

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, August 22, 2000***SENATE***Tuesday, August 22, 2000*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Mr. President: Hon. Members, leave of absence from sittings of the Senate has been approved for the following Senators: Jearlean John for the period 19—26 August; and Danny Montano for the period 22—25 August.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: 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. VINCENT CABRERA

WHEREAS Senator Jearlean John is incapable of performing her functions as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

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

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 August, 2000.”

Oath of Allegiance

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Vincent Cabrera took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

PROCEEDS OF CRIME BILL, 1999

Bill to provide for the consolidation of the confiscation of the proceeds of drug trafficking and to provide for the confiscation of the proceeds of other crime and the criminalizing of money laundering, brought from the House of Representatives. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

**PORT OF PORT OF SPAIN
(Future of)**

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Sadiq Baksh): Mr. President, several concerns have been expressed by Members of this honourable House, and elsewhere by other citizens and interest groups, about the future of the Port of Port of Spain. To allay whatever fears now exist, to end the speculation and misinformation that are now rampant, and to document the facts in this matter, I wish to make the following statement:

At the outset, let me state that the Government is not selling the Port, giving it away, or proposing to act in any way that is not totally consistent with our national interest, particularly our national security. Our basic philosophy is that the resources of this country belong to our people. We see our role, our duty in fact, as managing these resources in the best interest of present and future generations, facilitating growth and development, and putting in place a platform that will ensure progress.

Mr. President, in July 1999, representatives of the Port of Singapore Authority, PSA International, visited this country to explore the possibilities of an equity partnership or co-development arrangement between the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and PSA International. Subsequently, in December 1999, an agreement of confidentiality was signed. This was intended to govern the exchange of information between the two parties, the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and PSA International, so that the business opportunities could be explored in greater detail. There was the usual exchange of information including the annual report of PSA International for 1999.

Port of Port of Spain (Future of)

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

This was followed on April 24, 2000 (approximately four months ago) by a draft Memorandum of Understanding to cover further discussions and actions relating to the opportunities identified by both parties.

The Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago replied on April 26, 2000 pointing out, among other things, that while the idea of a strategic alliance was acceptable, the Port Authority needed to explore other partnership possibilities before making any commitments to the Port of Singapore Authority.

In the meantime, the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago had submitted its business plan to Cabinet. The plan is essentially the organization's blueprint for the future. The principle of private sector participation in the Port is a key feature of the new plan.

Since 1993 the Port started to commercialize some of its functions and, the new plan will incorporate certain specific business entities within the context of the Port's activities. Private sector participation will then be invited. The Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago sees this process of establishing business entities and getting private sector participation as key elements in making the Port more efficient and effective. It will no longer be a "Port of Pain".

Mr. President, proposals will be invited from the private sector for partnerships with the new company. Government will give its approval only if there is a suitable balance between the participation of any other partner and investment opportunities available to locals and local private enterprises.

1.40 p.m.

We will reserve adequate levels of shareholding for classes of investors including: the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; nationals of Trinidad and Tobago; local private enterprises; international investors; employees and employee associations of the Port Authority and the Shipping Association. Mr. President, any decision about participation will be taken only after a process of full consultation and communication among the major interest groups: the Government; the Port Authority and the relevant workers, representative group.

The views of the workers as well as the board and management of the Port are vital, since these are the people who have contributed to the climate of positive change that now characterizes the Port, and which will be needed to implement the business plan. Mr. President, as the plan unfolds or as implementation proceeds, I will continue to provide information to this honourable Senate about the transformation process at the Port of Port of Spain.

Port of Port of Spain (Future of)
[SEN. THE HON. S. BAKSH]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

Mr. President, another matter of public importance is the ferry service. The attempts of this Government to improve communications between Trinidad and Tobago are a matter of public record. On August 15 this year, Cabinet agreed to a proposal from the Ministry of Works and Transport for the acquisition through a short-term charter of a suitable alternative ferry to the Panorama.

We are guided by the time constraints and safety needs. The facts are that there are no available options locally or regionally and that we may be able to source an ocean going ferry from Canada or Europe. We have already initiated discussions with the Canadian and other governments for assistance in identifying and securing an appropriate vessel. We have established a timetable for expediting this process, including the engagement of a broker to identify and shortlist possible choices. By September 10 we hope to have a shortlist completed, and by October 9 to identify, examine, and charter a vessel. By October 23 we expect to have a ferry boat here in Trinidad.

Regarding the MF Panorama I wish to advise hon. Senators of the following:

- (1) An engineering specialist from the company which manufactured the propeller of the Panorama has inspected the damage and has advised that repairs can be effected within three to four days. Immediately repairs have been effected, the tests will be conducted at sea and the Panorama would then resume scheduled trips to Tobago;
- (2) Tomorrow, August 23, a barge will transport cargo between the ports of Port of Spain and Scarborough. All necessary parties have been advised and the operation is expected to proceed smoothly; and
- (3) A representative of the Port Authority will proceed to Venezuela today to investigate the possibility of a short-term passenger cargo ferry charter. No commitment will be made until careful investigations are conducted.

Mr. President, we have gone to great lengths to ensure that we find a replacement for the MF Panorama and to deal with the unexpected problems of the propeller. I want to commend the crew of the Panorama and the management of the Port Authority for continuing to provide a service in spite of the problem. They recognize, as we do, the vital role of the Panorama and the ferry service, in general, for maintaining the links between Trinidad and Tobago. The matter of another vessel is one that continues to occupy our attention. We are resolved to proceed with this and with the establishment of another port as priorities.

I thank this honourable Senate and I will continue to provide additional information about both the port and the ferry service.

I thank you.

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, Sen. Prof. Ramchand wants to make a personal explanation, but this can only be done with the leave of the President and by the indulgence of the Senate. Do I have the indulgence of the Senate?

Assent indicated.

MARIJUANA USE (Misconceptions)

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Mr. President, certain remarks in my contribution to the Senate debate on the Dangerous Drugs (Amdt.) Bill have given rise to misconceptions, and I believe that it is necessary for me to clear the air.

I begin, therefore, with a solemn declaration in this honourable Chamber that I have never broken the drug laws of Trinidad and Tobago. I am not a user of marijuana or any other drug. I am not in favour of making marijuana as freely available as tobacco and alcohol are, and I have no wish or intention to corrupt youth, or to encourage anybody to use any illegal substances for any purpose whatsoever.

The misconceptions to which I refer arose from the focusing of attention on two pages of a 13-page contribution and from a hasty reaction to the word "decriminalization". Many people thought, at first, and immediately put out the word, that I was proposing the full legalisation of marijuana so that it might be as freely available as alcohol and tobacco. That is wrong.

The argument of my two pages on marijuana was that we should look into the possibility of decriminalizing marijuana for medicinal purposes, because there is evidence that marijuana has valuable medicinal properties and is not addictive in limited medicinal usage, and there is no evidence of short-term or long-term harm to human health when it is used in such circumstances.

Misconceptions have also arisen about the actual extent in time and in quantity of my experience with marijuana in Jamaica all of more than 30 years ago; misconceptions about my possible connection with marijuana at the present time; and, I am afraid, misconceptions about my motives for raising in the Senate the question of decriminalizing marijuana for medicinal purposes.

Marijuana Use (Misconceptions)
[SEN. PROF. RAMCHAND]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

I found particularly hurtful an article in the *TnT Mirror* entitled "Independent Senators Slam Ganja Colleague". It is a strength of Independent Senators that we are able to hold differing views on particular issues, but I have to let you know for my sake and for their honour that I have been able to contact four of the five named in the article and they have categorically denied slamming me, commenting on my contribution, or uttering any of the two statements in quotation marks that challenged my competence and impugned my integrity.

I hope that an explanation to the Senate under the Heads I have listed above will help to dispel other misconceptions that are based upon mischief, misinformation, misunderstanding or misrepresentation of what I said.

Mr. President, 10 of the 13 pages of my contribution addressed the proposed legislation and showed my concern with the harm that drugs and drug dealers do. They suggest a necessity for solutions deeper than law and more sustainable than an unending war on an unceasing flow of new substances. I proposed that our best hope was to work towards the creation of a society in which there were fewer and fewer people prone to addiction or in need of drugs. These pages have been ignored, and the two and a half pages on decriminalizing marijuana have been made the focus of all attention, thus preventing my contribution from being its own defence.

Next, Mr. President, my words were erroneously reported, most damagingly in the *Newsday* of August 9, 2000, which I quote:

“Claiming medicinal purposes for marijuana use, Independent Senator, Ken Ramchand yesterday told the Senate he smoked marijuana every evening while living in for six years.”

I did not say that to the Senate and the newspaper was gracious enough to publish on Saturday August 12, 2000 my letter of clarification headed:

“I never said I smoked marijuana every evening.”

The error reappeared in print in the *TnT Mirror* of Friday August 18, 2000, in an article entitled:

“I like Ken Ramchand”

I am afraid that sound bytes, television clips, talk show jokes, titles of articles and letters in the press have lodged it in the popular imagination.

I knew that in making a case for the decriminalization of marijuana for medicinal purposes, I was broaching a demonized and highly inflammable subject.

The Senate is known to be a forum where rationality prevails, so I would like to explain why I spoke as I did and why I gambled on it.

I felt that my case would be stronger if I came over, not just as someone who had been witnessing for five years, but as someone who knew from personal experience, and I deployed my material accordingly. I felt when the jokes settled, all that would remain would be my call for consideration of the decriminalization of marijuana for it to be prescribed by medical practitioners in specific cases.

I did not realize that by personalizing the presentation and referring to myself rather than to “a person close to me”, I would attract sensational coverage. I did not anticipate that the decision to present myself as living proof that the controlled and medicinal use of marijuana are not harmful, would turn attention away from the issue to the person. To dispel false assumptions, I declare for the record that I did not use marijuana all through the five years that I lived in Jamaica, and I never said so.

I want to say now that the total usage was five or six times in all and all the instances occurred between December 1968 and 1969 when I had just arrived in Jamaica. I was remembering events of 31 years ago and referring to medicinal usage. I was not making solemn confession, and what I said did not take the form or have the purposes of solemn confession. I was not declaring myself a user of marijuana and I certainly did not intend anybody to believe that I smoke marijuana and, therefore, it was okay for them to do so.

As for my claims about the harmlessness of marijuana, I want to point out that I was referring strictly to a limited medicinal use and not regular use or abuse. There is considerable scientific research that a committee of experts would need to sift before we can pronounce on the harm that regular use, long-term use, and abuse may do, and until that happens nobody can even begin to think about the full legislation of marijuana or use for other than medicinal purposes under proper control.

Mr. President, if my contribution sent a wrong message to youth, I hope it is not too late to send out this correction. My children, do as I do, do not do as people tell you I say. I do not smoke marijuana; I do not want you to smoke marijuana; it is against the law to use marijuana and it would be no excuse to say that you are using it for medicinal purposes.

I have seen the effects of tobacco on individuals and I have seen the devastating effects on families and individuals of the uncontrolled availability of alcohol. Whatever the arguments in favour of allowing marijuana to be used for medicinal purposes, I cannot agree that it should be as freely available as alcohol and tobacco or be given status that will allow it to be as subject to abuse as these two dangerous drugs.

Marijuana Use (Misconceptions)
[SEN. PROF. RAMCHAND]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

I think a serious discussion has begun and I intend to pursue the matter, so I hope that this corrected message will travel fast and far.

Thank you.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, I seek leave of the Senate to have Motion No. 1 under “Government Business” on the Order Paper withdrawn in accordance with Standing Order 30(1). I also seek leave of the honourable Senate to have Bill No. 13 under “Bills Second Reading” on the Order Paper withdrawn in accordance with Standing Order 61(a).

1.55 p.m.

EDUCATION (PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE)

[Fourth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [April 4, 2000]:

Be It Resolved that the Government explain its philosophy of education with special reference to the question: “What is Education?” and “What is Education for?” [Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand]

Question again proposed.

Sen. Prof. John Spence: Mr. President, I welcome the hon. Minister of Works and Transport’s statement. I also welcome the hon. Minister of Education to our debate. On the last occasion, it was not possible for her to stay and listen to the contributions. I hope she was able to get Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie’s contribution, particularly, from the *Hansard* and read it. I notice that the camera has not come with her this time, which, perhaps is a pity.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: The camera is right there.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: That is a different one.

Mr. President, I had hoped to have from the Minister of Education, a statement on Government's educational policy because in fact, the Motion refers to a philosophy but it really tries to get at education policy. Instead of that, on the occasion when she made her presentation, what we got was a justification for certain actions that had taken place over the last few months with respect to placing of children in secondary schools and that, to my mind, is a very great pity. So with respect to policy, there really is nothing for me to respond to.

I cannot comment on Government's policy because we have not been given it, and this is the third occasion in which we have had what I consider a very interesting Motion from Independent Senators in which we have not had Government policy.

In Science and Technology we got a few statements, but certainly, there was no critical outline of policy. Indeed as I understand it, not directly in Government but outside of Government, there are now discussions taking place on Science and Technology and Research Policy. In the case of agriculture, I had hoped by now we would have had a statement by the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources in response to my motion with respect to agricultural policy. So what are we to conclude, that in these three major sectors there is no Government policy? That can only be the conclusion if it is not stated. If an invitation is issued to the Government to state its policies and they are not stated, I must say we have to draw the conclusion that they do not exist.

I intend to touch on some 10 issues—if there is time—which I consider are important, at least to me, in the development of such a policy so I am not going to suggest a policy, but I am going to raise issues which I think are important.

If we start at the primary level, it is clear from the results that we have been getting in the examination of the Common Entrance Examination that there is something seriously wrong with the primary school system and I will quote from an article in today's *Newsday* which is written by a well-known educator, Mr. I. B. Beddoe where he makes the point that indeed, there must have been a very great deficiency in our primary educational system. I cannot find the particular comment at the moment, but I would read, nevertheless, from his article because I think it has some other important things to say about primary education. I am reading some extracts, not the whole article.

“Newly appointed teachers are now hurriedly exposed to hands-on approaches in Teaching Reading and Number Work to First Form Special. What is needed is just not a Quick Fix.

In this scenario the Ladybird, *Read it yourself Series—Levels 1-4* has been considered.”

Then he goes on to give some assessment of the Ladybird readers both for and against, and then he comes to the much-publicized *Chicken Licken*.

“*Chicken Licken* has acquired recent notoriety. It has some 24 pages, 250 words with frequent repetition of the names of the animal characters presented ie Chicken Licken, Henny Penny, Cocky Locky, Ducky Lucky, Drakey Lakey

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

and Goosey Loosey, colourfully illustrated. This diet of nonsense-rhymes are to be fed to our First Formers and to the lasting ‘shame and disgrace’ of many of our Teachers and primary schools.”

What he gives is an outline of a project they had been developing with respect to a series of social studies readers at the primary level which could also have been used for teaching and basically, what he is saying is should we plan properly in advance, we do not have to do this quick-fix system and we would be able to address the problems which clearly exist at the primary school level. So I think it is clear that we have an issue there on which we should have had some statement of Government’s policy. Is the system to be left exactly as it is except for the change in the examination process?

The Secondary Entrance Assessment is now replacing the Common Entrance Examination, but let us look at that for a moment. The Common Entrance Examination was intended to place students in particular schools; it was a placement examination and the final place was either in post-primary centres or it is possible in some cases that no students were placed at all, but it was a placement examination. The Secondary Entrance Assessment is a placement examination. The format has changed, but the objectives are exactly the same. It is a one-off examination after five years of primary school. It places children either in the first school of their choice or in some other school based on certain criteria and now, instead of going into post-primary centres, the remainder will go into special classes in secondary schools or to the model schools.

Mr. President, it is perfectly clear, and to me it is logical that we have not abolished the Common Entrance Examination and I cannot for the life of me understand why this population—because the media have accepted it as well—feels that we have abolished the Common Entrance Examination. We have not. We have changed its format, that is all we have done. When it was first announced that we would abolish this examination, I said to the then Minister of Education it will take you seven years. Two years to do continuous assessment as a pilot scheme which was in progress and five years to actually put it in place because continuous assessment means over the full life of the time when the kids are in primary school. If you are not going to have continuous assessment and that seems to have gone out the window, and you want to abolish the Common Entrance Examination, then you have to have zoning. It is perfectly straightforward and I think there must be something seriously wrong with our educational system and I am going to suggest that we put in logic or rational reasoning into the teaching of our primary and secondary schools because clearly,

those persons who are saying that the Common Entrance Examination has been abolished have a problem with rational thinking. That is the first point we are on, and do you know it is going to catch up with us next year? Because when the parents understand fully that they have one exam which would send their kids either to the school, of their choice or to other schools, including special classes in secondary schools, they are going to be extremely surprised that the system is still exactly as it was before.

Mr. President, what are we doing really? There are also some other misconceptions about what happened with the Common Entrance Examination. First of all it has been suggested that the 10,000 kids who did not pass went into the streets. I raised this issue on a *Morning Edition* programme with the technical officer in the Ministry of Education and I asked how many kids would have been repeating. Her response was, some 3,000—4,000 so we are talking about 6,000, not 10,000. *[Interruption]* Well, it does not matter; 6,000 is bad enough if we were not properly placing them, but nevertheless, why not be accurate in what you are saying, rather than these wild figures that are thrown about? In fact, her comment was: “10,000 is being bandied about, but I don’t know where it came from.”

What about the change in format? Let us look at that for a minute. What we have done in fact is to put the clock back about 40 years. When I went to school, it was an Exhibition Exam which consisted mainly of mathematics and English and that is what we were able to do. Not surprisingly, because I think with due respect to Clive Pantin, he has a somewhat old-fashioned approach to matters of the sort and that is what he has done. He has turned the clock back. I believe one of the arguments he is using is that Dr. Capildeo, who turned out to be a brilliant mathematician, only had that sort of training so he did not need science and so forth. But what has happened since Dr. Capildeo’s time? Are we ignoring all the advances in science and technology in that time? What about information technology? What are we doing? We made an advance in which we put social studies and integrated science into the primary schools and examined them. I know they are still in the curriculum, but you know what happens in Trinidad and Tobago. The teachers know that they will not be examined and, therefore, they would not treat with them in the same way they treated with them in the past. So to my mind, this is a backward step. We could have looked at that examination and decided that there might have been some faults that we had to correct. I believe there is too great an emphasis on multiple choice and there might have been some more essay questions as were being introduced gradually over the period of years, but let us face it. A multiple choice question is a much more

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

objective question to mark than an essay question. The problem with the essay type question is if that is all you are having, then the objectivity is very difficult to attain. If one person—and I have done it myself, I have corrected 100 scripts of students at one time—does it, it is difficult when you start at one time three hours later to make the same assessment that you would have done at the beginning after you have read all the text. And if you can only do half one day, you have to do the other half the next day and you are always worried about whether you have judged the second half the same as the first and we have gone entirely into that system and left out multiple choice altogether.

The suggestion that multiple choice can be done by guesswork is obviously nonsense because multiple choice questions are properly designed not just for getting a guess to the answer, if properly designed, and I presume these were properly designed, if not, we should have looked at the design. You can extract from the pupil logic if the questions are well-designed. So while I am not myself an enthusiast about multiple choice, I realize that they have their place and we should not just throw them out. Now you think about next year when there are three or four essay questions, that is 30,000 by three or four, 120,000 essay-type questions to be marked somewhere in the Caribbean. To obtain objectivity and impartiality is not at all easy.

Mr. President, I am all for change and progress. I would have been all for change of that format, but certainly, I do not think that we have advanced by changing it in the way that we have done and it is a pity that we did not have more discretion on that change when Mr. Pantin's committee recommended it.

2.10 p.m.

Now, there is another aspect which we seem to have thrown out of the window, that of resits. We could give any number of examples of kids who did not pass for the school of their choice the first time but were able to resit and therefore next time around were able to get a place in whatever school of their choice. Some may have failed altogether. Failed is not the right word. Some may have gotten too low a mark to be placed in a secondary school at all, but on the second sit got through their exam. Now, parents have not really been told specifically that they can resit.

I know in answer to one or two questions the hon. Minister on the television and so forth has said, "Yes, they can resit", but what are they resitting? They are not resitting the old exam; they are resitting a new exam. So it means the teachers have to prepare them for a new exam and that is unfair to the kids who resit. Clearly, if we are to make this change there has to be a transitional period. What

one does is to run the old exam for a couple of years while the resits take it and then switch to the new exam. We have been very unfair to 4,000 kids who have had the opportunity to improve their grades by resits and they would not now have it. I think that is very unfair to those 4,000 kids. They would not have it because they are not sitting the same exam. They have to now prepare for a different exam and, clearly, if one had been prepared for one type of exam for five years, one does not just, after a few months, prepare for another kind of exam. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, Mr. President, if we had this issue to deal with of kids not going to secondary school—and certainly I agree that it was an issue and the Government is to be congratulated for addressing that issue. It is an extremely important step and we have been remiss in this country for not addressing it prior to this, but there is no reason why it could not have been addressed sensibly. We have not addressed it sensibly and we may, in fact, have not achieved the objectives that we set out to achieve because kids will go into secondary schools ill prepared and that will make them more frustrated, or we may have more kids on the roads rather than fewer. [*Desk thumping*] So let us advance in a sensible, logical, planned way.

Now, what could we have done? We could have said, “Every single child in Trinidad and Tobago will go to a secondary school when they are prepared for it”. That the population should have embraced wholeheartedly. So we could have beefed up the post-primary centres and increased their number to ensure that remedial teachers who have been properly trained would go to these post-primary centres, along with the kids, when they are ready. It may take one, two or three years. The hon. Minister gave us some records of the Common Entrance passes for the kids who are going to the model school.

If that is the result, clearly they would not, in one year, get up to secondary school entrance level, so it may take two or three years. However, if the Minister had said in advance that once they are ready they would go into secondary school, then she would have satisfied what was wanted, to have everybody in secondary school. That is an excellent objective. It should also be done sensibly, because what is being done now not only is much more difficult to do but it is quite likely not to succeed. Teaching of kids who have difficulty in reading and writing is not an easy task and clearly there must be special teachers in order to do that, especially if one is trying to do it in a shorter space of time.

So those are some of the issues that I think really should have been addressed differently. The hon. Minister has said that everybody criticizes and does not say what should be done. I hope I said what should have been done. We should have beefed up the post-primary centres. We should have said everyone would go to secondary school when they are prepared for it. We should have had proper remedial teachers in those post-primary centres and then we should have sent them on to secondary schools, and we would not have had this fiasco of schools not being ready, because it would not have mattered. They would not have been needed in those quantities that they are needed now if the kids were going into post-primary centres. Of course, there is the issue that we discussed on the last occasion, that if we start off with a first year of 200 in a school that is able to take 500, how do we get them back to their normal sequence of kids going through the school?

Now, what about the secondary school curriculum? We have been addressing the primary schools. We know that there is something wrong. We have not really heard from the Government how they are going to address the issue of the curriculum or the primary schools or the teaching, or something in the primary schools that clearly is not working as it should. What about the secondary schools? Frequently people make the comment that the secondary school curriculum is the—and the type of kids we are turning out has not really been meeting the needs of our society with respect to the world of work.

Should we not be looking at that as well? What sort of examination do we give them? In many aspects, the examination given to kids after a period of teaching at school determines what curriculum is written for them. Perhaps it should be the other way around but the two go hand in hand, in a sense. What exam are we giving them? Whether it is the Cambridge exam or CXC, it is still an exam that has the same format it has had in the past, and there is no alternative. It is very much an academic format. Now, in the United Kingdom some years ago in discussion with industry, in discussion with the world of work, they introduced a new examination for secondary school kids and a new curriculum to meet that examination.

At first it was not taken up universally by all the schools; although it was offered in the institutes of higher education so that adults who had missed that sort of training in their secondary system could take it up as an adult later on and so be better prepared for the world of work than they were being prepared in the secondary school system, but gradually it is being taken up by the secondary schools as well. So why have we not thought about a second examination system

when we know that 100 kids sit the CXC exam or Cambridge and 50 per cent of them are not going to adequately cope with it? Why do we fool ourselves? Clearly, it is not that those kids are not bright, but they are bright in a different way. So why do we not offer them a system which they can be bright at instead of offering them a system that they are clearly not interested in?

Half the time it is not really their ability to cope with the system but lack of interest. We cannot capture their imagination or their interest in this type of subject. I am not going to call names but when we were at school there was one boy who we considered not very bright. I consider that boy now to be a genius because he is in the world of art and he has made a name for himself internationally. He is no longer in this country but really, you know, if that boy had been in a different environment at school he would have done better at school. We had nothing to offer him at Queen's Royal College in those days, nothing at all that would have captured his imagination or interest. So why are we not looking at the secondary school curriculum? We go on saying that the product is not suitable to the world of work. The businessman says, and students keep complaining, "I have five O'levels. I cannot get a job because I am not properly equipped". Are we looking? Perhaps we are, but that is what we hope to hear from the Minister of Education; not a long justification for secondary school for all for a system that was clearly flawed.

Now, Mr. President, there are a couple of other issues with our secondary school system that we really do need to address. As far as I am aware, and if I am incorrect in this I stand to be corrected, our system of teaching is still what is now known in popular parlance as chalk and talk. We still have the system whereby a teacher goes to the blackboard, has 40 pupils—and honestly, I do not know from where the hon. Minister of Education got the international norm of 40. I immediately rang my son who teaches in the UK and asked, "What is the norm in the UK?" He told me 30 to 35, and in the school where he teaches, commonly he has taught classes of 16, so it certainly is not 40. However, that is another matter.

With respect to the way the teachers approach the kids, I have told this story before and I am going to tell it again because the hon. Minister is here. When I went on sabbatical in the United Kingdom, my sons went to a grammar school for a period of time. They then came back to a prestige school in Trinidad and one of them, the one who is now a teacher—and this is why he became a teacher—said

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

to me, “But you know, Daddy, the teaching here is quite different to in England”. I said, “How do you mean?” He said, “Well, we do not participate in the lesson at all. If we say anything either everybody laughs at us or the teacher tells us to shut up. We do not participate in the lesson”.

However, in England—and that is why if one looks at any schoolchild from the United Kingdom that child is self-confident. Our people cannot talk. They say things like “Am” and “Right”. They cannot because they are never encouraged at schools to speak out, so that is what we have to address. How are we bringing out the best in our pupils by the way that we teach? My son’s classroom in the UK has about six tables with kids sitting facing each other around these tables and he does his teaching by going through the tables. He does not stand up and pontificate to them on some subject that they may or may not acquire. They participate in the lesson. We need smaller classes, but that is what we should be aiming for. That is what we should have heard from the Minister of Education. We cannot do it now because we do not have enough teachers, but that is what we intend to do. That is our policy.

Another thing with our secondary schools, and we see it at university all the time, involves student activities, especially in some of the prestige schools. Some students are not encouraged to make their own student bodies, you know, to have a students’ union, to have different clubs and so forth run by the students themselves. In some prestige schools they do not like this because this they think makes it more difficult for them to control the kids. So they come to university and they have no clue about organizing their own affairs. That is why our students’ union at the University of the West Indies is so poor compared to other countries, because they do not get what they should be getting from school.

So that is another aspect not strictly of the curricula, but a way in which we approach our teaching in secondary schools that does not bring out the leadership qualities of the kids, which is what we should be doing by education. Educational philosophy. What is the education all about? It is not to give them facts that they will regurgitate but to somehow make them more able to deal with the life that they have to lead when they leave school, and this includes acquiring knowledge but it is not the be-all and end-all of the system.

Another thing that I think really needs to be given attention—I think it is receiving some attention—is religious education. I again speak from personal experience. My son happens to be the head of a department of religious education in the school where he teaches in the UK because he is particularly interested in

that area. In some areas in Britain now there are multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies. He has told me in some detail—I would pass it on to the hon. Minister if she were interested—how they approach in his school the question of religious education and deal with the different religions with which one has to interface. The important fact is that it is a compulsory subject in the schools in the United Kingdom. It is compulsory, not voluntary, as I think it probably is here.

Mr. President, there has been talk in the past of abolishing the shift system. I have never thought that we should approach the shift system by abolishing it. Now, I know the argument is that the kids will be in the streets if they are not in school. What we should have been doing was making available the facilities and the teachers for those kids to be engaged in other activities during the time when they would have been not at school because of the shift system. So we should have had sporting activities, we should have had auditoria in which we could do plays and have cultural events and all the rest of it. We should have kept them in school, off the streets, but not to deshift because the shift system does reduce costs. One's capital plant is better utilized if there is a shift system. Let us go for a minute to Hong Kong and see what the shift system is like there, one of the Asian Tigers which we constantly say we should be following, and let us be careful about what is going to happen.

I do not know whether the demographics of this country were being studied carefully in deciding how many schools were going to be needed. A member of the Faculty of Education with whom I was in conversation this morning said to me, "In 10 years' time we are going to have empty schools". So if we build more schools in order to deshift, there are going to be more empty ones. Another "by the way," Mr. President, but it really is so funny that one has to refer to it. We are now going to make all our schools colleges and by changing the name from secondary school or what have you to college, that somehow would seem to make them different. Nobody has said what is the difference between a college and another secondary school and how they are going to be raised up from being secondary schools to colleges and so forth, but they are all going to be called colleges.

Mr. President, I have always been an advocate for the abolition of the scholarship examination system. I have long felt that this system distorts the method of teaching, particularly in many prestige schools. I think some of the lack of success of prestige schools includes that scholarship system, because the school resources are put into the scholarship examination system to the detriment of other kids at the school. That is why there are prestige schools that may have in attendance the first 500 students who would have passed the Common Entrance

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

Exam in the island and many of them are not getting five O'levels. Clearly that school has failed if that happens, but we do not look at it as being a failure. We say, "No, it has got five national scholarships therefore it is an excellent prestige school"—for those five people but not for the other kids.

So, Mr. President, I feel long ago we should have done what the United Kingdom had done in the 1960s, I think, or the 50s—abolish the scholarship system and give a grant to people to go to university based on a means test.

2.25 p.m.

Many of the kids who are on scholarship, their parents can afford to send them to university anyhow. Give them a medal! I have no problem with medals and any sort of honour. Let them meet with the President of the Republic, the President of the Senate; anybody. Honour them, but take the money being used for those scholarships and give it as a grant to university students.

In fact, outlaw the system in schools in Trinidad in which a kid can do an A' level exam four times. Can you imagine that in this day and age we are forcing a bright, intelligent student to repeat the same curriculum four times? I can imagine nothing that could kill—it is no wonder our intellects never seem to perform when they get into the world of work. It is because they have been killed at school by that system. Certainly, if we are looking at issues for policy, one of the policy issues is to look at whether we should not abolish the scholarship system and put the money to better use.

When we look at the A' level examination, I am told that Trinidad is the only country in the Caribbean that is not looking at the CXC examination for replacing A' levels. I think it is called CAPE. I forgot what the acronym stands for. Yet, I was also told this morning that the United Kingdom Cambridge examination is looking at the CXC, CAPE in order to modify their own system.

We did not have to go far. Anybody who has been to the United Kingdom, north of the border, or has been to Scotland will know that the Scottish have had a different system for years. They have never had the A' level system. They had a much better system which is much suited for our needs.

Instead of spending two years to do subjects that prepare someone for university entrance when, in fact, 95 per cent of the kids are not going on to university and are getting inappropriate A' level training, they have always had a one year programme and it has been a much broader based exam. They have five subjects at their A' levels. Go and look at the scholarships. For years they have

been suggesting that we do that. CXC is now doing it, but not Trinidad. We are not interested in that. We are too conservative, yet we say that anybody who criticizes any change is not in favour of change and does not want change. Some of us do want change, but we want change in ways that will advance us, not ways that will take us backwards.

Mr. President, with respect to tertiary education, again I have to repeat myself as I talk about tertiary education because, as you know, I have had two Motions on tertiary education in this Senate over the last two years. I have to refer to two or three aspects of tertiary education. The first is the development of the Institute of Technology, and I want to congratulate Minister Finbar Gangar for this development. I think it is extremely important. [*Desk thumping*] Forgive me if I suggest that even now, we should use this institute to develop our tertiary educational system somewhat differently than the direction we now seem to be going.

I have argued that all of the technical institutions which we are putting together under a community college should really be a technical university. Look at what we have done. While we are talking about the community college, the past Minister of Planning sometime ago in this Senate said that perhaps in the future we may be thinking about upgrading it—Minister Gangar has gone and created a university. That is what it is. It is a university; it is offering degrees.

We have established in Trinidad, an institution offering degrees. Our own institution; not taking foreign degrees from somewhere else. I think they may be certified for some time, but I hope that eventually the intention is that they will stand on their own feet. It can be done.

I must say, however, Minister Gangar, if you will forgive me, this really is to show how Americanized we have become. We still use the English language in the country. The National Skills Centre cannot be c-e-n-t-e-r. That is not English; that is American. [*Laughter*] Not because Amoco paid for it. Let us get back and call it what it really is. That is the problem with our educational system. We are being influenced by all these other things rather than being taught proper English and spelling in the schools.

Mr. Speaker, what we should do now is build on that excellent start that we have made with the Institute of Technology—which really is a university, get off this path we are on with making all these different technical schools into

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

community colleges, because what is going to happen is that they will go through the community college, they will not have degrees, they will have associate degrees, and they will still have the problem of looking for somewhere to get a degree.

Why not upgrade the whole system? It is quite doable. Jamaica has done it. They have a University of Technology, which means that it can be done even in Trinidad. What we need to do now is to amalgamate the Institute of Technology with this community college and make a university of technology. Certainly, it will benefit the Institute of Technology too, because as I said before, an institute of that sort standing on its own means that persons will be getting degrees in a certain area, but they will not be well educated people, because they will not be brushing against people in other faculties.

The whole thing about a university is that when one goes there, one could brush shoulders with people in arts, medicine, science and what have you. That is what university is about. It is not just about getting a degree. That is only a small part of it. A large part of it is one's development as a human being because one does learn to live in a community with other people, various ethnic groups, various religions and various people from various parts of the world, and there would be people from various parts of the world if our Institute of Technology works properly, and I am sure it will.

Why do we not go the whole hog and make sure the Institute of Technology has companion faculties, and so forth? It will be better for them too, because now they are drawing upon an institution abroad, which has a broad faculty, to validate their system. Eventually, I hope that they will want to validate it locally. To do that, they must have academics from other disciplines: engineering, science, and so forth, looking at the standards of their degrees, the curriculum they are teaching, and so forth. That is what we should be doing.

Mr. President, I do not know. We now have distance learning. Sometimes I wonder whether we understand what distance learning is at all. We are setting up, what I assume, are computer centres where people could get on the Internet, but distance learning has to be backed up by a central faculty. The television university, the open University in Britain, has a whole faculty to back up what they give as distance learning. So, you do not do distance learning by setting up a few computers here and a few computers there. That is not distance learning. That

is setting up computer centres. It is very laudable. It is nice to think that communities can now go into a centre and learn to use the computer, to become computer literate and so forth, but distance learning? I do not think we really know what we are talking about.

This is what we should have been getting from the Minister of Education. Education from primary school to the tertiary level, if she is giving Government policy, even though it may be in another ministry and, of course, that in itself is a problem. I listened to Mia Mottley in Barbados four years ago—she was then 32 years old—and she gave an address for over two hours to the Parliament of Barbados. She started at preschool and went straight to university. Excellent! She did not look at her notes.

She did not rant and rave about politics. Occasionally, she gave a very subtle dig at the opposition but no politicking. Excellent! It made me agree with Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt that perhaps we should have more women in Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] I very much regret to have to say this; perhaps I should not say it. [*Laughter*] I will not say it. I think it is clear what I was going to say. Women are sometimes too strongly influenced by men and, therefore, do not give of their full potential.

Mr. President, with respect to teacher education, since I went to be on the staff at UWI in the early sixties, there has been discussion about a Bachelor of Education degree. I think that eventually about four years ago one was started. A few certified students were sent to do the degree and then the Government decided that they would not send anymore. I do not know why. If the Minister cannot speak about tertiary education because it is with some other Ministry, at least she can speak about teacher training, which would mean whether they get a B.Ed. degree or not.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: I am not sure I heard you correctly, but we have been granting scholarships for teachers to do the Bachelor of Education. There are in the system at present approximately 100 persons, and this year we have approved a further 100. This has been happening over the past three years. The programme is a two-year programme, so one batch will complete this year, one will complete next year and in September of this year, a further batch of 100 will be going in for the Bachelor of Education.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. President, I am very pleased to hear that. It would be good to communicate this to the university, because I spoke to the head of the education department this morning who told me that, in fact, the programme had been stopped by the Government. Perhaps it would be useful if they could communicate that to UWI. It might help them to prepare for the programme.

I want to go back to this B.Ed. degree, because it is something that I have argued within the university. I think the university has been at fault here. I very much blame the university over the years for not persuading governments, successive governments, that what we need in the educational system is a B.Ed. degree.

The problem with our system is that we turn out chemists, physicists, zoologists, botanists, what have you, and at the end of that time, the kids, because they have majored in these various subjects, look for jobs in that field. If they cannot get a job, they go to teaching. They are not really wanting to go to teaching. They are not trained for teaching. They may go and do a two-year in-service diploma later on. They get no additional salary for the two-year diploma, so there is no incentive, even if they do it, to do it properly; and they have no professional educational input into their degree programme.

The argument that has been used by these subject matter specialists over the years—I know the chemists are ones that use it frequently, but if you want to teach at A' levels, you have to have three years in chemistry in order to teach, which I do not agree with at all. Let us look at the actual real world. Most teachers, when they go out, do not teach only in their major subject. They teach other subjects too. If they are teaching chemistry to A' levels with three years of chemistry, they are teaching physics with two years.

Sometimes they are not teaching the subjects they were trained in at all. They are teaching other subjects. In the real world, we are not getting three years university people teaching A' level subjects. Why not face reality and say it would be very much better to give them professional training in education which none of them have, except the few who have gone through the programme recently, and drop the level—of course, it goes back to the A' level exam as well. If there is a one-year A' level instead of a two-year A' level as university entrants, clearly one will not need the three years at university to teach the one year at A' levels.

Let us look at it the other way around. We say they need A' level chemistry because they are coming into university. When they come into university, most times, the university teachers say, "You know, they were taught the wrong thing

at school. We cannot start at the end of A' levels. We have to start further back". So, having done four years of this programme at school, a bright kid, he then has to go back again. Why do we not face reality? Why do the people at the university not talk to the Government and the Government talk to them about these things?

We need to have a university council, because some of these issues need to be looked at. The Minister goes to the university council once a year. I have sat on the council for five years, so I know how it works. They do not discuss any real issues. Why do we not address the real issues that need to be addressed in our educational system? We should have proper teachers properly trained, professional teachers given a Bachelor in Education degree so they are given their professionalism and then we should pay them properly.

With respect to the teachers' training colleges, I understand these have not gone into the community colleges. Why not? I do not think it should be a community college. It should be a university. Why has the teachers' education college not gone into the community college? Could the hon. Minister explain that to me? I am told they are not part of the community college. Why have they been left out? Are we interested in the teachers' training college or are we going to abandon it?

If we are really going to have a good educational system and we have addressed the sort of issues I have raised here, we should have a policy based on these and other issues, and insist that our teachers become professional in the sense of having professional training. The advantage of having them recruited into a Bachelor of Education degree is that when they leave school, they are deciding to be teachers. They are not going to go into teaching because they cannot get a job in another field. One is going to be selecting them three years earlier. There may still be some afterwards and they can go back and do an extra subject in Education if they want. They should be able to get a B.Ed. after another year, having done their subject—or whatever time it takes. That is the exception but that can happen too. If one wants to be a teacher, go into university and do a B.Ed. It is three years, not two.

Then, Mr. President, we have to pay them properly. This is not a criticism of this Government. The poor pay of teachers goes back. Perhaps it will be solved next week when the budget is presented. I do not know. I certainly hope so.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended for a further 15 minutes. [*Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt*]

Question put and agreed to.

2.40 p.m.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: Thank you, Mr. President. I would not need that time to finish.

Teachers' salaries—I think if we are going to really move forward in that way, perhaps the two should really go hand in hand. We should start by giving the teachers who have been trained professionally an extra salary; then, we should insist that they be motivated and be properly trained. I know that it is difficult to increase salaries when you are not expecting an immediate return for that increase. I think they need an increase anyhow, given the job they do, but I certainly would put as much emphasis on that as setting up systems that can have them professionally trained in education and rewarded for that. It would be an incentive to get the professional training in education, then be properly rewarded.

Finally, Mr. President, if you like, ancillary to education but, I think, nevertheless important, as well as social issues, are school meals and school books, even though we have addressed the school book issue partially by reducing the number of books that kids have to get—and that was an excellent move forward. I entirely give the Government credit for having tackled that question. That must have been a difficult one to tackle because there were pressures from the commercial sector to go on as we were going in the past.

We could go one step further and I have said it before; it must have been four years ago during a budget debate. In Barbados, the schools provide the books. In the United Kingdom as well, by the way. But in Barbados, just next door to us, without our oil wealth, without our \$33 a barrel for oil today, they give the kids books and charge a rental. All the kids get books. They do not distinguish. The way they treat some disadvantaged kids is that without the whole school knowing it, the principal has the authority to waive the rental for kids who are disadvantaged. Then there are fines if the books are lost, not for the full value of the book, because many poor parents could not afford that, but there is a fine so they do not just treat it as a handout.

Certainly, we should have been doing that in Trinidad and Tobago many years ago with school books and that means hundreds and hundreds of dollars. Do not give tax breaks; give it where it really helps poor people with schooling which we say is the important thing. We have a budget coming up next week. The Minister of Finance, Planning and Development could still go and scribble on his notes to put in an extra line "School books for all" and that, the population including myself, will cheer.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Thank you, Sen. Prof. Spence. I just wondered if you were aware that Government has, in fact, spent several millions of dollars in providing free textbooks in the primary schools on a loan basis for needy students. I do not recall the exact figure but it is in excess of \$7 million with over 300,000 textbooks provided for needy children in the primary school system. So your point is well taken for the secondary system, but in terms of the primary school system, I know last year we had launched that programme to put free primary school textbooks for the needy children in the primary schools. I was just wondering whether you were aware of this.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: Excellent. All credit to the Government for having done that. I think that is excellent, just as the school meals are excellent, but as I am going to argue in a minute with the school meals, it must be extended. I agree with that entirely but the way to do that is to give to all the kids. Anything that distinguishes publicly between poor kids and rich kids is undesirable in our society.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: We have to start somewhere.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: I know we have to start somewhere, but where do we want to put our financial resources in the country? I mean, if Barbados can do it, why can we not? They have not got the national resources that we have in Trinidad. What do we spend our money on that Barbados does not? How can they have an exchange rate and a per capita income that is better than ours? What is wrong with us? That is what we have to ask ourselves. Is it the secondary school system? Is their secondary school system better than ours? Do they have more primary school passes into their secondary schools? Are they better taught? How do they train their teachers? It is just next door. I keep on asking: What is wrong with us?

Certainly, I congratulate the Government on introducing that programme of free books for disadvantaged kids. That is excellent and I applaud it. Now, let us in the budget next week, extend that to all the kids and all the schools; charge a rental to recover some of the income so that people would not see it as something free—because we do not really appreciate things that we get entirely free—but do not make the distinction between poor kids and well-to-do kids.

The same thing applies to school meals. The fact that we give some kids and not others school meals, immediately identifies those kids as poor kids who need a handout. Now, they may need it so badly that they may not show it. They are so glad to get the meal that they take it but it must have some effect on their psyche

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

and on their self-esteem. We could do it differently. Again, we could have all the kids having meals; again, we could have a charge and, again, without publicity, the principals can be allowed to waive it for certain kids.

It can be done in principle and I have estimated the cost. It will go up from the \$70 million we now spend to \$350 million, just about the take from the National Lottery. Why is the National Lottery in this country going into general revenue? In most countries, it goes to something which the general revenue normally would not do, like art, culture or something in the United Kingdom. Why can it not go into school feeding? I am sure many more people would feel less guilty about buying a lottery ticket if they thought it were for school feeding and not just another gambling thing to go into general revenue. But it would also have the benefit, as I have argued before and I will continue to argue, of acting as a stimulus to agricultural development.

There is also a health issue. We are bombarded every day on the radio and on the television with the thing about diet and health. You know, listening to the man on the television this morning talking about prostate cancer, what was he talking about? Fruit, vegetables, exercise. That is what he was talking about. He said that would help to delay all forms of cancer, breast cancer as well. Less red meat, more fish, fruit and vegetables, which are the things we can produce locally, so you are teaching the kids at school to have a healthy diet.

What do most of them do now, the ones who get the money from their parents? They go down to the fast food places, or they buy a bun, or drink a sweet drink which has no vitamins at all. They do not even take a juice, they take a sweet drink, or they take—I would not mention the brand name but there are some things which pretend to be juice that really are not juice at all but coloured water. I nearly mentioned a well-known brand name.

I congratulate the Government for introducing the breakfast as well because if you start off the day with a good breakfast, it might even carry you through lunch. In some ways, it is perhaps more important than the midday meal, especially if you are on a shift system. So, I congratulate them on that, too, but let us extend it a bit further. Let us really tackle it as a proper system and not—I do not want to call it tokenism because it is more than that. I mean, I pass by primary schools—and I have said this before—and I see kids taking home the lunch boxes. That is because they may have some poor brother or sister at home who will have nothing. That is good. They are teaching them to share. It always makes me emotional when I speak of them because it is so sad really in a rich country like this.

Those may be ancillary but I think they are important to our education system because they are important to the young people, teaching them to have a proper diet means that they will be well fed when they are in school, therefore, they will perform better in the classes.

With respect to the books, I think it will relieve many parents with a lot of stress, having to find these expensive—even though they are fewer—books for the children.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Sen. Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh: Mr. President, I share the sentiments of all contributors to this debate in congratulating Sen. Prof. Ramchand for his Motion on education which so far has stimulated much thought and discussion. The nation itself is engaged in consideration of some of the most daring, revolutionary and historic changes in our education system—changes so vociferously despised by certain persons while fervently applauded by others. I hope that out of such dialectic we may discover the correct synthesis in our quest for that precious formula to rejuvenate our education system.

So much has been said already, but I want to focus on one matter. The recitals of Sen. Prof. Ramchand's Motion focussed on certain features of our education reform programme, some of which have already been initiated like the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP) and the Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP) which are experiencing serious turbulence at this time.

The second and third recitals of the Motion incorporate one of the most significant levels of education in the life of the child, the primary school. I will limit my contribution to this sector of our educational system. I felt encouraged when I heard Sen. Prof. Spence begin by talking about the primary level and I did not read the educator's article, Mr. Beddoe. I am glad he mentioned the primary school.

The modernization of the secondary school system, I believe, will remain impoverished if we ignore its feeder school, that is, the primary school. There can be no meaningful secondary school system without a proper upgrading and reformation of the primary school system. Replacing the Common Entrance exam with the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) and the Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP) may only take us so far. Universal secondary education, with its promise of more high school places, more high school facilities also, or the de-shifting of the junior secondary system, will be an exercise in futility if we fail to energize and rehabilitate the primary school zone.

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. REV. D. TEELUCKSINGH]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

I ask a question in dismay: Why after seven years in primary schools should so many 12-year-olds learn to read *The Ugly Ducking, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Chicken Licken, Brer Nancy, Papa Bois* or a story I hope to write one day about “Princess Pulbasia of Tulsa Trace”? Why are such stories and fables being given to teenagers and young people who should be preparing instead for the job market? Why are they still learning to read and spell from the infant department story books? What was done in the primary school for the seven years those children spent there? Those are the ages, from five to 12, when children—I taught in the schools; I did not read that in a book—are so co-operative, so obedient, so responsive to affection and love, with minds described by the philosopher as “a blank slate”, the *tabula rasa*, only waiting to be written upon. What have we written on that blank slate from ages five to 12? What do we see?

Notwithstanding those who survive those impressionable and fertile seven years, thousands of children still score so disastrously in the examination which teachers all know was soon coming at 11-plus. As the hon. Minister of Education informed us when she last spoke in this honourable place, I, too, would like to ask: Why 59 out of 487 got zero in an essay for the Common Entrance examination?

2.55 p.m.

We may take another—I want to go outside of Port of Spain—487 somewhere else in Trinidad and Tobago to find if there are more zeros. Why out of a possible 60 students, after spending seven years in school, 24 children got one mark? How many more zeros, ones, twos or three mark performances will we find in the 29,000 across this land?

The question I want to ask about the primary school system is—it is about the most important in the various levels—who is responsible for this debacle in the primary school which has had these children for seven years: seven precious, maybe the most precious, years of their lives, as far as school is concerned? What can be done to save the nation’s children in the future?

Mr. President, the model school is symbolic of the disastrous failure of the primary school. The model school is an invention because the primary school system has failed. The primary school caters for ages 5 to 12. I believe, as a parent, almost all these children are not mentally challenged. These children are not neurologically disadvantaged. Who said they fell on their heads and suffered brain damage when they were born? I contend, Mr. President, that the potential is there for them to read and write, to communicate and to understand. Indeed, as the

hon. Minister quoted Dr. Marcano: I believe Dr. Marcano is correct when she said: “All children can learn”. Why then I ask, and the nation must ask, at this time, after seven years in the primary school, with a principal and a vice-principal in some instances, a library, recently some got computers, qualified teachers, millions and millions of dollars spent in the primary school, security guards outside and school lunches provided by the Government; do you think better salaries or air-conditioned classrooms will make a difference? That is the question I ask. Why, Mr. President, do we call them “slow learners” and, who is responsible for categorizing them as slow learners? Who calls them slow learners? Why do we produce slow learners? I contend that this miserable primary school system is responsible for making them slow learners. The primary school system and its servants have made them slow learners and it is within that defective system that some of our children are destroyed after seven years there; during what I consider the most formative—and educators will agree with me—and impressionable years of their lives. They seem to be prepared only to be dropouts at age 12. Mr. President, what a vicious circle! What a waste of human potential and what a crime against the innocents of this nation.

When they go through the solemn ceremony of passing out at age 12 on to form one in the college they will begin to return again. Look at the wickedness of our system and how we have missed the boat and spoiled so many lives. Now they must go to form one. They have to give way and cannot remain forever in standard five. They are going as though they are promoted. That is why I call it “a passing out”. It is a passing parade from one stage to the next and, poor things, they are going back to form one or moving up to form one, or into form one to return to those infant stories about the cow that jumped over the moon. What a supreme tragedy!

Mr. President, I hear educators say: “Keep them back in the same primary school”. I would not want that. What are you keeping them back in that same system for? To make them a total, not of seven years, but maybe eight, nine or ten years? What are we going to do? The answer could not be there. Whether they remain in the school or go on, they are losers, and that is the tragedy of our inheritance in the education system we have before us.

Mr. President, I hear you ask: “How is it, from the same primary school, we can find brilliant scholars?” I would not want to be one-sided in my consideration of this matter but, I think I can find an answer. Maybe there is one answer from the same primary school system that I criticized so much, or we may find fault with. There are still brilliant children. Mr. President, the basic failure of that

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. REV. D. TEELUCKSINGH]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

system is that it has added for too long to the deprivation of the lower-class children. Children at the upper social levels in our society continued to be favoured. Sen. Prof. Spence also said that. In that same primary school, Mr. President, our Government and our taxpayers pay our teachers. These teachers—only recently somebody told me that teachers who give extra lessons for the Common Entrance Examination are collecting \$450 a term from every student. Mr. President, it is only those who are privileged could attend those extra classes. No wonder they are the ones that are creamed off for the prestigious schools and, they are the ones who finally become the scholarship winners.

Mr. President, these are the privileged ones who do not go to school on half a meal, and it is not necessary for them to go to school with less than the basic books, they have everything. Do you know in so many primary schools, there are children who belong to an executive class, as it were, in the eyes of many teachers: some teachers who, invariably, tend to pay more attention to these who are socially favoured? I ask the question, we have to ask this, who then will teach and love the children of the working class, the poor, or those who come from rural backgrounds? Certainly these are the ones who call for careful attention during these very precious years: 5—12 or even those who need this kind of help in the preschool period of their life.

Mr. President, for too long many of our children in the primary school have suffered in that disaster area. As far as they are concerned, the poorer ones have been that graveyard in our education sector. I am glad the hon. Minister is here with us, for we need, at this time, a thorough investigation; more than some of the initial reform programmes initiated within the last few months. We need a thorough investigation into the primary school system in Trinidad and Tobago with appropriate mechanisms for a most radical restructuring and reformation, otherwise secondary and tertiary levels will remain in the doldrums—all these beautiful plans about another university and so on. I am afraid that we will not go far with them.

We have begun to reform the curriculum. Let us include the retraining of vice-principals and principals to be better managers, focussing on competence and commitment. Let us get the school supervisors who will be more than glorified messengers as they are. Now is the time for us as a nation to search for bright, committed teachers: teachers with a work ethic fit for a new age; a new millennium; teachers to take the primary school out of the twilight zone. Mr. President, I think we need a minister for pre-school and primary education and another minister of education for secondary and tertiary levels. We need that.

We have seen the need for the ministry to commission, and there is need to do this immediately: to commission our educators to write text books relevant to, first of all, purely academic needs and also to the social and cultural needs of our children. Now is the time to begin. It is our hope that Government and its advisors, the technocrats and others engaged in education reform, will treat with urgency the significant issues we have raised in this debate and also other national concerns articulated over the last few years.

Mr. President, I thank you.

3.05 p.m.

Sen. Philip Marshall: Mr. President, I want to make this contribution on what I consider to be the whole foundation and future of this beautiful country of ours of Trinidad and Tobago. I will focus my contribution on some of the statistics, some of the challenges, of how we may go about funding this transformation process, and it is a pity, possibly, that I should not have been one of the earlier contributors as I may seem to be recapping some of the ground already made.

Let me start, Mr. President, with an article in the *Sunday Express* of January 2, 2000 by Mr. Rambachan, and he refers to our new Minister of Education, who is with us in the Chamber today:

"With the advent of the new Minister of Education Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, we have seen a deliberate attempt to introduce a collaborative style of leadership and management into the Ministry of Education and in her relationship with the various stakeholders. I was particularly charmed by her unequivocal statement to students that they must be given the opportunity to speak and that their views must be given the importance it truly deserves."

It goes on in a later part to say:

"Governments are generally well intentioned in their goals and vision for education. They know that the ability of society to thrive and compete in a global environment will be sustained by the knowledge power and skills of its people, not necessarily by the natural resources."

I think we have spoken several times on the whole issue of the wealth of nations lying in the social and intellectual capital but not necessarily its depletable and possibly not renewable or non-sustainable natural resources. However, the transformation of the human resource potential of our society depends on how people charged with the duty and responsibility for educating others are inspired in their commitment and creativity to facilitate conditions for competence. This will not happen if the Ministry of Education continues to be where it is, in terms of the vision of itself, vis-a-vis, the stakeholders in the business of education.

The article ends:

“The current Minister of Education, in addition to her collaborative style would do well to redefine the vision of the Ministry and its officers from being what they appear to be to most people—‘commanders’ to what they should be—‘supportive service personnel. The psychological gap between the Ministry and its stakeholders would be reduced if indeed it were to become a Service Centre. That’s the true beginning of educational reform.”

I think that is a very important statement in terms of making everyone in Trinidad and Tobago own up and so face their responsibility for the education of their peers, children and brethren.

A ministry of education in a developing country could never have all the resources to unilaterally be responsible for the transformation of our societies. In fact, from the collaboration spoken about here, one can see the importance of such a success. In that, when New Zealand, for example, was thinking of the decentralization of its educational model, before making a move it consulted with its stakeholders for about a year, and it did it successfully.

In Latin America they proceeded apace; they seemed to get initial agreement from the key stakeholders and they moved on. When it really came to the crunch of making important changes, then the resistors really surfaced and the government had to back down. In other words, everybody said that decentralization was a great thing, but then the teachers' union realized that to have a decentralized union would mean a loss of power, so they let the change proceed to such a stage where if the government did not agree to back down, the whole situation would have collapsed. So I am really speaking of the importance of collaboration, the importance of communicating to each and every member of our society that education of our children is our own individual responsibility to be facilitated by the Government and by every single sector: social, health, and community.

Mr. President, let me start by giving you some important numbers of the challenges that we face; a profile of our population just as a reminder. Of 1,300,000 people—the exact figure is 1,290,000—our potential labour force is about 942,000. The actual percentage of people participating in the labour force, our participation rate, is about 61 per cent, so our actual labour force is about 562,000, of whom, unemployed is about 82,000 or employed about 480,000 people.

We have a situation that of a potential labour force of almost 942,000 people, we have formally employed about 480,000 people; say roughly a little less than 50 per cent. In our national budget the total of which last year, recurrent budget, was \$12.937 billion, we spent on education—let me just see quickly, I am not seeing it right here. Was it about 3 per cent? I will come back to that. I would just find it to see what is the comparison between our spending.

I will go on to analysis of the results of that spending in our labour force. I think this is important because we all agree that the future competitiveness of a nation, more and more today, is going to be based on knowledge; more and more of the day-to-day products and services that are traded have knowledge content. If you were to look at the gross domestic product of the United States, the greatest maker of their gross domestic product is services not, in fact, manufactured goods.

I now share with you the educational attainment of our labour force—which breaks down the highest level of educational attainment in our labour force. I would quote just three lines because it is quite a detailed breakdown. We have in our labour force of 480,000—or a total 562,000—86,000 to 87,000 workers whose highest level of education was primary school, but they did receive subsequent on-the-job training; that is roughly 19 per cent.

Then we have another 36,000 people who went to secondary school and left without one Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) subject; that amounts to 8 per cent. Then we have a further 67,000 people who have subsequently received on-the-job training, but left secondary school without one CXC subject; that is 15 per cent. In total, therefore, we have approximately 42 per cent of our labour force whose highest educational attainment does not include one Caribbean Examinations Council subject. They number, based on a labour force of 562,000, approximately 241,000 persons.

Mr. President, based on the average cost per annum to educate a child in Trinidad and Tobago, that cost is roughly TT \$3,200; that is the recurring educational budget divided by—I believe, 347,000 students. The cost per year per student is \$3,200. Based on that figure and based on the fact that the secondary students who may have spent three and a half years in secondary schools and left without a Caribbean Examinations Council subject, we have possibly spent, over the years, \$2.7 billion; I repeat, \$2.7 billion, which is 21 per cent of our annual recurring budget—over the lifetime of those students in the work force who have not managed to obtain one Caribbean Examinations Council subject among them.

The cost of educating those 241,000—in fact, I am looking at it, I may have actually made a mistake because it is 11,200 per year, and what you would really have to do is multiply the number of years as well that you went to primary school. So I may have underestimated this figure, but take the figure of \$3,200 and multiply that by 11,000, and that is the annual cost of students who manage to leave school without managing to obtain one Caribbean Examinations Council subject. Then you would have to multiply by the average time that they would have spent in schooling, be it primary or secondary.

I am making the point here that we are talking about billions and billions of dollars. We are talking about money that would construct hundreds of schools. Therefore, when we say that we cannot afford to pay teachers; when we say we cannot afford to put in place the environment needed to become more competitive, to make people's lives more wholesome, we are fooling ourselves into the fact that what we do not pay for now, we pay for later; in terms of crime, social inequalities and all the other issues that could make this country an attractive place for investment, development and export.

3.20 p.m.

Mr. President, I am talking about billions of dollars that are wasted. The importance of this dialogue is that we have to begin to do things differently. What do we do differently from Monday? This is the point. What do we do differently from Monday? I sympathize with the Minister of Finance: from where is he going to get the money? Remember the figures I always quote. He has \$12 billion, nearly \$13 billion a year in recurring revenue and to service debts, 27 per cent is gone right away, \$4 billion. We hardly have money to do any form of transformation. Our problem in this discussion is that we know what we have to do. Everybody shares the same vision on education; the problem is how can we

agree with strategies that turn that knowledge gap into action. This is the point, this is the problem. Will we be in 20 years' time faced with the problem, but ten times as difficult?

Mr. President, some of the previous contributors talked about the model of success to be successful and I am quoting from a report from a conference held in March this year about the Strategy for Education and it was convened by the Caricom Heads. I am not sure where the conference was located. It states:

“A World Bank document, ‘Poverty Reduction and Human Resource Development in the Caribbean’ pointed out that in 1992 the richest 40% in Trinidad and Tobago received 73% of the benefits of public expenditure at the post-secondary level, and the lowest 40% had 13%.”

In terms of our investments and foreign borrowings to finance educational projects, this may also be an interesting statistic. Trinidad and Tobago based on its borrowings, and that would include the loan of US \$101 million, plus a further \$145,000 from the Inter-American Development Bank, a total of US \$245 million divided by a school population of 387,000 persons works out to an average annual lending per student of US \$21.00.

Barbados, which fortunately or unfortunately, whichever way you look at it, is blessed with a significantly lower school population of only 60,000 persons, one-sixth of ours, but their average annual lending or borrowing per student to develop facilities is in fact almost \$120.00, six times ours. So what is almost happening is that the challenges faced by Trinidad and Tobago, say, as against Barbados, I am just using them as a comparator as Sen. Prof. Spence raised it, are that the same absolute dollars are really being divided among a student population one-sixth times, that is Trinidad and Tobago, greater than the other.

With respect to education, and again this has been an issue that Sen. Prof. Spence has always voiced. He has talked about the rate of return, and so did Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh. The rate of return on primary education in Latin America and the Caribbean studies are being done and I cannot remember the total methodology to calculate the rate of return, but on primary education it was 39 per cent, secondary education, 28 ½ per cent, tertiary education, 18 per cent and, therefore, as previous contributors said, the basic priority for any government in terms of education has to be spending on basic education.

Spending more money on public funds on higher level tertiary education is not only ineffective in terms of the long-term development, but also it is probably being spent on those who most can afford it. What am I proposing here? I am not

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. P. MARSHALL]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

proposing that somebody has to be well-off to go to university, but we have to revisit the whole question of the equivalent of the loan programmes for universities where when students graduate from university when they are able to find a job they repay the cost of their tuition, they pass the baton as it were, to a new generation of students to be able to afford it. So the idea would be not that you deny people the opportunity, but people who have benefited from this higher education, this input from the state, put back for others.

I read a very interesting article in the *Economist* talking about that problem in the United States of America, and what somebody said is that what the American Government should do is take the number of students graduating from a school, regardless of whether they were going to university or not and everybody should get the equal amount, and those who were not academically inclined would take their sum of money and maybe be entrepreneurs and maybe open an automotive paint shop, and those who want to go on to university do so. But we have a situation where the model is success for the successful. The more academically capable we are, the more likely in your development you will be able to acquire or hold on to a high-paying job. In the long run, it is the more support you get and the opposite, the least academically capable you are, the less you are likely to get a job and the less funds the state has to help you. So we have this spiral all the time. We have somehow to have funding mechanisms to reduce those differences in equality.

Mr. President, the Minister and this Government have reiterated several times, and the Prime Minister in his speech to the nation for independence says “Educate people and save in taxes.” I quote from the *Newsday* of August 31, 1998 according to Prime Minister Basdeo Panday in his Independence Day address.

“...the future will demand educated people with special skills.

Citing that ‘education is one of the most effective weapons in the fight against poverty’, he explained that this was why he has set out to engineer a revolution in education by a series of initiatives such as the phasing out of the Common Entrance Examination, the introduction of a community college system, energy skills centres, programmes of the National Training Agency, the establishment of the National Quality Council and distance learning.”

And several other initiatives like computer literacy training programmes, tax incentives *et cetera*.

One of the most difficult issues for people to come to grips with is when we look at the present situation, when we look at the challenges facing us and this Government certainly has not created these challenges; these are challenges faced by any government. When we have a situation, the first thing we may tend to do as a knee jerk reaction is to blame others. I am suggesting that we have to look inwardly, we have to develop the skills of self-inquiry and reflection and we have to ask what did we do successfully to get ourselves into this mess. The only way we can move forward is for everybody in every level of society, in every position, economic or not so economic, to realize that we have created the systems structure in which we operate. We are in charge of our destiny, nobody is going to come from outside, or is capable of coming from outside to change this for us, we have to change it and we cannot change things unless we do things differently.

I believe that the challenge is not only in building more hardware, in building more schools, in providing more school places. In fact, I would take the opportunity to read out some of the recommendations from this very important meeting and study of the Caricom Heads of Government during their 18th Summit Meeting in which they said the common policies of education really is one area in which as a region we could tackle together. In fact, the words were:

“Education commends itself as the one arena of governance and social progress that is most naturally fitted for federated action by member states.”

At the beginning of this conference, here was the vision described of the ideal Caribbean person adopted by the CARICOM Heads of Government and I would read out some of them.

And why I quoted it is that imbedded in this description of the ideal Caribbean person, although implicit, I think it spells out in quite an unambiguous way what the objectives of our education system must be.

“Such a person is described as being someone who:

- is imbued with a respect for human life since it is the foundation on which all other desired values must rest;
- is emotionally secure with a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem;
- has a strong appreciation of family and kinship values, community cohesion, and moral issues including responsibility for and accountability to self and community;

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. P. MARSHALL]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

- has an informed respect for our cultural heritage;
- has developed the capacity to create and take advantage of opportunities to control, improve, maintain and promote physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being and to contribute to the health and welfare of the community and country.”

Mr. President, you can see that when we talk about education it is not just a matter of the curricular and the teachers. The challenge facing us in our region is to change the mental models of most of our population. What do I mean by mental model? Simply the framework in which each of us as individuals view the world, view different circumstances and how we respond to it and how we develop our reasoning to respond to it. So I am sure, there are many situations where you see in Trinidad and Tobago the Government is always being blamed for something. It is being blamed for not providing jobs, construction may be taking place somewhere down South and they cannot understand why jobs are not being provided. It is the duty of the Government of the day to be open and transparent, to provide the population without in any way hiding the difficult challenging facts that governments of the day can only provide with some sort of enablement in the collective services of education, health, community welfare that the people of Trinidad and Tobago must take and be responsible for taking advantage of the opportunity, so that in their life they develop the capacity through education to enjoy lifelong learning and development. No Government can provide people with jobs. It is the market place that provides people with jobs. No company can or will employ 200 persons when they need 100, because the economics of their market place only dictate the affordability or cross structure of 100 people. So Government cannot go against the economic profiles for trade and environment, especially in a global and an open economy.

3.35 p.m.

We have seen, and the hon. Minister of Finance would have seen, that when the oil prices fell about a year ago, Trinidad and Tobago was hit with adverse terms of trade, because of the fall in oil prices, of about 13 to 15 per cent. It meant our major commodity, despite our diversified economy, our exchange rate earning power, as it were, fell by about 13 to 15 per cent because of the fact that we trade with the rest of the world. Trinidad and Tobago is a very open economy. In other words, if we add our exports and imports and calculate that as a percentage of our

GDP, that is the extent of our openness. I think, and my recollection may be wrong, that works out in our case to be about 70 per cent. So we are an open economy. We may compete locally but we are competing globally.

When BWIA leaves Piarco, it is not a local flight. It is an international flight. Their ticket prices have to be internationally competitive or else we choose another airline. So there are benchmarks in commercial terms where every private-sector company and every state-sector company that offers commercial services must achieve those benchmarks. So that the moneys available to the Government and the treasury could be spent to finance those areas such as education and health, the collective services, whose results and whose benefit will span a couple of decades at least. We may not see the fruits of the money spent today until 20 years later.

I guess that is one of the challenges of Government, that we tend to be drawn towards the creation of physical infrastructure projects because every citizen can see the bridge being built and the road being repaired. They can touch and feel the physical infrastructure and they measure the progress by physical infrastructure, which is a very important enabler, because classified in that in this new knowledge economy would certainly be the telecommunications networks, the satellites and the fibre optic cables that underlie the knowledge economy. Just as important, Mr. President, are the cultural infrastructure, the social infrastructure, the community infrastructure, the education infrastructure and the people enablers that will cause us to have behaviours that are different.

Mr. President, coming back to the proposal to deshift—and I would like to address the point about which Sen. Prof. Spence spoke—I am also concerned about the capital cost of a building that only, as it were, accommodates one shift. I would like to offer a possible alternative. Use that same building as a focus of community education. When one has not contributed enough to one's pension liabilities—and I know the Minister of Finance would certainly understand this as he is faced with the challenges of pension reform—an actuary may make a valuation and one would then have to make up for that shortfall in contribution by what is known as backfunding. Do you know what we have to do in this country? We have to backfund our population with respect to education. [*Desk thumping*] We have to backfund our education and our population.

Fifty per cent of our young men and women between the ages of 15 and 25 are unemployed, and I dare say we may even say most of them right now could be unemployable. So where are we going to get the money and the resources to retrain those people? Getting back to the point I was making, Mr. President, as

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. P. MARSHALL]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

part of this new education programme, in addition to the minister of primary education and the minister of secondary and tertiary education, maybe we need to have a minister of remedial education. What we should do is go out there, interview, survey and take a census of every young, unemployed person—take a current state. Where did they reach when they left school? Where are they in terms of academic, technical or other vocational training? I am obviously talking about people who would not be in a job.

Remember, Mr. President, I said to you that our labour participation rate is only 61 per cent, so I know there are many people employed in the informal sector. Just to tell you what that potential may be, the difference between our people of labour-force age and those actually formally employed is 350,000 people. Now, how many aunts and uncles make up the 350,000 people? That would also include newspaper delivery boys, fellows selling sugar cake at the Nestle intersection and so forth, but in that 350,000 do we have 100,000 or 150,000 people in need of remedial education to be sent back into the schools and retrained? I believe that the challenge facing us is, one, we know we cannot get more money.

The Minister of Finance has to use the benchmarks of attractive economic environments that may speak to lowering interest rates and encouraging investment in real production while holding on to his vision of lower direct taxes, so he cannot get more money. What does he have to do? He has to use the present money he has differently. That is the problem. You see, we talk about change and we espouse change and really everybody loves change, you know. The thing is, nobody likes to be changed. If in a survey we gave people a life and asked, “Here is Utopia and this is going to be the rest of your life; would you enjoy it?” They would say no. People get bored with change. The real challenge is: nobody likes to be changed but that is what we have, and this is what this Government has to do. How do we strategize?

We are in total agreement in this Chamber about the importance of education, or where we must go. The problem is, how do we do it? The answer is not simply building more schools. I believe that the hard challenge for Government is, because these are their voters, when the Government and the Opposition go on the hustings and they want people’s votes, are they prepared to look at them and say, “Madam and Sir, you are feting. You are in a rum shop. You are leaving your child at home. Why are you not at home yourself trying to learn and taking an interest in your development? Why are you blaming the teachers?”

Mr. President, if one is a teacher faced every morning with class indiscipline, the human spirit can take only so much. What we are doing is passing the burden. We are saying the Government is responsible for education and the teacher is responsible for discipline. How are both the Government and the Opposition going to look their constituents in the eye and say, "You are responsible from here on in for your children's discipline, attitudes and time doing homework"? Many surveys have shown that learning takes place just as importantly out of school hours. What are some of the things we have to do differently? I am about to end my contribution, Mr. President.

In Cuba, for example, 40 per cent of their education budget is spent on services and materials. After we spend 76 per cent on teachers' salaries, on education, we only have about 10 per cent left for goods and services. So I say, nothing much is changing. Nothing much can change but in this conference, and I believe they were using Jamaica as an example, they were beginning to look at a pilot of taking really qualified teachers in certain subjects and disciplines and getting those master teachers to make videos of materials.

In other words, we have a shortage of good teachers. We know the learning environment today is on the Internet, *et cetera*. Why can we not, over some bridging period, have the equivalent of teachers' assistants? We would put televisions and labs in schools, we have good subject matter and we supervise a class using instructional videos. How do you think businesses do it? How did I learn to programme? Through instructional videos, not one-on-one teaching. It is impossible. We have to do things differently. So what we have to do is take the best teachers. We know there is a problem. We cannot yet clone them because science has not yet reached that point, but what we could do is, using the whole process of communication and knowledge management, knowledge dissemination and capturing the expertise, come up with alternative media for teaching at the primary and secondary levels. Get people to assist them, if those people do not have the Dip.Ed. or other educational qualifications.

We are not going to solve the problem with the same resources. I can tell the Minister that. With all the good intentions, the only way things are going to change is if people agree to change. So the Minister has to change the population, the families and the community spirit. She is getting no more money from the Minister of Finance because he has to borrow and repay it. Remember, every time we borrow we seem to have something but do not forget we are paying it back in loan repayment and debt repayment down the road. Right now it is \$4 billion.

Education (Philosophy and Purpose)
[SEN. P. MARSHALL]

Tuesday, August 22, 2000

So, Mr. President, I would end just by saying that this challenge is a responsibility of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. It is such a fundamental challenge that I would like to see both the Government of the day and the Opposition not ever playing politics with the future of our country in terms of learning and competitiveness. I know there could be disagreement on certain strategies and I certainly do not think there is a disagreement between the Government and the Opposition on their vision for education and the importance of education. This Government has no doubt committed itself to education. It has begun to look at issues such as delinking the teaching service.

I do not know how we can bring on board—and as Prof. Ramchand has said, the Minister is going to have to use her collaborative skills. We have to get the teachers' union involved. We cannot do this without them. Most countries that have tried it, teachers' pay for performance and consequence management has not succeeded. Teachers have not enjoyed being measured and being measured in a manner where their pay is affected. I can sympathize with that, especially where one is coming from a current state of maybe indiscipline in a school and inadequate or spasmodic attendance. It is difficult to tell a teacher he has not succeeded in achieving outputs in certain grades or subjects, *et cetera*, when the level of inputs and the maturity of responsibility of the supporting community and value systems of those students still has to be upgraded significantly. But it is not something that the Minister should put down.

I really think in every public sector activity, performance management measurement must be inculcated as almost a transparent way of life. What does not get measured does not get done. Mr. President, I have said enough. I support the importance of this Motion and I certainly look forward to the Minister of Education, the Minister of Finance and the Government, really, understanding and reflecting the importance of education; which I know they do.

3.50 p.m.

I know the Minister of Finance promised us that for every dollar over US \$16, I think \$1 will go for physical infrastructure, and maybe two-thirds for social infrastructure. I may have got the figures wrong, I cannot remember, but we will see next Monday whether anything has changed.

I thank you.

Adjournment

Tuesday, August, 22, 2000

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, before moving to adjourn this honourable Senate, I would like to just make a point of clarification. That has to do with the withdrawal of Bill No. 13. I just wanted to inform the hon. Senate that the Government will be reintroducing a new Bill on land development. That is why we had to withdraw Bill No. 13. I just wanted to clarify that.

Before we adjourn, let me just inform my colleagues about the order of business at the next sitting, which is next Tuesday. We are dealing with Bill No. 19, Representation of the People (Amdt.) Bill, then we will proceed to Bills Nos. 1, 2 and 3 on the Order Paper as they are presently outlined. Then we will proceed to Bill No. 21.

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt: Excuse me, Mr. President. Did the Leader of Government Business not tell us earlier today that Bill No. 1 was going to be deleted?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: No. Bill No. 13. Motion No. 1 is to be deleted.

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt: Thank you.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. President, I would just like to repeat that we will deal with Bill No. 1, the Representation of the People (Amdt.) Bill; then we will go to Bill No. 2, the Licensing of Bailiffs Bill; Bill No. 3, the Patents (Amdt.) Bill, and then we will deal with the Supreme Court of Judicature (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill. We will then go to the Various Acts (Amdt.) Bill as the fifth Bill for next Tuesday. We will start at 10.00 o'clock in the morning and we will go to 10.00 o'clock in the evening to complete these five Bills.

Mr. President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, August 29, 2000 at 10.00 a.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 3.53 p.m.