

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, October 26, 1999***SENATE***Tuesday, October 26, 1999*

The Senate met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, leave of absence from today's sitting has been granted to Sen. Philip Marshall.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following communication 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. KENNETH AYOUNG-CHEE

WHEREAS Senator Philip A. F. Marshall 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, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 40 (2) (c) and section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, KENNETH AYOUNG-CHEE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 26th October, 1999 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Philip A. F. Marshall.

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

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OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Kenneth Ayoung-Chee took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

PAPER LAID

The Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation for year ended December 31, 1997. [*The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark)*]

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF LAND (NO. 2) BILL

Bill to provide for the orderly and progressive development of land in both urban and rural areas and to preserve and improve the amenities thereof, for the grant of permission to develop land and for other powers of control over the use of land and the design, construction and occupation of buildings; to confer additional powers for the protection of the environment, and the architectural and cultural heritage, and for the acquisition and development of land for planning; and to provide for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid [*The Minister of Housing and Settlements*]; read the first time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[Third Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 22, 1999]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Sadiq Baksh): Mr. President, at the dawn of the 21st Century, we face a turning point in our history: a pivotal moment in our new covenant between our citizens, Government and our country.

For the past four years, our Government has been bringing the true meaning of effective government to our people. Accustomed as our people have been for the past 40 years or so before this new, this true and this real meaning of government that has thrilled the majority of our people, fascinated many and I dare say,

dazzled a few, our country is being systematically transformed from top to bottom. The society is being directed by the centrifugal forces of the information age, microchip technologies, a borderless economy and a new communication network. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, how has this United National Congress Government played a pivotal role in making our society? We have done so by living up to our commitments of providing good government to the people, promoting peace and harmony by inculcating respect and trust among our varied people, by levelling the playing field so that each and every citizen is provided with opportunities for growth and development; by ensuring that the principles of our Constitution are rigidly upheld and, in general, by promoting the social, economic and political development of all our citizens.

10.10 a.m.

Mr. President, this budget must not be seen in isolation as a stand-alone event, rather, it is yet another link in that continuous chain of planned, social and economic development which this Government has provided, is providing and will continue to provide for all our citizens well into the 21st Century.

The tenure of the United National Congress to date can be simply expressed in three words: performance, performance and more performance. [*Desk thumping*] You recall, Mr. President, right in this Chamber they said they planned to do the St. Ann's Roundabout. We did it. That is performance. You will recall they planned to build a bridge over the Caroni River since 1981, we still have an outstanding debt of \$18 million on it. No bridge. They planned to do it. We did it.

Mr. President, we are a Government committed to action. Just look around you. See what has been achieved over the last four years and compare it with the last 30, 50 or 100 years for that matter. We shall continue, I assure you, to perform, perform and perform.

Our citizens over the years have become so accustomed to government being a monolith, as being aloof and away from the ordinary citizen, that the accessibility and candour of this Government have come as a welcome surprise to many. Mr. President, many of our citizens will tell you that in the past, budget time was dread time. In the days and weeks preceding a budget, people would purchase and hoard just about anything. Do you remember pitch oil? Yes, Mr. President, kerosene, cigarettes, cooking gas, gasoline and you recall foreign currency. Budget time PNM style was a time of fear, fear and more fear. Even in

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the last days of the previous government, in their dying moments, they continued to perpetuate fear into the population. You recall fear of what the new government would do, that old age pensions would be taken away, their freedoms would be curtailed and taxes would be increased. What really happened four years later was that pensions went up, taxes went down and additional freedoms were guaranteed. Thank God the population did not believe then and they will not believe them now as they continue their story of 1,001 tales. Take that for government PNM style.

Sen. Montano: Mr. President, a point of order. I am enjoying the rhetoric of the Minister, but he is reading, and we are expected to speak.

Mr. President: As you may very well know, Senator, ministers are given a certain latitude because of their responsibilities and they are permitted a high level of reading in their contributions, because of the statistics and other information which they are required to move with.

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh: Mr. President, fear PNM style. *[Laughter] [Desk thumping]*

Mr. President, what is a budget? It is no longer a time of fear, pain or grief. It is a time when the government reports to the people and when the population is informed about what to expect in the upcoming fiscal year. In terms of the United National Congress, it is the progressive, positive deeds of the last four years, a paradigm shift. One of the accomplishments of this Government is the awakening of the consciousness of our citizens to good governance, enhanced social and economic development and benefits such as sustained real economic growth which has been averaging 3 per cent per annum; reduction in unemployment, the lowest in more than two decades, just over 11 per cent. One recalls the two previous decades, a time slot which included that period of fiscal abundance when, according to the real father of the nation, money was no problem. In spite of all of these positive growth factors, inflation continues to be at its lowest, below 2 per cent and the currency is at its most stable ever.

Our Government is of the committed belief that education, training and moral developments are essential for growth. We are not about enslaving our people and denying them growth by providing the largesse of freeness. Rather, we will encourage them to grow and develop by providing the necessary environment for them to learn and work. Just look at the National Energy Skills Development Centre.

As a moral principle, we should not expect to benefit from any association with our nation unless we are prepared to contribute our fair share or fulfil our role as a responsible citizen. We must reject the idea that we have no obligation other than the ones we choose. Because we are social beings, we live in a network of interdependence and we are not free to deny or reject that.

As adults, obligations begin at home. Whatever the circumstances, we as parents have an obligation to obey the laws of the land and to teach our children the importance of becoming law abiding citizens. Civic empowerment expands individual choice and strengthens community institutions, not to make government irrelevant, but to make it a more effective instrument of our lives. Indeed, the more we rely and embrace decentralization and individual choice, the more we need shared goals to be clearly articulated to guide us in our endeavours and to unite our country. Unity of ends, diversity of means, this is the vision of the United National Congress. It is within this philosophical underpinning of our governmental framework that I unhesitatingly congratulate our Minister of Finance on the presentation of his budget, a budget which is clearly a blueprint for social, economic and human development. This is a necessary policy instrument to usher our nation into the 21st Century.

Mr. President, under the National Highways Programme, we have rehabilitated 82 kilometres of roads between the period 1997/1998 and 1998/1999. We completed designs for 140 kilometres of roads and construction which will commence in the year 1999/2000. We are going to be doing emergency work on the North Coast and the S.S. Erin Road, Siparia and the Eastern Main Road. Commencement of construction of approximately 100 kilometres of roads at Bonne Aventure, Gasparillo; the S.S. Erin Road from Debe to Syne Village; the Ciperio Road; the Guaracara/Tabaquite Road; the Mayaro/Guayaguayare Road; the Cedar Hill Road; the Naparima/Mayaro Road; Moruga; Siparia; San Francique; and Southern Main Road.

One other such measure is the transformation of the Highways Division into a Roads Authority. The details of this process include the legislation and regulatory framework that are being presently worked on to give effect to this proposal.

Mr. President, those of us travelling from the south of the country will be familiar with the works taking place at the Cross Crossing Interchange. This project, which is estimated to cost approximately \$151 million, consists of the following components:

- Dualling of the San Fernando Bye Pass from Chaconia Avenue to Cross Crossing Roundabout;

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- Construction of the Cross Crossing Interchange;
- Construction of a two lane connector road from Cross Crossing Roundabout to Golconda.

The immediate benefits of this project will include the unrestricted traffic flow in an area currently plagued by traffic congestion. I am happy to inform this Senate that this project is 85 per cent complete.

An asphaltic base course has been constructed on the southbound lane of San Fernando Bye Pass and on the connector road and indeed, traffic is currently using these newly constructed surfaces and will continue to do so to the end of this project. Temporary traffic diversions are in effect to facilitate construction of the Cross Crossing Interchange, which is taking shape and is scheduled for completion in March, 2000.

Prequalification of contractors for the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from Tarouba to Cross Crossing to link this interchange is in the final stages of completion and tenders are expected to be invited at the end of November, 1999. Construction is expected to commence early in the year 2000.

I now turn my attention to an important issue that people have been raising, the Solomon Hochoy Highway. Mr. President, as you are aware, the travelling public has had to suffer great inconveniences due to the reconstruction of this major link. It is instructive to give a little background so that we can understand the kinds of problems that the Ministry had to grapple with.

With respect to the southbound carriageway, the riding surface of the slow lane and shoulder of this highway had deteriorated to such an extent that it became dangerous for high-speed traffic. The result is that most of the vehicles are being forced, and were forced then, to use the fast lane. The pavement on this section is now considered to have totally failed and the only solution was for long-term repair of the pavement and to reconstruct and rehabilitate the road to withstand projected traffic loading and conditions for a new design of 15 years.

The northbound carriageway is slightly older than the southbound. The horizontal alignment and vertical profile run parallel to the southbound lane with similar interchange ramps and overpass and underpass bridges, limiting access to the highway to upgrade separated intersections only. Although this highway is three years older than the parallel southbound lanes, it is generally considered to be in a sounder condition. Detailed examinations, however, have revealed that the condition is only marginally better with the road pavement also in the latter stages of effective use and rapidly approaching a position of total failure.

Significant embankment and landslips have occurred along some of the shoulders of the northbound lane. Less severe land slips on other shoulder embankments have been progressively repaired by filling depressions with asphalt which does not solve the underlying problem, but instead, temporarily cured the asphalt.

Again, to deal with this problem, the Ministry proposed to establish international standards that would provide safe and efficient transport to people, goods and services.

Mr. President, I reported, in my last budget presentation to this honourable Senate that this project is funded by a grant from the European Union and strict procurement procedures are attached to this funding. One of these is the procurement of consultants and contractors to meet the European Union's guidelines. This virtually ensured that none of our contractors could qualify.

Originally, Comlysa-Lain Joint Venture was to reconstruct and rehabilitate 25.32 kilometres of the Solomon Hochoy Highway located between the Indian Trail Overpass and Tarouba, and also undertake specialists on selected highway bridges. Upon termination, 99 per cent of the bridge repairs were completed. However, a substantial portion of the pavement under construction between Indian Trail and Claxton Bay was left unfinished.

The Ministry of Works and Transport took a decision to fire the contractor, seize his equipment and pursue the matter at the international court level. The Ministry also took a decision to complete these outstanding works, using a combination of in-house resources and bonded equipment and material suppliers. In addition to the above work, general repairs to the section of the northbound carriageway that parallels the southbound carriageway under construction were also undertaken.

10.25 p.m.

This work comprised depatching, depression repairs and placement of a wearing course on selected areas. General road repairs to the remainder of the Solomon Hochoy Highway were also undertaken. Mr. President, this is a situation that we found ourselves in, in terms of the poor construction practices of the original contractor. We, in the Ministry of Works and Transport, took the necessary steps of a hard decision—but one that we had to make—and got rid of the contractor. With the European Union we are now looking forward to going back again to the international tender where we informed all the local contractors with a view of forming a consortium to be able to participate in the bid to complete the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway.

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Not only in the areas of road reconstruction that we continue to work, we realized and you recalled last year in my presentation that many roads did not fall under the purview of any ministry or any governmental organization and under the Orphans Road Programme, we initiated 16 roads, covering a distance of 12 kilometres. These were done in Laventille, Sangre Grande, Mayo, Palo Seco, Las Cuevas and Tunapuna, and we were assisted in our efforts by contributions of raw materials from Trinidad Cement Limited, Petrotrin and Lake Asphalt.

This partnership is expected to continue in the new fiscal year. Although we would wish that every road could be repaired and reached to an adequate standard to meet public expectation, this is not always possible due to the lack of resources, but the commitment within the Ministry is to continue to work, assiduously, on a regular basis, to ensure that some time in the future, we would be in a position to ensure that we provide the type of roads that the people of Trinidad and Tobago should expect.

I now wish to speak on the air sector component of the Ministry's operation. It is unfortunate that the minds of listeners would automatically go to the question of the new terminal being pursued under the Piarco Crown Point Airport Development Programme because much more has been pursued in this sector. Let me, again, begin with activities undertaken in the regulatory arm of the sector, under the aegis of the Civil Aviation Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport.

The main focus of the Civil Aviation Division during fiscal 1998/1999 has been the transformation of the division into a statutory authority. We are working within the Ministry to re-engineer sections that could stand alone and become units that would be able to generate income. The department of Civil Aviation is one such unit that would be able to transform itself and be re-engineered into a profit centre. So that the Civil Aviation Authority would become a reality in Trinidad and Tobago.

In this regard, several important projects were undertaken and the entire re-organization of the department would be expected. In terms of training, the Civil Aviation Training Centre has also been a hub of activity. Two training courses were run simultaneously, namely, the Aeronautical Information Services, course II, and the Air-Traffic Control Course 28. The Aeronautical Information Services Course II, which was run from April 12, 1999 to July 30, 1999 provided training to eight graduates from Trinidad and the Eastern Caribbean in the field of air-traffic services.

The Air-Traffic Control Course 28 which ran from March 29, 1999 to October 01, 1999 provided training to 21 students from Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts, Turks and Caicos, Antigua/Barbuda, St. Lucia, Cayman Islands, Anguilla and Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. President, of note was the fact that for the first time these courses were undertaken on a paying basis, and we will evaluate shortly to gauge the success level achieved.

The telecommunications and electronic section has also been very active in the refurbishing and updating equipment to meet internationally required standards. A programme mounted jointly by the International Air Traffic Association (IATA) and the International Traffic Organization (ITO), reviewed the air-traffic services for the year 2000. This enables the division to keep abreast of Y2K progress in all areas. With respect to the Eastern Caribbean states, Y2K contingency planning was organized here by the Trinidad and Tobago unit.

Mr. President, I am pleased to say that all the areas of the Civil Aviation Department and BWIA are also Y2K compliant. In fact, BWIA will be having flights on December 31, 1999 and Trinidad and Tobago has a responsibility for 750 kilometres of the flight-information region. This is in conjunction with the Caribbean having developed a Y2K contingency plan for Piarco and the entire region.

Mr. President, in terms of the physical infrastructure, the development of the new terminal building at Piarco has continued apace. Despite the prophets of doom and gloom on this project, perseverance and clear understanding of the importance of this project to the economic development of Trinidad and Tobago, has ensured that this super structure has risen from what was, literally, an impossible task. This project would give impetus to transport, trade and tourism. To give effect to this, I have already begun to ensure that we do an overall study of the entire area, so that we would be able to choose the best industries and to utilize the free-zone's area to be developed along and around the airport.

The new terminal has been sized to meet the anticipated passenger demands. It is also designed to ensure the governmental space required for both foreign arrivals and industry standards for airline space, which would provide the type of equipment that would ensure a modern facility. The facility is designed to accommodate 14 air-carrier gates and two commuter gates. The gate sizing is based on four aircraft size: commuter gates to handle commuter aircraft up to ATR-72 narrow-bodied gates to accommodate all narrow-bodied jets up to B-756; wide-bodied gates to accommodate A-300 and B-767-300 aircraft and the jumbo gates to handle the 747s and B-777, MD-11s and A-314s.

While I outlined the major components of the terminal building being developed, I must stress that we are not the only ones pursuing terminal development in the region. In fact, at last count, no less than 26 other countries in the region are pursuing some type of terminal development. So this is, indeed, a regional thrust.

Some of the major ones are: Aruba—US \$70 million; Barbados Sir Grantley Adams International Airport currently undergoing renovations at a cost of US \$75 million. The Dominican Republic at a cost of US \$400 million; Jamaica, has ongoing work at both Norman Manley International Airport and Montego Bay Sangster International Airport at a cost of \$153 million; in Caracas—\$95 million.

These examples have been given to show that we are not the only ones who view modern, convenient, user-friendly airport facilities as critical to the economic development of a country. Not to act now, is to be left behind again, on a regional level, leaving room for other areas to capitalize on our deficiencies. Mr. President, you would recall that Barbados is getting money from Trinidad and Tobago and has a better airport facility than Trinidad and Tobago.

It is necessary also to highlight that the Piarco Crown Point International Airport Development Programme does not simply consist of a new terminal building. Other activities being undertaken include:

- a feasibility study of the Piarco estate to identify the best use of the lands and fixed assets of the Airports Authority;
- Institutional strengthening programme for the airport's authority of Trinidad and Tobago, to ensure the necessary management capabilities for the terminal which are in place well before its completion;
- a public awareness programme to highlight the benefits of the terminal to the economy, as well as to draw the necessary manufacturing operations to the area;
- it also includes the upgrading of the Golden Grove Road and surroundings and utilities to facilitate the new traffic emanating from the new terminal development.

We envisage a new hotel development at Piarco.

10.35 a.m.

Mr. President, Tobago was not left out. In the conceptualization of this project, one facet has been the development of a feasibility study for the Crown

Point International Development project. This has been completed and the Tobago House of Assembly has been provided with the necessary documents outlining the different options which can be pursued.

In addition to that, we recognize some of the problems experienced today at the terminal in Tobago and as such, the ministry will be making available to the Airports Authority, \$10 million during 1999/2000 to ensure the improvement works continue at the Crown Point International Airport. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, as Minister of Works and Transport, I have been conversing with key stakeholders in the aviation sector as regards the needs of this new terminal development. I believe information is the key component to ensure that we attract the type of business that would make this airport one of the major hubs in the region. I know for years we have been really planning to get such a facility and we did not. The time has come now at this stage when we can do it and we will do it.

The efforts of this Government to the aviation sector have been, and will continue to be focussed on the promotion of growth in an environment of efficiency and effectiveness. I think the air carriers which operate out of Trinidad and Tobago namely, BWIA and Air Caribbean, should be commended. Both carriers have shown considerable growth in 1998/1999 and it was a period that was evidenced by rising levels of projected and increased routes in the entire region. This is something which we intend to encourage and to facilitate.

First, we in fact accepted a position that BWIA will be allowed to ply the route between Trinidad and Tobago and we expect the first phase of the seven-year agreement with Air Caribbean to come to an end in March, 2000. We are already beginning to hold discussions with both BWIA and Air Caribbean so we would continue to provide the type of air link between Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that all our citizens are in a position to have easier access to our unitary state.

In addition to that, BWIA put forward a plan for its fleet renewal and expansion and, in fact, will inaugurate a new route on November 3 when the airline will go into a joint arrangement with US Air to link Trinidad and Tobago to Washington and 11 other destinations. Air Caribbean also began flying, although BWIA, in fact, had a steward position for a 15-year period. We were able to hold discussions with BWIA so that the designation of Air Caribbean became a reality in 1999. During the year 1999/2000 we plan to provide additional opportunities for the expansion of the aviation sector.

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Mr. President, in terms of the sea link between Trinidad and Tobago, as I have said on numerous occasions, we cannot be satisfied with the service that we provided in the last few months, but we are working with the Government Shipping Service and the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, the business community and the Tobago House of Assembly in ensuring that we provide the type of sea links that will allow business and economic development to continue, especially in the construction sector in Tobago.

Mr. President you will also recall, early in 1997, we spoke about the possibility of the establishment of a port at Toco. Two years later we are in a position to, in fact, look at a proposal and we in the ministry—the Government through Cabinet approved the recommendations to hold discussions with the preferred developer and we have established a team jointly between the private sector and the public sector to negotiate the terms of such a construction on a build/own/operate/transfer basis.

A fully private sector initiative, the first moot project in the transportation sector and the first for the region and we are doing everything possible to ensure that all the environmental considerations are taken into account. In fact, we had a briefing session with the team responsible for negotiating, and they were told that one thing we would not compromise is the environmental responsibility of the developer.

Mr. President, the port development at Toco, if it becomes a reality, was never intended to replace the port of Port of Spain or the Government Shipping Service. It is just another opportunity to give additional choices and an opportunity to ensure that we develop an area of our country that for years has suffered because of the lack of transportation whether by air, sea, or land. In fact, as we talk of Toco, it was because of the plea of the people of Matelot that this Government considered the possibility of looking at rural transport.

Today, I am pleased to say that during this week the rural bus service will in fact, transport its 250,000th passenger. Two hundred and fifty thousand persons utilized the services. The most travelled route on the rural buses is from Matelot to Sangre Grande. In fact, during the first two months of operation, 14,868 passengers utilized that very important service. Mr. President, we are now studying whether so many people travel because of the availability of transport, or because of the economic benefits, because prior to the introduction of the rural bus service from Matelot to Sangre Grande, people paid \$20.00. Today, on an efficiently run rural bus, they pay \$8.00. [*Desk thumping*]

Recently, just two weeks ago, we inaugurated a service from Guayaguayare to Mayaro, and very shortly we will inaugurate a service from Icacos to Point Fortin. We have inaugurated a service from Blanchisseuse to Port of Spain and many other areas. In fact, as we look back, we realize that in the transport sector, the PNM really paid no attention at all. As they gave bus passes, they took away the buses. *[Laughter]* Mr. President, they will never live that one down, giving out bus passes and taking away the buses. That is the record of the PNM, Mr. President.

As my good friend said, all the roads in that particular area fall under the responsibility of the regional corporation controlled by the PNM. Maybe that is the reason. Mr. President, I say all the roads under consideration fall under the responsibility of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation controlled by the PNM. That is PNM style!

Mr. President, during 1999/2000, we did in fact suffer from a number of floodings throughout the country. During the last four years on a continuous basis we did as much as is humanly possible within the resources available. Many areas that never got any attention for years we went out and ensured that we cleared many of those areas. You will recall the Malick drain at the Barataria Roundabout that continued to be silted up on a regular basis. We are experiencing changing weather patterns and in recent years, this country has been experiencing a type of weather condition that we are not accustomed to. This is a worldwide phenomenon. I realize that as you look around in New York and California and the world we are seeing an unprecedented type of weather pattern that has resulted in flooding worldwide.

In Trinidad and Tobago we do have a number of issues to tackle in terms of situations of reforestation on our hills, clearing of areas, that is a situation that existed, but it has been exacerbated because of a number of recent weather patterns and when you look around it is more prevalent now. As you drive on the highway, you could see actually where the rain starts to fall and where it ends. Localized rain is something that we are experiencing.

Mr. President, in addition to the works done in the drainage department, we are continuing the reform measures within the ministry and utilizing all our labour in an efficient manner. We are trying our best to ensure that we develop and maintain all our buildings in Trinidad and Tobago. We are trying our best to restore some of our prestigious buildings. Within the ministry, as we build more roads and do more activities, we will be looking forward to utilizing more labour within the in-house resources of the ministry so that we would have a

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combination between contractors and in-house resources to ensure that we develop Trinidad and Tobago and we in the Ministry of Works and Transport stay in the forefront of the developmental process to be able to bring to reality the budget statements of the hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. President, I thank you.

Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams: Mr. President, before I begin my contribution, let me welcome Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette to this Parliament and extend special congratulations to Sen. The Hon. Vimala Tota-Maharaj on her elevation to a Minister in the Ministry of Health. I wish them both best wishes.

Mr. President, I did not expect to make a contribution at this time this morning but as I sat here and listened to the hon. Minister as he tried to paint a very pretty picture of his Government, I felt I could not let it go.

Mr. President, as you very well know that normally in budget debates, Ministers come forward with their programmes and those of us on the other side listen and try to ask questions, but it seems to me this has not been the pattern and I see a lot of hedging and people waiting until other people speak and therefore, we are quite willing to let the floor open to all those who would like to come, even at 10.00 p.m. tonight.

Mr. President, the last speaker spoke about the fact that this Government has systematically transformed the economy or whatever he said from top to bottom and I do not disagree. Everything has changed since they have come into office. Everything has changed from top to bottom and we will see that. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister also talked about levelling the playing field; today we are going to see which playing field because as far as we are concerned, the playing field is not level. The hon. Minister of Finance was not here when he also noted that the budget presentation should not be looked at as a “stand-alone” event. Really, I wish to tell him it is a “stand-alone” event because the Minister comes with his presentation and depends on his other Ministers to support, elucidate, give reasons to say things and if he knows his Ministers wait till late in the night, while others say nothing, therefore it comes like he is standing alone. He takes the rest of the blows all alone, nobody willing to share anything at all.

What had bothered me most of all and I really could not allow it to go because we forget very quickly—everybody in this Parliament does not walk with his or her *Hansard*—is the hon. Minister saying that his Government was noted for three things: performance, performance, performance.

10.50 a.m.

Mr. President, anyone who knows what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago will never agree with it—they could not. *[Desk thumping]* Let me tell the Minister that his leader knows that is true, and that is why I could afford to stand at this time and speak. That Cabinet reshuffle last week was because of no performance, no performance, no performance. *[Desk thumping]* The fact remains that the Prime Minister desperately needed help in his fifth-year, and brought one man to see if he could assist the whole Government. How could they talk about performance, performance, performance. *[Desk thumping]* Do not fool the people because everyone in this country knows that the Government got nothing done and, therefore, they brought someone to do it. I see the honourable Minister looking at me but I want to tell him he has no support for what he said.

I listened to what the Minister said and what has happened? I am coming to it. I could change the “ppp” into promises, promises, promises. *[Desk thumping]* Every single year is promises. When I looked at my notes from last year, to me, I could just take up the same notes and use them. When I looked at the *Medium Term Policy Framework*, it was the same the Ministries sent us last year, even the language did not change. I looked at it over the weekend and compared them. Is the Minister of Finance not aware that they are sending him the same thing? That is the same thing the Government intends to do—only promises, promises, promises. *[Desk thumping]* What are they delivering?

Mr. President, do you know that the Minister of Finance believes that people are at the centre? I believed him when he said it. Sometimes when I listened to the Minister he puts emphasis where he tries to capture the people. But his people have a different focus from him. When the Minister spoke about his success, do you know what he was referring to? A roundabout at St. Anns and a bridge over the Caroni River, and the Minister calls that delivery. *[Laughter]* *[Desk thumping]* Those are the two things the Minister highlighted as performance. The Minister said they were going to build a roundabout at St. Anns and they have performed.

The Government is talking about putting people in this age who are people-oriented at the centre and the Minister is talking about a roundabout at St. Anns. He is telling 1.3 million people that. Come on! I just could not let it pass. I had to come right out and let the Government know that we are not foolish. *[Desk thumping]* I know that their leaders would say that I am speaking out of turn, out of time and I did not tell them. I know my colleague Sen. Danny Montano understands that you cannot wait sometimes to say what you want.

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The Minister talks about a paradigm shift but I know there was a paradigm shift.

Sen. Shabazz: Paradigm.

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: It shifted because the focus is entirely different from what it used to be. We agree with the Minister whole heartedly that it was a paradigm shift. Let me just say that we come to this Parliament to sit and listen. Sometimes I wonder why do we stand up. I do not know why we get up and take part in debates. Nothing has changed. When the Minister of Finance said that he is not bringing in anything new because he did not see the need, the Minister was quite right because everything is the same. Why the Minister must bring in any new plans? He cannot because when the Minister looks at what he got from the Ministries, it is the same thing he got last year and this year, so he said nothing has changed and he would do nothing. Clearly, he has been very honest in that way.

Mr. President, I heard Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie rapping for the \$10 million for Crown Point. I remember Sen. Diana Mahabir Wyatt rapped here for \$25 million for single mothers. The Senator got up and congratulated the Minister and all the Senators on the other side cheered loudly.*[Interruption]* Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie I am saying it now, so that you will not rap in vain and they must take shame and do it. I remember the entire country was excited. Do you know what is worse? It was not implemented then as many other things.

Last year, we got promises and the only courteous thing to do was to say why certain things were not done. If they were important as we think, then the Minister of Finance should put it again on the agenda, but the Government just goes again with straw programmes. Do you know why I called them straw programmes? I called them straw programmes because they are empty with extremely creative names. The Government sits there and talks about these things which will never, ever happen. *[Desk thumping]* Straight public relations is what this Government is about. You see all that cheering you got, that is what they are living on. The more they clap each other is the more they continue to go down the road with public relations.

Mr. President, we are big people and we understand what is happening. This Government just does not take advice, even though you give them sound advice. I thought that is what Opposition and Independent Senators are here for. Yes, we will criticize a programme but every time we get up on this side, we say something that we feel is going to help, but nobody takes us on. In fact, every one gets arrogant and tells you that you are stupid and that it was done before and as a

result, the country suffers. If that is the way we are going with this Government we are going to be total failures in the long run. We cannot go through Government like this. They are supposed to listen, go back and work things out.

Mr. President, I am going to look at some of the things that the honourable Minister of Finance said last year that he was going to try to work on during the year. It was not in the budget and the reason is, no one gave the Minister what he asked for and they are talking about people and the same people are suffering. The media and the world would pick up all these nice things that the Minister has said—nice names, nice things, nice phrases. They sound good and we all leave here feeling quite happy only to know that they will never, ever happen. This Government as bold as they are would get up again, and read a whole speech of fine sounding things and it has nothing to do with the people. They are doing it every year.

I do not know why more people do not come to this Parliament. It is a beautiful place and nice things happen here. People enjoy themselves in here. We waste a whole lot of good time that could be used doing other things. I wish I could have done something else this morning. Yesterday, when I left Parliament I did not miss anything. I heard the highlights on the radio. I heard Sen. Shabazz's contributions and the hon. Minister whom I have great respect for, allowing people to take away things that he knows would be good for this country. But something has to happen.

Mr. President, I was reading an article on the Global Financial Crises and the Implication for the Caribbean Towards a Second Generation on Structural Reform. We attended this lecture at the Central Bank Towers and I think the hon. Minister of Finance was there and one of the speakers said: "It is interesting that in his budget speech last week, your hon. Minister of Finance called for a revolution in education."

We spoke about the revolution in education for the entire year and we were looking forward to it. What was the revolution I saw? We had a revolution—I must admit at least that one thing was true. *[Desk thumping]* There was a big sweeping revolution—revolution UNC style. I will not put a stroke for any other party. Revolution of their interpretation and I am going into areas that I know of. The standardization of textbooks that was a revolution, one book means the same book. *[Interruption]* I am coming to that danger. That was a real revolution.

There was an upsurge of violence in schools. I remember Sen. Cuffy Dowlat saying that it was the PNM that caused it. It comes like when someone said that John O'Halloran caused something. I remember Minister John Humphrey said it

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was PNM who caused it. There were teachers who were absent because they were protesting for their salaries last month, and some teachers did not receive their bonds and the Government is talking about the revolution in schools. That is what they saw as the revolution in schools.

Mr. President, people are talking about a crisis in education and the Government is denying it. As my friend said, there is a crisis in health and education. What was the Minister thinking when he was talking about the revolution in schools? He had his own ideas and focus and, therefore, the end of the revolution was chaotic. The situation is so poor and the Government feels that next year they could make that same revolution. But if they did not do it in four years, they cannot do it again because they do not know what it means. [*Desk thumping*]

11.00 a.m.

You do not know what it means. I want to tell you something. [*Interruption*] Well I heard that the revolving of the Ministers was the revolution they made. Oh Lord! And it is a lovely place to be, however, let me tell you something. We have to be honest with ourselves. Nothing happened in the education system. I will say it over and over again. I tell you, as we go through any one of the documents we have here, education and health should be the main focus. We are not paying any attention to the education system that we have here. [*Desk thumping*] Therefore, Mr. Minister, I do not know; we had \$14 billion to spend and \$1.4 went to education.

I want to tell you something and this time it is advice. You see Sen. Montano gave some advice. He said he is tired criticizing so he was giving some advice this year. Let me just put in focus what happened in education. In education you are into what is called the reform in education. If you do not know let me tell you. It is not only Trinidad which is into that reform. Most of the Caricom member states are into reform in education so it is not something that we alone are doing.

We got money from the World Bank and the IDB, they got money from the World Bank and the IDB to do a reform. If you are doing a reform in education, all the little parts must be correlated. So you feel when you write that you are into SEMP, the Secondary Education Management Programme, or you are into SIP, the School Improvement Plan, or you are into SEE, the Secondary Entrance Examination and all those various things, they are all different programmes you are doing? I want to tell you, no. They are not different programmes. It is one big programme. You are not seeing it. You do not understand what reform means. [*Desk thumping*]

If you understood what was happening, it would have come as if you were building a house, and had several parts to renovate and there were specialists doing different parts of the renovation. There would be those doing the windows and those doing the floors but there would be one person overseeing the entire renovation. That is where you made the mistake because you ain't have anybody overseeing it. Everybody got a little part and ran off with it as if it was their own piece.

So that in my house, the windows man went off doing his own thing. Whether what he did fitted into the rest of the walls, it does not matter; whether the man doing the floors has measurements that will fit those on the walls—everybody ran off with their piece. Then you come here and spread them out like these are all many different programmes you are doing and that is where you fail. It is not many, it is one programme. So that the School Improvement Plan people run to the teachers and the principals, the Secondary Education Management Programme people run to the teachers and the principals, the Continuous Assessment Programme people run to the teachers and the principals and all the other people run to the teachers and the principals and you have the whole system totally confused now and nobody knows where you are going.

Then this one gets his own contractor with his own terms and pays him off—friends there—and another one has the power to do his own thing and he goes off. When I tell you, all of that is total, total chaos. Nobody saw what was happening, nobody saw who was leading the reform process and that all the different parts must fit together. Take it, go back to the drawing board and see, because we are not going to get out of this confusion in education if people do not understand what you are into.

Let me tell you another thing. You are not into it alone. If you want, go up the islands and ask other people who did it or who are in the process of doing it how it is to be done. I tell you, I am really saddened when I see what is happening in education because I spent the best part of my life in the education system and I know and I follow it [*Desk thumping*] and I really regret that people are not seeing what they are supposed to do.

Then, when you get the *Hansard* from the hon. Minister, total arrogance. I heard this hon. Minister of Works and Transport telling me about approachable Ministers and all kinds of things. He forgets what he is talking about. There is total arrogance if you read the thing there, total arrogance, when he is talking like everybody on the other side is stupid. One could not approach him at all. One could not get anything done. One could find nothing at all—total arrogance, and that is why we are in this position.

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Also, if you are doing reform, we have technical people, technocrats. Politicians are not to make those hard decisions. What is happening is that the politicians are making the decisions. [*Desk thumping*] They are not listening to the technical people at all. So, even though the technical people do the best they can and present their ideas, the politician is just turning it down and saying, “We are doing our own thing”. That is why we have all this confusion with the books [*Desk thumping*] because the politicians are doing their own thing.

Now, let me tell you, as long as you continue to talk and not listen you will get that problem. Imagine a politician deciding what book to use. I was a member of the textbook committee long ago. Even when the NAR was there I was a member of the Textbook Evaluation Committee. I worked at a teachers’ college. That is not how you do it. The people give you the thing, they go through it. You do not know anything about education and as soon as you get it, “We do not want this. We want this book and it must go to the whole school”. That is only an example. [*Interruption*] For what reason? You have other reasons other than what the Minister thought you would have had and therefore you have that problem. So the reform is going no place in Trinidad and Tobago. All you are doing is embarrassing us as a country.

I tell you that all this CESS and the SIP and the SEE and the SEMP and those things will mean nothing to us in the long run because people do not know what they mean. You came into Government and there was a consultation there. This is one Government that does not want to use anything that it saw before. There was a consultation, we got the money, we did things, but you left some of these things and you are going ahead. New things happen and, yes, you have to do your own thing, but you also have to look on. Not because you are coming now you cannot do what was left before.

Let me tell you something about how they do not see what is happening, the linkages. We had a Cabinet reshuffle. There is a new Minister of Education. Where is the old Minister of Education? The old Minister of Education right now is in France at a conference for Ministers of—[*Interruption*] Japan?

Hon. Senator: I doubt that.

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: He is in—wherever he is—yes, in Paris. He went to a conference for Ministers of Education. Let me tell you something. If your focus is on the status and the travel and the perks then it will happen. But there is no way [*Desk thumping*] you would take—or I, having been moved, would get on a plane and fly there and sit with others as Minister of Education. I would never do that. I will tell you what you could have done. [*Interruption*] It is not self-interest.

If that conference is to throw up anything that will affect Trinidad and Tobago, then if the Minister herself could not go you could have sent someone else from the Ministry such as the Permanent Secretary or the Chief Education Officer or somebody. Someone else could have gone, [*Desk thumping*] somebody who could come back to that Cabinet or the Ministry and make a difference. You cannot send the man on a holiday then send him off to Tourism and then tell me you are serious about education. You are not serious. It is really an embarrassment to Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me tell you, when the election was called and a new government came and two days later a Prime Minister had to go—do you think the old Prime Minister could say he was flying out because he was on the list? [*Desk thumping*] He could not. He will be out of place. [*Interruption*] Sorry, Sir.

Sen. Kuei Tung: Will the Senator please explain how it is, then, that the same Prime Minister who would not go on a trip signed the Severn Trent deal five days before elections?

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: But he was in office, Mr. Minister. He was in office up to the time he was no longer Prime Minister and, therefore, legitimized in that position. I am telling you this and I am sure, Mr. Minister. I know the Minister of Finance. That Minister of Finance, if he were in that position, was not going to fly out. He was not going. I know him. If even he had heard about it two days before it was to happen and the next day was the thing, he was going to say, “You see me, the time I am over there I will no longer be in office”. He was not going. I mean to say, I admire him for that. This is ridiculous. [*Desk thumping*]

What was the point of the reshuffle? People were removed but still kept their status, still got back to a place where salaries and perks will remain and everybody else who was not there was pushed in. So it is a matter of keeping the family happy; one big happy family. Keep the family happy. That is the focus. I say, you could do all you want but be serious about the education system; be serious about the nation's children. [*Desk thumping*] I do not care what you do otherwise but you have to be serious about it. You, therefore, have to know what you are doing, you need to have a lot of co-ordination when you want to do things.

People told us what used to happen before a budget, how some people got a bit nervous. Let me tell you, you have this whole country in jeopardy. Parents do not even know if their children are sitting Common Entrance or SEE or SC or whatever it is. Ask any parent out there what is going to happen. In fact, some parents feel they will no longer have a Common Entrance Exam. Some parents

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feel they will have no examination to decide placement. It must be half the population or more who believe that. They do not know and they do not understand.

It is because we make wild statements, "End of Common Entrance". Parents are saying, "Oh God, next year is it? Well my child will be the following year, praise God". Let me tell everybody here in this Parliament today, you will always have that placement examination, whether it is called CE, SC, GE, AE, whatever it is, you are going to have that placement examination. Forget it. That is going to be always there. They are always going to have a placement examination. So people should know that from now and we should not wait until later on to confuse the people. You are going to have that placement examination and the CAP is only going to work with people to ensure that they are ready for the examination but you are going to have the placement.

This SEE is only because certain people want to save the person who said there would be no Common Entrance Examination. So they changed the name to SEE and they took off two or three subject areas and that removal of the two or three subject areas carried us back to the first set of Common Entrance Examinations when we did not have those subject areas. People said, "Those were not included because teachers were not teaching them, so let us put them back so teachers will teach them". Now you just take them off. So what you do? You revolve backwards. I do not understand.

Let us be serious about it. Hon. Minister, I know you are trying your best in certain areas but they are fooling you. Somewhere along they are fooling you. Therefore, I want to tell you also that that one book same book is going to cause some problems later on. First of all, I did not agree with the one book same book but even if you had one book and you could have several bits of material to teach the same structure, you must have libraries and other places in your school to get supplementary material. The children cannot survive on that one book. [*Desk thumping*] You did not have it. When I say libraries I do not mean a bookcase. I mean libraries staffed by people with proper library skills and who are going to help them.

Do you know what you are doing? You are putting my kind of children, your children and some of the children out there at a disadvantage. The same person who is leading this revolution, as you say, with the one book same book, has his children going to those private primary schools, brother, where they could afford to buy it and they have all the books [*Desk thumping*] and we are writing the same examination. Then this hon. Minister is telling me about levelling the playing

field. You are putting my children at a disadvantage because we only have that one book. We have no access to anything else. They have access to all the books that the teachers want, they have the computer, the Internet, the everything, and we are going to take the same placement examination.

So what have you done to the children? You have discriminated against a certain set of children. [*Desk thumping*] You say they are too poor, but you have made my children poorer. [*Desk thumping*] You have made my children poorer by taking it away from them and it is a serious thing because that one book is all that they have to depend on now. There is no opportunity to even walk to a library or somewhere to get somebody fully trained to help them with any other information.

It is there in the private primaries and it is all around this country. So the rich now, those who can afford to send their children to those schools, [*Desk thumping*] are going to be in a better position and they are going to move to the same prestige schools we are talking about and our children will never be able to do it. We have put them back. I am using this only as an example to tell you I am serious about it. I am willing to try something to see what you could do about it.

There is one other thing in that education scenario I could not take and that is, when you do an examination and you have data and results, the data are confidential. Do not have some people taking the data home, analyzing them and publishing them, claiming it is a comparison of this school against that one and performance here and performance there. That is dangerous. You are talking about levelling the playing field. You are not levelling the playing field because some of us start as an equal in the game and it is very dangerous to take that kind of data and put them before the whole country saying you are going to publish them. Somebody sneaked in there, I do not know how they got in there, took out the data and they are being published and the population had a biased look at the data.

The hon. Minister promised to put computers in schools and he said there would be one computer in each class. Let me tell you, that is where I find something happened. That is why I say, you do not implement. By September last they were scrambling to get some computers. There is a contract out for 700 as the hon. Minister said. At first it was to be 350, 20 in a school in a lab which will give each person access to it, now I see it is to be 700 computers. The fact remains that all year nothing happened and they are scrambling so that the hon. Minister could report. And it is the Ministry—[*Interruption*]

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Do not tell me anything about misinformation, man. Nothing I say—I stand on my two feet and everything I say could stand up to it [*Desk thumping*] because I am one of the people who do not talk off the top of my hat. I find out what I have to say first. The hon. Minister will know that they went back and they are now sending it to him at the last stage. At one time I thought he was delaying the presentation of the budget because so many things were not done—and I apologize to him for saying this, that he just could not face this Parliament again with, “Have you done this? Have you done this? Have you done this?” Nothing was done.

We got it quite down here when we all were having nice holidays—thank God for it—and what happened? We still have the contract awarded for the 700 computers and some schools have been getting them from other sources and whatnot, some churches, some religious organizations. I know the Maha Sabha brought some into their schools. However, what you really wanted to do for the people, for the children as a whole, and I call it the Minister's dream, did not come true because people just could not implement. The revolution did not come true. It will never come true anyhow no matter how much you wanted it.

11.15 a.m.

I am saying to you, as I said then, I was at teachers' colleges lecturing, look at your teachers' colleges. Every year, we are putting out 400 teachers. Any revolution that you want, go out there and start it in the teachers' colleges. [*Desk thumping*] Anything you do, you cannot do it unless you start it in the teachers' colleges. Go in the teachers' colleges, start there and give them the internet; give them computers; let them have full courses in Information Technology. When they come out, you have 400 more, rather than taking them out for seven days or five days and giving them a crash course and, “I cannot use the computer when I am done”. Because I have one at home for three or four years; I am going into a new one now, but I do not know how competent I am or if I can get out and use a programme.

Use those people out there. Any reform, those people are going to initiate that reform for you. They are the people who are being trained. Start with them; include them in everything; let them know how to use the electronics for themselves to get information. Let them surf the net out there to get information around the world. I see you have \$100,000 for library; I do not know what that is; it should be much more; half a million. Put in computers, internet and all that and update the college, so that they could find out what is happening around the world so that when they leave there, they are refreshed. They will push the revolution for you if you cannot push it for yourself. I hope that you understand what I mean.

Therefore, I need to say something. If you are into a reform process, your human resource is extremely important. The people are important and I am still saying you are totally understaffed in that Ministry to do the thing. What is worse and happening now, not only are you understaffed, for each of these programmes—Secondary Education Management Programme, School Improvement Plan, or whatever it is—what they have been doing now is bringing contract officers to run these things, some of them with no idea of education systems, no idea where we want to take the children. They do not have a feel of what it is and there are good officers there who can be put in these posts. So, you are bringing these contract officers. Some of them need to have training so you train them. Some of them stay with you for the two years and off they go, and you are still poor within the Ministry.

You have to look at your human resource and what is happening inside there. It is not going to be working well. You have to look at that, because if you do not look at that, you are going to be still poorer than you are. Have the schools properly staffed; have the ministry properly staffed; there are a lot of Trinidadians all about here who can do it and all these contract officers who might be friends, family or else—I do not want to even insinuate that this morning—let them find some other pastures. But we are serious about revolution in education. We want the reform process to go there and, therefore, we need to have the correct people.

I tell you that the Chief Education Officer, the man in charge of those things, I understand will be leaving sometime soon. It must be Friday of this week. Now, if your Chief Education Officer is going on Friday and you have not looked at anybody yet, or brought anybody in, can you imagine what is going to happen when the head leaves? He is going on Friday and nobody has come in yet. Six weeks ago we should have had somebody there looking at what was going on, in order to have the continuity. He has to be walked through the place. Do you think they are bringing him back? Six weeks ago, nobody came in, the Chief Education Officer is going on Friday, therefore, the house is going to be without a head. God knows what is going to happen. The reform process goes back again.

Let me just close up on the education system. Where are we going? Where are the local school boards? When are they coming on stream? Promise again. Distance education—Lord have mercy! I think Sen. Wade Mark must have felt good when he saw what happened to the Distance Education Minister; he must have felt vindicated now, because we gave Sen. Mark a lot of pressure when information was taken from him, but he must feel good today when he saw nothing happen.

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Distance education got out alone because that is so distant from that person you cannot have it. [*Desk thumping*] Listen, I tried to find distance education and I cannot find it anywhere. Where is distance education? It is something called education. I even asked the people at the Ministry of Education, “Do you know anything about distance education?” They said, “That is not here.” I asked, “How do you mean it is not here? Where is it?” They said, “Somewhere else.” They said “Information” and I said it was not there because information gone and left distance education. We are serious. [*Laughter*] You all are going to talk about this, but I am telling you this is serious business and nothing to laugh about. This is serious business.

That person has the portfolio for training the Youth Training Employment Partnership Programme which we used to do so well, which we met the NAR doing and which we continued and improved upon, which they tried to kill because I believe they thought, so foolishly, that all the participants were PNM people. But, YTEPP has gone through and what I saw coming through [*Interruption*]*—wait, you will tell me that you still have some YTEPP programmes.*

What I see coming through and what hurts me, and this is where I really felt sorry for Sen. Joseph Theodore—how could Minister Theodore allow his Civilian Conservation Corps to go to YTEPP? Those are two entirely different programmes. They had some military people working with them, that discipline that we are trying to instil in our youth. They carried that programme to 2,500 a year. Mr. President, do you know what I saw? The assets of the Civilian Conservation Corps now being taken over by YTEPP and they are training 2,500. So, do you mean to tell me that the numbers went right down? YTEPP and CCC only reached 2,500. That is only for the books, you know. When they get out there, it is much less and the Civilian Conservation Corps has vanished off the face of Trinidad and Tobago and I am really blaming the Minister of National Security because I feel, as a soldier, he has to stand up a little stronger. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] He cannot fall. He cannot tell me he is supporting YTEPP because his men were working and I know that programme. He knows I have followed it. I was happy when he got it.

I want to compliment the Minister for what he did for those young people. I saw them all around. I even saw them working with the National Housing Authority. They have all gone through. That discipline that was there, some of them felt so proud to be working with you all. That self-esteem that they had; do anything that you can, but take it from YTEPP because it is nowhere. YTEPP and

CCC are two different programmes altogether. Do not say that you are supporting them; you have to help me.

On-the-job-training down the drain, gone through, nothing. You have the pre-school with which Servol is working and there still is confusion because that has not been given the recognition it deserves even up to now.

I now go to home service. If they are really interested in pre-schools, why did they stop building the pre-schools which the Unemployment Relief Programme was building? I could name some of those. I can see them standing there. There were pre-schools which were being built by the URP but, because it was a new government, they decided they were not doing it. If you were really serious about the pre-schooling, do it, but that is only a small part of this whole thing. I ask myself: Where is the education system going?

Let me take a few minutes to talk about social development in this place. Here is where I will talk to the Minister of Finance because I really feel the Minister is trying. The Minister of Finance had promised that he would look at the allocations for certain categories and he said this is a people-centred budget. When he raised \$520 and \$620 for old age pension, I told him that public assistance is \$171.38 per person. He was not aware of it then and he said he would ask the Minister to send him a package so that he could look at it. I am saying today that I was a bit surprised and disappointed that the Minister did not find some way to alleviate the plight of those people. A sum of \$420 for a family of three, four and five. I have all the figures here. It was a promise he made and I think, from his point of view, from a people-centred orientation, that I would really have liked to see an increase in that and the \$75. It is still small. Therefore, when I heard government pensioners were getting \$75, I was a little taken aback and a little worried.

I want to agree with Sen. Dr. St. Cyr that we remove the age categories altogether—when I say age, I mean the barriers in those below 1996 or 1998, and let us go all over. I think that will help. They will all start at the \$150 as the case may be. It will pull a little more from your pocket, but I think it is only fair, because I think when they heard \$75, people were a little taken aback. They put themselves into too much trouble with those below this line and we got licks with that with the pension the last time; let us not bother to get into that. They served; the public servants served well; they say in how many years they did not get an increase; do not give them \$75. We could find a way to give them \$150 at the lowest if the first category is removed. I cannot remember the years, but those below a certain year would not get it.

In that same Ministry of Social and Community Development, we have some nice things—adopt a neighbourhood day care centre. Since last year I heard about the neighbourhood day care centre. Adopt a home is another one; adopt an old lady. All of those things are on the books but they know it is not going to happen. Why are they putting it in the budget? Nothing is happening to impact upon it.

We had the Geriatric/Adolescent Partnership which was under community development, and we used it as a national service programme—I still see the van riding around with National Service—and we used that as the national service because we know we had the Civilian Conservation Corps doing the environment. We used it as a national service and it was working well because the purpose was to do just what most national service programmes do, prepare young people to interact with the elderly, even their parents, and I thought that when they interacted with the elderly, they would really learn and benefit.

You would not fund the programme, therefore, that is almost in abeyance and you are getting new programmes—adopt a home, or adopt somebody or some elderly. Why all that nonsense? The programme was working successfully; carry the programme through. There are many young people out there who are very helpful and very glad that the programme was done. It continued a little while after we left office but now it has almost gone.

Then, there is the other one. I heard the Minister talking about the Retirees/Adolescent Partnership Programme where they wanted the senior citizens in the community to work with the young people, and I see they are putting the programme in the junior secondary schools. But, I remember when we left office, Marabella Junior Secondary School had already been prepared as the pilot for that. It did not happen and now they have brought it on stream, but if they had looked at the programme, the homework centre which they are trying to institute which they are not going to institute, they could have merged both of them. Here is where these same retired people with skills would be able to help those same young people from the junior secondary, who could monitor them doing homework, assist with sports, with music, with whatever skills they have.

So, why narrow it down to put “homework centres”? It sounds nice but for the last four years, we were going with the “homework centres” and not getting there, so please, look at the programmes and bring them together so that “homework centres” could be a part of the Retirees/Adolescent Partnership Programme and when they get there with those senior people, they do homework; if they like sports, you find a good sportsman who is retired and willing to come forward; he will come to the centre and work with them. I cannot see anything else.

Community mothers project. Every time I see something about mothers, I get frightened. This community mothers project where they are going to have mothers trained for day care for people is not going to happen, just like the \$25 million for single mothers. We had another “mother” project last year; nothing happened. So stop calling these high-sounding names knowing full well—when I heard Sen. Baksh, everything he said was there all along—it is nothing new, nothing creative. Put what you have, because I really feel you need to change your focus.

Very quickly, I also want to look at the whole idea of community centres. I saw where they are building some new community centres. They are boasting about it. We have had community centres over the years, and I am happy about the community centres. But, do you know what this Government has done?

Before we left office, we built some new community centres. Now, they have privatized the community centres. There is total privatization for the community centres. I will tell you why I say so. The village council people cannot get into those community centres as they want. They have to pay. They must pay to get into them. They have managers running those community centres who do not belong to the community. They will import a manager from wherever in Trinidad, bring the person to a community centre in your village and say, “You are the manager; run the show.” That manager is out to make money because you no longer feel that my taxpayers' money should help but I am telling you all these safety net programmes—and I put community centres in a safety net—we have to give something to them. Therefore, take some of my tax money and put it there. Put it into that, so you do not have that manager insisting that if the village council person cannot pay that money, they cannot use it. Weddings could go and parties could go and everything else, but the people who used to be inside the community centres are now outside and that worries me. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to tell you that you are building some new ones, therefore, you are going down the same road. Leave the people with the old ones they have because they could still walk into the old ones. The people in one community centre refused a board of management. It was not really the same project, but they were told if they did not take the board of management, they would not be helped with any expenses and they said, “All right. We would rather keep our building and fight up with it. We could go in when we want rather than you take it, put this and that and glorify it and we cannot use it.”

I am saying that if you want to bring the community together, try to look at the whole thing. I think it is something you need to look at, how we manage the community centres.

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Plaisance Park, in particular, had a community centre there. Texaco gave the land; it was built. It was in a state of disrepair. When we were building community centres, they came and asked. We gave Plaisance Park a community centre. Plaisance Park Village Council cannot go in there unless they pay or they do things now. The footballers cannot go in there. They say, "Better you had left us with the old building and we would have been able to use it." Why do we have such stringent rules and high costs? For everything, there is a cost.

We built the gymnasiums and to go into the gymnasiums we have around the country to practise "the little ball", those boys have to pay a certain amount of money per hour. Each person per hour has to pay a certain amount of money and, of course, when they have the games and they charge for their games, well yes, the clubs pay a little something. But to practise, the money taken from each person is a bit high and some of them just cannot go anymore into it.

I am saying if you are thinking about all these things as safety nets, if you are talking about crime, you are talking about saving the youth, I think you have to see the package as a whole and see how things can be facilitated so that these young people can have access to it and be kept off the road; in the nights they could go in there. I know it is a cost, but ask yourself: Which is the greater cost? Keeping them up in the maximum security prison, or putting out a bit of money now to help them? You have to weigh the alternatives.

If they have to ask people to pay one cent more to help, that is it, but we need to do things so that those young people would be able to get inside of there.

11.30 a.m.

Then we have the relief centres which we had built. The Minister did not make mention. We have three relief centres. Those relief centres were built so that if there is a national emergency or a daily emergency, there is some place where one can go to get a hot meal free of charge, if it happens. There are people in our community who are in need of that. We built three: one in Laventille, one in Spree Simon and one in Carenage. We expected those to be spread around the country and, therefore, when there is a crisis, they could go to the centres and get a meal. The project was stopped at those three places, and we are talking about poverty, helping people and the dignity of people. People could walk into the centres. Do you know what the centres were also doing? They had another module within them.

Sen. Cuffy Dowlat: More dependency.

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: If you do not understand, keep quiet. That module tells that they would train them, give them a skill. I have had pepper sauce, peanuts, and so forth from some of those same centres—I bought them in the grocery—because those are what the people produced. After time, those people do not come back again because we put them on their own. That is the kind of project we are looking for, so that all of these micro this, that and the other, I am saying, that is what is there. That is what we did. PNM did it! It was there, if you do not understand. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Cuffy Dowlat: Dependency syndrome!

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: That is not a dependency syndrome! I am glad that she said so.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: Thank you, Mr. President and hon. Members. I am glad she said a dependency syndrome. All over this world, there are attempts by governments to give something to those people who cannot afford. That is not a dependency syndrome. The United States had it, and then they eventually said that the people must go and work and they would pay them. So, they put them into jobs all over the place for them to do something.

We are saying come in there, we will train them, put them on their feet and they would go out. Do not tell me about dependency syndrome. They will have half of them starving out there stealing from people and the Senator is talking about dependency syndrome. She has to know how to get them out of it. If they do not have it, we will give it to them, and then we could say that we have done something for them and they could go on their own. Help! That is not what we have done, and we need to look at it.

Let me make some brief remarks as I go to the culture area. I hope that nobody thinks I am being personal, but I want to ask a question at this place in time. Is the Ministry of Culture relevant again to Trinidad and Tobago? Do we need a Ministry of Culture at all and, by extension, a Minister? I am not saying so because I want to look at anybody in particular. I am saying so because what I see happening tells me that something is not too right.

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All I am seeing happening now are some big, mega cultural projects. None of those projects have that input from the Ministry of Culture in the form of the cultural officers. World Beat, the Carnival Conference and they will have something in the new millennium. They will have all kinds of things happening. I am not saying anything is wrong with the mega projects. I am wondering what the culture Ministry is doing now, and even on those boards, even in the design of them, the culture Ministry is not there.

They have picked people from the Trinidad and Tobago community to work on those projects. I have nothing against that if they want to do so, but I still feel that something must be happening inside of the Ministry itself, otherwise, we do not need one. What is worse is that there is a National Cultural Council coming on board. I think it went to Cabinet already. All of the people on it will probably be from the community, a nice budget because they need a whole lot of things—board members at \$6,000 a month—but no cultural officers on that.

I am asking myself, what are the cultural officers to do? Where are they positioned? Do we need them? I am saying that yes, we need a Ministry of Culture and a Minister. It is important, because as we will see later on, what is happening is that we are losing it. The process must go on. We have to nurture that culture, and it comes from the Ministry of Culture, but right now, the officers are being sidelined and things are happening out there, and when this comes on board, it is going to be worse.

Yes, the Minister gets up front on special occasions, but most of the things are happening by others other than the people in the Ministry. They are no longer important or relevant to the development of the culture, and that is what worries me quite a lot. That role must still be played. There is an important part for it, and all who want to come in and help can do so.

Emancipation has gone out of their area—most of the national days and festivals. What the Ministry is now doing is allocating funds to the different organizations for carrying through their activities. That is what the Ministry has now become. I feel that when this National Cultural Council comes on board, the Ministry will be the administrative arm in there. That is what I am seeing. I am sounding a warning, because sometimes when one says it, people will stand up and say, “We cannot really do that. How do we merge this thing? How do we do that? What role do we give to the Ministry of Culture?” I think that they have a role.

Yes, they say they have a Cultural Immersion Programme. They had just a few schools done for a short period of time. That is not going on now, but I think

it is on the programme to go on where they will go into the school and spend a few days on immersing the culture. Still, I am not getting that definite focus where they are working with the schools and with the community out there.

Since Best Village is now removed from them, things are much worse. I am saying it with no bitterness. I hope I am not offending anybody. I do not think it is anybody's personal fault. It is how the whole thing is disorganized, where the Government focus is being put. It is about how one positions things and where one is focussing.

I would really like to know what is going to happen to that Ministry of Culture. What is going to happen to those who call themselves cultural officers? Are they going to have to wait and see if they could make a little opening for themselves while we take their roles away from them? Here they are to nurture the culture. I have a fair understanding of what is going on there at the moment, and I only ask the powers that be to see if they could put a little more into that Ministry and see if they could devote a little more attention, because they are going to sideline the people. They are not only frustrated, we are talking about human development.

We have cultural officers, people who have technical skills, and they have a role to play. I am not saying anything against the mega projects. In fact, when we work with them at this level, they will be ready to take part in all of these mega projects, but at the time, we are not getting anybody to feed into it. We are going to lose some of our cultural traits because we have them and we are not passing them on, and the people in there are not being used in the way they should be used.

Remember, for carnival, we have all the special interest groups doing their thing. The Ministry of Culture is not a part of it. There is a cultural policy which has now come on stream. There was one before. I think the Caricom had done something. That has been sidelined and a new cultural policy has come on stream by a group outside of the Ministry, and that has been accepted. I just ask that we pay some attention to that kind of thing.

Mr. President, my time is going and, therefore, I just need to hope and pray. I went to Grenada last week and I heard that CARIFESTA is to be held next year in St. Kitts. I saw in the budget that we are getting prepared for it, and I hope that at least the Ministry of Culture will be able to handle that and work with the artistes. I hope that they will leave that at least with the Ministry, and some other group will not take it up and say they are doing it.

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Where is the centre for the performing arts? I saw \$100,000 allocated last year; \$500,000 allocated this year. We already had designs left there for it. If they are making new designs, it takes them four years to do them. They did not want to build on what was left there. If they are doing the designs, do not fool the books. One year, \$100,000, the next year, \$500,000.

Let me just look at two general things. I cannot help it, after I looked at the television the other night—I am throwing this for Sen. Cuffy Dowlat—and I saw them demolishing the houses. We had it three times and I will say it “again”! The woman came out and said, “I was in my bed sleeping”. Do you know why I am saying it? When that came up in this Parliament before, she said that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. She is one who got up and said that the PNM were heartless people because they went and demolished houses. There was no way I would have allowed that to happen.

Listen, I do not want to know whether she is right or wrong. All I am saying is that the same things she stayed there and criticized are the same things happening today. [*Desk thumping*] I am saying nothing more than if one lives in glass houses, one does not throw stones. We are talking about poverty. The hon. Minister said that he was looking at the people and levelling the playing field. If he sells all of those units that we have built to those middle class people—and I must apologize to the national community that I was a part of the government that did not distribute those houses—those same people he is throwing out of those houses will never be able to get homes. [*Desk thumping*]

Those units were built for disadvantaged people. We have a responsibility to subsidize rent. Do not tell me that they are not renting again. It is only for those who could afford. If they do that, they would always have the poor people never being able to allow themselves to grow. They will give them land and they will build ajoupas. [*Desk thumping*]

The PNM built those houses for disadvantaged people, and I say that we should give them to the people. If they do not do that, forever they will have this problem. I do not care what they say. They met it and now they are selling it to a certain class of people because they find it is too good for the other people. We are talking about people’s self-esteem. It was built for them. Give it to them! All of those houses are just standing up around this country, people are saying that they have nowhere to live and nowhere to go, and in four years, they would not give them the houses. They are not levelling the playing field, and I will appeal to them that they should do it.

The last thing I want to look at—I could not help but sit here today and hear that hon. Minister get up and talk about performance, performance, performance. I am driving on that highway. I thought that in the reshuffle, something else was going to happen. *[Laughter]* I am saying that if I was the Minister, I would ask to be reshuffled. *[Desk thumping]*

There is no way that any Minister could come out and justify why, for nearly two years, my life was at risk, and then he comes at the end and tries to justify it. That highway provided comic relief for us for almost two years. The first thing we did every day when we reached there was laugh. We had to laugh and then we got vexed! We laughed because we saw things going up in the air and we did not know what they were. We laughed when they put plastic and covered it with sand. Then we saw that they put some sort of basket material. They moved all the plastic and put baskets and we laughed. We saw places where it looked like if it was a little hill they were trying to build, and so every day was a new laughter. They opened a part, when one turned to the side, it was like one was falling off the hill.

It was comic relief! Non-technical people were laughing at this Government and they allowed that Minister to carry us for almost two years through that. When he could not take it any more, after all the money was finished and his own thing had been satisfied, he made a big public announcement that he was firing the contractors. They should have done that quietly in the night! Worst of all, they said they were going to seize the equipment—three little old cranes. They are still there. I saw them there. *[Laughter]*

After that he said, and other people in the backbench said, we are accustomed to building roads. He took the advice and he said that the Ministry of Works and Transport would continue to build this road. Who said so? Well, we had something else coming. Like it was the URP they used there. I would see some people working there for two weeks and then another set would come.

We used to check it every day. It was like the URP and we knew nothing else was going to happen. Well, he could take it no more, feared the reshuffle, time was running out and people would talk, so he quickly came with a big apology and now we are hearing that he will give the contract to somebody else. I want to tell him that nothing will happen next year, because they are so scared of what he will do in the election year, they will not allow him to touch the highway. *[Laughter]*

I think the Minister owed more than an apology to us. *[Desk thumping]* I have to travel on that road, and we all know how we put importance on roads. In

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the middle of Debe there is one of the best roads we could see connecting La Romain to the Debe market. One of the best roads in San Fernando going through the canefield. Go and see it! Beautiful road!

We all pay attention to roads. Roads help them. People see the pitch and they feel that they are doing a lot. It is the same thing that is going to come back and hit them there. That highway they fooled us on, they knew they could not build it. What I want to tell them is that they cannot implement anything. Even though they will get all the plans there, they cannot implement. You know what is worse? Even when they see a project starting, they are so arrogant that they stop it and then want to start again. Look at the library! The thing was going good and you stopped it.

I want to tell them all that as far as I am concerned, no expediter, no implementer, could solve their problems, because they have basic problems where they have a very different focus. *[Desk thumping]* We could go from now till whenever it is. Their business is keeping the family happy. Their business is keeping certain people in Trinidad and Tobago happy. They have a straight focus for certain people. Outside of that, they do not care. One could be very successful in the corporate world and I congratulate that person, but with this Government, one could take the camel to the water but one cannot make it drink. That is what they are going to find. I wish them luck.

Thank you, Mr. President. *[Desk thumping]*

11.45 a.m.

Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. President, I would like to begin by adding my congratulations to those of other people. As I was coming here this morning in the car I heard on the news that both Sen. Tota-Maharaj and Sen. Gillette had been sworn in yesterday as Ministers. So I would like to welcome Sen. Gillette formally to the Senate. I suppose he realizes that he is getting into a very difficult position there, the expectations are going to be very high, a lot more than just state-of-the-art, up-to-date computers in every classroom; there is also going to be Internet access; the Permanent Secretary is actually listening to the Ombudsman; and these bottlenecking projects, I wish Sen. Gillette the best of luck. As for Sen. Tota-Maharaj, I look forward to seeing her continue to grow from strength to strength, which I am sure she will.

Insofar as the budget is concerned, like Sen. Daly and the Minister of Finance, I do not see any reason why a budget has to be tinkered with each year just for the sake of pleasing the crowd. I am one of the people who believe that if something

is not broken you do not have to fix it. I think that Trinidad and Tobago, in fact, is one of the few developing countries that has managed to deal with structural adjustment, if not well, at least, relatively well. I think that the formula that we have been using has been working and I think it is a reflection of the maturity of the country. We have managed to go through three successive administrations without messing up a formula which is working and, despite the fact that some of these measures were very unpopular and very painful, I think it may have even contributed to the demise of some of the administrations that followed them; nonetheless, they were adhered to. I think it is something we should be proud of.

It is fashionable in Trinidad and Tobago, every time a budget comes out, for everybody to immediately say something negative about it. I think that if you are a commentator with a job and you dare to say anything favourable as it comes out, you are immediately going to lose the job. If you really want to have some fun and you have got nothing else to do, go back over the last 10 years of comments that have been made on the budget. It really is rather amusing because more or less the same phrases are used year after year; they do not vary very much.

If you are a neophyte to Parliament, whether you are a practitioner or if you are in the press—and I realize that from time to time we have had new people come in trying to cover Parliament—there is really a very easy way to deal with the budget, just go back and read over the last 10 years and the comments that the people have made, memorize a few sentences here and there.

If you are doing common entrance, you go back and look at the previous test papers then, as soon as the Minister says, thank you Mr. Speaker and sits, you can be an instant expert. Lloyd Best, for example, is a very good one to quote, if you can understand Lloyd Best. *[Laughter]* You quickly gather that he is quite sure that everybody else completely missed the point, and he is probably right, because I certainly could never figure out exactly what it is that he wants to replace the policies that we have got with and why.

Then you can also quote, less impressively, various of our economic organizations who usually try to find something that has been left out, and other people who do not seem to know what to say usually go to arithmetic because everybody likes to find an error in a copybook.

I think that there is a kind of fashionable intellectual nihilism with which the country as a whole greets each new budget as it comes out. It is kind of a party line that no intellectual or pseudointellectual dares say anything positive about a budget as it comes out. Well, I am, obviously not in the class of these intellectuals.

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I have just spent a week in Latin America talking to people from countries close to ours about macro economic policies in their countries and the results that they have had. These are people whose populations have become so disenchanting with the macroeconomic policies that are prevalent in their countries that they have populations that have ended up with a majority of children who cannot even read. Sen. Yuille-Williams is complaining of the educational system, and I will have something to say about that as well. But at least the majority of children in Trinidad and Tobago can read.

We talk about corruption, and we are right, of course, to talk about corruption, but when you look at our neighbours where people's perception of corruption is so vast that it has resulted in civil war, either declared or undeclared, and very often in brutal military takeovers; this is very, very close to us. You look at the thousands of street children who are being shot down like vermin because they bring disease and they thief. Also, to actually have a woman who is the head of an organization called the Black Renaissance Association—or words to that effect, I cannot translate very well from the Spanish—who said that she went around talking to other women in the country from which she comes, because she had discovered that there had been a policy to sterilize black women and to stop them from having children. The response of the women she spoke to was, “they should have sterilized more of us to stop all the thieving by these children in the streets that bring disease”.

When I realize how far we are from countries that are close to us, when I look around and see what we have in Trinidad and Tobago, I try to avoid the sort of fashionable knee-jerk responses which are totally negative about everything that we have done. Because I think Trinidad and Tobago is a wonderful country. I think that it has done extremely well. I think that we have to learn to appreciate the efforts that have been made on the part of both the public and private sectors, and the sacrifices that ordinary people—people like us, people in the streets—have made to keep this country stable and in a state of relative economic equilibrium during the structural development process. For that, I would like to compliment the Minister of Finance and his three predecessors and also the people of Trinidad and Tobago for their astonishing resilience and patience in what we have had to go through.

Having said that, of course, is not to imply that I am either satisfied with the *status quo* or that I agree with everything that is in the budget, because I am not and I do not. The budget debate, as far as I am concerned, is the time when we take the time to look at national policies, our social policies, and our economic

policies and, looking at the arithmetic as far as I am concerned is merely something we do in order to see whether or not it supports the policies.

There are two specific areas I would like to look at because I think that my colleagues have covered other areas so well that I have no desire to go over what they have said. So with your permission, Mr. President, what I would like to talk about are two things: number one is good governance and macroeconomic policies that support it or do not support it and, secondly, democracy, and what we are doing to democracy in Trinidad and Tobago and, once again, the macroeconomic policies that are underlining what we are doing or we are not doing.

While I feel that our macroeconomic policies are largely on the right track, I am not always convinced that the people who do the arithmetic are really on the same wavelength as the policy makers. The results of this in terms of governance are felt very strongly by the people who often have no voice publicly. Let me give you an example. I am sure that it is the policy of this Government, certainly the policy of the Minister of Finance, to ensure that we have a Parliament here that works efficiently, effectively and that serves the needs of the entire nation. But what do you do when that policy which is enunciated by the Minister, and by the Government, is not translated into action? What is the result in terms of people's perception of governance?

Let me give an example. You want to have a Parliament that works efficiently and effectively, but working conditions in this building are conditions that would never meet even the outdated standards in the Occupational Safety and Health Bill, which has been floating around for the last 20 years. The parliamentary workers, the people who are employed by this Parliament, have to work in conditions that are incredible. They have to sit, sometimes, with umbrellas over their heads at their desks. There are times when Members of Parliament walking from office to office, if it is raining, have to walk with umbrellas, too. I am sure, Mr. President, that this is something that you have had to experience.

Now, why? What happens to the money that gets budgeted for repairs? Does good governance not mean that policy gets translated into action? Or does it mean that policy gets sidetracked by territorial arguments as to who is supposed to move first and who is supposed to move second?

Last year, to give you another example, when Parliament staff—and I hope that the Parliament staff would forgive me for mentioning this because they certainly did not give me permission to do so—asked for the same allocation for paper and stationery that they had spent the year before, this was what they had

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used up the year before, they were only allocated 70 per cent of what they had actually spent the year before.

As a result, before the end of the year they ran into shortages of stationery for things like *Hansard* documents, and we no longer had those little pads that we used to have to be able to make notes on because they ran out of those. Come to think of it, we still do not have those little pads that we used to be given to make notes on, because they just do not have money for those anymore.

Now, this may not be a big thing, nobody complains, we bring our own stationery or we borrow from each other, we get along, as Trinis usually do. But, it is typical of translating policy into actions, these may be small things, but how can you expect the staff of the Parliament to be able to cope when their budget for stationery is cut? They do not even have enough stationery when you call up and say, “Could I have a copy of a *Hansard* document because I need it for a debate”? They have to scramble around to find paper. I mean, this is governance. How effective can a Parliament be without paper?

There was a Bill passed about unwaged work about three years ago, it was an Act, it went into law, which said that within two or three years—Sen. Prof. Spence would remind me—we would be counting the contributions of people who work in this country but do not get paid in money. We will count the value of the unwaged work so that we can see the contribution of those people who are in the civil society, the people who provide the social services, the NGOs and the CBOs. What is the value of the work that they give to the society?

Three years have passed and I gather that in the next census there is going to be one little question tacked onto the end, which is going to refer to this, but in a very truncated way.

12.00 noon.

So I ask: What is the connection between policy, which this Parliament comes forward with, and putting things into action? This is what good governance is, that it has to be seen to operate. We passed a law recently, setting up parliamentary committees to monitor activities in various ministries. *[Interruption]* Okay, it was not passed but it was passed in the honourable Senate—Sen. Prof. Spence tells me that it is coming back, but nonetheless we expect it to go through because, I think, it is a good, sensible piece of legislation.

Mr. President, there is nothing in the budget that provides for consequent compensation. There is no budgetary allocations for it. I do not know whether budgetary allocations can just be found, or a supplementary budget would have to

be passed—but if you are going to ask people to undertake work that is very serious and indepth—because it is a lot of very serious and indepth work—in addition to attending sittings of Parliament; in addition to the usual standing committees which the Minister read out yesterday, without compensation; then what the Minister is doing is making sure that people like Sen. Danny Montano; Sen. Martin Daly; Sen. Philip Hamel-Smith and myself are excluded; all the professionals who, if one does not work—one does not have a salary coming in, unless one is working and producing. Obviously, we are not going to be able to afford to continue in Parliament. There is no allocation for it, which means that it is another way of saying that policy is being passed but when it comes to the budget supporting it, to indicate that good governance is serious, it is just not there. This could be just another way, of course, of getting rid of—what is it Cromwell said—the troublesome pests in the Opposition that keep—
[Interruption]

Sen. Daly: Who would rid me of this turbulent priest.

Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt: Okay, “turbulent priest or troublesome pest”. I am sorry that Daniel Teelucksingh is not here. But the point is that we have got to start taking a serious look at the whole process of governance. I think that the public confidence in the process of governance in this country is at an all time low, and that is not an idle opinion. It is a fact and it is backed up by documentation in the press; in *Hansard*; in endless reports; in private sector committees and commissions. Lest I am once more accused of making statements or pointing fingers without naming names, let me just point out that this is not unique to Trinidad and Tobago, this is happening all over the Commonwealth Caribbean.

The Commonwealth Secretariat has commented on this. It is also happening in Europe and North America as has been mentioned by the International Economist, Francis Fukiyama in his paper “On Human Nature and the Reconstruction of a Social Order.” What is being pointed out by the Commonwealth Secretariat as well as by Fukiyama is that things are changing and that there is no faith in governance anymore. Some governments are changing and even falling by violence as a result of people not having faith in the institutions that run their countries.

We have seen what is happening in Venezuela—which is right next to us. Further West than Venezuela there are more serious things going on, virtually civil war in some of those countries. These protests are taking place on the part of ordinary people like us who are frustrated, because they see that good governance

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is not something that is taking place. Their taxes are not giving them what they want. Just for a moment, ask yourself a couple of silent questions, and answer them honestly and silently. First of all, as far as you are concerned in the popular perception of Trinidad and Tobago, is there corruption in Government's running of infrastructural projects or in granting of contracts, licences or permits? I am not talking about facts; I am not talking about evidence. Forget the evidence! Is there a perception of mismanagement in ministries and Government affairs? Is there a perception of teachers' incompetence and brutality in schools?

I saw Sen. Daly come in with a *Newsday* and on the cover it says, "A girl, 10, beaten badly by male teacher." Mr. President, this must be about the fourth story in the last week or two, about children being beaten in schools. Is there a perception of neglect and misuse of resources in medical facilities? Yesterday, rather *en passant*, Sen. Daly made a reference to stealing food in hospitals—not even as a point, it was just *en passant* reference. What about police? Is there a perception that police ignore abused women and are connected with drug traffickers? I am not asking if these things happen, I am just asking: Is there a perception, publicly, that these things happen? If you can answer, "yes", then can you ask a second question: "What happens in this world when people lose faith in the governance of their country? What happens? History is replete with examples and do we want this kind of thing to happen in Trinidad and Tobago? I do not think that there is anyone here who wants this to happen in Trinidad and Tobago.

Yesterday Sen. Shabazz spoke about the problem with SRPs. I have also received documentation from SRPs who have worked 8 hours a day—as the Minister pointed out—five days a week, some for 15 and 20 years, alongside regular police officers with no vacation leave; no sick leave; and when they get wounded in the course of duty—this is not speculation, I have spoken to them—there is no compensation, even if they are subsequently unable to work. In an instance recently, where somebody was killed in the line of duty, the other regular officers on duty had to pass the hat to get money for funeral expenses and to go and comfort his wife and children who do not get compensation or pension because he was not a regular police officer. The other officers in the police service notice this and make their own conclusions about whether we, as the Government, care and if somebody comes to them and says, "I am not asking you to do anything illegal but just look the other way while I am doing something", they are going to make their own conclusion.

Mr. President, it reminds me of—do you remember Shylock in the Merchant of Venice, with his despairing cry about:

“Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means,.If you prick us, do we not bleed?...if you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?”

Mr. President, do you remember Shylock in the Merchant of Venice? Are the SRPs the Jews in the police service? What was the hon. Minister’s answer to Sen. Shabazz when he asked about what was going to happen? Was it, “ We are going to pay these pensions because they deserve it? They have worked side by side for their entire lives with the other police”? *[Interruption]* No. As I recall, it was “Well, it is going to be regularized. We are going to put them back where they belong, on part-time work.” Does not an SRP have senses, affections and passions? If you prick him, does he not bleed? If you poison him, does he not die? And if you wrong him is he not going to seek revenge?

12.10 p.m.

What are we trying to do to people? I wish Sen. Prof. Ramchand was here: I remember a poem when I was in school. Maybe somebody could tell me who wrote it. It started off like this:

Be still my soul, be still
 The arms you bear are brittle
 Earth and high heaven are fixed of old
 And founded strong
 Be still my soul be still
 If now you grieve a little
 Remember days ere you were born, for they were long.

I forget how the rest of it goes, but I remember the last line. It was, “Let us endure an hour and see injustice done.”

Yesterday when the crosstalk was going on about the SRPs I thought of that. I should have looked it up last night. I thought of that, because the answer was: What have you done in the last 34 years? And I thought, how long is that hour that we have to endure and see injustice done? Who cares if the PNM did not do anything for 34 years? That does not excuse anything being done now.

Hon. Senator: That’s right.

Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt: You do not have to belong to a political party to care about what happens to a country. Sometimes I feel that the political parties just do not understand that ordinary people can be committed to social development without necessarily being aligned to any political party; that we can care desperately within or without the civic society and NGOs and CBOs, and want to push for reform in social and economic structures in political systems and make sure that there is good governance and ethics in the way things are carried out.

Mr. President what about the teachers? Let us look at some more of the Shylock association. What about teachers, who, according to what I see in the press are being paid about on par with unskilled cleaners in TSTT? Those are teachers into whose hands we very casually toss the future of the country. Our education system is a disaster. All I can say is, thank God for the Cabinet reshuffle that has put Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar into that ministry. When you look at the conditions under which our teachers work, and again, I think, do we think they have not got eyes, that if we prick them they do not bleed? Do we think that teachers do not know what is happening to them? And I am not talking about infrastructure and building labs and that kind of thing. I am talking about the training of teachers, the payment of teachers, and the conditions under which they work.

How can we attract people of the calibre of Sen. Prof. John Spence, Sen. Dr. Eric St. Cyr and Sen. Prof. Kenny, and all the others who have contributed their lives to education? We need them on primary levels, we need them on secondary levels. We need people who will be looked at with respect by students and their parents alike, who did not go into education thinking that they were going to teach subjects; they went in teaching individual students, individual children in whom they saw potential; people who understand classroom management and do not think that discipline is something which is applied with a fan belt. Discipline has to be something that you develop in children from within, so that external discipline is not necessary.

Where are we going to attract people of this calibre into the teaching profession when we treat them the way we do? The only thing that I can think of in mitigation is that we have Servol—which I will come to a little bit later in another context—which has schools in 158 centres in Trinidad and Tobago in conjunction with the Ministry of Education. Servol has had a tremendous record in results with children who have come from the most difficult of backgrounds, who themselves were abused as children and yet in not one of these Servol schools do they use physical or psychological punishment in order to discipline or correct children. You will never, ever find in a Servol school a male teacher

beating a 10-year-old girl so badly that she urinates on herself because she could not answer all the questions when called to the blackboard.

Mr. President, what have our macroeconomic policies done to our education system? Why are we in the situation we are in? Look at the health sector. In the same press ads that I read, I realize that nurses get paid less than unskilled cleaners in TSTT, and they are given less resources to work with. Nurses, too, have eyes; nurses, too, bleed when you cut them; nurses, too, have passions, ideas, needs and wants and they, too, react to injustice. So what do they do? Those who can, flee to Europe, United States of America, the Middle East and they go for eight years, nine years. I talked to a couple of them recently. They come back with enough money so they can buy townhouses in Westmoorings and have enough money to set themselves up in business.

A nurse in Trinidad and Tobago earns one twentieth of what her counterpart does in Germany. The training is no different, skills are no different, so what is different? It is because there is a higher dividend earned in countries like that on social capital that is accumulated by earlier generations, and it affords nurses this level of respect from the society, which takes us back to the macroeconomic policy and good governance again.

Mr. President, capital is no longer regarded by economists—and I hope Sen. Dr. St. Cyr will correct me if I go wrong here—as just being “financial” capital. I think that the Minister of Finance and his predecessors have managed wisely and brilliantly, I really do think that they have. But economists today, as I understand it, recognize that finance is just one form of capital which was the focus of the economics of the 1970s which to some extent seems to me to be the focus still accepted by Government practitioners. Maybe they were trained in the 1970s; maybe that is what they know. But there is also “productive capital” which is like machinery and equipment. I was struck yesterday when Minister Theodore talked about police vehicles and so forth. This is “productive capital”, because it is machinery and equipment but when we do not maintain our machinery and equipment, we squander that capital.

There is “infrastructural capital” which includes things like roads, water, telecommunications and all of those things which I leave up to you to decide whether or not we are managing properly and investing properly. And then there is “human capital” or “skills capital” which is often called the sum total of all the skills and learning and training that we have in the country.

Finally, there is “social capital” which is what I have been talking about, which includes parliamentary democracy and people’s trust that there is a

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parliamentary democracy; that there is a free press; that there is respect for human rights for everybody, regardless of who they are; that there are hundreds of active NGOs and CBOs operating in the society; that there is an independent and trusted judicial system. This is what “social capital” is, and we have to invest in social capital so that the public service is respected and honoured and given the status that it should in the community and this means that people like nurses, teachers and police officers are given the status in the community so that we can look up to them and respect them. “Good governance”, therefore, means that our institutions provide us with those things we need.

Mr. President, if I have a quarrel with the budget, it is not in the way the finances have been managed, because I think the Minister of Finance is doing that, as I said, with a great deal of wisdom and pragmatism. I think it is the failure to recognize that we have to invest in social institutions such as Parliament so that the rain does not drip down on our heads. I have stood here talking, distracted by the sound of rain dripping on that pillar back there behind me. I do not want Trinidad and Tobago to end up like a lot of our Latin American neighbours. I would hate to see the lack of trust, the complete disillusion with governance, which happens in those countries, happen in Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad is better than that. It is worth more than that, and we have to give Trinidad and Tobago what it is worth. We have to pay our police officers, our teachers and our nurses so those services will attract women and men of the calibre that we need, of unquestioned integrity, honesty and ability, so that good governance will not just be something that is given, but it will also be perceived to be given.

I am not even sure that all the corruption that everybody says exists, does exist, but I do not know. It is just that perception is the existence of a feeling which is a fact, even if there is no basis in fact for the feeling. We have to take into account perception because that perception is what people act on.

In the last couple of minutes that I have, Mr. President, let me just turn to democracy and what we have made of it, because democracy, as far as I am concerned, means giving and respecting equal rights for all citizens regardless of who they are, and we live in a country where a lot of our educational system has been expensively privatized so that well-off people, and some not so well-off, can scrimp and save to pay \$400.00 per month—or \$4,000 depending on which school you go to—to make sure that their children go to schools where they are going to learn, where teachers are actually going to be present—which is another big story—where they are not going to be beaten with fan belts, or beaten on their heads with the narrow side of a ruler. We live in a country where a lot of our

security services have been privatized and there are well-off people in this country who can go to bed at night without worrying that they are going to have their doors broken down, and their women be raped in their beds or grabbed out of their beds and raped. But poor women in this country cannot afford that.

If we are going to have health services, we should make sure that people can get operations and needed drugs before their kidneys give out because now they do not have dialysis machines and technicians for the dialysis machines. In other words, if we are going to have a democracy that is really a democracy, the kind we talk about wanting, we have to be able to provide all our citizens equally with things like education, health, protection according to the law, and access to employment because this is what makes people able to survive.

I want to slide into my last few minutes by asking a very serious question which is: Is protection under the law given equally to people regardless of gender? I do not think so. When I listened to the Minister yesterday he talked about violence and how it takes place, and in 1998 of 69 murders reported, 23 were as a result of the domestic violence situations. Unless my mathematics are wrong, that is about 33 1/3 per cent. For this year, to date, out of 68 murders reported, 15 per cent are as a result of domestic violence. That average is about what, 24 per cent over two years of the murders? Or as a result of domestic violence, almost a quarter? I even found myself gratified that the Minister started off by saying that domestic violence is a serious crime, because up until a couple years ago, nobody in this country, except for the victims, has regarded domestic violence as a serious crime.

Then I got angry with myself, because I was being grateful for something that should have been recognized a long time ago, and I got angry because the inequality still exists. The Minister recognizes that domestic violence is a serious crime, but I am not sure that the station staff at the Rio Claro police station recognized it, various magistrates do not recognize it, and in neighbourhoods all over Trinidad and Tobago, people sit and listen to women bawl at nights in pain and children moan because they are being molested, and they obviously do not recognize that domestic violence is a crime.

12.25 p.m.

Mr. President, if you are looking for equality of protection under the law, how often do you think that a man in this country gets assaulted repeatedly by another man, his life is threatened, and he is told "I am going to kill you"? In the unlikely event that he does not retaliate, he takes the law into his own hands and retaliates. How often does a man in that position report the matter to a police station and be

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told, “Go on, get out, you are a nuisance just leave us alone” We know this happens to women. So what we do is come up with a semantic subterfuge. [*Desk thumping*] which is the only way I can describe it that says, “we are going to have safe houses next to police stations.” How many? Where? How long is a woman and her children allowed to stay in a safe house? One hour? One night? One week? What good is that going to do when they have to leave after a week and go back and get killed?

Minister Phillips has done her best and tried in her own Ministry but she was never given the resources with which to work. The Minister has to resort to the same kind of semantic subterfuges. The Minister spoke about the 22 drop-in centres that were set up—but she cannot say it because she is so loyal—they were only opened for eight hours a week, and they are now closed because of lack of funds.

Mr. President, we are talking about funding. How many women in this country got any of the \$25 million that was promised for victims of domestic violence last year? What happens to them? They become statistics because of lack of affordable housing, somewhere to go or alternative residence. What about affordable housing for women who are subject to domestic violence, if we really believe domestic violence is a serious crime? If I count by myself, the number of women who I have spoken to over the last year about affordable housing, and who have gone and applied again, again and again for public housing and were told there is none available, counting from my own experience, is dozens, and I am not even anywhere near the people who have gone to apply.

Mr. President, I know that I am typecast—I can hear people’s minds going click, click, click—as somebody who is always carrying on about women and children’s rights. Let me remind this honourable Senate, that half of humanity in this country are women. [*Desk thumping*] And, furthermore, they are the mothers of the other half. [*Desk thumping*] As far as I am concerned, any country that refuses to treat women and minorities of any kind, whether the minority is because of race, religion, gender, sexual preference, physical handicap or whatever God or your institutional upbringing made you, refuses to treat people equally is not a democracy. I think that everybody should have protection equally under the law, and they do not now. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, the macro economic policies of this country are not yet investing sufficiently in the forms of capital, other than financial capital, to ensure that we will get a return on our national investment that will ensure that good governance exists and that democracy ensures that all citizens are going to be treated equally.

If I can just wind towards the end, as for the left hand knowing what the right hand is doing for arithmetic and numbers, and the policies that undermine our budgets are concerned, if there is one organization that I know contributes in this country to social democracy, it is Servol. Servol works with the Ministry of Education, and it does the work and the Ministry gets credit for it. Servol does not mind that, and even the Minister acknowledges this in his speech. The Minister said that he was giving greater resources to Servol this year, and so he should, because the Ministry of Education has asked Servol to expand its programmes by 5 per cent. Since the National Insurance rates went up, Servol needs to have that increase in order to keep up with its existing programmes, without even being able to increase the 5 per cent.

When I looked at the figures in the budget—and the ministry's subvention to Servol largely goes towards paying teachers—I want to make this point clear that these are the teachers who do not beat; these are the teachers who get wonderful results with the damaged children, who turn youngsters who are hostile, angry and aggressive carrying knives from broken homes into responsible young men and women—this year, instead of increasing Servol's budget, it was decreased. It was cut by \$276,000.

Mr. President, do teachers not have eyes? Do they not bleed at the cut? Do you think that Servol teachers do not see and understand, and get the message about the importance of education in this country? I know the Minister would not have done this. I know that the Minister is not going to deliberately say one thing in a policy statement, then turn around and do the opposite. The Minister is not blind and stupid and he knows somebody like me is going to make a big fuss about it. But somebody put those figures in there. I do not expect the Minister to go over every single budget item in all these documents. That is not his job, and if he did it he would not be doing his job. I am sure that he has no idea how much money is budgeted for paper in Parliament this year. I would not even ask him. Or, how much money is budgeted for Servol's teachers. It is not his job. His job is to direct policy and I think his policies are good, sound and wise, but they are not being translated by this budget into action and, by the support systems that should exist into action.

Mr. President, we spoke about the Domestic Violence Act that went through. I am very grateful that it went through but where are the allocations for the counsellors that we need in order to support the provisions of the Act? They are not there. We talked about trying to help the police service and I know the Minister.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. D. Mahabir-Wayatt: Mr. President, thank you, this will not take more than about two minutes. I listened to what Minister Theodore said yesterday about the police, and I do have a special soft spot for the police because through the new community policing programme they are turning around governance in one area in this country from being reactive to proactive. They are going into the communities and trying to prevent crimes. They are doing the work to prevent domestic violence that the rest of us have been trying so hard to do.

So if I fight for them, over and over it is because I have some idea of the pressure they are under and the pressure they are under when somebody dies and they have to pass the hat, in order to get funds to bury him. They have to go and visit the widow and orphans and have no comfort to give them because there is no money coming for them, who have worked and given their lives for this country.

The Minister spoke about a nucleus or what is referred to as the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and he is talking about one poor psychologist for 4,000 men and women under stress. This is the EAP, the nucleus with two welfare officers? All I can say is, "Hath not a Jew eyes?"

Mr. President, this is why, when we are talking about good governance, it is important to make sure that everybody understands the same thing by "good governance". When we talk about "democracy" we have to be talking about the same thing. We have to be talking about equality for all people under the law. When we have a chance to discuss the budget as we do, as a policy document, we have to make sure that policy does get discussed and the figures in the budget do support and back up the policies that have been enunciated, so that people in this country can have faith and trust in the process of governance, and in the people whoever they are who sit in this Parliament and run the institutions of the Government.

Mr. President, thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: We will break for lunch at this stage and resume at 1.45 p.m.

12.36 p.m.: *Sitting suspended*

1.44 p.m.: *Senate resumed.*

The Minister of Culture & Gender Affairs (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Daphne Phillips): Mr. President, thank you for this opportunity to address this Senate and the nation on some of the things we have been doing in the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs. Before I do that, I should like to add my congratulations to those of others in acknowledging the two new Ministers with us, Minister Vimala Tota-Maharaj and Minister Lindsay Gillette who have joined us in this very important task that we have to perform for our nation, Trinidad and Tobago. I want to encourage them to go along in this very important and noble task which they have agreed to accept.

Mr. President, I should like to congratulate as well the Minister of Finance for the emphasis in his budget on social aspects of development. The budget is “A Blueprint for Human Development and Sustainable Growth”. Some of the comments made by some of the previous speakers on the budget were that it is just a repeat of what had gone before. If social development, human development and sustainable growth have been identified in the previous budgets of the Minister of Finance and of this Government, I wish to congratulate him even more. The Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs is concerned, and has always been, with human development in the areas of culture. Culture here means not only art forms but our values, our traditions, our heritage as well as, of course, gender issues related to men and women and all who represent, of course, all the people in our country.

I should like to make a few comments on some of the contributions that have gone in terms of social development and human development. My colleague, Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams, this morning outlined her perspective of what has been happening, in fact, what perhaps has not been happening. I just want to make a few things clear, particularly in relation to those aspects of responsibility which either are now or were once under the control of the Ministry. This Government has been accused of following the PNM in projects and of not following the PNM, so I am not too sure where—and indeed in Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams’ presentation she accused us of both. However, I want to make a few things straight in terms of the facts in relation, for example, to community centres which, of course, were once under the domain of the Ministry.

Mr. President, the issue of access to community centres—and we know very well that community centres are necessary and important—must be examined. They are the focus of so much activity which will take place in the community which will touch the lives of people. In the community development area, certainly when it was under my charge in 1996, 1997 and part of 1998, we found a situation in the same village councils Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams identified, as

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not being able to access at this point in time—and I do know that that is correct—in which only a few people would have access to these community centres. Those people would hold the keys and other people were not able to access it to do the important work that was necessary.

We then created what we called community centre managers which we got from the community. We installed something like 60 of them just to keep the community centres open so that they would be accessible to the women's groups, the cultural groups and other such organizations that needed to use the community centres. Mr. President, we cannot fool ourselves. We inherited a situation in which the community centre system was very corrupt and politicized and persons were not able to have access in order to do the work that had to be done. We had community managers put in. We created boards so that people could access those centres—everybody, whatever social or cultural organization or group. This is where we want to go. We want really to enlarge the work of the communities, enlarge access and this is why we are opening out the communities to the work that has to be done in relation to social development.

Mr. President, the Best Village Programme which was again under my Ministry—and I am only saying this to comment on some of the misleading statements that were made this morning—we know has produced some excellence. Some of the groups, like the Laventille Folk Performers and others, have been doing very well. We also found that programme to be narrow and available to so few people. We found that the programme has great potential but that it must be spread out into the wider community so that villages across this nation would have access.

Again, we have to address the whole matter of widening and broadening the access and the participation of people at the community level. This is why we expanded the community centre programme. It brought in managers at the community level and broadened the Best Village Programme. All of these are good but they must be accessed by everyone and this is why we tried to open it. However, what we found, Mr. President, was that in opening these things there were complaints that—and I think these complaints were instituted by those with some degree of influence—we were trying to take away, we were trying to stop, we were trying to deny people access. This is certainly not what we did.

We noted that other institutions, the relief centres—there were three of them—a food kitchen, soup kitchens—what we said was that we do not want only to give people a fish, we want them to learn how to fish. What we needed was a mechanism through which people will learn. To this end the Community

Development Fund was created, the SHARE project which we met was expanded, the self-help project was expanded to include a category now where individuals can access help if they are in crisis or some initial problematic situation where they need assistance. In addition to that, we have enlarged training projects for people in the community, through this Community Development Fund, which is, so far, underutilized and we have made available access to small business and other micro enterprises for people.

So that instead of carrying on the dependency syndrome, Mr. President, we have tried to train the people, even initially some of the women through the URP project but also through various training and development projects. We have found that in 1998 the World Development Report showed that Trinidad and Tobago, and this report is produced every year, was the best of the developing countries in terms of the poverty index and in terms of our dealing with poverty. It shows, therefore, that what we have done in not carrying on the dependency syndrome has brought benefit to the people; not carrying on just the little clique of people, highly politicized, who had access to resources in the community through the Community Development Division. We have tried to open it up and to involve training and development for our people.

Again, this morning Sen. Yuille-Williams pointed out that she was concerned with what was happening in culture and that we are moving into mega projects, perhaps, in the country, to which she had no objection, but she was concerned about what is happening in the Division of Culture. Well, let me tell you what is happening. When we entered the Division of Culture what we met was, and I am not exaggerating, a Division that was responding almost exclusively to what we call the National Days and Festivals. I have spoken to the Division about this. I am tired of talking about this.

The National Days and Festivals was created some time before where we acknowledged our national heritage and identity; no problem. The Division was doing almost exclusively that, running after groups to give cheques and to have them carry out festival activities relating to these national days. We found also a highly politicized—which I have said already and which is very well known—non-representative Best Village programme. We found that it did produce some good results but it was not wide enough. It was not involving the communities. It was not involving the villages. It did not allow us to take advantage of our whole culture, our whole heritage at the folk level. We found that there was no policy to guide the actions of the officers and of the Division in terms of development of our culture and our artforms.

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We also found that there was one project, a pan in schools project, but it was highly non-functional. It was non-functional because of its structure, that is, two teachers were assigned to that project to be implemented in all the schools. That situation just could not work. However, in this world what we find taking place around us is that culture is developing, the arts are developing, cultural products are being talked about all over the world and cultural industries are developing. We are in a world of globalization of the economy but there is also globalization in the area of culture. We have to emphasize training and development of our arts and of persons in our art forms and we have to contribute to the creation of cultural institutions and the development of cultural products. That is what we thought.

We, therefore, began to place emphasis on training in the arts. In 1997 we started by offering four scholarships per year to students of Trinidad and Tobago to study music at the University of the West Indies at the degree level with emphasis on pan. We are beginning to emphasize training in the arts and training in pan music as well. We encouraged the development of training seminars and workshops in the various arts, some of them our local arts such as chutney, steelband, calypso and pitchakaaree.

In management of the arts we found that our people, when they went abroad, did not know how to take care of themselves in terms of selling their product and getting the best for themselves. We started seminars and workshops in those areas.

2.00 p.m.

There was no culture policy. In 1996, we started the development of a national culture policy and by 1997, having that draft policy, we created a national visual and performing arts policy, because these are the arts, the visual and performing arts, in which most of our activists and artistes are involved. We had consultations with all the cultural organizations in the country to develop this policy.

This policy has now been accepted by Cabinet in principle and we are creating a cultural council of Trinidad and Tobago which will consist of members in the arts, in business, in management, in the professions, so as to implement that policy, because, Mr. President, we have to develop the arts and we have to create cultural institutions out of our art forms. Many of our artistes are doing very well, but they have to compete with those outside, from all over the world and they have to show themselves and Trinidad and Tobago as professionals.

So, yes, we are creating a cultural council of Trinidad and Tobago for which names are before Cabinet; we have to decide on that. That council will take the policy; refine it; review it; implement it. Whether we go with a statutory body or not, that, too, will be determined.

Because of our emphasis on training and development in the Division of Culture, we envisaged and created, not for the first time, a National Steel Orchestra, and that was finally brought into being in 1998 and it has since been, of course, institutionalized through an Act of Parliament. Its members are full-time salaried employees of the state for whom emphasis on literacy in music is very much a goal and emphasis on continuing education is significant.

The members of the National Steel Orchestra are all literate in music at this point in time. The minimum level of achievement in literacy is Grade III, Royal School of Music, and they are continuing to strive towards that. We are emphasizing training and development in our arts. Our National Steel Orchestra represents our orchestra, an indigenous instrument, an indigenous creation of our people. What we are doing, yes, we are shifting paradigms, but to training and professional development in the arts. That is why we are doing it.

So, what we met when we got into the Ministry, as I said, was just the officers going behind the national days and festivals without a vision, without seeing what was the role of the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs. We are saying that the role is training—training in the arts; not running behind every little function that is going on, but training in the arts. That is our responsibility to our country; that is our responsibility to our nation: to develop our art forms.

We created earlier this year, as you know, a carnival institute, again, for training, for archival activities to record our history for heritage, for research and development of our carnival arts.

We have a cultural emergence in schools projects. This is where we are, again, emphasizing education in the arts and using our culture and our art forms in the school system. Yes, we started that project on a pilot basis but the results were so attractive and so good, that for this year, we are saying that we are using this project for children with difficulty—we call them children at risk—children who have, as you know, Mr. President, so much stress, perhaps abuse, perhaps violence in the home, and children who are traumatized in schools. We are using this project for those children so as to assess the impact of this full exposure to the culture and to the art forms on the children.

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Once we get the results of that experiment, that study, we will institutionalize that programme—arts in schools, our culture in schools, our indigenous art forms in the school, because we are sure that they impact on the lives of children.

Just the other day, last week, when we launched the Carnival Conference, one aspect of that conference was a two-day workshop for children and we saw the children there being taught how to do the various dances. We saw them being taught how to create in the area of the carnival arts and we saw children from all kinds of schools, all social classes, all ethnic and other groups coming there, having fun, learning to identify with our local arts, having a sense of identity and nationalism and that is the cultural emergence project. That is it in relation to the carnival arts. We are convinced that here is where we want to go in terms of the culture in our schools. As I said, this is a pilot project. We will get the results of it this year and we will attempt to institutionalize it in due course.

We piloted the acceptance, by Cabinet, of a centre for carnival arts, as well as a pan factory for Trinidad and Tobago, again, emphasizing the development of our indigenous arts. These projects, however, are awaiting finalization of suitable sites.

On one of them, the centre for carnival arts, this was created as a result of our attempt to try to implement what we inherited from the previous government of a design for a cultural centre. Everybody in Trinidad and Tobago knows and we, in the Ministry, are painfully aware of the need for a centre for the performing arts. We came into office; we found on the books plans for such a centre at the Prince's Building Grounds.

Sen. Daly: You have the savannah now.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. D. Phillips: We had an architect look at it and what we found was that the space—and I said this already and I will say it again—the Prince's Building Grounds were not adequate. The congestion there, the tennis courts, the National Museum which needs expansion, the need for parking facilities, the need to satisfy the requirements of all these artistic groups—we did not have enough space.

Sen. Mohammed: There is Queen's Park Savannah.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. D. Phillips: So, we decided maybe at the Prince's Building Grounds, and we did bring to Cabinet a centre for the carnival arts on the Prince's Building Grounds. But, what we find now, Mr. President, is that the lands there are under the control of the Port of Spain Corporation and we have difficulty in getting approval, getting the authority to go ahead.

Sen. Daly: Just pave it.

Sen. Cuffy Dowlat: Stumbling block again.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. D. Phillips: Yes, the Port of Spain Corporation, so we have to look at other sites and that is a problem.

Sen. Daly: Is the savannah one?

Sen. Dr. The Hon. D. Phillips: We will come to that.

Mr. President, what we did as well in trying to incorporate all our art forms, we created a home for the National Parang Association of Trinidad and Tobago and for the parang festival. For many years—and I understand from them, it is about 27 years—they have not had a place from which they can perform and do their administrative and other work in relation to parang, so we identified a site for them while a permanent site is being negotiated. Of course, this also facilitated the expansion of the parang art form into the school and there is now a “Parang in Schools” project which we are also proud to identify with and facilitate expansion of that project. Indeed, parang is one of our earliest art forms; it is one in which we have participation by the old, the young and all ethnic groups and it is one which we certainly support.

Lately, with the assistance of Sen. Prof. Kenny, we also identified the need for the creation of a national heritage project on Nelson Island. A committee was identified and that committee is still working on the details of the proposal, so Sen. Prof. Kenny and his committee may not see in the Draft Estimates of Expenditure funding for that, but that is under our millennium project which I shall talk about, where we will fund a national heritage project under that millennium project.

We did meet the national days and festivals. Of course, some of those days were expanded to include the holiday for the Shouter Baptists, which we also fully support.

What we have done is tried to encourage national celebration of all our national days and festivals and this is why we are expanding the funding to all groups all over the country, and that has certain problems in the sense that we need more and more money every year for these national days and festivals, but the idea is that we celebrate ourselves in all our forms, we celebrate all our art forms, all our religious and national days that have been identified through a national holiday. This is something we inherited which we are trying to expand and make very national.

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So, Mr. President, what we are doing in the Division of Culture is not emphasizing that the cultural officers go and do the culture, and perform in the arts. We are emphasizing training and development; we are emphasizing putting our culture in our schools because we know that can contribute to positive attitudes and values in our children; we are emphasizing, as far as we can and a little bit at a time, maintaining and identifying our heritage and cultural and social traditions, and protecting, as we have done with the carnival institute and, of course, the heritage project.

We have, again, also in terms of heritage, created a folk database in the Division of Culture where we have a folk archivist working on cataloguing and having our folk traditions available for our researchers as well as for the children, *et cetera*. So, that is where we are going with culture.

What is our programme for 1999/2000? A centre for the performing arts is still very much in our consciousness, still very much in our concern. We have made several attempts this year to have some facilities available for our performing arts groups, as well as for the audiences that we need to accommodate.

A centre is planned for construction within the proposed Association of Caricom States complex which is to be located on the Wrightson Road foreshore. As you would see in the statement of expenditure, only \$500,000 was identified, but that is for preliminary works—the drawings are already done; the concept is already there, but the funding for that project will not be located in the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs but within that ACS project.

2.15 p.m.

That line item in the budget for the centre for performing arts appears very small because that is not where the funding is located. It is within that ACS project which is on stream.

In 1999/2000, as I said, we are creating a cultural council for Trinidad and Tobago. The cultural council is something of a board, a group of people, a committee whose members will review and implement the national visual and performing arts policy which we created again, through a committee with a wide base representing the various interest groups, professions and areas in Trinidad and Tobago. That committee will soon be put to work. There is an allocation of \$1 million for the work of the culture council this year, and we expect, Mr. President, that out of this will come an implementation plan, a concept of the way in which that council will function, and we are looking at the possibility of creating a statutory body out of that council.

The National Steel Orchestra in 1999/2000 will, of course, continue to function. Again, the board of management for that institution is receiving the attention of Cabinet. As we know, the National Steel Orchestra Act No. 19 of 1999 is on our statutes and the orchestra would function as a statutory body with its own fund, its ability to bring in funds, to access international funding all for the benefit of the development of the National Steel Orchestra. We will insist on emphasis on excellence, training, music literacy and development of the members of that National Steel Orchestra.

The Carnival Institute in 1999/2000 will also receive its full quota of staff and equipment, and this year in the budget, we have been allocated a sum of \$1 million under recurrent and \$300,000 under capital expenditure to allow the Carnival Institute to serge into full activity. This is where we want to preserve our carnival artforms as valuable assets for our country.

A national millennium project has also been created. We worked very hard on that project and it will also be launched. Two particular aspects of it: the World Steelband Music Festival, which was initially envisaged by Pan Trinbago has been refined and included, and the National Heritage Project, will also be included in our millennium project. There are other smaller projects as well. Trinidad and Tobago will also be attending Carifesta in St. Kitts in the year 2000, and we have \$1.5 million identified for that. Certainly, that will be an area where our officers in the division of culture will put together a professional group of performers to function in that project.

As I said, plans are on stream to institutionalize the Cultural Immersion in Schools Project and we will look at the results of its impact on the children with difficulties; children at risk. In culture we also have a Cariforum project which is a regional project involving the administration of culture in the Caricom region. The four countries involved in that regional project are: Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Belize and the Dominican Republic. Each territory is responsible for one aspect of the project, Trinidad and Tobago being responsible for training in archives and museums. This is one area in which training is very necessary. Trinidad and Tobago, therefore, will train the region in archives and museums.

Also available for Trinidad and Tobago under this project are cultural exchanges, cultural administration and the creation of cultural industries. All of these are the ways in which we are going in this modern era in terms of administration of culture, development of cultural industries and training. Training, training, training! This is our goal. Training in culture and other artforms. This project is partly funded by the European Union, and this year we

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have the sum of approximately \$2 million to run it in Trinidad and Tobago. So, training is our theme as well as presenting opportunities for our artistes to excel and for our culture to influence the lives of our children and our people in Trinidad and Tobago.

In relation to the participation in the national days and festivals, we have been assigned a grant—the funding has been increased by \$1,168,900 and this will facilitate some improved funding to various organizations for specific cultural activities. We are also looking at enhancing our cultural infrastructure and, while the Centre for Performing Arts is on our minds, we are really very much concerned about it.

We are also doing renovations to the National Archives which started in the last year and will continue this year at a cost of \$4 million. The National Archives has been a source of concern, and we are very pleased that that project has started. We have already done some work there. Additional sums will be assessed when we do the mid-year review. If there are funds available, we will try to access those. The archives, of course, continues to attract both local and international researchers, and we need to have proper facilities there. We are also reorganizing the archives administratively as well as physically, and many officers from the archives will be exposed to our training in the Cariforum project for archivists and museum workers.

We are also doing some work on the refurbishment of Queen's Hall, which has been a project in the making. This year, we have \$1.9 million for architectural designs and other preparatory activity. This project, too, will be re-evaluated in the mid-year so that we can perhaps begin the work on it in the coming year. We want to enclose the Queen's Hall, which is a popular site for presentation of the arts, and we want to air-condition it and improve the acoustics and so forth.

Sen. Prof. Spence: And the chairs. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. The Hon. D. Phillips: And the chairs. There are two projects for which we have no funding in the budget. One is the Naipaul House, Prof. Ramchand. This is not because we are not considering it. It is because the committee which has already been approved by Cabinet to oversee that house has to be regularized in its legal status by the Solicitor General's Office. As soon as that is done, again, in the mid-year review we will try to access some funds for the preservation of that house. Same thing for the Naparima Bowl where we need to do some work. The concepts and the design work have to be done.

In terms of physical infrastructure, we are trying to improve these areas. The National Museum and Art Gallery may also become a statutory body very soon with the passing of a Bill which has already been laid in the Senate. That will change the status of the museum and allow it access to international funding and so forth, and we want to do some study for its renovation, development and its modernization this year. We are very concerned about the expansion and development of our National Museum. We have already seen increased interaction between the museum and the community through increased school visits, planned vacation camps and projects, exhibitions, workshops, special events, cultural programmes and symposia which have been initiated by the curator and his staff. We are very pleased with the way the museum is going, but we need to improve its physical appearance.

Mr. President, also under the control of the Ministry is our very popular international Festival of Carnival. This year, we have been able to attract from the Minister of Finance some additional funding for carnival, given the importance of the year 2000 carnival in Trinidad and Tobago. This year, the allocation for Carnival is \$28,898,000, but out of that, we have to pay some outstanding debts for 1999 of \$3,670,000 and the payment of a loan we also accessed for debts from the 1998 Carnival that has already been paid to the groups. That was \$5 million and the interest on that was \$1 million.

Out of the \$28 million, we have roughly \$9 million, or so, to pay in debts. We have \$1.2 million we are going to assign to regional carnivals to encourage carnival in the region, while payment to the carnival bodies: the National Carnival Bands Association, Pan Trinbago and TUCO, which is the calypsonian organization, is roughly \$10 million. The approximate amount to the National Carnival Commission (NCC) to facilitate Carnival is approximately \$8 million. We expect that our Carnival for the year 2000 will be improved and will represent the significance of the year 2000 for all of us and for Carnival itself.

Mr. President, we are very clear on what we are doing in culture. We are in no way marginalizing any cultural group or body. We are trying to nationalize our culture, incorporate and embrace and delight in our range of cultural artforms, but we are emphasizing training and development, professionalism and the positive aspects of the impact of our culture on our children and our people. We are trying, as well, to do what we can in terms of cultural infrastructure.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. D. Phillips: Thank you, Mr. President. I have to hurry. Concerning the area of gender affairs, certainly it is one area in which we have not inherited a programme or any kind of ideas or activities from the previous administration. We had to create from the beginning and we did start very early.

2.30 p.m.

We started by involving the wider community in issues, particularly in the issue surrounding domestic violence. We created a 'Friends of the Division', we created a male support group and finally, policy and action for prevention of domestic violence.

In 1996, a comprehensive domestic violence programme covered counselling and listening services, as well as public awareness and legal reform. The National Domestic Violence Hot Line was set up in August, 1996; 800-SAVE, 24 hours/7-day-week service. This, of course, meant that we added to our staff an additional 10 or more persons to man this line and to manage it.

Indeed, we involved the community police who worked very closely with us in that programme and offered some kind of training, seminars and so forth in relation to those. We also involved the NGOs in that domestic violence programme. We also added to the staff two male officers—and this was for the first time in the division, so as to influence and build a male programme. Because of our shift, and again, we shifted here from women's affairs to gender affairs and in this way, incorporated both male and female in our concern and our actions in the division. That change in name of division came in June, 1998.

The Domestic Violence Unit was set up in 1997, again with additional members of staff and looking at research and public awareness. We have had to create from the beginning with this Division of Gender Affairs. We had to add units as we see necessary and as the money was available.

My colleague, Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt, who I know is very passionate about this particular aspect of our reality, did comment on the drop-in centres. Yes, we started it as a pilot project in 1998. We had some funds from UNDP, which also asked us to use that money towards that project and that allowed us to continue with a few of them. But we now have funds in this budget for the financial year 1999/2000 to reopen those 22 centres and we hope during the year to expand those centres, because even those are not enough. We also want to open each one of them more than once a week. So we are also looking for that as well.

We have also emphasized not only care in domestic violence situations, but we want to prevent the situations. We have done that through public awareness as well as through trying to empower and educate women, because many of them are in situations from which they cannot escape because they are very dependent.

We have been emphasizing training and development for our women. We have the non-traditional skills project where we are going to have at least 1,000 women per year for three years, at a cost of \$2 million this year, to access the non-traditional training for women. This is training in construction skills, small appliance repairs, *et cetera* where we think there are opportunities for women who do not usually have some kind of training. So we have this non-traditional skills project for women.

We also have a women's leadership and enhancement institute where we are developing the women, so when they get the skills they can then come to the institute and be shown how to create business and other enterprises out of the skills they have. That is one aspect of the leadership and enhancement institute.

This year, particularly because of our concern with the need to empower our women, especially low skilled and unemployed women, many women are single mothers, we have created a special project. This project is called 'women's second chances'. It is a training and employment project for women. There are three aspects to this project: there are community agricultural projects; there is an elderly care project for older women; and there is a homework centre project which we are doing in collaboration with the Ministry of Social and Community Development. Each aspect of the project involves training and employment. All the participants of this project will be paid during the period of training and employment. They are all sustainable projects in agriculture, in elderly care, because we are linking them to other services available.

For instance, in agriculture, after they go through the three months of training and work, they will then go to our leadership institute and be exposed to agribusiness at the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives project, where they send persons abroad for agricultural work.

We are also looking at niche markets in handicraft items and so forth, but that is still under consideration.

In the elderly care project, this is for older women—Social Development had a project for younger people, this one is for older women—because we think that there are those who are very much in need as well. When I say older, I mean women 35 years and onwards. We think that they are very sympathetic to older

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people. We want to connect this project as well to the Ministries of Health and Social and Community Development projects, and the home care projects, because these women will be trained in caring for the elderly. Of course, during the training they will be given a substantial stipend.

So the agricultural project, as well as the homework centre project, which is largely for younger people with O'levels and so forth, are for both men and women. We are emphasizing gender here. The elderly care is really for the women.

In addition, we have an educational caravan for post common entrance children, and here is where we want to impact on young children—after they do the common entrance, before they get to secondary school—about this issue of gender violence. We have seen that there is gender violence in schools. We want to confront the children with all the possibilities, solutions and issues related to that while they are preparing to enter secondary school. This is a pilot project. We start things on pilot because we are creating as we go on. We know there is so much to be done and we are working and we are interested in the NGOs in this regard. We are working on a project, therefore, to expose children, just presecondary children, to issues, discussions and experiences in relation to nonviolence, both boys and girls. We will pilot this and depending on the success we will try to institutionalize it.

We also have of course, a male programme which we have enhanced. You may have seen in the press that we have advertised for men adequately trained to work in our Gender Affairs Unit in this area.

Mr. President, we have to create as we are going along, we are looking at the reality and trying to get ahead of it as well. We know the violence problem is a difficult one, but we know that we cannot work on violence alone, we have to prepare our women and our men, we have to encourage them, we have to train them, we have to empower them.

Many schools have agreed to work with us on the homework centre project, as well as many homes for the aged, which are overwhelmingly supportive of being involved in these projects.

So our 'women's second chances' will get off the ground. In fact, today we are doing interviews for the co-ordinators of this programme. This is where we are going.

I am sorry, Mr. President, perhaps we do not have enough time to explain in detail the things we want to do. We know that the issues and the relations between

men and women have to be addressed, not only for the low income persons and persons with low skills, but right through the society. We will continue to work with the NGOs because we know they have been very upfront in this regard. We will continue to try to influence through our culture and through gender, because they both relate, culture and gender affairs, to positively impact on our people both young and adult.

Mr. President, I thank you.

Sen. Prof. John Spence: Mr. President, I rise to speak on the Appropriation Bill (Budget).

Mr. President, I would like to say a few words to start with about the format of the budget and then to take up one or two particular aspects of the budget itself, or at least, with the budget document.

It seems to me that there has been some confusion in discussions of the format because somehow one is confusing the budget presentation with the actual budget, which I consider to be the figures. I think perhaps, it is this lack of clarity between the two aspects of the budget presentation that causes some of the discomfort about the budget. I think, myself, that the format that has been used by the Minister of Finance for the last three or four years for his presentation has not been satisfactory from the point of view of analysis of the budget; certainly not by persons who are not accountants or economists.

In this regard, I want to do something that I did in the first year of this Government's budget presentation and that is to read a little from a contribution made from the present Prime Minister when he was Leader of the Opposition in 1995. It is interesting what he says. He says:

“Under the system of government practised in Trinidad and Tobago, Parliament had little or no effective control over the \$110.583 billion which came into the hands of the Government between the years 1973 and 1993.

It is in that context that we must embark upon this budget debate which many feel is an exercise in futility, since nothing that we say or do during this debate will change one comma or one line of the Budget Speech as delivered by the Minister of Finance in this honourable House.”

That is the hon. Basdeo Panday. Now some of us feel that way even now, but nevertheless it is our duty to make comments and so we do.

I think it is important also to understand what the hon. Prime Minister, then Leader of the Opposition, had to say about the general context in which the budget was cast. This is what he said:

“As far as the presentation of the annual budget is concerned, it is important to note that we in Trinidad and Tobago do not follow the practice as it obtains at Westminster. In the British system there is, at the beginning of each parliamentary session, a throne speech in which the government, through the monarch, informs the parliament and the nation of the government’s policy and proposals for the nation for that session. It is the occasion on which the government, through Her Majesty, informs the parliament of its legislative agenda for the period.

In the United States, the same function is performed in the President’s address to the nation. In several Commonwealth countries, there is the equivalent to a throne speech or an address to the nation whereby the nation is informed of the government’s policy and programme against which they will be judged at the end of their term. The government’s overall policy, having already been stated at the beginning of the session, the presentation of the annual budget in such countries is merely a statement of government’s monetary and fiscal proposals for that year; an exercise in ways and means, so to speak. It is a statement of what moneys the government needs to implement its policies for that year and how it will raise its revenue for such expenditure. The budget in such circumstances is merely the annual translation and implementation of a known medium and long-term policy.”

I want to go on further than that, Mr. President, but clearly, what the hon. Prime Minister said at that time was that the format that we need, if we are going to have a proper understanding of the annual budget, is for its policy statement, having been made previously, to then put the budget into that context.

2.45 p.m.

The last statement of that sort was made in this country in 1976 when Sir Ellis Clarke made what is, in effect, a throne speech. After that the annual budget presentations included that background. So we had very long budget presentations that had both the background policy and the context of international economy and so forth and then the budget.

What has happened in the last four years is that we do not have the throne speech; we do not have the policy statement in a concise format in one document; and we have a budget statement which does not give that background but also does not present the figures in such a way that it is easy to understand how the policy which has been previously outlined is going to be implemented this year by

this budget. To my mind, there is a great deficiency in the budget presentations we have had in the last four years including this one. I want to read what my hon. colleague, Sen. Dr. St. Cyr has said, because I agree with this fully. It says:

“If I were the Minister of Finance, I would certainly prefer to present a budget such as he did, because then the Parliament cannot hold me to account. [*Desk thumping*] I know that if not this year, certainly last year, the hon. Minister said that the budget is a sort of shopping list and, depending on the revenue outturn, he would allocate accordingly. But then, there is no basis of holding him to what he committed himself to, nor is there any basis for channelling him in one direction rather than in the other. So, I believe, myself, that in the practice of our democracy, we really have to get back to, if not the style, certainly the structure of previous budget presentations.”

Of course, I agree with that entirely.

I have prepared budgets myself for various programmes within the university, which were being funded by outside agencies, and what one does is to try to make the presentation as vague as possible, so that you cannot be pinned down subsequently and you are left with as much flexibility as you want. This is something we do all the time, but those agencies—make absolutely certain that on their behalf they pin you down to certain specific activities. It is the duty of this Parliament to scrutinize the activities and, therefore, I consider it our duty to point out to the Minister of Finance, if he is, in fact, giving himself maximum flexibility, he is, therefore, making it more difficult for us to account as a Parliament for what he has done. Once again, I would urge the Minister of Finance to change the format of his presentation.

For example, Sen. Marshall has given me a document—just a summary table—which is extremely useful. Had we got something even like this from the Minister of Finance, it would have been useful. Instead, of course, what we each have to do if we really want to get into the guts of the budget, is to go through all the documents and as we are not accountants they are much more difficult to follow and, of course, the documents themselves sometimes have contradictory statements in them and there is not one concise document to which you can go.

Some of these figures here, for example, let us just take the ones—since our friends from Tobago are here—which have to do with the Tobago House of Assembly. One can see, immediately, from these figures that the allocation for Tobago is \$325 million odd for recurrent and \$92 million for capital. Sen. Marshall has calculated that in terms of percentage, so we know that is 2.8 per

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cent of the total annual budget. In fact, if we are trying to get an equitable contribution for Tobago, how do we go about it? I have been kindly given the Tobago House of Assembly estimates for this year, and in fact, their request for their estimates is very much higher, of course. It is \$589 million. So that they are saying that their allocation is about 55 per cent of what they had asked for. Clearly, all departments asked for certain sums of money and because the budget is finite and not infinite, they have to be reduced, so what is an equitable allocation for Tobago? Well, the Tobago population—if we do it on that basis, because this is one basis that we might use—is about 3 per cent. So if we took 3 per cent of the total budget, from the recurrent point of view, we would come up with \$390 million and if we added on the development programme we would come up with about \$440 million. So it would seem that in both cases, if we use the population entirely as a basis, that Tobago is, perhaps, being somewhat short-changed.

On the other hand, when we look at the Tobago House of Assembly Act, it was pointed out that because Tobago is an island on its own, there are certain costs and expenses that are higher than Trinidad and Tobago. So even if one were using population as a basis, one would expect that an equitable allocation would take that into account and therefore it would not just be 3 per cent, but somewhat higher than that.

I want to make some other comments on the general aspects of the budget, as well. I think that if the hon. Minister is going to make a presentation of the sort that he has made then perhaps I would suggest to him that he do it in two presentations instead of one. Because what he has said is that the population is not interested in figures. Well, then what I suggest is that he make what I would say is a proper presentation to the Parliament, because he is not speaking to the population, at large, in this presentation; he is making a presentation to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. So let him make a proper presentation to the Parliament and then the same evening go on the television and make the speech that he made to Parliament, to the general population, and those of us, parliamentarians, like Sen. Burke who feel that they cannot understand the figures, can listen to the presentation in the evening. It is the duty of us, as parliamentarians, not just to listen to the general presentations but to try to understand the figures that go with it. As I say, it is extremely difficult to do that and certainly, as far as I am concerned, I have given up. This is my 14th budget presentation and when the figures were presented to me in a way that I could, in fact, delve into them closely, that was what I did.

Now, in response to the Minister's overall presentation, I can do a little more than respond in the same way, as well. So I really think that I agree entirely with Sen. Dr. St. Cyr that we must go back to the original concept. It is very interesting that the hon. Minister said that his philosophy was that people were being put first and all the rest of it, but here is an interesting comment from Kamal Persad, who, I believe, is a strong UNC supporter and he has said here: I quote:

“It is , in reality, a technocrat's budget divorced of philosophy and ideology.”

So this gentleman said the budget has no philosophy and no ideology. Now, he is saying this in praise, by the way—that it should not have an ideology and a philosophy—and so it does not. But that seems to me to really indicate how different people have reacted to the budget.

There is another aspect of the budget which is not present and that is—Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt referred to it earlier on—the presentation of the data for unremunerated work; and attached to that is the household survey. We passed a Bill here which became an Act some years ago. At the time some of us were very skeptical about the whole thing. We thought it was being rushed through Parliament in order that Trinidad could go to the Beijing Conference and say, “we have passed a Bill to do with unremunerated work,” and we would say to the world, “look what we have done, we now assess unremunerated work in this country.” Of course we do not. So the cynical ones of us who, at that time, thought that this was the whole idea, turned out to be right because we have not yet presented the data in that forum. *[Interruption]* And that is at least three or four years. In what year was the Beijing Conference?

Sen. Tota-Maharaj: It was four years ago.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: In my view, just as important—rather than more important—I was able to get attached to that Bill, a provision that we should have a household survey at least every three years. It is extremely important that we do that, because at the moment we are relying on things like the Human Development Report which the hon. Minister quoted, to show what fine fellows we are, and we are not really getting at the guts of what is the situation now in Trinidad and Tobago with respect to poverty.

2.55 p.m.

The last assessment that we did was in 1992 and the report eventually came out in 1996 from the Ministry of Social Development and it is this we used,

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incidentally, to say that the poverty line was \$620.00 a month and to be able to say that having increased the old age pension to \$620.00 we have now brought all those people above the poverty line.

This document was 1992, that was when the data was collected. If you take inflation at 5 per cent per year, what would the poverty line actually be now? Do some arithmetic quickly in your head. It is probably more like \$700.00 or \$800.00 a month. So if we are using the data of 1992 we are misleading ourselves. That is not to say that—I give all praise to the Government for having increased the old age pension. Obviously that was a good move and nobody daresay it was not a good move, but we must understand that we are still trying to catch up and we have not advanced and we should not fool ourselves into thinking that we have advanced. The only way we can know what we are doing is to have the data and the way to have the data is to have a household survey.

In the United Kingdom, there is an annual household survey. Perhaps that is too expensive for us and that is why I suggested one every three years. It is extremely important that we do that, otherwise we will continue to put our heads in the sand and think that we are doing well and be very surprised when we have crime and all sorts of people on the streets and vagrants and so forth, because we have not understood what our actual situation is with respect to the poverty in our country.

The hon. Minister of Finance has said as one of the important aspects of his budget, “No new taxes.” My position with respect to taxes is why no new taxes if we need funds? The theory is if we reduce the taxes, especially corporation tax, we will get greater savings and greater investment and I would like the Minister to bring the data to this Senate to show that the reduction in taxes he has made while he was Minister has resulted in a greater saving rate in this country or a greater investment rate in local investment. I am not talking about investments in the oil industry and petroleum sector from abroad. I am talking about local investments in the manufacturing, agricultural or tourism sector. Bring the data! Prove the theory that you have espoused because if that is not so, the only argument you can use for lower taxes is if you have higher taxes, you might get lower compliance rate and, therefore, you will get less money in. But if one accepts that you can increase the compliance rate by, in fact, having more people working on the collection of taxes and so forth, then that objection also disappears.

I cannot see the reason for having no new taxes at the higher level if you are saying you cannot do more for the hospitals, you cannot pay the teachers more, you cannot pay the nurses more because you do not have the funds. If you do not

have the funds, take it from those who have and pay the nurses, teachers and policemen so that you will have a better quality of life for us all. I cannot understand why we accept this dictum that comes from the business people who obviously prefer to have lower taxes because their profits increase, but what do they do with the profits? Do they reinvest it in productive enterprises in Trinidad, or do they put up bigger shopping malls? Which means more recurrent expenditure, more consumer spending, more pressure on the rate of exchange. Where is the evidence? Let us get the University of the West Indies to do the studies if we cannot do them ourselves. I have a problem with the general philosophy both in terms of the way it is presented and that philosophy about taxes.

Mr. President, I have changed the order in which I am making the contribution somewhat, because I want to go immediately into having some discussion on Tobago because our friends from Tobago are here and they may be leaving so I would like to say a few words that I have to say on Tobago at this stage.

I think one of the important aspects of the Tobago situation currently is tourism development. We in Trinidad and Tobago said that we are putting tourism first, at least we say tourism and agriculture are the things that we think are important to create jobs and all the rest of it. The petroleum sector is looking after itself and it is doing extremely well, we are first in the region and nobody can question that. The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries certainly hats off to him for the job he is doing, but as he points out himself, that does not create many jobs and so the Minister of Finance has said we must have tourism development and agricultural development. I would return to agriculture later on.

The problem with tourism development I believe, is what sort of tourism are you going to develop in Tobago? I am talking particularly about Tobago because if you listened recently to the Minister of Tourism who is no longer Minister of Tourism, he put a lot of store by what would happen in Tobago. In fact he said development is going to take place so rapidly there that they would have to import labour like Bermuda did and so forth.

What sort of development do we want in Tobago? I come from a small island. I was born in St. Vincent so I am particularly conscious of what could happen in a small island if you develop in a certain way. I want to read from Sir James Goldsmith's book "The Trap" because interestingly enough he was asked—the question that he was speaking to was rather skeptical about politicians on the whole. So he asked to any politician in any part of the world that he

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thought would have a good concept of development for his people to maintain their quality of life and so forth rather than just their economic indicator and this is what he said.

He was saying that in most countries growth is taken to mean increase in GDP and he is saying that is not necessarily the case as we are now recognizing development is more than just increase in GDP. He said:

“However, every now and then in some unlikely place, one does come across different thinking. I once visited the small island of Anguilla in the West Indies, which at the time had a population of about 9,000 people. I lunched with the then Prime Minister. The island is very beautiful. It has long white beaches and hospitable people. I asked him about his plans for developing the island. This is more or less what he answered:

‘This island is our island, and we are very happy living here. We have two alternatives. Either we can develop at a reasonable pace and in a way which supplies good jobs and well-being to our people, or we can choose the policy which has been applied in practically all our neighbouring islands. We can aim at rapid and maximum development. After a great deal of thought, we chose the former of these two policies. If we had decided to develop tourism as fast as possible and build great hotels and apartment complexes one next to the other, then we would need to move to a policy of massive immigration so as to be able to operate such an economy. We realized that the inevitable result would be that we would become a minority in our own country. And we would not be spared the growth in crime and drugs and other social tragedies which seem to be the inseparable companions of rapid development, tourism and substantial immigration.’”

Mr. President, what do we want for Tobago? Here we have the Prime Minister of Anguilla saying, no we do not want that rapid sort of development, but here we have a tourism masterplan and the Minister of Tourism in Trinidad and Tobago saying we want rapid tourism development for Tobago, hotels and all the rest.

I say the people in Trinidad who are making those decisions do not live in Tobago so it is important that we understand what the people in Tobago want. The hon. Minister of Finance knows that for seven years I have been trying to get a study done of what the ordinary folks in Tobago want with respect to the way their tourism should develop. Do they want the large hotels, or do they want the sort of eco-tourism that I feel—what I call conservation tourism that is the Asa Wright sort of investment. It is not what the Tobago House of Assembly wants, it

is what the ordinary people in Tobago want. The Tobago House of Assembly may say that they have consulted the ordinary people. I would like to see that done in a very systematic and scientific way so that we can be assured that is what the ordinary folks in Tobago want.

The problem is that true bureaucracy which I hope Sen. Gillette will address and I apologize to him for not having welcomed him at the beginning of my presentation. May I do so now.

I welcome you Minister Gillette to the Senate, and forgive me for calling you "Jillette". As you know your uncle was very friendly with my parents and that was what we called him in those days. At the same time may I also divert to congratulate Sen. Tota-Maharaj on her elevation to a Minister.

I had tried to get a study going for seven years and honestly, it is bogged down in the most unbelievable bureaucracy. The Minister of Finance in his various Acts has helped me and still that has not worked. We will say more about that when the Tourism Development Bill is being discussed shortly, so I would not spend any more time with that.

I think a part of the problem we have to address, and it is coming up frequently with Trinidad and Tobago, is the relationship and it all goes back to the Tobago House of Assembly Act. I sat on that select committee and you will remember, Mr. President, I in fact submitted a minority report which in effect said we had not enough time to study this Act properly and we did not. That is why we made many mistakes in the way we had worded that Act which are coming home to roost now. The problems are now arising.

What I have done recently is to get hold of two Acts in the United Kingdom from which I think we have a lot to learn and which could be applied to the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago and Tobago. This is the Government of Wales Act 1998 and the Scotland Act of 1998. The Welsh one is more applicable because the Scottish one has a great deal of autonomy and we have not yet arrived at that stage in Tobago.

Scotland is almost a separate country with different judicial systems, different educational systems and so forth. The Welsh Act is interesting because the way they solve the problem of jurisdiction, is part of what is happening now. Who is responsible for what. Is the Minister of Planning and Development still responsible for planning in Tobago? Is the Town and Country Planning jurisdiction still the one that will decide what happens in Tobago if a new hotel is to be built? For example, when the Four Seasons Hotel was being mooted, the

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Minister of Planning and Development, who was then acting Prime Minister, I think overruled the Town and Country Planning Division with respect to that development. I think Tobago is still fighting that issue. What is the jurisdiction with respect to the Minister and the Tobago House of Assembly?

What the British have done in the Welsh Act is to say that in each ministry, the minister by an Act of Parliament, is a separate Order in Council, for each ministry transfers his authority for Wales to the Welsh Assembly. It is clear. He no longer has any authority in Wales, he has given up that authority in Wales to the Welsh Assembly. If we had done this—and I think we still ought to visit the Tobago House of Assembly Act and do this—if we make it clear that when the Minister of Health hands over his authority for matters of health to the Tobago House of Assembly, he no longer has any jurisdiction there and, therefore, it is clear who has the responsibility.

At the moment, to me, it is extremely unclear and I think we will be running into many difficulties. Each time we have a new bill to consider—we have the Planning and Development Bill and Sen. Kenny and Sen. Cuffy Dowlat will confirm that one of the issues I tried to address was the question of how does this Planning Act affect the Tobago House of Assembly, and we put in some clauses. The Bill has to come back and we have to look at it again, but the fact is that we should deal with the Tobago House of Assembly Act itself.

What they had done with the Welsh Act, in addition to the handing over part—there are a lot of other consequential changes in existing legislation that we never did. They have gone through any number—most of this document is not the Act itself, but the changes to existing legislation to make sure that they are not in contradiction of the Act. Not only have we not gone back and changed existing legislation, but we are creating new legislation which contradicts the Act and that is the battle we keep fighting here all the time. I really think it is extremely important that we address that issue if we want to have proper development in Tobago.

I think with respect to tourism development, it is the people of Tobago who should decide and that is why when the Tourism Development Bill came, and it is coming back to us, I will take the same position that I did with respect to development in Tobago. The Tobago House of Assembly must decide. They are the ones to decide in conjunction with Trinidad and Tobago because they have to live with it. They must decide whether they want conservation tourism as I would put it, and entities like Asa Wright dotted all over the country, or whether they want a series of Four Winds, Hilton, Club Mediterranean and so forth.

The present tourism development plan set 1,000 hotel rooms for Charlotteville. Can you imagine how that would change the character of Charlotteville? Do we want the character of Charlotteville to change?

Hon. Sen.: No way.

3.10 p.m.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: Mr. President, when the honourable Patrick Manning was Prime Minister, he said 5,000 hotel rooms for Tobago. Is that what we really want? Let us be sure that we develop in a way that will not kill the egg that lays the golden goose.*[Interruptions]* If we developed in that way in Tobago, in a very short time,—sorry, the goose that lays the golden egg—people would no longer want to go to Tobago. Cuba will come into the fold when Castro dies. They will open up their beaches and then why come to Tobago? But if you want to go to Tobago as it is now, there is something which Cuba does not have—tropical rainforest, very pleasant people and our heritage festival and the like. So let us be very careful about what we do.

Another aspect of the budget which, I usually discuss is education. I want to say a little word on tertiary education on this occasion. I am very surprised to see that there has not been any mention in the budget presentation on the Community College. We are saying that human resource development is an extremely important aspect of our development process.

The late Frank Rampersad—and this is the first year that I did not get the opportunity to consult with him over my budget presentation, because he has been very kind to me in the past—wrote a paper actually in 1992, but it is still applicable now. Data from a World Bank study shows a low throughput of grades at tertiary education level in Trinidad and Tobago. Based on 100 students entering primary schools, there is a 70 per cent chance of a student entering secondary school, 24 of these would pass the CXC English and 19 per cent would pass in mathematics. There is a 10 per cent chance of the students attending tertiary level education and a three per cent chance that he/she would attend the University of the West Indies. By its comparison it should be pointed out that in Barbados, there is a 42 per cent chance that the cohorts entering primary school would enter at the tertiary level institution finally. Forty-two per cent compared to 10 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, we have decided that we do not want a technical university, pro tem. I think that is a bad mistake. If we look at the number of people that we need to put through at university level, the University of the West Indies cannot do it,

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even from what we say that we want to do. Some years ago, the University of the West Indies said that it would double its numbers in five years. Are we anywhere near that? I venture to suggest that the numbers have gone down. Certainly in agriculture they have gone down. So we still have the problem that we are short of university places in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, but what is happening? Every university in the world is offering degrees in Trinidad and Tobago. All the polytechnics that were polytechnics a few years ago in the United Kingdom are now universities. They are offering degrees in Trinidad and Tobago and stealing our students.

Yesterday, on the television I saw a lady from Canada and a gentleman from the United States. They are having a programme here telling the students at schools, how they can get to university in the United States and Canada. They can sit the SAT examination and get a scholarship. Do you ever see John Donaldson Technical Institute, San Fernando Technical Institute or the new Community College, which is being formed having anything at the Hilton, showing students what they can get by going there? Perhaps, they cannot get anything. Why are we not doing it?

Mr. President, what Mr. Frank Rampersad said in this paper is, that we need to treble the tertiary level places available to Trinidad and Tobago if we are going to make any impact on science and technology in this country. We are saying that we want to be a modern financial world class centre and all the rest of it. But none of this is in the budget, yet it is a budget which is intended to increase the human capital in the country. Perhaps, we should rely on all these foreign universities giving their degrees here. Perhaps we should be sending our best brains away to other countries. The likelihood is that a large percentage of them would not come back.

My belief is that if you go to your own university for your first degree, you then develop between the ages of 18 and 21 in an atmosphere, which you have now matured in, and the likelihood of your coming back, even if you go abroad—I think they should still go abroad, I am not knocking that at all. Anyone, who has got a first class honours or an upper second degree at the University of the West Indies can get a scholarship to go abroad. There are many scholarships and they are glad to take you at that level. The chances are that you would have got so taken up with the activities in your own country, you should be becoming involved in the political activities as well. Are our students encouraged to do that?

Mr. President, when I was at university that was a big part of it. We formed an overseas students club and it was all anti-colonialism and the rest of it in the

1950s. Do they do that here? Do any of the political parties have parties at the university? When I was in Bristol the Labour Party, the Conservatives and even the Communist Party had. What is wrong with our system? Why do we not take our best brains and keep them. We give island scholarships and if you come first, which means that you are the best at the top, you can then go and study anywhere in the world!

So, we in Trinidad and Tobago make sure that our best brains do not go to our own university. I have said this before in this Parliament. How can we do something like that, and still be proud of ourselves? Those students should go abroad after they have done their first degree. Even if we say that the scholarship will give them three years here and then three years abroad, that is what the scholarship should say and not that you can choose to go any part of the world and taxpayers would have to pay for this. This circumstance still irritates me. I think we really need to do something about tertiary education, which we are not doing.

The honourable Minister of Finance now has tertiary education under his portfolio. I am appealing to him to do something about tertiary education, including upgrading the Community College and speeding it along. What is happening with the Community College? John Donaldson and San Fernando Technical Institutes are still under the Ministry of Education and the Community College is in the Ministry of Planning. Are we really serious? I keep saying that we have 17—there must be more by now—retired university professors through the University of the West Indies—all Trinidadians. Do we ever use them in developing our tertiary education system? We have them in all sorts of fields—engineering, science, art, history and so forth. We do not use them—put them out to pasture. So I think really that we need to look at the tertiary educational system.

Mr. President, I just have a couple of comments on the secondary school system. One is to agree with the comments made about the Common Entrance Examination. I think the changes are probably very important changes and needed to be done, because I think we were really overloading our 11 plus students with these examinations. Why do we have to pretend that we are abolishing the 11 plus Common Entrance Examination? I really do not know. All we have done really is to change its format, which was correct. We should have done it and we have now done it. We are also saying that it does not have to be 11 plus, they can write the examination at 12 plus or 13 plus. So we have changed the format and the requirement, but we still have the examination.

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I thought that we were going ahead with the Continuous Assessment Programme, which I felt would take seven years to introduce. Two years of testing and five years of actually putting it into operation, so that you assess the students at the end of their five years at primary schools. But we are not doing that. We are changing the examination. Nobody said whether CAP is going to be implemented and whether it is going to finally change the examination.

Now, I would warn—and I hope that the people in education understand this—in fact, I will write to the new Minister and explain this to her. One of the reasons we went through the format of the present 11 plus to a multiple-choice system, which I do not agree with—it is a bad system in my opinion and we are doing it right up to university level. But the reason we went to that is because if we did not do it that way, there will be 30,000 scripts to mark.

Mr. President, if there are 30,000 essays to mark, it is different from if there are 30,000 scripts with boxes to tick off, whether they are right or wrong. One can put a grade on top of it and you can see in a very short space of time, whether it is right or wrong. Now, we have gone back to an essay type examination. Yes, that is what we should do, but let us make sure that we put in place the structure to mark 30,000 scripts for each paper, not just one paper—30,000 essays in English, grammar and mathematics or whatever they are doing. If we do not put it into place, the first year we do that, the 11 plus results will come out after the school term has started. So let us be sure that we know what we are doing.

I think it is an important development. I think that is the way we should go.

3.20 p.m.

Mr. President, I would like to give full marks to the Minister of Finance for the placing of computers in schools. I differ from many of my colleagues in the Senate who seem to be criticizing this move. I do not think they are really criticizing it but they seem to be saying there are other things which have higher priority. I do not agree. Of course the other things should be done. We should have transport to schools. In fact, I want to suggest to the hon. Minister of Works and Transport that the rural transport system should be used between 6.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. exclusively for transporting children to schools and then from 3.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. likewise. It should not be transporting anybody else and, if you do that, I would give you 100 marks for that development.

It is extremely important that we do that because kids in the country, as we heard in this debate, have a terrible time getting to school. So the rural bus system I agree with. Although I may have made some comment about the buses needed

tuning and so forth, it is a good idea, but let us use it as a school transport system for those times of the day, 6.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. So I think that the computerization is extremely important for this reason.

What is happening in our society is that the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer and the opportunities for the poor to move out of their poverty are becoming less and less. It is happening all over the world. One way they can move out is by being computer literate. So, what will happen if we do not have computers in the schools is, those kids who have parents who can afford it, all have computers. I took advantage of the loan and I gave my old computer to my grandchildren so they have a computer, you know, but the ones who cannot afford it will be left out if you do not put it in the schools. It is extremely important that you put it in the schools.

So I give the hon. Minister of Finance absolutely full marks for that development [*Desk thumping*] and I reject any criticism that is being made of him for having done that. It is extremely important that we do it. We must see that the teachers are trained, obviously. I am sure he understands that. I mean, he must see that the rooms are set up with air-conditioning and whatever they need. He understands that too but do not let that keep back the programme because that is the only way disadvantaged kids will be able to become computer literate and, therefore, have one other opportunity, apart from sport, to take them out of their poverty.

Mr. President, I notice, and the hon. Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs has made reference to it, that the National Carnival Commission budget has been increased this year by \$15 million. Now, I suppose, I think, as she said, some of it is due to the fact that there were outstanding bills. If that is indeed the case, it makes me even more concerned with the issue that I have spoken about in this Parliament before, namely, the paving of the savannah.

If this organization was in debt to the tune of some \$10 million, or whatever the figure may be, how could it have gone and spent another \$2.5 million which it did not have to spend? It was not its business to prepare a site for the military parade or whatever it is. So I have written out what I think about this issue and, with your permission, Mr. President, I want to read it. It is my own but I have written it carefully so I want to read it because I think it is an extremely important issue, far more important than I think we understand.

I am referring to the hon. Minister Brian Kuei Tung's statement in the Senate in explanation of Mr. Carlos John's action in paving a portion of the Queen's Park Savannah without reference to the relevant Ministers. Minister Kuei Tung agreed

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that the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the hon. Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs had not been treated in a correct manner and indeed indicated that as Minister of Finance he was also compromised. However, Minister Kuei Tung stated that he was a friend of Mr. John and, having spoken to him, he was sure that Mr. John did not intend disrespect to the Ministers or the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Since Mr. John did not intend to be disrespectful then it can only be that he is unaware of the manner in which Government Ministers should be treated. However, Mr. John is Chairman of TIDCO and, as such, has to deal with important foreign investors. There have been no adverse reports of him in that capacity so it has to be assumed that any lack of knowledge on his part in how to deal with important personages only applies to local Ministers of Government! Mr. John has said that he did not have the time to consult with the Ministers. In that case, one has to assume that Mr. John awarded a \$2.5 million contract in haste using taxpayers' funds not yet voted by Parliament.

If there was not enough time to consult with the Ministers then where did the time come from to assess, (1), the extent of the area to be paved; (2), the type and quantities of materials to be used; (3) the drainage systems to be installed for [*Desk thumping*] runoff as well as to protect the structure from underground water which could lead to subsequent deterioration of the surface; and (4), the best method for dealing with the water-table? It is difficult to understand how an experienced businessman can award a \$2.5 million contract in such haste.

Mr. John stated that the cost would be met out of next year's budget, which implies that taxpayers' funds are involved and this is confirmed by the hon. Minister of Finance who says that he will have to find the funds. So what I would like to know is, did he find the funds in this budget?

Mr. President: The hon. Senator's speaking time has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: Thank you ladies and gentlemen. Mr. John has stated that there was an emergency, since the military parade would have had to take place under muddy conditions. This is a very poor excuse since the venue of the parade could have been shifted to another site, for example, Chaguaramas with PTSC buses providing free transport for members of the public—at considerable less cost than the \$2.5 million! Further, it appears that the problem arose because

Mr. John did not take down the North Stand in time for the grass to re-grow. Mr. John has corrected a problem of his own making at a cost of \$2.5 million to the taxpayers!

Surprisingly, Mr. John's unintended disregard for the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources continues daily since the newspapers are reporting that the National Carnival Commission (NCC) is taking bookings for use of the paved area, which is still under the control of that Minister and is not under the control of Mr. John or the NCC. Mr. John cannot now plead ignorance as he did earlier on. The World Beat just took place.

Many prominent persons—and this is what I find is so disturbing, Mr. President and that is why I think this issue is much more important than we take it to be—are justifying Mr. John's action on the basis of the good it will do for ordinary folks. Is it so soon forgotten that in 1990 a group of persons invaded Parliament to do good for ordinary folks? The end does not justify the means. It did not in 1990, it does not in 1999. [*Desk thumping*] Who are the ordinary folks who will benefit? The carnival revellers? Hardly, since the paved area will be covered by the ramp and the North Stand. The revellers will still have to go through the dust at the exit.

In any case, the proposal to erect a \$5 million dome for a trade fair sounds rather permanent and would seem to suggest that plans are being developed for the Parade of the Bands not to go through the savannah at all! What will become of the site at Golden Grove, which is now grown over with grass, recently prepared as a trade fair site? Is that more wasted taxpayers' money? What are we going to do with that site? Will the patients in the hospital benefit from the loud music from regular fetes held on the paved area?

I understand there were many complaints over the weekend from residents as far away as St. Clair who were very disturbed and very annoyed about the noise. Nobody is thinking about the poor people in the hospital. The residents in St. Clair can put their air-conditions on and reduce some of the noise. The hospital is absolutely open, within a stone's throw of the thing. I spoke with the Minister of Health and with the Chairman of the Regional Health Authority and asked them both to go down to the hospital when the thing was on to see for themselves. I do not know if either of them went to see what it was like for the patients at the hospital.

In every part of the world the vicinity of a hospital is designated a quiet zone. In Trinidad and Tobago we make sure we put loud music near to the hospital and, not content to have it once or twice a year with carnival and panorama, we now

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want to have it every Saturday night. What about the traffic congestion? Fortunately, the World Beat festival, as far as numbers go, was a flop. Suppose they had gotten the 25,000 in attendance they expected? What about the traffic congestion in that area? How could you put in that area a function that has that sort of traffic?

Why are we not thinking of the Foreshore? Why are we not thinking of Chaguaramas? Chaguaramas is ideal. Provide transport as part of your ticket. You pay to go in and you pay for the transport as well and put PTSC buses to take the people down there. There are no residents down there. The Foreshore—it has been suggested that we design the thing like the Sydney Opera House where the sound is made into a cone and put out to sea. Why in the savannah, quite apart from the environmental effects? Why not somewhere else? Each day brings new questions on this issue and no answers.

Fortunately for transparency in Trinidad and Tobago the Parliament will soon pass the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill which will allow scrutiny of matters like these by parliamentary committees. I hope that when we pass these committees we will look into this as one of the things we investigate. It is very important that the wrong message is not sent to young people in the nation. The message that Mr. John and his supporters have sent is, if permission cannot be obtained from those in authority for a particular action then act anyhow and the authority will be faced with a *fait accompli*. So it is reasoned by the perpetrators of the action that it will have to be retroactively approved, particularly if the action is large enough.

Are young people being taught to treat their parents in this way? Act and what could a parent do if you had gone out and got married or something like that? There is nothing they can do. That is after the fact. Mr. President, in my opinion, this process has to be reversed. The concrete or whatever it was that was put in the savannah has to be taken up and, quite frankly, it surprises me that Mr. John has not resigned. I do not think the Government should force him out but I think he should voluntarily resign. [*Desk thumping*]

Finally, Mr. President, with the little time that I have left I want to say a few words on agriculture. You know this is a subject on which I speak most of the time, but it is not really necessary this time because recently we had a debate in which I spoke very extensively on this matter. Again I want to give the hon. Minister of Finance praise for having included in his budget the possibility of a study of the School Feeding Programme so that it might be linked more closely to the agricultural sector.

However, I am disappointed to see that in the Tobago budget apparently they had asked for some allocation for the agricultural incentive programme and that was cut out. I think, certainly in Tobago, this is one of the areas of the country in which it should be possible to organize very effectively a School Feeding Programme based on local agricultural production. It is not there now but it should be possible to develop it if it were well integrated.

So I welcome this move and I think the hon. Minister has done extremely well to see the potential for agricultural development in the School Feeding Programme because he has said, and I heard him on television myself, that we ignore agriculture at our peril and that is what we have been doing for the last three governments. For all the lip-service we have been ignoring any concrete measures that will take it forward. I would not repeat what I have said about how we might take it forward because it is all there in *Hansard* but I think we ought to at least consider those measures.

Now, one of the largest agricultural enterprises is Caroni (1975) Limited. There is reference in the budget documents to a transformation plan. We cannot say whether it is worthwhile or not because we have not seen the plan. Why is the plan not available? Could I ask that a copy of the plan be placed in the Parliament Library? [*Desk thumping*] How can we comment on something that we have not seen? This may have very significant effects for the agricultural sector.

From the little that has been said about it I do not really see how breaking up Caroni (1975) Limited into separate companies with a holding company is going to affect their productivity because you could have done the same thing by having divisions. If all the sectors are losing money I do not see that you are going to be able to privatize them. So, unless I can see that plan, I cannot be convinced, as it stands now, that what is being done for Caroni (1975) Limited is really going to solve the problems there.

I have a much greater fear, and I keep repeating this and I am told, yes, it is going to be done but I never see any action. Caroni (1975) Limited owns the largest acreage of arable land in this country and it is owned by the state because the state owns all the shares in Caroni (1975) Limited. If we divest Caroni (1975) Limited, or part of it are we divesting that land? We won it back from Tate & Lyle when we bought Tate & Lyle Limited and made it Caroni (1975) Limited. I think it would be a shocking shame and indeed it would be a betrayal of generations to come in Trinidad and Tobago if we broke up that large area of land on the basis of privatizing it and did not retain it for the state. So I have said over and over again if you want to do anything with Caroni (1975) Limited first vest the land in the state.

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Why can this not be done? The state has given Caroni (1975) Limited millions and millions, \$2 billion in 1993 alone, writing off debts and \$100 million each year since then. In return for all that just transfer the land to the state and then lease it back to Caroni (1975) Limited and then you have control by the terms of your lease in how it is managed after that. If you do not do it that way and you decide this hundred hectares of land is going to be privatized because some company wants to do something with it, it is gone.

That is what I see creeping in by the back door by this breaking up of Caroni (1975) Limited into separate companies with a holding company and the proposal to privatize some of these entities. It is all right to privatize. If a Ministry is making money, privatize that but you can do that without—make that one a separate company if you want and then privatize it. But why break up all the other units? Will somebody come clean and say what this plan for Caroni (1975) Limited is? Does it involve alienating from the people of Trinidad and Tobago that 50,000 acres of arable land? I think it really would be a shame.

Now, Mr. President, since I seem to still have a few minutes left, I want to say something else with respect to agricultural development. I have said this already but I will repeat it again now, because agriculture has gone so low in Trinidad and Tobago you have to recreate it. Now I agree entirely with Sen. Dr. St. Cyr about family farms. That is the thing we have to do. That is what we have to go for. It would not just happen so we have to plan it and we have to encourage it.

One way that we can encourage it is by creating the family farms and then leasing them to farmers whom we select carefully, not for political reasons but because they are likely to become good entrepreneurs—not just farmers, entrepreneurs. That is what we need to do. I have said this for 12 years in the Senate. Let us take the 3,000 acres of citrus and break that up into 50-acre lots. We will have 60 family farms right there. If those 60 young people well chosen, some University of the West Indies graduates, some Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry graduates, some people whose fathers have been in farming and so forth, and they are successful, that is the demonstration we need.

3.35 p.m.

The same thing with cocoa, a ready market, high quality cocoa, disappearing fast. We will soon lose our market. For two years now, it has gone down and down and down. Next year, we will lose the market. I forecast that if we do nothing about cocoa, we will lose the market for our cocoa and we would not do it by the programme that is being proposed by the European Union funding; we

would not do it because they have said go and try to rehabilitate these old five-acre farms with part-time farms.

There are two good cocoa farms in Trinidad. One is an entrepreneur, not a farmer, a businessman who went into business, Mr. Manichand in Manzanilla, who has a 50-acre plot, he is doing extremely well. He has a new system of planting of new varieties, making over 1,000 pounds of dried cocoa per year with the average being 100 because most people have part-time farms with a little cocoa on it with all sorts of other things.

And, of course, Phillip Agostini, who has an excellent market for his cocoa. He will survive when the rest of the industry goes, because he sells to one manufacturer in France and he has it down to, like the wine thing now, he is even getting his cocoa called "Gran Couva cocoa". So, we have a district in Trinidad that is now going to become famous for a certain quality of cocoa. That is what we should be doing in other districts.

But, we also need to tackle the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board and, really, if the Prime Minister would allow me to be impertinent and rather forthright and suggest that, perhaps, a businessman like Sen. Gillette should be put in charge of the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board. I think that would really be doing something for agriculture in this country. Because, how could you possibly market cocoa? Very nice chap, very nice man, very competent, tries his best. How can you take a civil servant and put him in charge of the international marketing of cocoa? To market cocoa to Cadbury and Mars and these multi-national companies, you must have a businessman. The chairman is never a businessman; the Chief Executive Officer is never a businessman; and we are marketing our cocoa internationally. Why are we playing around? I do not believe that Government should control everything.

There are certain things that Government cannot do and one thing it cannot do is to market cocoa internationally. Privatize it if that is the thing to do. Privatize the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board. I have no difficulty with that, once the farmers get a good deal, but you must re-establish an industry, or they will have nothing to market and that is the real problem. That is the real issue we have to address.

So, Mr. President, I think we can develop the agricultural industry in two ways, by ready markets for export crops like cocoa, and there are others that one could suggest and by new crops—you know, my present prejudice is for the dwarf pommecythere—like the dwarf pommecythere which will put you into all sorts of marvellous products. That is a new industry. Traditional ones like cocoa, you

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develop the domestic market by feeding it into the School Feeding Programme and not just for poor children, all the kids at school.

When my children were at school in the United Kingdom, there was no choice, they ate in the school cafeteria, they paid a nominal fee, so the ones who could pay, paid. It was probably subsidized anyhow; but the ones who could pay, pay, and the others who cannot pay, give them a chit at the beginning of the year. Do not let the other people know they are getting it free. At the beginning of the year, you buy chits and certain children are given chits free. A sum of \$350 million a year.

Take the take from the lotto and put it into that and you are putting a nation of healthy children and, in addition to that, you are going to teach those children what it is to have local meals based on local ingredients. You will wean them in advance away from McDonald's, Burger whatever it is and KFC. We can do it. We have it within our power to do it. There is no magic about it.

But, what do we do? We try to do incentive programmes that have failed miserably in the past; we try to re-invite, to give some money for buying a tractor, or buying a pick-up, or ploughing a bit of land, or digging a pond. That is open to corruption. It does not increase agricultural productivity. It is a complete waste of time. Perhaps, now, with the change of Minister, it will go out. I hope so, but there may be something in the budget too, for that to continue.

Mr. President: You have one minute left. I do not mean to interrupt you.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: Mr. President, we can do it. We can do it. We can do it. But, we have to change what we are doing; do something new and then we will succeed in the agricultural sector.

Thank you, Sir. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette): Mr. President, [*Desk thumping*] I rise to support the Appropriation Bill 1999/2000 which was presented by the hon. Minister of Finance.

It is with deep pride and a sense of duty to my fellow citizens that I stand before this honourable Senate to undertake my first official responsibility as a Government Senator. [*Desk thumping*]

I would like to thank hon. Senators for the general support and the warm welcome that has been extended to me on becoming a Member of Parliament. I also look forward to working with Members on both sides of this honourable Senate [*Desk thumping*] in bringing about the true transformation for our society

and in ensuring that every citizen of this country benefits from the renewed vibrancy of our economy.

There has been much talk about there not being any change with the budget. Let me give you a little story that I can share with you. It goes something like this. There was this person in New York who owned a very large company and he came into the company one day and saw his financial guy fighting with his accountant, and his accountant fighting with his marketing guy. He looked at everybody. Everybody was very upset. He looked at his financial controller and said, "Let me ask you a question. How much money do I have in the bank?" And the controller says, "\$50 million in the bank." Then he says, "And how much accounts receivable do you have?" He says, "Well, that is under control; it is within 30 days." "What about your payables?" He says, "Well, that is under control, too; it is within 30 days." "What about your inventory levels?" He says, "That is perfect. He says, "You all continue fighting. I am out of here. I am going to play golf." [*Laughter*]

This really brings to bear that we have accepted that the economy is going in the right direction so why should we try to shake it or change it, when we already have a proven method.

If you look at some of the statistics, Mr. President, the economy has registered growth every year with real GDP increasing at a yearly average of 4.5 per cent for the four-year period 1996—1999. This represents a significant improvement when compared to GDP growth of 1.1 per cent for the comparative period 1992—1995. World GDP really averages at 2 per cent per year.

Inflation has been consistently in low single digits, averaging about 4 per cent over the same period. That is remarkable.

Unemployment has moved from a high of 19.8 per cent in 1993 to a low of 13.7 per cent projected for 1999. This is really reported in the Central Statistical Office Labour Force Bulletin.

The country's debt service burden has been reduced and our debt service commitments have been lowered from 15 cents to 9 cents on every dollar exported, and I do not even know that local companies in the private sector can boast of such a success, so that is really a feat to accomplish. I really look at the cash flows of the country, Mr. President. I think, more than anything else, you can make all of the balancing, you can make all of the profits, but if you do not have cash at the end of any fiscal year, you have a problem.

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When you look at the Central Bank reserves which have increased from US \$652 million in 1995 to a projected \$1.3 billion at the end of 1999, that is really remarkable. That is good cash management by any standards. [*Desk thumping*] I think, really, the economy is well-placed for the integration into the world economy, and I think that we can really withstand any effects of international or economic turmoil.

As a businessman, I am well aware of the positive implications of this for our private sectors. Private sectors can now actually go on the international market and have the credibility to borrow at lower interest rates, whether it be prime plus one per cent. I would even like to say *libor* plus one per cent maybe, because we have the international rating and the confidence that we can do what we say we are going to do. That is very important.

In referring to Sen. Prof. Spence who spoke about the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer, if you look at page 13 of the budget of the Minister of Finance, he said that small business loans will be increased from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million. They have already been implemented. That, to me, opens a whole new area of business of what I call the knowledge-based industry. It is from half a million to \$1.5 million. You really cannot spend this money on capital expenditure and equipment.

Knowledge-based businesses are really derived from the growth of the internet as you see in the United States of America—portal designs, web designs, host designs. If we can literally take our graduating students out of the university and say, “Listen, you can now design on the internet and export these services overseas”, can you imagine what that would do for us? The whole of the 1980s, what I call the American revolution when companies like Microsoft, America Online and Netscape, these companies; it was remarkable in the 80s. As a matter of fact, they out-performed the blue chip companies and I think that Trinidad and Tobago is well poised to really do that.

This particular thing here which I think people have really glossed over, which is this loan thing right here, it means that university students can now come out and access loans and develop knowledge-based businesses with two or three people and that is something that becomes tremendous in the future. It does not deal with great capital expenditure; it deals with probably buying one or two PCs, developing portals, developing web-based systems for businesses and exporting them on an international level. So, that is really remarkable.

One of the most important things that I think is in the budget that I liked, after we are through with all the numbers, is on page 17. It says:

“Proper parenting and schooling are essential.”

I think that, really, is the heart of the budget as the hon. Minister said. It is a people’s budget. By actually putting a lot of resources into proper parenting, we would have better kids coming out in the future; commitment to marriage; lower domestic violence; rounded individuals; people with pride and integrity; good family life and good family values. Those are the kids who are going to be the future of this country and I think that we have really missed this point if we do not look at it on page 17:

“Proper parenting and schooling are essential”

for the future of this country. That is the vision I would like to see into the ensuing millennium.

Mr. President, my appointment at this critical juncture in the development of our country provides me with a true opportunity to contribute to this Government’s vision for our country. I hope that I will bring to bear a unique perspective on some of the nagging problems that plague this Government’s valiant attempts at economic and social development and transformation.

During the course of this year, I will work with the hon. Prime Minister, my ministerial colleagues, as well as public servants throughout the country, in fulfilling my mandate to function as an agent of change.

I would also like to say something in reference to Sen. Danny Montano when he said that we should really try to encourage to buy local. I really have been an advocate of buying local and supporting local businesses. I think we produce fantastic products locally. We should also try to drink local. But, what we should also try to encourage is to also marry local, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] Sorry, I just had to do that.

Mr. President, once again, I thank you for the privilege of addressing this honourable Senate and I look forward to a cordial and constructive working relationship with all Members.

Thank you, Sir. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Daly: Bring Reeza now. Let us hear the contrast.

3.50 p.m.

Sen. Agnes Williams: Mr. President, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this budget debate for our financial year ending September 30, 2000. First of all, I want to congratulate my colleague, Sen. The Hon. Vimala Tota-

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Maharaj, on her promotion. I think that in any ministry to which she goes, she will be a credit and I know that the Health Ministry is a great challenge, but she can work something out. So, we look forward to improvement in the Health Ministry with her being there. I must welcome our newest Senator, Senator The Hon. Lindsay Gillette, who just gave us a shot and disappeared from his seat.
[Laughter]

I must also congratulate our Minister of Finance for his additional duties as the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Planning and Development. I always felt that finance and planning and development went hand in hand, and that it should not have been separated when he had the job. For Tobagonians, that should be a plus because we have to deal with one Minister in Finance and Planning and Development instead of two ministers. [Desk thumping] I know that the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Planning and Development, Sen. Kuei Tung, always listens to our Tobagonian pleas, and I have great hope that in this coming year he will continue to listen to our pleas and give us equitable financing for the Tobago House of Assembly.

My job is difficult, yet easy. Mr. President, I have heard about all the numbers and it has been bandied about in the newspaper and everywhere by my other colleagues that Tobago needs more adequate financing. I agree with that sentiment, but it is not only this present Government alone that has been in the stingy syndrome. I have to be truthful. We have statistics here that show us.

This document is *An Analysis of the 1999/2000 Capital Budget* prepared by the Tobago House of Assembly. In Appendix I concerning the development programme or the PSIP programme, for the years 1990—1999/2000, the trend has been the same where our allocation in the PSIP has just been a mere 4 per cent. There were times when we went to about 9 per cent, but there is an average of 5 per cent of the national allocation from the PSIP. In our recurrent budget also, in the analysis for the recurrent estimates prepared by the Assembly, when we look at our analysis for 1999/2000, the most Tobago ever got of the national pie is about 2.9 per cent in the year 1999.

Mr. President, in his budget presentation, our Minister of Finance and Minister of Planning and Development has reaffirmed and reassured the Tobago House of Assembly that he is willing to continue the dialogue with Tobago to ensure that we conform with the provisions of Act No. 40 of 1996—the THA Act. We have been given some more hope again in Tobago that despite our ploddings over the past 10 years for more of the national budget, we believe that at this point in time, our new Minister of Finance and Minister of Planning and Development

has suddenly realized that we have a case. After 10 years—and we know this dialogue will always continue.

It would take someone who is blind not to realize that in our Tobago Development Plan, Report No. 4, the entire draft Tobago Development Plan has been done in sync or in collaboration with the Medium-Term Development Plan for the whole nation. In Tobago, we have not gone astray from the national plan. All our Tobago planning has been in line with what the national planning really says; things like transshipment, development of the tourism industry, developing our human and social resources concerning proper parenting, education. If one looks at the documents, we are all in sync with the same line.

Mr. President, if we critically analyze the Tobago Development Plan, the goals and aspirations there are the same. They are cohesive with our national policies and our Medium-Term Development Plan. They are not in conflict with the national policy. All we need is to just sit and work out the situation between Tobago and Trinidad, have more meaningful dialogue, open our ears and listen.

There is a moral obligation by any ruler. I firmly believe that the powers that be are ordained by God. No man puts himself in position. The good Lord allows people to be in position, and when we are in position, we are supposed to make decisions for fairness, equity and the good of the country. The Good Book says that the heart of the king or the ruler is in the hands of God, and God turns it whithersoever he wills. So, the powers that be are ordained by God, and I agree that our Government is in power because God allows them to be in power. One cannot believe half of the *Bible* and not believe the other half. The powers that be are ordained by God and they should be doing the best for the country.

Mr. President, I am more encouraged today to know that after 10 years of getting stingy budgets, we have a Tobago Development Plan which our Government can look into. The trend was there and, as Sen. Prof. Spence said, we looked at maybe numbers, population size and just gave budgets, but we have been plodding, and I am sure that our ploddings have not fallen on deaf ears.

If we all sit as reasonable men and women and go through this development plan for Tobago, check it in line with our national plans, we would see that there are ways and means that we can really have the lot of our smaller island improve. We have confidence that our ministers in our Government are looking at what Tobago wants, because next year is a very important year for our country. Everybody wants the people to know that each person is doing good for the people so that we can win the votes. Sometimes we have our personality differences that we can put aside and have heart to heart talks, look at the moral

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obligations, see what each other is asking for. It is all for the improvement of the economy of our nation.

Sometimes when I read parts of the Minister's budget speech, I wonder if I am reading parts of the Tobago Development Plan. There are some of the same phrases, the same ideas, the same concepts, so we are not really in disunity in that area. All we need to do is just continue working together, continue bargaining and in the long run we will have an equitable balance for the country. When Tobago is fully developed along proper economic lines, the multiplier effect will spill over to Trinidad.

As one of our Senators said, many of the people in Tobago who are employed in the Hilton project are Tobagonians who have been trained, found no employment in Tobago, came to Trinidad to work and they are working over there, too. I can put my hands on many of our Tobagonian professionals who could not have found jobs in Tobago and are employed even in Trinidad and all over the world; especially in the Caribbean. Many of our bright boys and girls.

Mr. President, at this point I just want to impress upon our population that at times one asks and asks for something. One does not always get the answer on the same day. Even with a parent and a child, the child might ask the parent for a new car and the parent might say that he is only 17 years old. He might keep asking year after year, and by the age of 21 he might get the new car. Most likely, if the parent has the means he will get it, and right now, our bigger sister or brother has the means. We have been asking and asking from Tobago, and I am confident that we will get more financial assistance, more of a listening ear in Tobago.

As I said before, what is happening now is not a new trend. It could have been that it is easier to work with an old trend, but we in Tobago have been appealing more and more for all our programmes. Even in our health sector, we heard that the Minister wants to open a hostel for women. We in Tobago have that in our plans also. We also need to have funds to help us with respect to gender issues.

I am talking from my heart, Mr. President. At times we have to throw aside political difference and decide what we need for our country. Where do we go? I am saying today that after many years of us having just 2.9 per cent or 5 per cent, the time has come and the time is here when we will be listened to.

Tobago has been in the news for the past few weeks with all sorts of issues, and I was heartened to see that our credit rating on the bond market, the national credit rating, has improved. It gives me hope that the credit rating can redound to the good of Tobago and the House of Assembly later on. The Act provides for us

to be able to get loans or grants from international agencies, and in that respect, I feel good, because what happens in the national community should redound to the Tobago House of Assembly also. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, the Minister, in his budget speech, spoke about new areas of revenue and revenue collection. That has been enunciated in our Tobago Development Plan. Once again, we are not in conflict. We have been trying to explore all the means or areas where revenues have not been properly collected that we can properly budget and account and bring more into the national coffers. There are people who evade taxes and others avoid taxes. One is legal and one is illegal. The Act provides that businessmen should pay their revenue into the Tobago House of Assembly fund. We are having discussions on those lines at the moment with central government, and I believe that working together in harmony is the only way we can go in the future.

4.05 p.m.

Trying to antagonize each other would not work. We need to work in a harmonious relationship, sit like big men and women, reasonable people, and discuss everything. Mr. President, I would not go the way of attacking anybody, although I am being needled in this corner here to say some things, but I would not say anything.

I still compliment the Minister of Finance in the way he has done his budget because he has done his budget in another way, maybe not acceptable to all, novel, and maybe if I were in his position I might have done the same thing. He has created a lot of dialogue and controversy and people have had to dig deep to understand what is going on.

One piece of wisdom that he has done in this budget is that he has pegged the budget at \$16 per barrel. I remember the last time he had it at \$17 there was a lot of talk when the prices fell, that he was wrong, or he had to do it over and I lived to see that he did not have to do over that budget. Using the figure of \$16 has been astute, it is very conservative. I read today in the *Trinidad Guardian*, Tuesday, October 26, 1999, where "Oil closes 11 cents weaker, Brent crude settled at \$22.81 per barrel". Our economy has been subject to all the fluctuations of oil prices and putting it at \$16 a barrel, I think, is very wise. He can have his oil stabilization fund to take care of those fluctuations.

So I want to compliment the Minister of Finance for what he has been doing over the past years and trying to do to keep our economy stable. In his Blueprint for Human Development and Sustainable Growth, he has done it his way, like

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Frank Sinatra said, “I did it my way”. I think he did it his way. We may not all understand or like it, but that is democracy.

Today, I want to say thanks, Mr. President for a small contribution and intervention in this budget debate. I am just saying that I have great hope that in the future we will continue in Tobago and Trinidad to have meaningful dialogue that we can work out our problems and get our economy going in a sustainable growth to benefit the entire nation.

Thank you, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Philip Hamel-Smith: Mr. President, it feels good to be back on my feet to make a contribution to this debate. It has been quite a while, maybe too long.

I would like to join the chorus of voices in congratulating our two new ministers. Firstly, Sen. The Hon. Tota-Maharaj and, as others have said, I am sure she brings a new breath of air to the Ministry of Health, and I am sure would be a very positive contributor to the fortunes of that sector which we are all so concerned about. To our new senatorial colleague, Sen. Lindsay Gillette, I was minded to offer him a few words of advice, but after that contribution a few minutes ago, it seems that he can well take care of himself.

Mr. President, I would like to begin my brief contribution by firstly attempting to put this 1999/2000 budget statement of the hon. Minister into perspective. I attempt to do so by painting a backdrop against which—to use the Minister’s words—a Blueprint for Human Development and Sustainable Growth was cast.

I think, as was pointed out by one or two others, that it is important that we do not read or listen or view the hon. Minister's blueprint as a static isolated statement or document. It is clear to me that it is one in a series and the hon. Minister took great pains to point out that this was his fifth effort at shaping the economy of Trinidad and Tobago in a way that—to use his words—“impacts on the lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago in a positive and meaningful way.” He stresses that all five budgets of his have been people-focused and people-centred.

Over the last four years, we seem to have become accustomed and taking for granted real economic growth which, as we have heard, averages about 3.5 per cent per annum over this period. It is true to say, and I include myself, that in these four years of real growth, we have all got accustomed to not only the effects of it, but the benefits that flow from this growth. We have also grown accustomed to a progressive fall in the rates of inflation. Some of us conveniently forget life when inflation rates back in 1993 were choking us at an astronomical 13.5 per

cent; that was just 1993. At the end of the second quarter the annualized rate of inflation stands at 1.7 per cent. It has also been pointed out by the hon. Minister, and I remind you, our foreign reserves have more than doubled in these four years and the country's debt service burdens have been significantly reduced. All of these have been alluded to in the budget statement.

Our unemployment, identified quite rightly earlier on in the debate as one of our social ills, has been the subject of much concern. A review of the published statistics will reveal a rate of 11.7 per cent prevailing at the end of June. Of course, again, we could conveniently forget that the index rates for unemployment peaked at nearly 20 per cent in 1993; we forget very quickly.

Allow me, Mr. President, to digress a bit and once and for all get rid of the repeated attempts to discredit the Minister's statement relative to this issue of employment. We have heard that echo many, many times. I refer this honourable Senate to the *Labour Force Bulletin* put out by the Central Statistical Office, Vol. 16, No. 59, dealing with the labour force for the quarter ending June 1999. I would like to read three short statements into the record. Hopefully, it will once and for all, put this issue to rest. It says here:

“The number of persons with jobs increased by approximately thirteen thousand (13,000)...”

In the quarter ending June 30, 1999.

“Inversely, the number of unemployed persons decreased by approximately 13,000 persons...”

The second statement, I think, is very interesting. It makes it quite clear that the total unemployed as a percentage of total labour force declined from 14.1—which was captured in one of the budgetary documents—to the said 11.7 per cent.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Where did the jobs come from?

Sen. P. Hamel-Smith: In fact, the answer to the question of where the jobs came from is quite comprehensively dealt with in here. It is a voluminous document, but in fact, goes sector by sector, age group by age group. What I am going to identify really, for those who have talked about the effect on the female population, is quite revealing. The statement here is:

“On the other hand...the number of females with jobs increased by ten thousand and seven hundred (10,700)...”

We are talking about this quarter. So of the 13,100 increase, 10,700 were females, or by 6.1 per cent. The unemployment rate among females declined by 3.7 per

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cent in this quarter alone. So it would seem, at least, during the quarter under review here, that there had been a significant impact on the female working population.

I saw someone during the course of the debate—I am not sure who it was—actually handling this document and, certainly in response to Sen. Prof. Spence's question, I think it is a document that we should get our hands on because it is very informative and rather very interesting reading. Like most of the other Senators here, I, too, have grave concerns about the level of unemployment.

Mr. President, even if we are slow to give credit to the Panday Administration for some of these identified achievements, we cannot but give some credit to the hon. Minister for maintaining a prudent fiscal policy, while pursuing unquestionably sound economic management practices.

On the social front, among the many achievements, are those highlighted, I think, firstly by Sen. Marshall and others, which are captured in that United Nations report which was referred to. I, again, make reference to that report. I myself have read abstracts from it and whereas there are various ways you can interpret the information in there—it does give us information that puts some of our concerns at ease, to the extent that we are facing in the right direction, and that we are identifying where the problems are—this is not to suggest that poverty is no longer with us. Certainly, what I am suggesting is that this current administration is, in fact, taking the issue of poverty seriously and is doing something about it.

Mr. President, one of the criticisms of the budget statement is that it only looks back. I think that was one of the headlines that the Dailies had captured. I think that, indeed, is a shallow view of the Minister's statement. I have also opted to look back, if only to underscore the rationale for the way forward as charted by the hon. Minister's blueprint. Without the need for the imposition of any new or increased taxes, the hon. Minister would generate income, enough to support an enhanced PSIP which he has priced at \$1.884 billion. Hopefully, with the energy and skill of the new blockbuster, we will achieve a record implementation rate under this programme. If we have reviewed our previous PSIPs, the area of concern for most of us would, in fact, be that numerical, the implementation digit. I think that the Prime Minister's move to include the hon. Sen. Lindsay Gillette is, in fact, a move in the direction to address that concern which we all have, implementation. Therefore, I look forward to fairly high implementation rates in the current year of this highly criticized and optimistic PSIP budget.

I have no doubt that the hon. Minister of Finance in his response will deal with some of his critics who have questioned the projected enhanced revenue picture for the 12-month period. Mr. President, I take the liberty to digress a bit to establish clearly how at least one of these revenue figures presented by the hon. Minister has been arrived at. I have taken the liberty to examine the revenue figures projected from the energy sector.

Mr. President, the tax revenues from oil and gas production would be considerably enhanced in 1999/2000 as the effect of the tax incentives from gas field development becomes less burdensome. By saying that, what I am drawing to the honourable Senate's attention is just underscoring the fact that in the recent past, our revenues have suffered by the very steep write-offs that the companies involved in exploration and production have enjoyed. Therefore, to state it another way, the revenue stream has been artificially depressed by those write-offs. Now that period has more or less blown away and, therefore, without any additional things being done, we are poised to enjoy a far higher revenue stream from these quarters. Therefore, this is one of the issues that clearly gives rise to the level of comfort that I certainly have for enhanced tax revenues from this sector.

4.20 p.m.

Additionally, of course, we know that the Atlantic LNG Plant which was commissioned on April 19, 1999 would now be captured in its entirety—a whole 12-month period. The benefits which have been referred to in many of the economic commentaries that we have seen, of course, only capture a small part of the year and, therefore that additionally, adds to the increased income that could be anticipated from the energy sector. Both the gas revenue and the condensate production resulting from this commissioning would provide a boost.

We also have—and I think the hon. Minister mentioned this in his address—the advent of a new Titan Methanol Plant that is soon to be commissioned during this period under review. Its direct contribution, as an additional process plant, will enhance the throughput of natural gas and therefore increase volumes of LPG resulting in enhanced revenues again. These things having been said, the more obvious contributors, of course, to the comfort level of that additional \$916 million, is the fact that the projected oil price for the year is significantly higher than in previous years. For the first time this projection of oil price that has been captured in the budget statement, has not come under the kind of criticism to which we have become accustomed. I think it just means that the Minister of Finance has stabbed at it, in a way that is conservative enough for everybody to

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feel comfortable with, but realistic enough to provide some sort of balance for his budget.

If we also recognized that the way crude oil is sold is that in fact it is priced ahead, we realized that we are already enjoying about four or five months of pricing at known levels and therefore, the prices that we are fetching for our crude would hold somewhere out there into the future and therefore our exposure to any significant market fluctuations is that much reduced. So, I think at \$16 we have hit it well, and therefore, I look forward to that Stabilization Fund kicking off quite significantly this year. Additionally, although not all that significantly, our crude oil production is starting to show signs of improvement and is expected to grow at about 5 per cent for the current year. This, of course, comes along with the increased exploration work that is going on and with the gas production, in fact, it produces a significant level of condensate with it.

So I think with all that added together, we have all the rationale you need to support the higher level of revenue that the energy sector is targeted to produce. Understandably, however, everybody could have come up with a measure or two, however small, which may have been worthy of inclusion in this year's budget. Instead, the Minister in his wisdom has sought to keep a good thing intact.

It has worked for us, as almost all economic commentators have concluded; as Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt indicated, if the formula is working, why change it. The Minister, instead, has not been tempted to throw in some election goodies, but has demonstrated restraint and prudence and for this, I commend him. If he has erred, he has erred on the side of being conservative, and for somebody in the game of budgeting, I think that is a very good quality. The surprise in this budget, of course, is that there are no surprises. Many people seemed very surprised at that.

Mr. President, permit me to spend just a few more minutes looking at a few specific issues that I have found worthy of highlighting. Firstly, I want to respond to the unfounded criticism of the view that nothing in the budget is being done to promote and facilitate private-sector investment. There was a cry for figures, more figures. But I respond to this criticism by simply quoting just one basic statistic: the non-oil sector exports have grown by 20 per cent compounded over the last four years. I am sure you will agree with me that that has not happened by chance.

Additionally, I cannot but draw the Senate's attention to a banner article found in the September issue of the linkage publication of the American Chamber headlined; "AmCham Members continue to have confidence in the T&T

Economy.” Mr. President, a few brief quotations from that article speak for themselves. It says:

“The Trinidad and Tobago economy has performed creditably over the last five years with economic growth averaging 3.5 per cent per year and inflation showing a declining trend..”

Later in the article, it says:

“SURVEY FINDINGS:

You will be encouraged to know that from a wide cross section of members surveyed, no falling off in investment is anticipated for 1999 to 2001.

While decline is anticipated for some categories of investors, increases are expected for others.”

It goes on to give some statistics and ends by saying:’

“During the next two years they plan to invest almost the same amount. On the question of employment, no reduction by our members is planned in these years.”

Mr. President, there was a fairly comprehensive survey done of the foreign investment community that is represented in the American Chamber and these are some captions of the results from that survey. I think, if nothing else, it gives us some measure of comfort, that a significant corner of the investment community in Trinidad is fairly confident that the economy is poised to go in the right direction. These investment flows have not in general assumed the character of portfolio investment of a speculative variety. Hence the likelihood of sudden capital flight as experienced in Mexico and South East Asia is very remote. This is another concern people have that the bubble will just burst. We do not have that kind of speculative portfolio investment that these other countries have been subjected to. The economic growth that we have attempted to take for granted will be with us for a while, once the Ministry of Finance continues to reside where prudence and financial discipline exists. For me, Mr. President, more of the same is good enough.

I want to just touch on some of the initiatives that have been undertaken to create more market space for the locally-produced products. This is an activity that goes without being noticed and taken for granted, but this administration has spent plenty time and energy pursuing this policy of trying to create more market space for our local manufacturing community. This Government has long recognized the challenge which faces the manufacturer in the international trade

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landscape, and these manufacturers have been the beneficiary of many trade negotiations that have been pursued in the recent past.

This Government, faithful to the spirit of the Chaguaramas Treaty, has pursued with the rest of Caricom, negotiations to access the markets of the Dominican Republic, the Andean Community which is Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. We have done the same in the Central American Community Market such as Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Where Caricom has not been able to address our localized needs or, maybe, not moving as fast as we would like them to, we have individually embarked on bilateral negotiations as in the case of Mexico, Panama and Costa Rica. All of these negotiations have augured very positively for our manufacturing community and export products. In addition to this, bilateral investment treaties have been signed with Canada, United States of America, the Mercursor Group, Dominican Republic, France and the United Kingdom. Of course we have also played a lead role in the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations which are ongoing. Presently, negotiations are ongoing to provide Trinidad and Tobago with an enhanced Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) package, and discussions on a new Lome V deal is also being pursued. All this adds up to Government fulfilling its role as a facilitator to the private sector, the declared engine of growth.

I would just like to spend a few more seconds, if I may, and pass on to the tourism sector, being one which has the potential to address both human development and sustainable growth—the banners of this budget statement. Sen. Marshall highlighted the critical role that this sector has to play in the continuing growth of our intellectual capital. Mr. President, I underscore this view and in the area of human development, I wish to highlight a few specific initiatives.

We all would have heard many years ago of the Hotel School—some of us might wonder whether this still exists. I just want to say that this is, in fact, a revived initiative; alive and well. In fact, presently there are two campuses of the Hotel School; one, in Trinidad and the latest in Tobago.

The programme offers a very wide scope as you could well expect and in fact, from the very smallest and lowest level of jobs in the catering and related skills, it now goes as far as offering an associated degree to some persons who enter the school.

4.30 p.m.

Less known than this Hotel School may be the Frontier Services Programme which provides specialized training for customs and immigration officers. This

shows that there is some sensitivity in the tourism thrust on which we are embarking. This frontier services programme is attempting and driving in the direction of equipping our customs and immigration officers to deal in a more hospitable, humane and welcoming way with our ever-increasing number of visitors.

I also understand, and maybe our Minister of National Security could confirm that there is also specialized police training targeted for this tourism sector. The job creation potential of the tourism sector is well known to be very expansive. The direct employment is currently calculated at one and one-half permanent jobs for each new hotel bed. In fact, I am very familiar with the soon to be commissioned Tobago Hilton and the employment rate. The permanent job employment level targeted for that particular project would be in excess of one and a half jobs per bed.

The growth possibilities for this sector are managed in a very consistent way with the tourism master plan as well as the Tobago Development Plan, previously referred to, which is both focussed and targeted and I would like to put some of Sen. Prof. Spence's fears at rest in that this tourism master plan, along with this Tobago Development Plan does not project tourism in the mass way that some people's fears suggest. The planned development is going to be very controlled in both size, designs, and location and although you would expect and see some of the brand name resort hotels arriving on the island, I do not think that big names should be turned back. Big names, yes, but not big buildings. Therefore, if you see the Four Seasons, the Hilton, the Marriott and the Hyatt, I do not think that is reason to fear provided they are doing their development within the confines and the parameters of the designed development plan for Tobago.

The growth to date has been steady and consistent, with visitor arrivals increasing at about 7 per cent per annum. The Minister of Works and Transport dealt with the question of airlifts and I would like to endorse what he said and let you know that on a weekly basis, additional flights have been attracted to our sister island of Tobago. There are flights coming in from North America directly into Tobago, from the United Kingdom, and from Germany and it is quite revealing to be at Crown Point Airport when some of these new airlifts arrive there. It augurs very well for the economy of Tobago.

If you ask the average hotelier in Tobago of his current occupancy rate, he is likely to report higher than 80 per cent and that is in a situation where the hotel rooms are, in fact, expanding so I think it is quite commendable. Just that you would have something to compare that against, back in 1995, the average

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occupancy rates using a lower number of hotel beds was 49 per cent. A major boost to this sector is likely to come very shortly with the advent of the passage of the Tourism Development Bill which is before the House for debate, and which of course, as you know, replaces the Hotel Development Act. This Bill will, for the first time, offer incentives that address an expansive group of activities that never before were offered. I look forward to hearing the views of all in the Senate and getting their support for the passage of that much needed bill.

Mr. President, we can individually dissect the budget sector by sector and find repeated initiatives that address both human development and sustainable growth. I leave that for everybody to do on their own and on this note I rest my case.

Fellow Senators, I commend this budget statement to you for your support. Thank you.

Mr. President: We will take the tea break at this stage. The sitting is now suspended until 5.10 p.m.

4.35 p.m. *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Mr. President, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on matters arising from the budget statement by the honourable Minister of Finance. I do not intend to take advantage today, of the fact that the budget debate seldom recognizes the offside rule, but I may yet require your indulgence in the matter of injury time.

Mr. President, I intend to confine myself to educational issues, though, I would like to make one or two—what people may call—“crankish” remarks about the Government’s economic policy. Just to satisfy my conscience. Certain things worry me about the country’s finances and our economic policy and it probably is because I do not really understand the way the figures work all that well.

When I look at *The Review of the Economy*, I wonder if we are as well off as the Minister would like us to think we are. I really cannot understand—and I am not being ironic—I am sure that the Minister would be able to explain it to me, I hope he will. When I look at the balance of visible trade 1990—1998, imports are greater than exports. When I look at revenue and expenditure for the same period, expenditure exceeds revenue. So, I am wondering whether that is a worrying matter about the economy. When I go down to line five, in the Balance of Payments Summary, under Current Account, there are deficits, but in line seven, where the Minister talks about overall surplus and deficits, we are getting overall

surplus. I do not understand how—given the figures concerning revenue and expenditure, imports and exports, and given the deficit on the current account—we are still running a surplus. Maybe the Minister will explain.

Secondly, the second crank remark. Last night, I cringed hearing somebody on the news talk about opening up Trinidad and Tobago to outsiders and selling this country to the world. I cringed because I believe or fear, that selling the country is essentially what is being done by a policy of seeking out foreign investors, who inject money into the country, and stoke up the economy to run at an unnatural rate, the rate required to feed ourselves and the investor. If I go into economics you all will have to give it up. *[Laughter]*

Mr. President, if foreign investment is welcomed as a way of diversifying the economy, how come the majority of the foreign investors are coming to milk either the petroleum sector or the utilities? What kind of diversification of the economy is that? It was bad enough to accept that we have to give people a pile of money to come to run the post office, but it is really frightening to be told that we do not know what to do with Lake Asphalt.

Thirdly, I am disturbed by the decision to enter into an arrangement about a desalination plant, without any discussion of the issue in Parliament and without any satisfactory rebuttal of the argument that if we had spent money on dams, reservoirs and lakes and fixed the leaks in the system, we would have solved the problem of supplying water to citizens; we would have dealt with the problem of flooding and we would have made a contribution to environmental care. How come this never got debated? How come we never got a chance to make the point? How come the points were never rebutted? The only merit of a desalination plant and a farmer's disaster relief fund that I can see is that it could be delivered before party time comes around. Incidentally, Mr. President, I wonder if the honourable Minister can tell the Senate how much we are charging the desalination people for the use of our seawater? They are coming and taking our seawater and selling it back to us. We should be charging them for that.

Mr. President, I also want to say something about the gross domestic product. I want to say aloud that a gross domestic product figure, jacked up by investment is not something to be proud of. It is only an announcement to the world that this is a place where you can come and make a hefty profit. This is a good place for you to come and invest and very little of that investment and that jacked up gross domestic product benefit the majority of people in this country. The standard of living of the majority of the people may inch up, but not in the correct ratio to the increase in the gross domestic product.

5.20 p.m.

Why is it, Mr. President, that we are talking about attaching agriculture to the School Feeding Programme? Why do we not talk about attaching agriculture to the everybody feeding programme? Is it only school children who could eat vegetables and fruit? Why do we not make a determined effort to yoke agricultural production to the food supply for everybody? Why does it have to be the schools only?

I shall make two more points, Mr. President. The late Hamel Legall was untiring in his argument that one day natural gas will become more important than crude oil. When I look in the *Review of the Economy* I cannot get any evidence to let me know which is bringing in more, natural gas or crude oil? I would like the figures in the Review—maybe the Minister of Energy can enlighten me later on, to indicate what shifts there might be between crude oil and natural gas. Mr. Legall was always worrying about what would happen with the price of natural gas and, from what I gather, we have pegged the price of natural gas to the people who are purchasing it for the next 20 years. I wonder, Mr. President, if we have not boxed ourselves in there by pegging the price for such a long period.

Finally, I would just like to state a very old-fashioned view. I state it because I have listened to or read reports of what Sen. Dr. St. Cyr has said and I have listened to Sen. Prof. Spence this morning about agriculture, about self-sufficiency, *et cetera*. I take the old-fashioned view that our economy will only improve if we can bring ourselves to agree to modify our lifestyle and our habits of consumption. It may be too late for that to become general policy, Mr. President, but I can assure you that a few of us are trying to set an example to young people about how you can change those habits of consumption and how you can change the lifestyle and kill off some of those appetites which are draining the country of very hard-earned foreign exchange.

Mr. President, that was the fun part. I would like now to proceed to some comments on education. If there is one thing that all of Trinidad and Tobago agree on it is the need to improve the education system in this country. In his budget statement delivered when he was merely the Minister of Finance, the hon. Brian Kuei Tung said that:

“...the key to maintaining a country’s competitiveness, relevance and social welfare is education.”

He also referred to education as equipment:

“...to meet the needs of the knowledge based global environment.”

He spoke of it as empowerment

“...to meet the challenges of the next century...”

Mr. President, long before our children became human resources to be developed for economic purposes I, too, was singing a mournful song about the state of education, and from 1987 when I wrote one of my “Matters Arising” columns under the heading “Education System Needs a Complete Revaluation” right up to 1997 when I published an article by Dr. Ian Mc Donald called “Let the Children be Children”, one has returned with despair and urgency to the subject of education, the subject of our children. How often have I wished I could put down my pen and pick up a big stick and take Deaf Ears by their ear and say, “Deaf Ears you can't hear, Deaf Ears you will feel”. Talk does not work.

We all agree that education is important and when we look around we can see a large number of unrelated organizations belonging miscellaneously to the state, to the state's investing partners, to foreign countries, to private citizens, all of them providing different kinds of education. More important than all of this is the Government's commitment as well to education. According to the budget statement the Government intends that by the year 2001 there shall be primary school places for all children who want them and by 2003 secondary school places will be available for all those coming out of the primary schools. If we achieve that it would be a wonderful thing and we would be forever indebted to the Government. I think it is a wonderful agenda.

In the budget statement the hon. Minister specifies a number of laudable goals: the establishment of early childhood care and education programmes, the continuation of primary school building, the continuation of primary school refurbishment, the construction of four secondary schools, all of which fall under a World Bank loan under which we did not perform very well, but I would spare the Government any embarrassment on that. In 1982—1983 a World Bank loan was aborted and this one was nearly aborted because we did not drawdown on it for two years and we lost \$10 million paying interest in 1996 and 1997 for not implementing anything that we were supposed to do under that loan.

Also coming on stream is the Secondary Education Modernization Programme that intends to modernize our secondary education system. The material base for that is the construction of 24 new secondary schools by the year 2001. It is further projected that by the year 2003 every secondary school in Trinidad and Tobago will be able to offer students at minimum a five-year course of full-time instruction. The total cost of this programme is estimated to be US \$150 million. This is a major financial undertaking and a wonderful commitment.

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The Government has committed the people of this country to a programme of education reform and they have committed the people of this country to paying over the next 25 years for the educational reforms we are to put in place in the next five years.

Well, if I am going to have to pay for this for the next 25 years, Mr. President, I want to interfere in Government policy and I want to talk about what should be done. I cannot just take some plans that are foisted on me by the people who have been running the education system badly for the last 20 years, so I hope I would be forgiven for interfering in Government policy and talking. I have to interfere because, with all the business and “busyness” about education that is going on, there is no consensus in this country about what education is or what education is for.

It is an issue that requires us to think for ourselves and to find our own answers. It is an issue that needs to be explored at every level in the society. It is an issue that needs to be agreed to as part of a national plan that will be followed by whatever Government is in power. That is why, as soon as my motion calling for a debate on the workings of Parliament gets on the Order Paper, I am going to table another motion calling for a debate in the Senate on what is education and what is education for, which I hope will be the beginning of a national debate on this central and crucial subject.

Mr. President, one of the classic texts on the subject of education is by Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead was a philosopher-mathematician who was interested in seeing the world whole. He was curious about and trained in mathematics. He had a great interest in the natural sciences. He was Dean of Science at the University of London. He was a thinker of some profundity about aesthetic, moral and religious matters. He was, what I would call, an educated man and he was also an educator. He lectured and he wrote books such as *Science and the Modern World*, 1925; *Process and Reality* in 1929 and *Adventures of Ideas*, 1933, very stimulating even at the present time. However, the one for which he is most famous, and the book that every would-be teacher is called upon to critique when he begins his teaching training is, *The Aims of Education*.

Whitehead was not always right, Mr. President—only Prime Ministers can be always right—but I would like to quote from the opening paragraph of his book and from the closing section of the first chapter as a starting point for my own attempt to add to the very skeletal ideas about education that one can dredge up out of the budget statement. Whitehead starts the first chapter of his book by recognizing two elements in education that are constantly acting upon one

another. One of them he calls culture and the other he calls expertise, being an expert in some special field. He says they are always acting upon one another. He said:

“Culture is activity of thought, and receptiveness to beauty and humane feeling. Scraps of information have nothing to do with it. A merely well-informed man is the most useless bore on God's earth. What we should aim at producing is men and women who possess both culture and expert knowledge in some special direction. Their expert knowledge will give them the ground to start from, and their culture will lead them as deep as philosophy and as high as art.”

After inveighing against the mere accumulation of inert facts, after inveighing against a subjection to mechanical training to do X or Y or Z in a factory, Whitehead outlines the desperate need for an integrated education whose main ideas and interrelations the child should be encouraged to possess and to apply to the circumstances of his actual life. There are two little gobbets here:

“There is only one subject matter for education, and that is Life in all its manifestations.”

He also says:

“Education is the art of the utilisation of knowledge.”

In the closing paragraphs of the chapter he winds himself up and utters a warning against the trivialization of education. He utters a warning about the refusal to cultivate our minds to hold on to enduring truths and values and, at the same time that it is being trained, to cope with the changing world. You cannot learn to cope with the changing world and throw aside all the enduring truths and values that have sustained your civilization. He said:

“When one considers in its length and in its breadth the importance of this question of the education of a nation's young, the broken lives, the defeated hopes, the national failures which result from the frivolous inertia with which it is treated, it is difficult to restrain within oneself a savage rage. In the conditions of modern life the rule is absolute, the race which does not value trained intelligence is doomed. Not all your heroism, not all your social charm, not all your wit, not all your victories on land or at sea can move back the finger of fate. Today we maintain ourselves. Tomorrow science will have moved forward yet one more step, and there will be no appeal from the judgment which will then be pronounced on the uneducated.”

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Mr. President, I have used Whitehead to ease in a critical perspective. Commenting some years ago on another regime's budget, I used the title "economic calculus and philosophical void". A year later, things had not changed. I modified the title of a famous calypso to "Captain gone so bus". Got it? It was "Captain gone soca"—to describe—[*Interruption*] It is kind of far-fetched? Well, I will explain it. "Captain gone soca", now "Captain gone so bus". To describe another budget that had gone bust, bereft of ideas.

I invoke these titles now along with references to Whitehead but restrict myself to the education side. Neither in the budget statement itself, nor in the Public Service Investment Programme, nor in the Medium Term Policy Framework 2000—2002 is there anything that bears the slightest resemblance to a philosophy of education. So, that is the problem, a whole pile of money is being spent. Buildings are being put up; committees are working on curricula; people are implementing this; they are changing one exam to put in another exam; all kinds of things are going on. Busy, busy, busy, but there is no philosophy of education.

I am not critical of the Government's intention. I think, as I said, that it is a great promise being made to the nation that places and schools are going to be provided for all our children who are eligible by 2003 and they want to make every child eligible. It is an automatic right. You are a child; you are five or six years old; you are going to school. You are 12 years old; you are going to school. That is wonderful.

There are many positive features in the Government's plan but the measures appear to be piecemeal, overlapping, uncoordinated and self-contradictory. In the absence of a vision and a philosophy, they seem to conform to a hand-to-mouth and utilitarian view of human nature, human needs and human possibilities. Where is the human being as a feeling, thinking, sensitive animal? Where is this human being in the Government's plans for training and turning us into productive units?

So, I would like to address a number of possibilities that are still open to us given the spending that is going on, on various measures. I have to be careful about time, so I am going fast.

The first thing is early childhood care and education which the Government recognizes is important. Early childhood care and education centres are being built all over the country so that children from the age of four are being brought

into some kind of educational care. In the past, I have advocated these centres and I thought of them as separate institutions, but I have come around to the view that it might be better to attach the early childhood care and education provision to the primary school, so that every primary school should begin two years earlier and have the early childhood care and component building.

This would allow us to lower the compulsory age. The law would say that every child has to go to school from the age of four, because every child in this country needs early childhood care and education. The first suggestion I am making, based on what is there already, is that, yes, let us develop early childhood care and education, but not separately. Let it be part of the primary school; let it be in the same building or on the same grounds; or if you cannot help it, close to the primary school of which it is a part.

The second thing, again, to which the Government is already committed, is the free flow from the primary to the secondary, once there are secondary places for all. Once there are secondary places for all, you do not need an examination to determine the selection process. You abolish the Common Entrance and you abolish his twin brother. What you use in the primary school is the continuous assessment provision that is already established.

So, let us say we are having continuous assessment. Make it clear we are using the exam for a couple of years, but that as soon as we have enough secondary school places, we plan to abolish the exam as an entrance exam and we are using continuous assessment to monitor the growth and the development of our children over the years and within a particular year. So that we build up a profile of each child and we know what are his or her strengths, weaknesses and aptitudes and, by the time that child is 11 or 12, we have a fairly good idea of his or her strengths or weaknesses and where they should go next in the educational system.

If we are having such a free flow, then we have to think very hard about the secondary school and I do not see anything in the budget statement that indicates that any hard thinking has gone on. It is clear from the SEMP documents that the Government is committed that all secondary schools should offer a five-year programme.

Now, in 1968, when the then Government brought in the junior secondary schools, there was going to be this three-year school right after primary school which everybody would have to go to. It was for a three-year period, the junior secondary. That was not a very bad idea and I think they would have found, if it started to work, they would have needed to extend it to five years, that everybody

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goes to the five-year school, there is no prestige attaching to one over any other. But, as we know, that essentially sound plan of the 1968 draft education project was sabotaged by the prestige schools. The prestige schools refused to strip themselves down to five-year schools; they wanted to remain prestige schools and so the system remained intact and this resulted in the nightmare of many of the junior secondary schools that we now have with the shift system and all the anomalies flowing from that.

We now have a chance with the Secondary Education Management Plan to bring back the five-year school that everybody should go to. If we believe in equality of opportunity, if we believe in the elimination of privilege—privilege because one's parent is richer, or one's parent is middle class—we would develop these five-year schools and make them available to everybody.

We have a sense of the aptitudes of the children, we have taught in the primary schools, and because we know that some want to go in a slightly more technical direction, that some are more interested in music, that some are more interested in geology, and so on, our five-year schools must have a common core, a cluster of subjects that all our children in the secondary schools should take. I would say half the subjects. Let us say four subjects, the equivalent of four subjects as a common core for everybody and the other half of the provision would offer options, so the student takes the core and takes the four subjects that suit his or her aptitudes and interests.

In each secondary school, you would accordingly have about three streams. Let us not call them A, B and C because people think C is inferior to A, but the equivalent of the old 1A, 1B and 1C, where 1A does the core plus humanities subjects; 1B does the core plus science subjects; 1C does the core plus other technical subjects. So that within the secondary school, if by Form 3, I am in the C stream and I want to change over, it will be easy enough for me to change over. We should have these five-year secondary schools with a core syllabus and options operating in three streams up to the fifth form level.

Mr. President, these five-year schools will need to be linked to the primary schools that surround them in the community. There may have to be two secondary schools for every five or six primary schools in a community and if you have that, you have a kind of zoning that is going to get rid of the transport problem, because those primary schools which are feeding into the nearby secondary schools will be so close that even if you have to have a shuttle service, it will not be the long kind of transport that you have to organize, and you do this up to the end of the five years.

This, Mr. President, would then put a burden on us to think hard about sixth form schools and a sixth form education. A concept of a sixth form education to be worked out with a common core of the humanities and sciences, but sixth-form is the time that marks the beginning of specialization into fields—technical, vocational, humanities, natural science, science/mathematics, tourism, whatever.

You begin at this point to break up the old kind of secondary school system which collaborates with the university to make people feel that a degree from a polytechnic or a degree in technological studies is inferior. You are introducing at the Form 6 level, the notion that we are developing mind, we are developing aptitudes and that the conventional university degree, which has the tie and jacket associated with it, is not superior to a degree that is going to come from a polytechnic.

Of course, the graduates from these sixth form schools can go into the work force; they can go into industry; or they can go into a re-organized tertiary education level; and there, I have to join Sen. Prof. Spence in saying, stop the foolishness about community colleges and colleges of arts, science and technology. Set up a technical university of Trinidad and Tobago.

You would now have the University of the West Indies Campus which should be made an autonomous Campus of the University of the West Indies; and you would have the Technical University of Trinidad and Tobago, the premier tertiary institutions in Trinidad and Tobago, to which can be linked all the other schools in the island. Then nobody can come here and set up any offshore college; nobody could come down here and sell programmes and take our rich students away. We will have a complete, integrated, educational system that satisfies the needs and aptitudes of all our children.

5.50 p.m.

I work in a university where half of the students should not be. But they are bright people. *[Laughter]* They are there because we only have one kind of university. It is a place where half of the lecturers should not be too, because they should be in another kind of university. They can teach, but they cannot teach in the conventional university where they are now.

I am not knocking the university. I am just saying that the poor University of the West Indies has had to carry the burden of all tertiary education. It has had to spread itself to cover a whole wide range of subjects and, therefore, it cannot proceed in depth in any area. A technical university would free up the University of the West Indies to be an even better university than it is now: smaller, fitter, sleeker, slimmer, real bionic. Make it over.

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Mr. President, I am looking at the proposals in the budget and the willingness to spend money, and I am saying that the kind of thing I am suggesting about creating a coherent system and reorganizing the secondary schools and tertiary education can be done, given the present plans of the Government. All we need is the will and the vision to create that integrated system.

This system that is being proposed would combine training with education and kick out the invidious distinction we are sometimes forced to make between them. It would break down the prejudice at the tertiary level which seems to exist in favour of the conventional university and against polytechnics, and so forth. It will give to graduates of both types of institutions common programmes in cultural literacy, including environmental science, cultural practice, and so forth.

I move now to some practical points about the educational system and, particularly, the primary and secondary. I have to go fast. I think much work needs to be done on curriculums, because if one is devising a new system—a whole integrated system—curriculums will have to dovetail into one another. A need for expanded teacher training, and although I vowed never to say another word about textbooks, *[Laughter]* perhaps I could speak about a learning material development committee. *[Laughter]*

Mr. President, we really have to think hard about the nature of the book. We have to recreate the teaching material used in our schools, especially at the primary and secondary levels, for here there is a crying need to remake the textbook. We have to revise content, revise attitudes to content, and do so in the light of the readings of history, culture and society, and the human capacities of our people, all of which readings are emerging from the work of our scholars and artistes.

The second and more visionary step would be to modify the very notion of the book which has to carry built-in couplings with the computer, film, theatre and performance, painting and drawing, musical expression and other forms of student activity. We have to pull together teachers and technical people and say, “Look, we are making a new kind of book,” and the new kind of book will recognize that our children are exposed to a whole wide range of teaching and learning materials and our students are not poor, craven bridegrooms who say never a word. They do not just sit there; they like to do things.

The book has to be redesigned to take into account all of these changes in sensibility and all the developments in technical means of conveying information and knowledge. The new book must come in a format that permits additions and deletions with the same ease and flexibility that word processing allows us to alter

the manuscripts we create. So, it is a very exciting time for people who are involved in education, Mr. Prime Minister, if we are revising—

Sen. Prof. Kenny: It is Mr. President; not Mr. Prime Minister.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: It is probably quite Freudian. *[Laughter]* Mr. President, I hope you do not mind the demotion. *[Laughter]* With respect to teachers' salaries, the time has really come for us to recognize that if education is the most important plank in our social development programme, teachers have a major responsibility in our society, and they should get a remuneration that would allow them to move in the world with dignity, ease and confidence. *[Desk thumping]* We really have to think about them.

They are the ones who are working with those children, and if they are not happy and comfortable, they will pass on their sourness to our children. They are not going to mark the written work. They will be “pulling bull”, giving private lessons and looking to selling insurance. They will be doing all kinds of things in their spare time when they should be at home meditating and reflecting on the human material they have to work with. Mr. President, I really wish that the budget statement had made something very concrete and definite about teachers' salaries.

I come now to a major issue in our political life, our educational life and our social life. It has to do with the creation of an intellectual tradition and the recognition of intellectuals. This is a country that stubbornly refuses to accept that we have a long intellectual tradition going back to John Jacob Thomas, moving through Walter Rodney, C. L. R. James, and Lloyd Best.

Whatever their political views, these are people who have lived the life of the mind. They are people who have equipped themselves with special knowledge, people who have thought and reflected on the problems facing their country, and they have come up with solutions. *[Desk thumping]* They are people who have no constituency, it would appear, because when they go on the political platform and talk—like me talking here now, nobody will understand them—nobody will understand! *[Laughter]* So, the intellectual in politics cannot go on the platform because he will not make.

Mr. President, one of the consequences, something that would follow from a properly developed educational system, would be a place for intellectuals, both at the universities and schools and in the life of the nation. Some time ago, I did a piece in the *Trinidad Guardian* called “Intellectuals and the powers, or the fate of fine minds”. In it, I took in the fact that Naipaul spoke about the failure of

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intellectuals in Argentina; Lloyd Best spoke about the failure of intellectuals to have any influence on the way our societies have developed; and Lamming talked about the organic intellectual, the mind thrown up by a particular society and community; the mind attuned to the needs of that community and visionary about the needs of that community and articulating solutions to problems of that community.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Thank you, Mr. President. I hope you noted all the interruptions. [*Laughter*] I am quoting from the article which was published on August 23, 1990:

“In a society like ours with its history of race, colour and class interests; its relentless pursuit of profits; its brutal exercise of power; and the use of education and all the institutions as instruments of control, it is not surprising that there has been little interest in ideas or thinking and none in the development of infrastructures to encourage and sustain intellectual activity in the pure sense...”

What do I mean by a pure sense, Mr. President? That will come out in the description I tried to offer of the stance of the intellectual.

“In its general form—a patriotic commitment to his society—the intellectual's commitment does not interfere with his methods or with his pursuit of truth. But as soon as he joins up with the party or power bloc, his independence of thought and his integrity come under pressure. In no time at all, he ceases to be an intellectual. The fate of fine minds conscripted by the powers is either to fall out with the powers (as James did with Williams), or become a privately resentful functionary despising himself and fooling himself that he will clear his conscience...”

The intellectual is acutely aware of the subtle ways in which the power systems in a given society control what we eat, drink, smell, hear, see and even think. In a way, he recognizes that he himself is or can become an agent of the very systems whose more obvious forms of oppression he opposes...

But, he is oppositional. He does not take sides because—in his soul and in his bones he feels it, and with his mind he sees it—the powers are in control on all

sides. Instead of retreating into silence and scholarly pursuits, or exploding in anarchy, he keeps running ahead of the powers by maintaining an alert and critical consciousness. He examines the issues in depth and in their complex interrelations to the best of his ability. He is always open to new information and new insights. He writes responsibly. He waits for feedback and intellectual debate. He is famished without these.”

He is hostile not to individuals and groups, but to the forces...

In a shallow society, his impersonality will not be respected, and those whose positions he criticises will react personally.”

That is the peril, Mr. President, of being an intellectual and that is the peril that a proper educational system will help to remove.

6.05 p.m.

It will make our politicians realize, for instance, that if I oppose you on a particular issue, it does not mean I am against you or that I am for the other side. Or, if I support you on a particular issue, it does not mean I am with you forever and ever and I am against the other side. A lot of the intolerance that we see in the political system at the present time comes from a failure of the society as a whole to have any respect for intellectuals and intellectual tradition.

Finally, I would just like to say what I have said year after year, that the basis of the system is the child and the primary school. There are many books written about the child and the primary school like: *Organizing for Learning in the Primary Classroom*; *Organizing Learning in the Primary School Classroom*; *Children and their Primary Schools*; *Teaching and Learning*; *Creative Activities for Young Children*; *How Children Learn*; *How Children Fail*; *Instead of Education*; *Teaching Thinking*; et cetera. Hundreds of books, and they all point to the necessity to take account of the child, the home, the school, the community to think about values and beliefs; to think about self-esteem and emotional sustenance; to think about the relationship between play and self-expression and learning; to think about nutrition, health, exercise and sport; to think about parenting. All these books suggest, not only ways of laying out the classrooms with the activity rooms and the rooms where they all come together for maths and reading, the rooms where they listen to music, the rooms where they paint, the kinds of playgrounds they operate in, the use of a kitchen, having toilets in the school, *et cetera*.

In our situation, we have to think very hard. All these primary schools we are building, they are no good. Because those schools do not recognize that 80 per

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cent of the children in our primary schools either come from poor homes where there is no parenting or from well-off homes where both parents have gone to work and there is no parenting. The primary school, which is beginning at age four, has to take over part of the role of parenting and it has to take over part of the role of presenting a sense of home. Those schools have to be physically designed to bear a resemblance to the home.

Mr. President, I have a lot more to say, but I want to get in two quotations: one from John Holt in *How Children Fail*; and one from Ian McDonald in *Let the Children be Children*. It looks as if some of my time is being saved because I cannot find the John Holt, so I will begin with Ian McDonald and hope by then I will find the other quote. Please bear with me Mr. President. *[Searches for quotes]* That is part of the per-oration, Mr. President. *[Laughter]* That is the thing that was going to carry all the weight and sting. I think I will just give it up, Mr. President.

Essentially, what the article by Ian McDonald was arguing is that we can take our children through training, we can teach them facts, we can subject them to all the disciplines of the school, but we must not create a system in which we make them lose the capacity of the child for wonder and curiosity. Let the children be children.

The quotation from John Holt was a quotation along the same lines, talking about the tenderness, the fragility and the value of these young human beings whom it is our privilege and opportunity to “educate”, to lead out into the world.

Thank you, Mr. President. *[Desk thumping]*

Sen. Kenneth Ayoung Chee: Mr. President, please allow me to congratulate and extend my best wishes to the two Ministers who were recently appointed, Minister Vimala Tota-Maharaj and Minister Lindsay Gillette.

With respect to the budget, I just wish to address a few issues, a few matters in the budget debate. The first matter is tourism and I wish to refer to page 34 of the *Public Sector Investment Programme 1999/2000* which deals with tourism. You will note that it is acknowledged there that the tourism sector is a significant employment generator and foreign exchange earner, and that TIDCO will invest \$14 million in tourism related activities, specifically in the following areas, to complete outstanding works: Maracas Beach, St. James renaissance district, *et cetera*; facilities at local tourist destinations in Mayaro, Toco, *et cetera*; to establish renaissance districts in Chaguanas and Debe; and finally—and this is my disappointment—to promote Trinidad and Tobago as a tourist destination in

North and South America and in Europe. With \$14 million for all of this, Sir, that is a tall order.

Fourteen million dollars, assuming they spend \$10 million on promotion or thereabouts, that is about US \$1.5 or \$1.6 million and you could only run a few cocktail parties with this in the money centres of the world. It is just not going to be enough to do the job. That is disappointing because of the acknowledged importance of tourism. I know resources are scarce, but sometimes, if you do not do it right, if the effort is too diffused, then you do not get the results, with the end result of nothing being achieved in respect of promotion. So that is the point I wish to make with respect to that allocation.

The second point under tourism is the allocation of \$4.5 million for development facilities at Chaguaramas, the money will be spent for waste and pollution management, redevelopment of water and sewerage infrastructure, development of the golf course, and preparation of a development plan. My sense is that if \$4.5 million is allocated for all these things, I really fear that you would have another resurfacing of the raw sewage that took place a month ago in the Chaguaramas area. I do not believe that this country, with its eyes on tourism, can afford to have a recurrence of that sort of thing, either in Chaguaramas or in Tobago. If we want to grow the tourism industry, and if we want to be a total quality nation, it just must not happen that we would have raw sewage around the Chaguaramas beach area and in Tobago. It just must not happen.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, in accordance with Standing Order 9(8), I beg to move that the Senate continue to sit until the conclusion of the Appropriation Bill 1999/2000.

Question put and agreed to.

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Sen. K. Ayoung Chee: So if funding is really the constraint, I suggest some greater effort be made to find the necessary funding to do a good job, to deal with the sewer problem. I know the Minister has constraints, but I would like to urge him to find the necessary funding to deal with that problem.

The third matter I wish to deal with is the matter relating to Caroni (1975) Limited. I refer to page 28 of the budget speech. I quote:

“Mr. Speaker, several attempts have been made to transform Caroni (1975) Limited into a diversified, financially viable entity. However, the Company continues to be a financial and debt burden on the Treasury. Recognizing the urgent need to deal with this situation, Government has

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initiated steps to bring about a complete restructuring of the Company during the 1999/2000 fiscal year.

This Implementation Plan is geared to the phased private sector participation in the operations of Caroni. This will be facilitated through the restructuring of Caroni into a Holding Company and the creation of Strategic Business Units as subsidiaries.”

Mr. President, I like the idea, but given the problems of Caroni (1975) Limited, something has to be done. But we have not been given details of the plan. So it is rather difficult, we have to be speculating and guessing.

All I know is that over the last 10 years, Caroni (1975) Limited has received from Government funding of approximately \$3 billion, if the numbers are correct, and \$317 million is budgeted to be given to Caroni (1975) Limited in the current budget year.

Now, ideally, these funds should not be going to a commercial enterprise, albeit state-owned, but to needier places like health and education. I know Caroni (1975) Limited has been a problem for years and years, but I am concerned about the use of the word “strategic”. It has a nice ring about it, “Strategic Business Unit”, but without the plans, I could hardly conclude, or given the history, I can hardly expect that these units would, in fact, be profitable units, whether you rename a division, or you create a limited liability company out of the division, I am not seeing enough in the documents to make me feel comfortable that one can look forward in the near term to profitable units, except perhaps for the rum division if that is to be spun off into a separate business unit.

We must have hope, but we are not told what will change. Will it be business as usual or will there be some true transformation of body, mind and soul? Would there be, as Sen. Prof. Spence has said, productivity benchmarks? What will be the gains out of this transformation?

Given the history of Caroni (1975) Limited I hope that Government will be dedicating special resources to fast-track this transformation because with at least \$3 billion, shall I say, down the drain in the last 10 years, the sooner we stop the haemorrhaging, the better for the country.

So, before I close, may I mention or refer to the fact that the Minister of Finance has been concentrating on the three Ps: performance, performance, performance. May I suggest to him that he concentrate on the three Fs: focus, focus, focus.

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

Sen. Dr. George Dhanny: Mr. President, may I say that it is a great privilege to be here and to make an intervention. This is my first essay into the arena. I have listened with great interest and I must say, I have learnt a great deal since yesterday from very informed, very intellectual and enlivening discussions, as the one that we had a while ago, a very clinical analysis by my friend and colleague, Sen. Martin Daly, and also the great oratory from my friend, Sen. Teelucksingh. I want to confine my remarks to some of the fundamental aspects of the budget because I am under serious constraint; I have been warned by Sen. Mark. So I would have to try and do a précis of what I want to say.

6.20 p.m.

First of all, permit me—together with others who have done so before—to congratulate the new Ministers, Sen. Lindsay Gillette and also Sen. Tota-Maharaj; we wish them well. I know that prospects are very exciting indeed.

Mr. President, it has been suggested that the way in which this budget was developed lacked any proper consultation and invitation of views of members of the public for whom the budget provisions are designed. Mr. President, that is completely incorrect. You would recall that the hon. Minister did in fact invite, as always, the views of all stakeholders. So that we have that information. What is very interesting thereafter—of course, he explained details of the provisions after he had delivered his budget statement to all the parties including the media, which means that the population would have been informed as to the provisions. They, therefore, had ample opportunity to question the Minister and to arrive at some understanding of what he was trying to do. I believe, in that process, the budget was actually brought to the people themselves.

In my view, the hon. Minister of Finance has shown genuine concern and sensitivity to the needs of the population. It was said a while ago that perhaps—I think one Senator said that if one looks at the presentation last year and one looks at it now, there are just variations here and there—that is for a very good reason. I may say that what the Minister has done is to follow very faithfully, a well-established path of fiscal discipline and prudent management of our financial resources. In those circumstances, there was no reason to depart from the established procedures which have proven to be workable and successful.

The result, of course, is that the economic fundamentals—as they say in economic circles—reflect a very healthy economy at the present time. This is judged by factors such as stable foreign exchange; growth in the economy; low inflation and foreign reserves for a five-month cover. That is a remarkable

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achievement for any administration and I think the hon. Minister ought to be congratulated on that.

All experts who are looking at the performance of the Trinidad and Tobago economy are looking at those fundamentals and it is on the basis of that, they would agree whether they are going to invest in Trinidad and Tobago or not. In confirmation of this, very recently, the President of the Caribbean Development Bank said—I am paraphrasing—that all the fundamentals in respect of the Trinidad economy are sound and have been in place for the past four to five years, which I may say embraces or traverses the period of this administration.

The budget itself reflects genuine sensitivity to the needs of women, children and the elderly. Mr. President, you would recall that this is the year of the elderly. The unwed mothers have been allocated a sum of \$25 million. I have some questions which, perhaps, the hon. Minister may want to clarify. In what manner would these funds be provided to these unwed mothers? Would it be a question of merely a handout or, would it be a means of empowering these women, so that they no longer depend on any charity but that they would be able to develop skills for their self respect? In other words, that they would be empowered. What I mean is, to provide them with the necessary skills to be used to create jobs and employ themselves.

That is a very critical area, particularly, at this time when there is so much evidence of domestic violence. Mr. President, now is not the time nor the place to go into the reasons; that is for another time. Clearly, if women can be empowered to take care of their needs there will be no necessity for them to be subjugated to any man—if I may put it quite frankly and straightforwardly—so that it may have an effect in changing that relationship. The more you empower the woman the less dependent she is on the man. That, I dare suggest, could very well be one device whereby the incidence of domestic violence can be reduced.

I am of the firm view that if you take care of your women, you take care of the nation. They are really the people who have the responsibility, by nature, to be able to take care and we ought not to allow them to be left unattended. So that whatever could be done—and this is a very good move by the Government—to assist them in relation to skills, I suggest that we use those persons who have retired from the public service such as teachers, public servants and retired businessmen, to assist in the education and the provision of skills to these people in their communities. Mr. President, I think it is very important.

6.30 p.m.

Mr. President, some time ago I heard of a story—and I know it is not novel—that some families in rural areas are eating grass. I want to know how and why these people have no intellectual spark, if you like, to find a way to deal with that problem in the rural environment. It is something I cannot understand. I find it is very difficult, but I want to suggest that it is an area where community leaders can assist these people to save themselves so that this situation would not persist.

Poverty to a large extent is man made. Of course, it has structural factors as well. To begin to change that status, you have to change the mind and say this condition is intolerable. I think what the Government can do—and what is intended here—is to provide the framework by giving the assistance to achieve this end. And when we are talking about employment and self-empowerment, I want to suggest—there are three countries I can think of where they have experimented with providing this assistance for the acquiring of skills. It is a question of credit; they are Bangladesh, India and Mauritius. They have state funds which are taxpayers' money. It is not linked to any financial institution but they provide short-term loans to people who want to go into small cottage-type activity. I want to suggest that. I have indicated it to the Minister, but I do not know if he can handle that. In other words, there is no point in saying that you must get 25 per cent and we would secure the institution with the other 75 per cent. I think that is burdensome and something has to be done about that.

If we in Trinidad and Tobago—and I think this budget is designed to do that—are to establish a level of civilization of which we can be really proud, we must provide for the elderly, the very young, the dispossessed, the poor and the disabled with opportunities for self-development.

In the Caribbean, we are losing our soul in that we no longer care for the elderly. The first thing that happens, they want to find out where there is an old people's home so that they can consign the old people there. That, I can tell you, is not the tradition in Africa, it is not the tradition in China, it is not the tradition in Japan, it is not the tradition in India. We should recapture some of that love and deal with our elderly people in a caring and loving way.

A comment was made—I think by Sen. Prof. Spence—dealing with the Tobago matter and I want to say something on that. He was referring to a provision in the new relation between the British Government and Wales. There is a movement now to free it up and give them greater autonomy and things like that. In Tobago, there is a Tobago House of Assembly Act and I have been very touched by the tremendous amount of discussion and pain as it were, coming from

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the hearts of the representatives from Tobago in relation to Tobago. I certainly agree that something ought to be done about that.

Mr. President, I want to indicate, and I wish to direct this through you to Sen. Prof. Spence that the Tobago House of Assembly Act has what is called the Fifth Schedule attached to the Act in which there are at least about 30 areas of exclusive responsibility and jurisdiction to the Tobago House of Assembly. The others are shared jointly with the Government, and/or Government agencies. But there is a procedure when you have to deal with those. One is exclusive so you can do what you want with that. With respect to those that you have to share, there is a procedure and it is done through a device under a Letter of Understanding between the two parties, the Tobago House of Assembly and if it is a government agency and/or the Government. I have had the opportunity to look at this Act recently and I see nothing fundamentally wrong with that Act, Mr. President. I think what is lacking is maybe the mutual respect, the understanding, and the willingness to overcome any difficulties and things like that. I am hoping that after this debate, the parties will revert and try to apply these provisions.

These provisions in the Act have been the result of very mature reflection by the present President while serving in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and it represents the culmination of the hopes and aspirations of Trinidad and Tobago. I do not think there is any need to tamper with it and I believe we do not even have to import something from Wales or Scotland or anything of the kind.

Mr. President, I commend the hon. Minister. If you looked at his face when he was meeting the media, I saw a face reflecting great concern and I genuinely believe that he is very concerned about these social issues, and he is very amenable to meeting, as far as resources will permit, these social requirements. I commend him and I speak in support of the Bill and I thank you, Mr. President.

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. President, I really did not think I would have been on my feet so early in the evening. I was looking forward to at least another two hours as well as dinner. *[Laughter]* But it appears that all of us must be very tired. I certainly am very exhausted, Mr. President. This is literally going to be the last speech—I do not like the word speech—I am going to make on the budget for a little while. I have been going at it since October 08, 1999, I have tried my best to make sure that all the pieces that were missing in the budget have been explained to the people of Trinidad and Tobago as far as I can, and I really must admit, I am very, very exhausted.

So much so that on Friday when I addressed this honourable Senate, my social graces must have deserted me and I failed to say welcome to my very good

colleague at that time and to congratulate Vimala, and I wish to do so at this time. I wish to congratulate Minister Lindsay Gillette, and unlike Sen. Daly, I should have no difficulty in saying it. I congratulate him on his maiden contribution today. I thought that “marry local” sounds like a good punch line. If I were a media man I would say “marry local” before buy local. But then you know, I have had a lot of essays—and I like that word essays—into the affairs of the heart and they have all been local. *[Laughter]* That is not to say, Senator—and I want to make it very clear—I know the goodly Senator’s wife and she is a very beautiful, charming person. I know her quite well and I can say that in all true genuineness and sincereness, she is a very nice lady so I know that he did well. *[Laughter]* It sounding like a nice budget subject.

I also want to congratulate Sen. Vimala Tota Maharaj both of whom were sworn in yesterday as Government Ministers, and I want to say something that might be a bit too daring for this evening, but I could have sworn I heard Sen. Gillette say: “and to bear true fruit.” I know he is a man of many children, he has six and he is on his way to a full football team, so I know he really was serious when he said he wants to bear fruit in this honourable House.

Let me end by saying congratulations and thank you very much for your support Minister Gillette. I also look forward to welcoming you to your first Cabinet meeting. I think in the main, I might say that the reviews you have got are much more positive than negative although, typical of the way we think nowadays, some of the negatives started first and eventually some of the positives begin to flourish.

This has been a very interesting and intriguing debate and I thank Senators on both sides for the debate. Exhausted as I feel now, I want to say that I have listened very carefully.

I want to believe that I really chose the right theme for this budget because for the last three days I have been spared a whole battery of questions about money, money, money and instead I felt that the debate was going where I wanted it to and that is, the social issues. I think all of us here are beginning to realize that a good economy, even prosperity—and I dare not say that word too loud—may not necessarily be what every Trinidadian and Tobagonian wants. What we want is a good quality life for all. That is why I started off saying that I want to put people at the centre of all my budgets. That is why I started to do little things to help, because even as the economy grows and we begin to do better, we have to find a way to take care of the people who are least able to take care of themselves and the first thing I did, was I thought about the people who were at the evening of their

years as it were, and who had worked all of their lives, maybe some had not. The fact is, they had no other source of income other than a hand-out. I hate to use that expression, but that is what it comes down to. They had to depend upon the generosity of the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago through the Government to be able to eke out a living in the evening of their years.

I said in the budget statement, in many cases, there were grandmothers taking care of grandchildren and the only source of income they had was the generosity of the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago. So I am glad if I am the instrument of being able to say that I can do something on behalf of the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago to alleviate the suffering and to improve the circumstances, financial and otherwise, of these people who have reached the evening of their years.

They are no longer able to work, they cannot reasonably be expected to find a job and I know in many cases of a number of people who had already crossed the age of 65 who continue to work. Therefore, when I went on some of these radio programmes and television shows, people would ask me: why is it that you have restrictions with respect to who can get and who cannot get? And I know that there was some confusion, not much, with respect to who qualifies and who does not.

6.45 p.m.

Mr. President, when there are limited resources, there is a challenge to make sure that it meets the targeted group as far as you can, and my targeted group in the first instance, was those who really had no form of income whatsoever and relied upon old age pension. When I spoke about improving the “means test” it meant that if you had an income of \$1—I think in the old days it used to be \$5,000—then you get a piece. But then I want to move the old age pension to a point where the people of Trinidad and Tobago can say; there is no one in Trinidad and Tobago who earns less than \$1,000 per month. I cannot get there overnight from \$250—\$1,000 without seeing the expansion of the economy and allowing more to be filtered down as it were, through these mechanisms.

Mr. President, I used the question of old age pension merely to signal that is where we want it to start. That is why I was quite pleased when I got a letter from Mr. Richard Jolly. I do not know how many people know about Mr. Richard Jolly but he is the special advisor to the administrator in the United Nations Development Programme in New York, and the architect of the *Human Development Report*.

Mr. President, this report does say some kind things and I think Sen. Philip Marshall alluded to many of them. I want to read for you some of the things he said in a letter which was written to me on October 14, 1999, a couple days after my presentation of the 1999—2000 budget in the other place. As I said, I presented the budget on October 8, 1999 and on October 14, 1999, he wrote to me saying:

“Dear Minister Kuei Tung,”

I want to admit that I do not think that I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Jolly. I certainly do not have a face that comes to my mind.

“To the best of my knowledge, this is a first—the first time a national budget has been specifically described as a blue print for human development in line with what we have been advocating over the years in UNDP’s Human Development Reports.”

Mr. President, I am just reading some excerpts.

“Thus, the already impressive standing of Trinidad and Tobago worldwide both, in terms of the overall human development index (HDI) as well as in terms of the human poverty index (HPI) will undoubtedly climb even higher.”

He further went on to say:

“From my perspective, the Blue Print focuses rightly on some of the fundamental priorities: reducing poverty, unemployment and inequality, improving education and opportunities for youth, increasing security and controlling crime, improving health and raising incomes and support for pensioners.”

I will be happy to circulate copies of this letter just for the Senators’ own benefit. As I said, to me, this is a testament that what we are doing is going to go a long way. Now we cannot fix it all, certainly not in one year or even one term, but we may have an incentive to ensure that we do come back. It certainly means, as I said, from the way the debate went that there are genuine concerns on both sides of this Senate for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. There is need, maybe for more consultation on a national level for us to understand and address the social issues that face Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, I do not think that crime or poverty has anything to do with one group of people. It has to do with the coming together; the meeting of the minds; the ability to have consultation and communication and to be able to develop the kind of strategies that would take us out of this situation, where we can now say

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that we are satisfied that economic growth has borne fruit for every national of Trinidad and Tobago. I think that is our objective. What we would like to see going forward is a lot more understanding and appreciation of what needs to be done, so that the consultation process can be fair, frank and free of any political narrow-mindedness.

I am pleased with some of the comments that have been made, even where they have been critical. I know that I will continue—if I am allowed to present another budget [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*—to pursue and deepen these strategies to ensure that the social impact of our economic growth is so great that we can then boast that truly, we are a country that is civilized.

Mr. President, I was particularly touched by Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt's plea for social capital and the development of it. Certainly, I think we have demonstrated in the four years that we have been in office that really we want to not threaten democratic institutions. We would like to build on them. Sometimes to build means that you have to challenge areas that may appear to be threatening. I do not think challenging anything necessarily is a threat. Some people interpret it as a threat. Certainly, in the four years we have tried our best to show that we are concerned about the fragility and the aging of our democratic institutions.

And I am on record saying I am very much in support of our democratic institutions. I would go so far as to say that if I even begin to suspect or think that there is any Senator on this side, who wants to destroy any democratic institution, I would be the first to be out that door. I say that without any fear of contradiction. If I think or believe that any Senator on this side or any Government Minister on this side even thinks of attacking or destroying a democratic institution that we have in Trinidad and Tobago, I would not be a part of it—I cannot be.

So one would understand how emotional I felt about this and how touched I was when Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt spoke about social capital. I believed in every word that she said. As a matter of fact, when I discussed it with her, I told her she even had the right voice for it and she sounded very emotional, then she said that she was very genuine about her concerns for social capital. I am sure that she will understand that as a native of this country, I share her own vision as to where we want to go and how I plan, as the Minister of Finance, now the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, to see this country develop.

Mr. President, I want to make one quick comment about that. One of the things I tried to achieve in this budget is the problem we are faced with every day. It seems to be a bit of self-destruction in all of us. I am saying, not necessarily us

in this Senate. But when I have to travel overseas and talk about Trinidad and Tobago, one should see the kind of regard that people have for this country that we ourselves do not have. We do not have the kind of regard for Trinidad and Tobago that other people have for us. It is an amazing thing. Unfortunately, my only connection with many of the people overseas that I am talking about is people who I do not know. I am talking about investors.

I have sat in a room with three and four financial investors talking about Trinidad and Tobago because it has been arranged for me to meet with them to describe Trinidad and Tobago's economy, political system and everything else. I looked at the questions that they asked of me. I remember a lady on the West Coast saying how it is good to hear a good story for a change. She said there are so many crazy countries going there with crazy stories that for a change they have welcomed hearing a good story.

One of the first stories that I talked about—let me assure you that financial investors are interested basically in two things: political and financial stability. Now, they may be fairly close or intertwined. Political stability means, are you going to have a change every five years and then shift in terms of democracy, in terms of attacking institutions? Or are you going to have a change in the political and the financial policy? That is the key, because no one is going to lend you money for 10 years and not be sure what is going to happen to your country in five years and we have a change every five years. So understand the amount of confidence that you get from an investor who is saying "I am willing to lend Trinidad and Tobago money to be repaid at the end of 10 years", if they did not have the confidence that we have stood the test of time in terms of political change and financial stability.

When I demonstrate to them that we have had three administrations in the last 10 years, that helps.

6.55 p.m.

You have seen what happens in the rest of the world. There is political change and financial policy changes; financial policy or democratic policy changes, and investors become nervous. I am not talking about people who are coming here to build a plant, you know. I am talking about people who are sending you a cheque. This is the hardest confidence to build—you would not believe that—for a guy to take his money and write a cheque and say, "To you in Trinidad and Tobago here's a cheque, pay me back in ten years' time". That is a true story. When I say that I mean that is a good story for Trinidad and Tobago to tell. We seem as though we want to destroy ourselves with it.

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I was quite pleased with the kind of reception I got in the USA among big investors, such as Microsoft. Microsoft is interested in buying Trinidad and Tobago Government bonds. Yes, Government bonds—Microsoft, Mr. Gates and his group. There is a Kuwaiti Oil Price Stabilization Fund that has been around for many, many years. I never even knew about that. I met with these gentlemen. They said, “We represent the Kuwaiti Oil Price Stabilization Fund”. I said, “What is that?” They said, “Yes, we have been setting aside money for many years till today”. Do you know what he told me? The income from the Kuwaiti Oil Price Stabilization Fund generates more income for them than the oil revenues. Do you know that? I could not believe that.

So when I tell you I am serious about setting up this fund, it is not because I woke up one morning having dreamt about it the night before; it is because I have seen living experiences and living examples of people who did the right thing. The Kuwaitis today no longer rely upon whether oil price is \$25 a barrel. They have investment income that supports them and they are now investing in Trinidad and Tobago Government bonds. Now do you understand what I am saying? So I have had a tremendous vision.

I do not want to go on and on because I know it is very late in the day. However, it has been a bit of an eye-opener for me and I certainly have come away very pleased having been able to convince people. Many insurance companies in the US have bought the bonds. I am told I had about a 50 per cent hit rate. What that meant is I saw twice as many people as who have bought bonds, but that was good for us because many of the people who came in are people, some of whom know Trinidad and Tobago. Some have been holders of our bonds in the past but many of them are brand new and many of them are looking for a story like Trinidad and Tobago's.

Now, another thing that is not told is that we are way ahead of the emerging market in terms of being able to do this. Many countries, including Argentina—Argentina went and could not meet the rigid scrutiny. People were a little skeptical and did not want to go in. They could not raise money on a long-term basis and had to back away and raise money for two or three years because the rates were so high that they did not want to commit themselves for 10 years at such a high rate.

I am talking about countries like Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil that are borrowing at 13 and 14 per cent and saying, “Well look, I cannot borrow at 13 per cent and 14 per cent for 10 years, they would laugh at me at home”. So we borrow at a 10.27 per cent effective rate. People think, like I see in some of the

newspapers, that we can just go to the US and say, “Trinidad and Tobago comes to borrow” and we will get a barrel of money and come home with it. They do not know how tough it is inside there. That is why I said the most difficult confidence to develop is for a man to write a cheque and tell you, “I will see you in 10 years' time”. Just think about it. I do not know if there is any Senator on that side who would give me a cheque and let me pay him back in 10 years' time. So, you understand what I say.

Now, let me go to some of the issues that were raised. One of the issues that was raised is the question of the numbers. I just want to casually remind folks of what Minister Mottley, who was a Minister of Finance, had to say. He felt certainly that those numbers that I have illustrated were creditable when I talked about strengthening the economy, about achieving continued growth, about increasing the country's foreign reserves, reducing the foreign debt and so forth, reducing inflation and the unemployment rate. I will talk about unemployment in a minute. He said in *The Mirror* of Sunday, October 17:

“...I think the country should feel grateful that it looks as though we have been able to come through a very bad period with low oil prices and so forth.”

He went on to say:

“The figures quoted by Mr. Kuei Tung are creditable figures. They have been audited by the IMF.”

I am surprised at “audited”. I suppose what he really meant is that the IMF is satisfied that the numbers we have produced are figures they can accept. So that when Senators get up and ask me—and I remember Sen. Shabazz saying that I am trying to fool the people with it. I want to quote the latest bulletin that came out of the Central Statistical Office dated September 1999 Volume 60 No. 59. It was only printed and released last week Wednesday. Whilst I was privy to some of the numbers because they informed my budget presentation, at the time there would not have been what I would regard as third-party confirmation as this is now. It says:

“The number of persons with jobs increased by approximately thirteen thousand (13 000) (from four hundred and eighty five thousand (485 000) in the 1st quarter, 1999 to four hundred and ninety eight thousand (498 000) in the 2nd quarter, 1999) or by 2.7%.”

That is the cause of the drop. The number of persons with jobs increased. It went on to say:

“...total unemployed as a percentage of the total Labour Force (the unemployment rate) declined from 14.1% in the 1st quarter, 1999 to 11.7% in the 2nd quarter, 1999.”

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I am sorry that Sen. Shabazz is not here. It did not say, “for men only”, it says the rate of the total unemployed as a percentage fell to 11.7 per cent. I can talk a bit about the difference between men and women. It says:

“When viewed from a gender perspective, the data revealed that the unemployment rate among males declined from 11.3% in the 1st quarter, 1999 to 9.8% in the 2nd quarter, 1999.”

That is for males. For women it says:

“The unemployment rate among females declined from 18.6% to 14.9% over the same period under review.”

It is not as high as the males but certainly it has come down as much. It has come from 18.6 per cent to 14.9 per cent for the females. So I think Sen. Shabazz—as I say I am sorry he is not here—should take stock of some of the numbers that are there. I did not present the figure of 11.7 for males only; I presented that as the total unemployment rate for both men and women.

I want to skim through, as well, some of the questions that were asked with respect to the numbers. I just want to stay on that. One of the questions that was asked was the question of the internal debt stock. I have had an increase in the internal debt stock, and I admit that, but this has been due firstly to the issue of public servants’ arrears bonds in the amount of \$1,547.8 million over the period 1996 to 1999. Now, that was Government debt. That is the debt that was owed to the public servants that had to be taken on board so I had no choice but to programme it and accommodate it in the budgets between 1996 and 1999.

It has all been accommodated from year to year. So for three years I have been able to accommodate the public servants’ arrears bonds in the sum of \$1,547.8 million. Now that increased our debt stock. Fortunately that debt is only for two years, is that right? That was the two-year bonds that we issued so, basically, it will be behind us certainly by the end of next year, but that is what has increased our debt stock.

We also had things like the cost of police stations and three project financing facilities were brought to account: Fincor Financing Facilities I, II and III. This question of financing facilities is something that many people do not understand. Many of these financing facilities—and let me tell you it is something I am very loath to continue—have to do with design, construct, finance (DCF).

I want to swing quickly to something to which Sen. Martin Daly referred, the question of off balance-sheet budgets. In the case of InnCogen and in the case of

the desalination plant, there was nothing that would appear on the balance sheet. In essence, someone says, "I will build a plant" and there is a contingent liability that Government assumes. However, it is not a hard liability and it will only become contingent in the event of something not happening. It is not on the books nor should it be considered as off balance-sheet items because there is no liability that the Government accepts other than, maybe, a take or pay contract. But certainly we have no liability, hard or otherwise, with respect to the plant, we have no liability for loans, we have no liability for acquiring plants.

What happens is that some businessmen—well, actually, in response to a request for a proposal, because in both cases we made a request for proposals and we invited people to submit proposals. In the first case, InnCogen, T&TEC had indicated that, based on their long-range plans or even their medium-term plans, they would not have been in a position to provide the kind of electrification needs this country was going to need based upon our expansion in the energy sector. That is where it starts. Also, you may have no choice to make a decision.

I would hate to be part of a government that has to make a choice between providing its residents with electricity or providing its plants. That has to be an awkward choice because, if you give it to your residents then your industries suffer and if you give it to your energy industries then your residents suffer so anyhow you take it you are literally between a rock and a hard place. In the case of the desalination plant, it is a similar thing. WASA decided, as part of their plans, that it would help them if they could, instead of sending water to the industrial estate at Point Lisas, divert some of the water from the Caroni Arena Plant to assist in meeting the needs of the people in south. Therefore, requests for proposals were submitted and people submitted these things based upon these requests.

I am not a technical person, unfortunately. The only technical thing I know about is a bit of finance, but certainly I assumed that a lot of the questions raised by Prof. Kenny had been addressed. Now, I know that one of the criticisms I had been hearing for the last three days is, why is it not being debated in Parliament? Maybe that is the time when you have to debate it, before the request for a proposal goes out. I have no difficulty with that. However, it seemed odd. I do not know whether there is any parliamentary procedure for debating a need for it unless we generate some sort of interest in it. I am not too sure if you do that whether, when you are asking people to submit bids, you would not have to give away too much of your considerations if it is talked about too much.

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Sen. Martin Daly in previous times has said that maybe we should discuss it after the fact. I would much prefer after the fact merely because by that time you would have made your decision, and what is under scrutiny is your decision. However, I would prefer not to debate it before because I think the process could be tainted if too much discussion takes place with respect to the request for proposals. I have answered that in that case. Whereas the Fincor facilities are off balance sheet items, InnCogen and the desalination plant are not.

In the case of the desalination plant, I have given an undertaking that the Government will pay, in the event WASA is unable to pay, for the take or pay contract for water. In the case of the electricity contract, I have given the undertaking that if T&TEC is unable to pay, because they have a take or pay contract for the electricity, then Government will give the undertaking and that is the contingent liability that exists. There is no other hard liability. In the case of the Fincor facilities, that is a hard liability.

So if Fincor builds the National Library for us, I have to cater in the books to bring on a facility called a National Library which Fincor has designed, is about to construct and which they have financed. At the end of the construction period I have no choice but to bring it on the books because that is a liability that we have agreed to and that is so for all of the other Fincor facilities. I do not remember what other facilities they provided. I think the Industrial Court was one, and there were a couple of others. There were three that were done previous to my coming into office, between the NAR days and the PNM days and now we have hooked it.

So, if there is any criticism to be made about my increasing the debt of the country, it is because I am bringing to book liabilities that had already been agreed to by previous administrations.

7.10 p.m.

The other area in which there was some contention was the increase in revenue. Let me just quickly indicate how the increase in revenue is expected. In the case of the oil revenues—I am loathe to mention which company, but everyone knows, this is not a secret anymore—BP Amoco alone accounts for \$916 million in revenue. I say this not because I want, necessarily, to criticize BP Amoco as much as to criticize our own situation. When I say criticize, maybe do a critical appraisal of our own situation.

You understand that when you have a budget of approximately \$14 billion and one person is giving you a billion dollars, you could understand your exposure in having one company contribute 1/14 of your total revenues. I consider it an exposure.

As a businessman, I would never want to have my revenues so skewed that one customer is giving me so much of a great portion of my revenues. I am exposed. I am not saying this because I do not think we should weaken Amoco in terms of the contribution it makes to the revenues, as much as strengthen the rest of the economy, so that Amoco's percentage comes down but you do not weaken Amoco.

This is based on: First, the SPT (special petroleum tax) is expected to increase by \$127 million and the PPT (petroleum profits tax) of \$789 million. There is a breakdown that I can provide. It is all based on the increase in the price of crude oil. In Amoco's case, Amoco had dramatic reduction in write-offs, particularly by Amoco, as I said, under the exploration and investment allowances. They had made a number of investments in the exploration in the last three years which they had been writing-off and that has come to an end.

As a result of the increases in oil prices, the SPT rate would rise from 9 per cent to 12 per cent and so forth. The other part of it, of course, as I said, is the sale of—

Sen. Montano: I thank the Minister for giving way. Before he moves on to the other issues, perhaps he could elaborate in terms of the contribution to Amoco's profits from the sale of natural gas. What he said was that the increase would be coming from the increased price of oil. How much of that is actually going to come from the increased sale of natural gas? In other words, what is the incremental revenues that we would be getting from the coming on stream of the LNG plant? Does the Minister have any idea what that is?

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: I am sorry. I do not have that. I know I can tell you, as an off-the-cuff comment, we are not happy with the kind of revenues we generate from natural gas and it was for that reason I said in the budget statement that something has to be done.

Now, let me tell you, it is not our intent, necessarily, to increase the take from Government, as much as to recalculate or to redistribute. You see, there are several ways for Government to collect revenues. Either we take it as a royalty up front and it could be fairly hefty, in which case, we will not get it later on. Or, we wait until the companies begin to make profits and then take a huge slice of the profits.

Now, what it means is that if you take a royalty, you get your piece up front for one and, secondly, you get it certain. In the case of taxes, it is not so certain, as you know, because it depends on the other conditions worldwide. If prices are

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down, then your revenues are down and your corporation tax rate is low, your SPT or your PPT, as the case will be, would be low. So, it is really how you want to blend so the country, as a whole, gets a share.

I do not know the exact amount as to what the increase is going to be as a result of the Atlantic LNG plant. That is your question, is it not? I am not too sure, but if you wish, I would try to find out and provide you with that information.

As I was saying, the other portion of it is the sale of the National Enterprises Limited (NEL) of which we hope to sell about 30 per cent and raise about TT \$720 million. That is where we got the \$2 billion increase in revenues over the previous year.

There was one other comment where somebody asked about unspent balances—statutory boards and similar bodies had projected at \$98.4 million. That includes one figure of \$75 million which they have on deposit which I am bringing to book. It is not a revenue in the true sense of the word. It is already there. We just have to transfer it, \$75 million out of the \$98.4 million.

So, when these numbers sometimes look a little skewed from \$2 million to \$98 million; it is not that we expect to get more money from that. It may be, as in this case, that we had the money sitting on deposit in the National Housing Authority and we are going to transfer it into the Treasury.

I want to spend a few minutes quickly addressing some of the concerns. On that point, let me go quickly to Sen. Prof. Ramchand's point. When he says it is cranky, in essence, that the foreign investors come here and literally make off with super profits, that is to suggest that those super profits are theirs at the expense of nationals of Trinidad and Tobago. Now, a responsible government has to make sure that any foreign investor who comes here does not come here with the idea that he can take advantage of us, negotiate to take his super profits, and leave.

We, as a careful government, as any administrator, have to ensure that we take care of the interests of nationals of Trinidad and Tobago. If we do not encourage foreign investment then, as you rightfully pointed out, we will not have an opportunity for the social sector to inch up, because the natural resources remain in the ground and, instead, you have your people remaining at a very low level of development.

The only opportunity you have, because we do not have the capital to take the reserves out of the ground; we do not even have the ability to negotiate sales or to find markets and so forth. These are big international concerns and this is a big

game and, of course, from where I stand, my perspective is not to get the Government involved in investing money in extracting resources out of the ground. If Government gets into it, you know what is going to happen. Nobody will benefit then, but in this way, we have a responsibility to negotiate with investors to ensure that whatever return they will get is shared fairly—and I do not want to say equally, but—equitably between the risk that they take as investors and the people of Trinidad and Tobago and, in some cases, even the banks, because sometimes, in many cases, they have to borrow part of their capital. So, the banks get a good return, the investor gets a good return and the people of Trinidad and Tobago get a good return.

Now, it is always questionable what is a good return in any one of those three cases, but that, basically, is our approach. We have no choice but to encourage capital investment from overseas in order to bring some benefit to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Because, I have always said that as a young man, I heard it said that Guyana was rich in resources, but Guyana continues to remain poor, by our standards, with many natural resources. The natural resources are of no value to them in the ground, so they have to encourage foreign investors to be able to get some benefit for them. Now, if it is that the foreign investor takes an “unnatural” as you used, but my word would prefer to be, an “undue” portion of it, then the people of Trinidad and Tobago must suffer and you are right. But I do not see any alternative and I certainly would not encourage leaving the reserves in the ground and the people of Trinidad and Tobago not become developed in the meantime. So, I hope I have been able to explain our position there. It is not as cranky as it sounds.

Sen. Alfred raised the question of financial regulations. I am not overly concerned about the lack of financial regulations for the Tobago House of Assembly because, as I said, people think that the Tobago House of Assembly Act No. 4 is the only Act that governs Tobago and that is not so. The Exchequer and Audit Act which certainly has far more powers, certainly gives the Minister of Finance far more powers and certainly has powers that are given to the Auditor General and so forth, is more key than any financial regulations that can be made. In the absence of those financial regulations, part of the problem we have found is that the Tobago House of Assembly Act itself, really is silent in things that we would have liked.

Now, I have had a task force look at it; it spent a long time looking at it and, to be quite frank, the general consensus is that there is no absence or lack of

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financial regulations in terms of the Exchequer and Audit Act, as well as other constitutional acts that give them. So, I do not think the Chief Secretary, or any Minister of Finance, or any government or public official, can say he or she is not accountable. Anyone who does that is fooling himself or herself. There are enough checks and balances in the system to ensure that people are accountable for what happens.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Just a quick comment, Mr. President, because it relates to what Sen. Montano was saying. The problem is that in the schedule which was referred to earlier on, finance is their responsibility and that is where the problem comes in. So, the Act is defective.

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: But, even though it is in the Act and I admit that, Prof. Spence, the Act did not say that the Exchequer and Audit Act no longer applies, so it has to—

Sen. Prof. Spence: It did not say that it did. That is the problem.

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: It does not say that it did?

Sen. Prof. Spence: It does not say that it does and finance is their responsibility.

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: Yes. But the Exchequer and Audit Act applies to every piece of public sector finance, regardless.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Exactly the point.

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: It does not matter where the money is spent, whether it is in a municipal corporation, as long as it is public moneys, it is subject to the Exchequer and Audit Act. There is no escaping that.

Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie pleaded with me about why central government did not address the non-payment of salaries. I could use one analogy and I am sure I could use an analogy that would bring home to you my own point. It is not that we were not concerned. As a matter of fact, Minister Mark at the time, who was acting as Minister of Tobago Affairs—the substantive Minister having been away—and myself, were consulting on that matter all the time. We were as concerned about the non-payment of salaries as we can be.

Let me give you an example. Suppose I had sent a cheque to the principal of a school and said, “I want you to pay your teachers their salaries.” And one day I hear, after the month end has passed, that salaries had not been paid. I could not very well send him another cheque, could I? Because if I sent him another cheque, I still had no assurance that the teachers were going to be paid, so sending him

another cheque, my concern therefore—and I will be honest with you—was to see if I could get the Auditor General to determine whether the money that was meant for teachers' salaries had been misdirected.

Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie: So, was the money sent?

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: The money was definitely sent. You have to understand, Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie—and I say this without any apology—we actually treat Tobago as a priority. The Act says that at the beginning of the quarter, I must send three months *en bloc*. So, he has three months' salaries before and I do not expect him to pay the three months' salaries in advance, but he has it. We send him money for three months' salaries at the beginning of the quarter and sending another month's salary is not going to help the situation. We are more concerned about the rigidity and the kind of fiscal discipline we expect of him. That is what we are concerned about.

Now, I am making no judgement as to what he has done or not done. I cannot do that. What I have to do is rely on the Auditor General to submit a report. Let me mention to this honourable Senate that I have had that transaction investigated by the Auditor General. The Auditor General has since submitted a report to me. I have submitted the report to Cabinet last week and she made two basic recommendations which I will share with you.

One is that the matter should be immediately turned over to the Attorney General because you have to understand, again, the Attorney General has a special place with the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The Attorney General is the legal person for the Government, so that whether it is the Tobago House of Assembly, a municipal corporation, or a Ministry, the Attorney General represents the Government in legal matters. She says, firstly, it should be referred immediately to the Attorney General who must take the action. We are about to do that.

The next thing recommended, among others, and I do not recall them all—I do plan, I think by Friday, to lay the document in the House so that everyone can see it. As I said, these are public documents. The Auditor General does not do a private or confidential report. I will lay it in the House. She did say a more extensive audit should be carried out on the operations of the Tobago House of Assembly. That is as much as I am allowed to say at this time.

There are quite a few other things and I just picked up on a few of them.

Mr. President: Minister, I think Sen. Moore wants to ask something.

Sen. Moore: May I ask, as a matter of clarification on the matter of advances for salaries for the very last quarter of the financial year, was there not some setting off of funds which the Assembly was expected to receive against the sum that it was to be given? Is there some minusing for that?

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: Yes, but setting off does not mean that you are not in “in funds”. If you set off, it is because you have already collected the funds and, therefore, the funds are reserved for your recurrent expenditure. If you collect the money in Tobago, it is money that is earmarked, based upon parliamentary approval, for goods and services, for personnel expenditure and so forth. It is not because you collect the money in Tobago, you can do what you want with it. It is part of the parliamentary approval, so collecting the money in Tobago or collecting the money in Trinidad makes absolutely no difference.

Sen. Moore: Sorry. I did not mean what was collected. Was there something as a projection that was expected since they were not sure about what would have been the intake of the Assembly for those last few weeks at the end of the year?

7.25 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: We react basically on the information that is fed to us by the Tobago House of Assembly. If the House of Assembly refuses to submit information, then the people at the Ministry may anticipate it and make that. As far as I know, they made the final payment in the last quarter of fiscal year 1999 based upon either the actual collections or the projected collections. There was no query as to what they collected or did not collect. If they make a projection saying that they are expecting to collect \$2 million and they do not collect, we would send the money immediately after, so that by September 30, they should have seen these funds in any case.

Prof. Spence, I have to disagree with you with respect to why not raise taxes. I believe that over the years the people of Trinidad and Tobago have been really overtaxed. I believe that with the advent of value added tax, people have to pay lower taxes—both individuals and corporations—because value added tax is a tax and it goes to the Government.

Value added tax is slowly becoming much more significant in terms of the revenues of Trinidad and Tobago than either the corporation tax, the PAYE or the individual tax. I would hate to see a reversal of that at this point in time. As the economy expands, VAT is going to become a more influential tax, merely because expansion of the economy really encourages circulation of money and, with the circulation of money, we will see the tax being much more frequent.

I want to raise one other matter quickly. Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt is not here, but she lamented the fact that there is only one psychologist for 4,000 policemen. If I believe that, it really is a sad state of affairs that there is only one psychologist for 4,000 policemen, but I have to assume that those 4,000 policemen do not all need psychological help. If they did, heaven help us. *[Laughter]* While I accept what she is saying, it occurred to me from a budgetary standpoint that I really cannot budget to have psychologists for all 4,000 policemen. I think I would have to go and find 4,000 new policemen if they all needed a psychologist.

I assumed that firstly, the psychologist is only dealing with those who need it, which is the exception—maybe 5 per cent to 10 per cent. At 10 per cent, if one is talking about 400 policemen who need a psychologist's help, the psychologist is certainly not expected to deal with any large patient clientele because he or she has the power to refer the person to another psychologist, so it is not as if they were unnecessary. I thought I would mention it because I found it very funny. As the Minister is saying, he would not be seeing them all at the same time.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: Mr. President, I beg to move. *[Laughter]*
[Desk thumping]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Sen. The Hon. B. 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.

Bill accordingly read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, November 2, 1999 at 1.30 p.m. I want to inform Senators that we are going to deal with Bill No. 5, a Bill to amend the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago Act, 1991, and we will then proceed to bills 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 in that order. These are: the Integrity in Public

Adjournment
[HON. W. MARK]

Tuesday, October 26, 1999

Life (No. 2) Bill; the Constitution (Amdt.) (No. 5) Bill; the Constitution (Amdt.) (No. 6) Bill; the Human Tissue Transplant (No. 2) Bill; and the Human Reproductive and Genetic Technologies (No. 2) Bill. There is also the Planning and Development of Land (No. 2) Bill which is also scheduled to be dealt with.

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, before putting the question, I would like to congratulate all members of this honourable Senate for the very high standard which has been maintained throughout the course of debate on this budget. I would also like to congratulate Sen. Gillette and Sen. Dr. Dhanny on their maiden contributions. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.37 p.m.