

Paper Laid

Tuesday, September 12, 2000

SENATE

Tuesday, September 12, 2000

The Senate met at 10.02 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

PAPER LAID

Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association for the year ended December 31, 1987. [*The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark)*]

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, I beg to move that the Senate deal with “Bills Second Reading” instead of “Motions”.

Agreed to.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 11, 2000]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Minister of National Security (Sen. Brig. The Hon. Joseph Theodore): Mr. President, I appreciate this opportunity to make a contribution to the debate on the budget for the year 2000/2001 and to extend my congratulations to the hon. Minister of Finance for a budget which deals with matters of importance and puts in priority those areas that require attention in our country.

In dealing with national security particularly, I would like to indicate the role of the Ministry of National Security and attempt to show how we plan to utilize our funds to achieve this aim. In the Ministry of National Security, we wish to see the law enforcement agencies as being well-equipped, effective organizations. There have been many reports of crime in the country being sourced from the passage of drugs through our country. As you know, Mr. President, Trinidad and Tobago is regarded as a warehousing stop where drugs come in

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bulk, broken down and shipped elsewhere. We know that some of the drugs have remained and the aim of the Ministry of National Security is to put a stop to these drugs passing through our country by use of our coast guard and police service and to a certain extent supported by the military.

We feel that since a high percentage of crime, sometimes attributed to 60 per cent is drug related, putting an end to the movement of drugs through Trinidad and Tobago will go a long way towards reducing the crime situation in this country. I would show what has had to be done over the years to put infrastructure and systems in place to allow our law enforcement agencies to operate efficiently and at a level that is required to deal with the criminal element outside and within our country.

When I assumed responsibility for this ministry in 1995, we found that there was an urgent need to address several issues, in the ministry, where the lack of proper infrastructure was a problem which hampered the performance of all the divisions of my ministry.

The Ministry of National Security, primarily deals with the police and coast guard, but it also has responsibility for the other protective services: fire service, prison service, immigration and the Forensic Science Centre. We also have a responsibility for the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force, a youth movement which has paramilitary background. All these divisions contribute to National Security's impact on the daily lives of people in this country, and what we found was that some time prior to 1995 there was a lot of activity to promote good law-keeping, law enforcement, but some of the activity seems to have come to a stop.

In the police service for instance, there was complete neglect as far as recruitment was concerned, training, provision of equipment, vehicles and the maintenance and repair of these facilities. Some people suggest that one should not reel off numbers and talk about how many police stations were built and repaired, but I think it is important that we look at what little there was at the beginning of our term of office and what had to be done in order to provide the necessary infrastructure for the adequate performance of these agencies.

As you may have heard, Mr. President, from the few speakers on the Government Benches, this matter of neglect extended beyond national security. We heard the word from the Junior Minister of Health about the neglect that occurred in the medical services. We realize the neglect of repairs to our

roads, similarly in the Ministry of National Security there was total neglect and a lowering in the morale of members of the police service and the other protective services as a result. There were no uniforms, a number of vehicles that were bought were not repaired and simply created a large graveyard at the St. James Barracks.

Over the last four years, it was necessary to put a number of these things right. That takes time, and we found it was like stopping a large boulder coming downhill. You do not step in front of it and this is what the ministry had faced. Things had begun to get out of control, members of the police service, as we would recall, were totally demoralized to the extent that it was felt that the government at the time was not only against them, but seeking to punish them for trying to stick to the rules and regulations that govern the operations of the police service.

Hon. Senators would recall the police commissioner was arbitrarily transferred one night on television to the Prime Minister's office and removed from his post. It is either a lack of understanding of how the police service and the military forces operate, or a total sense of vindictiveness which may have led to such an act. It did not work and it caused the police to take an unprecedented action by marching around this Red House to show their displeasure.

What this did for me, was to put me on guard when I came into office of what not to do. I learnt from my predecessor that simply being keen and anxious to achieve something and disregard the feelings of other people is not the way to go. This rescue operation which we had to carry out with the protective services and to a certain extent the defence force, took time. One would expect the electorate to have things happen overnight, but as we would appreciate, flowers, trees, nothing happens overnight. Anything that would come to proper fruition takes time, nurturing, caring and some attention.

We have been trying to show the police service and the defence force this attention, albeit over a period and in so doing, we have had to deal with matters of accommodation, so I do not apologize at all for listing all the stations we have had to repair and giving this honourable Senate an idea about the perilous state in which we found the police service. That condition which existed in the police service could easily have further contributed to the crime situation because there was a Scotland Yard enquiry which was called to investigate corruption in the police service, whether or not this was true. I do not think it has ever been proven, but the commission found that there was no clique within the police service that was bent on causing disorder and the matter rested there.

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This administration is aware that they are not all angels and, as I saw in the newspapers just recently, it was admitted that corruption existed in the PNM as well so there are no ivory towers. One must admit that within any organization there is the good and the bad, but the recent tendency to throw corruption as a mantra every time one speaks does not help matters, it tends to destabilize the country and it seems to be very counter-productive. I think it is a very odd way to approach the politics of this country that because one is in Opposition, one should say only nasty things about the Members of the Government and suggest that everything we attempt to do is in some way linked to some illegal activity.

We are trying to assist the people of this country, we all live here. A number of us have children and grandchildren who have to grow up in this country. I have never regarded my position in this Government as one of permanence. There are some people who may feel that their positions are there for all time, but it is temporary. I still have to walk the streets of the country and I certainly do not accept the allegations made by certain uninformed persons that whatever we are trying to do is in any way designed to be against the people of this country. On the contrary, it would appear that a number of actions taken by the former administration through spite, or for whatever reason, were simply because it was felt that a person who was not a member of that party, was not entitled to whatever largesse the party seemed to accrue unto itself. Only yesterday, Sen. Carlos John pointed out that the road works programme was for everybody in Trinidad and Tobago. We are not a party that is suggesting that only UNC members or activists are entitled to the wealth of this country, but everybody. We are a Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

10.15 a.m.

Somehow or other this seems to be forgotten in all the rhetoric that people are trying to throw at the public, in order to confuse them and make them feel that all the progress that has been made is of no consequence. But as a government of everybody in Trinidad and Tobago, I entertain requests from people. I do not ask them to see a party card; I do not ask them what religion they are; but they are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. And I think the more everybody in Trinidad and Tobago regards their duty to the people of Trinidad and Tobago in such a manner, this country would function better. But to simply object to something because it is

being raised on the Government Benches, I think it is very narrow-minded and totally unproductive.

Over the years, while no preventative maintenance was done on police vehicles or police buildings, we found that in 1995, of the total number of police buildings there were two that were two to three years old and in relatively good condition. These were buildings that were built in St. James, West End and so on. But do you know what has happened over the years, Mr. President? These new buildings were constructed, completely ignored and allowed to deteriorate and fall into a state of disrepair. I do not understand how this could happen; and I do not understand if Members of the PNM keep their homes in such a manner. Because how is it you could allow windows to fall off; one hinge goes, then the next hinge and then they throw the window in the yard and put up a piece of cardboard to cover the opening. This was the sort of legacy left by the PNM administration that we found. A lot of money has had to be expended in correcting these wrongs. *[Interruption]* Mr. President, I can hardly hear myself. I do not know whether or not the noises are reaching you.

Mr. President: Hon. Senator, could you allow the Member to make his contribution without cross talks, please.

Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: I thank you, Mr. President. I think cross talk is an ideal term to describe the sort of noises coming from the other side. I am talking very straight, and cross talk does seem somewhat confusing, because it is neither “yes” nor “no”; and what is good today, does not stand true tomorrow.

On the matter of these buildings, in 1996 we started pursuing an initiative of reconstruction and refurbishment. There were 58 police stations identified for major repairs or reconstruction, and do you know who makes the most noise about the condition of the police stations? Of course, the Opposition Benches—to suggest that somehow this Government caused these stations to run down in four years. We are trying to get them back into some habitable condition, because the police have already been badly treated. They are already demoralized and then they are asked to exist in these structures that are virtually uninhabitable. We try to do something about it because we are interested in law and order, and we feel that the agencies of law and order deserve better. And it is coming. They are getting better: they are getting uniforms, transportation, proper communications, and adequate accommodation. All of this is necessary because one must show, in

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a material way, that one's intentions are there and that we are really interested in the welfare of our protective services and members of our defence force.

Over the years, Mr. President, we have spent over \$85 million on building new police stations and doing renovations. For instance, in 1997, we opened the Maraval Police Station; the Four Roads Police Station in Diego Martin; the Erin Police Station; the St. Madeleine Police Station; the Princes Town Police Station; the San Fernando Divisional Headquarters; the Sangre Grande Divisional Headquarters; the Freeport Police Station, which was built at the back of the old station; the station at Mon Repos in 1998; the Barataria/El Socorro Police Station.

In 1999, the Gran Couva Police Station; the Cunupia Police Station and the annex of the San Juan Police Station. The main building was completed just a few months ago and officially opened about a month ago.

On the issue of the Barataria/El Socorro Police Station, a case in point too. The very Senator Nafeesa Mohammed had to bring it to my attention a couple years ago, that plans for this station, which somehow had disappeared in a drawer in the Ministry of National Security or in some filing cabinet—as most other progressive things disappeared—needed attention. I responded and thank the Senator for bringing it to my attention, that this station needed building.

Sen. Mohammed: Mr. President, on a point of order. I think the hon. Minister is misrepresenting what I brought to his attention. Because the statement he made just now about plans being hidden or could not be found in drawers or whatever it is he said, I did not say that to him. I did bring to his attention, though, the fact that there was a need for the police station.

Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: Mr. President, I thank the hon. Senator. She is right. But it took this deputy political leader to bring to the UNC administration the fact that the PNM never got around to building the station. *[Desk thumping]* That is what happened. And I went to my Ministry and I found that there were plans years ago, and they had been put away; they had been ignored. Do you know why? Because perhaps, at the time, it was Mohammedville; perhaps at the time the hon. Senator's family did not find favour with the PNM. I do not know. *[Laughter]* But one knows that the vindictiveness that occurs in the PNM could lead to such behaviour.

Hon. Senator: It is true.

Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: This is a Government of all the people and I have no problem in going up there. The Senator herself, her uncle and her brother were invited to the opening of that station. Because we are open and we

are prepared to accept anyone and deal with matters that affect the people of this country. *[Desk thumping]* I had to raise the point because this is where PNM Members, who got nowhere when their Government was in power, are seeking assistance and getting results. *[Desk thumping]* Talk about roads, Mr. President. I am sure the hon. Senator on the other side would describe how well the road has been done, as Sen. John said. *[Desk thumping]* There is no discrimination. The fact remains that the people of this country, regardless of who talks about minority or majority, put us in Government and we have a job to perform and we are doing it.

Sen. Mark: Definitely.

Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: Mr. President, notwithstanding how or when, we are here today and we are performing the function that we are supposed to perform. If it is when the PNM was in Government, they had some problem as to how they got there and some doubts prevailed, which somehow inhibited their performance, I have no excuse for that. *[Laughter]* It is a pity that some of the people on the other side, as mentioned by a Senator yesterday—I think it was Sen. Cabrera—are wont to take basket. Now some people perhaps do not understand the term “basket.” But when you give somebody a basket with holes in it and tell them go and fetch some water, you are, in fact, pappy-showing them. And there are people who are taking basket and seeking positions and wanting to go up for elections, when I doubt very much that this is being done with that person’s interest at heart. Perhaps certain people do not take basket.

10.25 a.m.

There were other projects—*[Interruption]*

Mr. President: Senator, could you let the Member make his contribution uninterrupted, please?

Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: Mr. President, it is a pity some people cannot keep their cool and they get all flustered when matters tend to fall on their doorsteps; but for what it is worth I think one should maintain the decorum of this honourable Senate. *[Desk thumping]* It is this sort of politicking that really puts me off sometimes when some people feel that in order to sort of aspire to any political position one must only cry foul and say negative things about the government in power. One must admit that the Government in power is making a major contribution to the lifestyle of people in Trinidad and Tobago.

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I do not care what people say or what the Opposition wishes to point out, the police service and the Defence Force have come a long way [*Desk thumping*] and, to coin the phrase used by the hon. Minister of Finance, they should not go back. They should not be sent back to that mire of neglect and desperation from which we brought them. This is what we are faced with, Mr. President. Those officers were totally destabilized and demoralized and I have no doubt—in fact, I wonder whether or not it was deliberate, because the crime rate went up during that period because of the inefficiency of the police, brought on by the negative attitude and the neglect fostered on them by the PNM administration. So I should like to continue.

Now, again, in 1995 the Patna Village and the Valencia Police Posts were open. Of course they were thought of by the PNM, [*Desk thumping*] but it was the UNC Government that concluded them, like many other things that were thought of by the PNM and never achieved. They had ideas and I have found many things in my files that, for some reason or the other, never saw the light of day. I am not quite sure if there is some problem with implementation. There are people with many thoughts and ideas but no knowledge as to how to get them done. Somebody cannot have an idea about building a plane and when they see somebody else build it and it is flying, suddenly claim, “But I thought of that”. This is what we hear from the other side. Whenever things are achieved, suddenly they thought of them. The question is, fine, think of it, but who does it? Who got the results? Who has put it there? This administration, Mr. President. So we went on with the building of police posts.

In Cap-de-Ville in 1996; in 1997, Longdenville; Pinto Road; St. Barb’s; in 1999 Malabar and in 2000 St. Mary’s, Moruga and Debe, Penal. There were other facilities that we refurbished. Now, Mr. President, it was impossible to rebuild all these rundown stations so we had to take a decision that it might be more economical and timely to do a certain extent of refurbishment and virtually renew some of the stations because, again, the idea was at the time to build new police stations. This was further compounded by the PNM administration which came up with the idea of police posts.

Now, as I had to point out in another place, a police post is really a small temporary structure to be put in a place where there is a problem, until the problem has been brought under control. However, these police posts that have been put around the country only had the effect of further weakening the police service because the resources were not provided and officers, vehicles and

equipment had to be taken from existing police stations to man these police posts. So matters, instead of improving, became worse because of all these police posts. The police service has now looked at the layout of the country, the areas of high risk, and at the larger police stations we put in place support patrols and extended activities linking up with these very police posts in order to give the coverage required for the districts in question.

Of these facilities which were refurbished, there were about nine in all. There was the Santa Cruz Police Station, the Blanchisseuse Police Station and Freeport Phase 2. What we did in Freeport was to build a new station at the rear and refurbish the station at the front. Now, that is an old building with a lot of fretwork and jalousies, very much a heritage-type building, which we sought to preserve. Moving away from the thinking that prevailed, before we came into office, that the way to show progress was to destroy anything that had any meaning or value and put up a square concrete building and air-condition it, we were able to refurbish this building. I will invite Members of this honourable Senate to take a swing by Freeport one day and look at what is now the charge room. It used to be the entire police station. It is now the charge room and the main police station is at the back. This is the sort of thinking that prevails within this Government and in my Ministry.

They also did work at the San Juan Police Station, which we completed a couple weeks ago, the St. James Police Station and the Police Training College. Let me say two words about the Police Training College, Mr. President. The Police Training College has two large dormitories, each capable of accommodating approximately 120 to 125 recruits. When I visited the St. James Barracks in 1996, I found that only one dormitory was functioning and that the intake of police officers was restricted to 120 because of a lack of accommodation. Now, this is where one wonders just how the police service survived. This lack of accommodation did not come about because of lack of a building—the building was there.

Do you know what had happened over the years, Mr. President? The building started to leak and the upper floor started having problems so the police were told, “Move the recruits downstairs and let the upper floor continue to get the wetting”. The boards rotted on the upper floor and then the lower floor started getting wet so they simply stopped putting recruits in there. Now, there is no positive thinking here. This is simply a matter of, “If it does not work put it aside”, or, “Run it until it breaks down and park it up and the government will buy another one”, or, “We

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will find the money”, or, worse yet, an attitude seemed to have been, “If it is broken down, tough luck. We are not going to fix it”; again this sort of bad minded approach which the police had to face where none of their facilities were repaired, none of their vehicles were repaired and everything went from bad to worse.

We went to the barracks. We got the Ministry of Local Government—well it was Works and Transport at the time, the URP Division—to put a new roof on the building, and we were able to increase the police intake from 120 every six months to 250. Again, there was a result. A common result of that shortage of recruits, again because of a lack of morale—they were being ignored and none of their facilities were being repaired—was that more officers left than came in. So a decrease in the number of police officers continued over time, only to find—another matter I should like to deal with is how the SRPs were used.

The PNM administration felt they were doing a good job by suggesting that they would limit the size of the police service, only to cause the Commissioner of Police to call in SRPs, who are part-time officers, and have them work full-time alongside their regular counterparts. Only three months ago Cabinet agreed to absorb up to 996 SRPs. More than 300 of those people had served more than 20 years as SRPs, working whole time, being exploited. They got no leave, no home allowance and no travelling allowance. How could one treat people like that and expect them to conduct law and order in any civil manner among the civilian public? This is total advantage and this sort of attitude of taking advantage of people seems to have prevailed and to have gone across the government ministries and affected most of the activities taking place in this country. What happened in my Ministry is just one example of what can be repeated throughout.

Sen. Mark: Total neglect.

Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: It is sad. We went ahead with many renovations but the important thing is, as far as the vehicles, right now, Mr. President, we are in the process of renovating 15 police stations. Contracts have been given out and work has already started at Couva, Morvant, Moriah, West End, Santa Flora, Caroni, Charlotteville, Fyzabad, Penal, Chaguanas and Arima and work is soon to start at Point Fortin, St. Margaret’s Station in Biche and Tableland; and those are the others. All this work, which is going to cost approximately \$15.7 million, will be completed by the end of this year. Now, this is not politicking. This is putting proper accommodation for people who are

working round the clock. Police officers work 24 hours a day. They have to work in shift and they work on weekends.

The reason I am spending so much time on the police service, Mr. President, is because many of the problems that apply to the police service can be repeated for the other divisions of the Ministry. The Coast Guard, for example, when we came into office, of the Coast Guard vessels there were nine launches. Of the nine launches, six of them were not working and had to be put on dry dock, and the two fast patrols were out of the water. Now, do you know what is strange, Mr. President? This administration did not have to put these boats on dry dock. We found them on dry dock. They had been sitting there for a number of years awaiting parts. Now, it is dangerous and it is critical to crews afloat to have vessels that are not functioning properly. One simply cannot pull aside like a motor car, park it up and come out.

These crews were put in danger because when the normal servicing time came the vessels were not maintained. Money was not provided until eventually they had to be taken out of the water and it fell to us to have these vessels repaired. Of the nine launches and two offshore patrol boats, they were all in varying stages of deterioration. Now, we have seen old vessels, vessels 30 and 40 years old, that are constantly being refurbished and upgraded and that are still working extremely well. So now, from that position, after having these six vessels refurbished, we also received two 82-foot cutters from the United States Government and a number of aircraft for aerial surveillance.

Right now the Coast Guard has 10 launches working, the two 82-foot cutters, five fast interceptors functioning and six aircraft operational. These vessels and aircraft are deployed to the six Coast Guard bases throughout Trinidad and Tobago: Stauble's Bay, Hart's Cut, Point Galeota, Cedros, the Air Wing at Piarco and at Scarborough, Tobago. Again this deployment was to make for better operation of the Coast Guard. The two new buildings were constructed at Stauble's Bay because, again, the old World War II buildings had taken their fair share of sun and rain and had deteriorated. So, Mr. President, I got the impression that our Ministry was really on a rescue mission to try to bring these divisions back. I am glad to say that not only have we done so in the main, but with our plan and our programme for the new fiscal year, using the funds we have available, we would be able to continue this exercise.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. President, the hon. Minister seems to be winding up, so I wonder if I could ask him a couple of questions.

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Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: Not at all.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Over the last four years I have frequently drawn to his attention the state of the San Rafael Police Station. In fact, I have invited him to visit on more than one occasion. I am still willing to take him there. It is a beautiful building but going to rack and ruin.

10.40 a.m.

The second point is, it was reported in the newspapers that a sensible proportion of the Cherokee jeeps were in disrepair. Could you give us some information on this?

Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: Thank you Sen. Prof. Spence. The San Rafael Police Station is one of the stations that the Government was aware of. It was not originally part of the schedule for rebuilding or refurbishment, but it is a station that we are looking at to have refurbished on contract during the course of the year, because we do not want to break it down and then have to put it back. The Government wants to refurbish the station and this is what it will be doing.

Mr. President, with respect to the Cherokee jeeps—that is fairly dated news. There was a time when there were a number of Cherokee jeeps—about 30 odd—that were not functioning. This was primarily due to the fact that the National Insurance Property Development Company (NIPDEC), who was the agency, had acquired the vehicles and was responsible for the maintenance and they had stopped paying the agent—the garage that had supplied them. Due to no payments being made, no work took place. Now that the three-year warranty period is over, the Government is out of that arrangement, and it is fixing the vehicles directly with parts ordered from another firm. I would think that if there were anything like 14 jeeps off the road now, that would be plenty. The majority of the jeeps are back on the road and functioning.

Mr. President, an example of this very arrangement with respect to vehicles is, when I took office, of the 607 vehicles in the police fleet only half of that amount, which is 303 were serviceable and a lot of those vehicles were aging. We are still suffering from that problem because no sooner the vehicles are fixed they are back in the shop. We have tried to offset that by acquiring another 132 vehicles, all of

which are still on the road and these are the newer PBA vehicles that one sees around. Those vehicles were leased in 1996 and are now owned by the Government, the lease having been completed.

The Government recently acquired 50 cars and 25 motorcycles for use on the Highway Patrol, which was recently launched. Tenders are being evaluated now for a further 122 vehicles. Twenty-two of these vehicles will be for a renewed praedial larceny squad, and 00 will be sent to police stations. The major problem is that the stations do not have enough vehicles, and although there are vehicles around, a lot of them are not assigned to police stations. Tenders are in train now by the National Insurance Property Development Company (NIPDEC) to acquire these vehicles. What the Government found is that although it got 100 vehicles in 1996 for the E999, the Government did not buy any new vehicles in 1997 and 1998. The Government tried to maintain and keep the vehicles going. I admit that was a mistake.

Mr. President, what the Government should have done is to get rid of most of the old vehicles and renew the fleet. There was a study conducted on police vehicles and one of the major problems was that the vehicles were too old, and that they needed to be renewed on a regular basis. A term of three years was suggested—well give or take the state of the vehicle—I think the Government now has a system in place for regular inspections, preventative maintenance, and timely repairs, which was the major bugbear that hampered the police service from having its fleet fully operational at all times. These systems have been put in place. Similarly, we have done the same for the coast guard, and contracts are being awarded for the maintenance of the coast guard vehicles.

Again, one of the mistakes the Government made was to think that the police or the Coast Guard contained the expertise and had the facilities to do the maintenance. The vehicles were too many and the number of mechanics was too few, and with some of the modern vehicles, the knowledge was too scarce. Basically, we were really working under a disadvantage in trying to have the police fix these vehicles themselves. So for the last year and a half, we have been outsourcing repairs and the vehicles are coming back on the road.

In fact, we will be getting back 14 Discoveries that were off the road for years and have now been completely refurbished. So all in all, the systems are in place and this is the good news. Now that the systems are in place for preventative maintenance, it means that the vehicle fleet could be maintained and the police would be on mobile and can answer calls virtually from any station when they are received.

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The Government has hired a fleet manager to develop and implement plans for proper maintenance of the police fleet and he has instituted a preventative maintenance system. The components of this system are planned maintenance; computerized maintenance management; and driver retraining. Another point that has occurred—and this is something that a number of people have been critical of—is the daily inspection of vehicles and records. A vehicle logbook has been introduced where drivers will be required to record any defects and mileage when they inspect the vehicles daily on taking them over. Again, there was always the feeling that a vehicle would be parked up there and any police officer could pick up the key and go and jump in the vehicle and drive it, and nobody will be responsible for any damage subsequently discovered.

Mr. President, the Government has reinstated defensive-driver training to be conducted by the police service, and the Government has increased and widened the E999 system to provide better coverage. Right now, phase two has been completed, which means the police have coverage throughout Trinidad and Tobago, both the E999 and the highway patrol. Radios are being fitted to the new vehicles to be part of the new system. One point of interest is that phase three of the E999 which is in train now, will provide a further sophisticated system. Some of the required elements are the point to multi point wireless network for voice, data, and full video service; a computer aided dispatch system; and an automatic vehicle location system.

Mr. President, what the computer aided dispatch system does is give better communication—almost internal dialing—between police headquarters and all the divisional headquarters. So we do not need to go through the Trinidad and Tobago Telecommunications Services (TSTT). The police will have their own secure microwave backbone on which their messages will be transmitted, both voice and video data. The computer aided dispatch system really adds to the information obtained about a venue.

For example, let us say that the police get calls regularly from a certain club or about a certain building, that data is put into the system, so when next a call comes in, the dispatcher would be aware of other related events that may have occurred there. The police will be able to know what type of area they are going into—whether where they are going is a gasoline farm or petro station—and the history of the place. This will also allow the police to communicate with the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to find out information about people there or whether or not somebody was picked up. The Criminal Investigation Department will know what warrants are outstanding.

Mr. President, the police will also be able to communicate with the licensing office in obtaining information with respect to vehicles which they may spot on the road. The vehicle location system is a computerized geographic system, which will allow the centre to keep track of certain vehicles, and target those vehicles to points of problems. When the calls come in, the police will be able to pick up the nearest vehicle and vector it straight to the position. Mr. President, what this does is give the police the use of modern technology that is available on the market to increase their efficiency.

10.50 a.m.

Training follows the same pattern. Over 200 police have been abroad on training, and there are areas that were of concern to members of the public and certainly to members of this House. The training done by the police did not allow them to be efficient and do their work properly, but the training done by the police now deals not only with domestic violence matters, but also with crime investigation, crime scene investigation. Again, this was a problem where people suggested that the scene of a crime was not kept sterile enough for the forensic investigators when the time came, but all of these types of training have been addressed and regular courses are being conducted.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by a further 15 minutes. [*Hon. B. Kuei Tung*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: Mr. President, I thank the Members of the Senate. For instance, besides the 200 officers who were trained overseas, with respect to local training, there were 2,952 participants in various courses in 1997; 1,316 in 1998; and 2,253 in 1999. There is a continuous training going on. It would appear that training in the past ended at recruit level when they left the barracks and it would seem that a lot of these people remained recruits at heart and mentally, while they progressed up the ranks. It is unfortunate, but we have gone past that stage now and the police service, I am glad to say, is responding to the training.

What we try to impress upon the new entrants to the police service is the fact that the service is pursuing a vision of being customer-driven and able to manage its relationship with the general public in an acceptable manner. Of course, there are complaints, but as the Police Complaints Authority confirmed, a number of

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the complaints are not pursued by the complainant and a number of the complaints that are lodged are sometimes registered as three or four complaints against the same person; using violent behaviour, not co-operating, not investigating. Sometimes it is the same complaint against the same person.

We did find that the number of complaints had reduced and when we launched the opening of the office for the Police Complaints Authority in Tobago a few months ago, we were pleased to note that there had been a great improvement in the relationship between the public and members of the Police Service.

Coming back to the training of the community police, they have been exposed to training in anger management, domestic violence issues and mediation. A total of 768 officers have done defensive driving and crime scene management which I feel is critical. They were also exposed to training in the change process, team building, performance appraisal, supervisory skills, leadership, conflict management, occupational health and stress management.

Among the foreign training, they dealt with collection and preservation of crime scene evidence, tourist related policy, information technology, advanced fingerprinting science, money laundering, illicit traffic in firearms, narcotics investigations, intelligence gathering and analysis. All in all, the training has been quite broad-based and from the recruit to the executive in the police service, various seminars and training courses have been conducted over the years and are continuing at this time.

Mr. President, what I had hoped to achieve in my Ministry is putting systems in place which would ensure the ongoing maintenance of police plant and machinery—accommodation, offices, vehicles—and this is now in place and for all intents and purposes, it should continue, regardless of who my successor may turn out to be.

It is not a matter of me. It is a matter of the Ministry and what the Ministry has to contribute. *[Interruption]* No. There are some people on the other side who are “me this” and “me that”. This is not a me thing. I am here to perform a function and my Ministry has done just that and we are utilizing the funds we got this year to complete a number of projects which were started. For instance, the building on Richmond Street known as the “old Mirror building” will house the Organized Crime and Narcotics Unit and the Fraud Squad.

Also, the rebuilding of the old police headquarters. *[Desk thumping]* It is now scheduled to start in October, 2000, Mr. President. We spoke with the contractors and there was some delay in the contract being signed up between Nipdec, who are the project managers. They have already inspected the place, all the plans are

completed, the funds have been made available and I was advised, coming up to this debate, that October, 2000, work will begin.

Many people seem to have forgotten that while the old police headquarters existed, the police administration building was constructed and was never intended to be police headquarters. Of course, I was told when I came into office that there were other plans for the structure which, again, seemed quite farfetched and to lack any serious thought, but the old police headquarters is needed and I trust that work will begin before the end of this year.

A number of projects were done for the Regiment and the Coast Guard. The fire services, again, same story. The average age of the appliances in operation was 10 years old and of a total of 110 vehicles, there were 60 unserviceable. It was found that most of the vehicles were in a state of neglect and had not been repaired. From what I recall, there were about three ambulances working and, at that time, there was no national ambulance service as operated now by the Ministry of Health.

Since 1996, the number of vehicles required to bring the Fire Service up to the international standards were four major aircraft rescue and fire fighting vehicles, which are based now at Piarco and Crown Point; a hazardous chemical vehicle assigned to the Chaguanas Fire Station; a chemical industrial vehicle located at the Couva Fire Station; six utility vehicles; 14 ambulances; 10 water tenders; 8 command jeeps and 11 water tankers.

As far as fire is concerned, a number of the existing fire stations are in need of repair or reconstruction. We dealt with the one in San Fernando. Most people will recall the small fire station that was next to the Town Hall. We were able to relocate that to what was called the Norwegian Seaman's Guesthouse. We have it on a lease for three years while a new station is being constructed.

A new station was constructed in Santa Cruz and this year there has been the construction of new fire stations at Sangre Grande and Couva. This is the station that is to be relocated to an area nearer to Point Lisas to serve more directly, the industrial estate.

As far as the prison service is concerned, besides the extension of the women's prison, plans have been completed for a new medium-sized security prison in Tobago. In Tobago, as we know, relatives, and so forth, are put under great pressure to visit inmates who have to be sent to Trinidad, once convicted. All we have in Tobago is really a temporary holding area which really does not serve the

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needs. There is also no prison for females in Tobago. This facility, the area I believe, has been identified. We are in consultation with the Tobago House of Assembly and a number of bids from local contractors are being considered for the award of a contract.

Under transportation, we were able to award a contract for transporting prisoners to a private firm which assisted with the speed at which cases could be heard, because there were many complaints that prisoners never reached to the courts because of the limited vehicles and again, the vehicles that were operated by the prison service being unserviceable.

The theme throughout everything that obtained in the Ministry was either unserviceable, decrepit, rundown or in need of repairs. This stood for the fire service, the prison service, the police service, the coast guard and the defence force.

The forensic science centre was a fairly new facility and the only additional work we are doing there now is establishing a new area where autopsies can be performed. Where it is being done now is within the main building where the staff work and it is not the best place for it. A contract has already been awarded and work should start there shortly.

The areas of concern which I highlighted today deal with law enforcement and justice from the point of view of the forensic science centre. Training is going on now for at least two members of staff and we do have a committee that is looking at de-linking those professionals who work in the Forensic Science Centre so that their terms and conditions and their salaries can be renegotiated outside of the normal public service where they are put into positions that are not in keeping with their competence and training. That is being addressed as well.

All in all, what this Ministry has done over the years was to set right a number of defects and deficiencies that we found which were to the disadvantage of the officers within the service and to put systems in place to ensure that what we are doing is not only a temporary measure, but would have some long lasting effect and will continue to function on a natural basis, that things are in place and if a vehicle breaks down, a certain process will occur. A certain procedure will follow and work will be done.

We also arranged that the fleet manager will visit the stations periodically to see the vehicles himself and speak with the officers who are in charge. Similarly, we have hired a facilities manager to be responsible for the buildings and their

maintenance and repair. If there is a janitorial firm coming in to do work, he will negotiate with them and show them what they are supposed to do.

We had an experience with this very issue of civilianization in the Police Service some years ago. Some three years ago when Mr. O'Dowd, now Sir John O'Dowd, came here and conducted a survey on the Police Service, it was a quite voluminous document. I think we all recall it contained 300 recommendations. One of the recommendations which was implemented was that of management for the Police Service, but like everything else, managers were appointed, in most cases without the knowledge of the police service. What did one get? The police did not acknowledge them. The managers served their term doing virtually nothing and left.

11.05 a.m.

We have now re-appointed managers with the knowledge and support of the police service. The facilities manager is functioning; we have a human resources manager who is functioning; we have a fleet manager who is functioning and an IT manager. A number of these managers are now part of the police service, are not part of the Ministry, imposed on the police service, as was the thinking at the time. It did take some tolerance and negotiation with the police for us to reach agreement.

I am glad that these systems are in place and the Ministry will continue, for the balance of this fiscal year, to make sure that all the projects that are in train will be completed and that the effectiveness of the protective services and the Defence Force are maintained at a high level and that we maintain their equipment to make sure that their facilities, their vehicles and their communication are all functioning to allow them to carry out their work at a level that is in keeping with the standard we expect here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Those systems are in place. They are not *ad hoc* things. They are working. We have tried them. They are proven and the funds we have are sufficient to complete the projects that we have started. The number of projects we have already done is in keeping with what we were capable of achieving over that time and the issue of refurbishing stations will be pursued to make sure that the conditions under which our police officers live are up to acceptable standards and that the police areas where they operate are kept in habitable condition.

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All in all, the Ministry has sought to bring back the dignity and pride to the divisions of this Ministry and we have used the funds allocated to do so. We have been able to put systems in place to ensure that the standards are maintained at very high levels.

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

Sen. Martin Daly: Mr. President, I think on this occasion because there is so much ground to cover, I would like to map out those areas of the budget which I would like to debate with the emphasis on the word "debate". First and foremost, we need to address what I consider to be the alarming situation with the national debt and, in due course, I will be inviting Senators to look at Appendix 16 of the *Review of the Economy 2000* to see what is the cause for my concern.

Secondly, Mr. President, I would like to deal with, not only the lack of any policy statement from the Government in key areas of its operation despite repeated requests and opportunities to do so, but I would like to deal with some of what I would consider the delusional claims that have been made in the areas of health and tourism. I think it happens to all governments. It is frequently forgotten that the Independent Senators deal and analyze the workings of Government, regardless of who is in power. Therefore, I think people sometimes get a little hysterical when their ministries are the subject of analysis. Nothing I have to say is intended to be personal. It is intended to be purely an analysis.

I would like to deal with the vexed question of the Salaries Review Commission because I think there is a great danger—I consider it the cravenness of the two main political parties in dealing with the Salaries Review Commission—of subverting the Constitution, something I feel very strongly about.

Finally, time permitting, I would like to deal with the ill-conceived announcement that salaried individuals will no longer have to file tax returns—a more cockeyed idea I am yet to hear—and I will point out what are the deficiencies in it and what are the things that will have to be thought about before we come to amend the legislation. I intend to leave that for last because there is no way the Government can implement those changes without fundamental amendments to the Income Tax Ordinance so if I do not have the opportunity to deal with it on this occasion, well, depending on a variety of variables, I may get the opportunity to deal with it when we amend the legislation. I will leave that for last although I am very concerned about it.

With regard to the national debt, if one looks at Appendix 6 of the *Review of the Economy*, one will see that it is beyond dispute that the national debt, that is, the total public debt, has been rising. There is no dispute about that. There is some dispute about whether this Government had the unfortunate experience of having to book certain debts which it did not incur. If the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development says that Taurus, National Fisheries and the BWIA privatization, to name three examples, were not properly booked before he became the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, then until I hear to the contrary, I will accept that.

That, of course, does not answer the fundamental question of why the public debt is rising, regardless of whether you have to discount that increase because of debts that were not booked by a previous administration. It does not answer the question. It simply says, well, it is rising by a smaller amount and the thing that alarms me most when I look at Appendix 16 is that the internal and external Central Government debt is not particularly any cause for alarm. If you drew a graph of it, you will see a fairly gentle and benign curve. What concerns me and what we have to focus on is what the Government has to answer: Why is it that the liability for guaranteed debt, that is, debt of other players in the public sector which is guaranteed by the Government, is rising so sharply—\$4.3 million to \$5.6 million to \$9.1 million? Why is that rising so sharply?

I venture to suggest, Mr. President: Is this Government like all of its predecessors—may I underline that, like all of its predecessors—without exception, yielding to the temptation to misuse the structures that we call state enterprises and statutory corporations? Every Government has done it so who wants to go out and say, "Boy, Daly attack this Government", let them go and say it. I mean, as I have made it abundantly plain, those things do not bother me.

The other thing that is cause for alarm is that this Government, like all of its predecessors, borrows money from a malleable Central Bank and so, the internal debt of the Government excludes loans and advances extended by the Central Bank to the Central Government. Now, the Central Bank is the Government's banker and if the Government, as a customer of the bank, borrows money from the bank, they have to pay it back or they have to provide collateral, otherwise the Central Bank will be in breach of its statutory duty and be in breach of basic fundamental principles of banking. One needs to be concerned at any given time about what is the extent of the Government's overdraft with the Central Bank.

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I like to keep things simple. It is just as if you borrow money from the bank on overdraft, you have to be concerned about whether you are within your limit or whether you are exceeding your limit. If you exceed your limit, do you have to pay a penalty? What is the rate of interest and what collateral do you have to put? It is as simple as that. Now, the very first time I ever spoke in the Senate happened to be in a budget debate when the PNM had succeeded the NAR. That was the first time I learnt that if you exercise free speech, you got sanctioned. I spoke very vehemently about the malleability of the Central Bank in lending money to governments, particularly in election years. To this day, there are high officials in the Central Bank who have still, in the good PNM tradition, withdrawn speech from me but it certainly means I have to speak to fewer people. It suits me very well because many people like to speak with me. This is nothing new but it is continuing and continuing and continuing.

So far as I am concerned, therefore, we need to know in plain and unambiguous terms: What, if any, is the Government's exposure by way of guarantee on the major projects that are being conducted by state enterprises and statutory authorities? That is what they have to come and tell me as far as my perspective is concerned. Whether the airport is going to cost \$1 billion, \$2 billion, \$3 billion or \$4 billion, we need to know in plain and unambiguous terms if the primary debtors and the primary players in that project fail, does the Government have to satisfy their liability? It is a question that is capable of an answer, yes or no, and if the answer is yes, then you tell us precisely in dollars and cents terms: What is the ultimate exposure of the Government in relation to the airport project?

Now, of course, if the Airports Authority is the borrower or is in some other way liable, it is all very nice. You can tuck it away in the Airports Authority and just say, "Well, you know, the debt is really going on. Look, our internal and external debt are in order." But, if there is a guarantee in there, we have to be told yes, there is a guarantee and okay, it is not going to happen. We have done all our projections and we will never be called upon to pay but, anyway, this is the extent of the liability.

Certainly, when we hear the discrepancy pointed out by Sen. Montano, about the landing fees, which will be the main revenue of the Airports Authority and the interest payments, we must get frightened and want to know what is the ultimate exposure of the Government. That is a matter of grave concern and I, like all of my colleagues who have spoken in this debate and others, will miss Sen. Kuei Tung. We will miss him dearly and he knows that when we raise these things, he

at any rate, is mature enough to know they are not personal. I suggest to him that unless he wants to go out—he says he is going out; I have my doubts—with a whimper and not a bang, he really must not worry about who has provoked him, who has said anything about his mortgage or what has been said about his shares or anything. Just come and tell us, like the straight up trooper that I have always found him to be, “The Government has guarantees for projects of X amount, so much for the Airports Authority; so much for my good friends at Tidco.”

Tidco is the perfect example. Where is Sen. Marshall? He referred to it in pained tones as a maligned organization. Well, I am going to malign it some more and perhaps, this should be an appropriate time at which to formally congratulate my very good friend, Sen. Carlos John, on his maiden speech. [*Desk thumping*] To the observation of my colleague, Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie, it certainly was a virgin speech, if one were to judge from the tremors that were associated with breaking his duck. All I can say is that he is a man of great discipline and I have private knowledge about what extracurricular assistance he may have taken before making his speech, but I am happy to see that was not visible, unlike at least one legal colleague who used to appear in this Senate on previous occasions. On one occasion, he came from a function on Bastille Day and he certainly did not acquit himself as well as you did Senator. [*Laughter*]

11.20 a.m.

TIDCO is a continuing scandal. TIDCO is upset and they—like all of those who try to sanction me—have joined the long queue. They are upset with me. My sources tell me, on one occasion, when we were pounding them for the Miss Universe Beauty Pageant, they had a special seminar in the Kapok Hotel to deal with—I have the documents with me—what was described as Sen. Daly’s front-page *Express* article. That is the level of their paranoia. Of course, I had to answer to the proprietor of another newspaper as to why I was writing articles for the *Express*. That in itself was another painful exercise. Of course, it was not an article at all.

I dare say that my good friend, Sen. John, is in a position to confirm that such a meeting took place in the Kapok Hotel. These people were quite astounded. All their professionals were quite upset: how could we be maligning TIDCO. If TIDCO wants to lie down and be raped, then we have to comment on it. They had no business being the vehicle for the Miss Universe Beauty Pageant or the World Beat Festival. Other people should have taken the rap for that. If they are so

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supine, as the Central Bank is supine, to agree to a cockeyed plan by the Government, then it goes wrong, they have to take the licks. “Yuh” put “yuh” hand in the fire, you will get burnt.

Now we have this quite extraordinary situation where, the First Citizens Bank has issued a letter dated September 07, 2000. In another place I would ask your leave to have the usher pass them around. Perhaps, I could ask my colleague. I made a few copies. Could you make sure that some get to the Government Benches? Now we have this extraordinary situation where the First Citizens Trust and Merchant Bank has issued a letter to players in the financial market, seeking their subscription to \$80 million bond issue being put out in the name of TIDCO. Well, is that not quite extraordinary? Of course, may I say, immediately, this bond issue provides for a government guarantee. It says so in the first paragraph. Here we go again, another goofy guarantee. I do not know if this \$180 million is one of the guarantees that contributes to the aggregate of the \$9 billion worth of liability. This is very disturbing. It is disturbing first of all because, whether it is TIDCO or anybody else, why is the Government going to guarantee a bond issue, when it already has \$9 billion worth of contingent debt?

Then, of course, we begin to understand what happens. I am quoting from the first paragraph of the letter:

“The funds raised by this issue will be used by TIDCO to finance the implementation of Phase II of the National Road Enhancement Programme.”

Tidco is going to build roads? But, of course, one can understand why: because the former Chairman of Tidco is now the “Minister of Roads”. His tentacles are still in Tidco. What I am concerned about—I do not know whether Sen. Shabazz’s road is one of the roads here and that was a pilot project but, no doubt, he will tell us in due course. This is a very serious matter. First of all, I submit that this is unlawful. Although they are a statutory authority—I took the trouble to check it. They have what used to be called a Memorandum of Association, now by-laws. I would like to see whether Tidco’s by-laws permit them to deal with roads at all. Even assuming that it does, it is politically quite improper to use Tidco for that purpose. That is why we have a Ministry of Works and Transport. Whether it is technically lawful or not—I do not have access to their Memorandum of Association to see whether it is lawful—politically, it is quite wrong. It defies all conventional notions of accountability and it is the improper

use of a supine state enterprise. Therefore, I dare say, it would not be parliamentary.

On the last occasion they were upset because I referred to them as the “TIDCO posse”. If they are supine to this extent, Mr. President, I leave it to the imagination of Members of what else they might be called on this occasion. It still begins with “P”.

What is Tidco doing having a bond issue to do with the National Road Enhancement Programme? I consider this a serious smoking gun on the part of this administration. I would like an answer. I am raising it, particularly, because I am already alarmed about the contingent liability for guarantees. Is it every hare-brained scheme that the Government guarantees—Miss Universe too? I do not know. I never really looked into this. It is worse. The potential for havoc in the national debt is worse, because in financial circles, as you would well understand, people who are asked to guarantee the liabilities of others are sometimes asked to provide what is called a Letter of Comfort.

Without boring everybody, a letter of comfort indicates a sort of light touch on the back to say they are there and everything is going to be all right. Most Letters of Comfort are not intended to be legally binding: they are just a statement indicating, “Well we will do the gentlemanly thing and if TIDCO goes belly up, we will give you some money back.” They are not generally intended to be legally binding, some are. I do not know whether any of these contingent liabilities include Letters of Comfort or not. I am certain about one thing: there is no government that is not a renegade government. Happily, we have never had renegade governments. We have never had renegade governments. We have had renegades in government, but that is another story. There is no government, other than a renegade government, who, if called upon to act in accordance with a letter of comfort, could seriously say to the lender: “Well, you know it is only a comfort and we are not giving you anything.” A private person could do that. A serious government whose financial creditability is at stake, has to honour Letters of Comfort too. I would like to know whether this liability for guarantees includes Letters of Comforts as well as guarantees that are formerly, legally binding. We should be told.

As to this latest excursion on the part of TIDCO, I do not know. I suppose we are going to hear some kind of bush lawyer argument about, well the tourists have to drive on the road, so it is connected with tourism. I suppose that is what they

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are going to tell us. They certainly tell us things in other aspects of debates that really are an insult to our intelligence. If you ask the ordinary person: “Does TIDCO build roads? They will tell you “nah man”. That is how you test it. Here we go. Here goes TIDCO again. If it causes people to be critical, well so be it. You see the danger. It is going along the same path of guarantee.

This letter is alarming from two points of view: it exemplifies two sins of government whoever they are; the improper use of state enterprise and statutory corporations to avoid accountability and so on, and the temptation to guarantee or issue Letters of Comfort in order to get things done by hook or by crook, particularly, in the election year. Mr. President, I am concerned about that.

There is no tourism policy. We know there is not one. Because, on the last occasion when we were dealing with the amendments to the Tourism Development Bill, Sen. Carlos John promised us—I have his *Hansard*—that we would hear more about tourism policy in the budget. Unless Minister Nanan is coming then, one opportunity—who was the CEO of tourism and knows all the hot spots in the world—to tell us what the tourism policy is has been completely lost. That answer was given both in response to myself and to Sen. Prof. Spence on the occasion of that debate. We have not heard one word about the tourism policy.

That is bad because all my colleagues have pointed out that the Government never tells us what its policy is. Here is where the delusion comes—I dare say I would be sanctioned for using the word delusion. All governments are delusional! They are all delusional without exception, let me say that. Whether it is RAM or MPM or however Bally deals with it, they are all delusional. When elections are coming around they become even more delusional.

11.30 a.m.

First of all I should say in passing, and I assume it is a typographical error, it says on page 3 of the Budget Statement: “We reduced the public debt;” and that is about as inaccurate as saying there are 19 safe houses. Although they are going to tell you they cannot say where they are because it is a matter of national security and it is a secret. That is what they are coming to tell you. I tried to pass a note to the Senator yesterday to tell her that is what they are going to say. They are going to say: “We cannot tell you where they are, if people know where they are, the women are going to be beaten more.” This is Trinidad of course, you could have 19 safe houses and it would remain a secret, because there are not 19 safe houses, or if there are, they have not been provided by the Government anymore than they built 39 hotels. When that was pointed out to my friend, Sen. Carlos John on the last occasion he said they really meant hotel and guest houses, bed and breakfast,

but that is not what they are saying here, and people are listening to this. That is just delusional. If it is not delusional, it is deliberate and I would not like to think that of Sen. Kuei Tung on what I believe is. So if it is not deliberate, it is delusional. You did not build 39 hotels, you did not provide 19 safe houses, you did not reduce the public debt and “yuh lehing go” guarantee on letter of comfort as Manley would say: “like a dose ah salts.” And God help us if it pass through his budget. If the salts and these guarantees on letters of comfort pass through his budget, “we gone through”. We go tremble like “meh” partner, but for a different reason. *[Laughter]*

So it is delusional to say that the policy of the Government has increased tourism, increased visitor arrivals and the tourism share of GDP for 1 per cent bordering on 3 per cent. First of all, Mr. President, I assume the Government has the figures for visitor arrivals that would segregate those arrivals into tourists, businessmen, I suppose the deportees return as residents, but I do not know. I do not know how many of those visitor arrivals are drug mules. I do not know. We know some of them get caught, but the point about it is that they claim, and I disputed, that one of the reasons tourism had developed to that extent in GDP and why there are so many tourist arrivals was because of the yachties, the yachting business. I told them to be careful with that claim; that I believe the main thing that draws the yachties South was mother nature, and my good friend, Minister Nanan said—and there was great mirth and laughter from the other side—well what you mean, in all the PNM years nature was taking a nap? And everybody laughed, they say but he “ketch” him. How “yuh” mean, it always had hurricanes. Well, there is a thing called research, and a thing called preparation and let me say if you are relying on the “yachting” business to say that it is your policies that have driven up tourism from 1 to 3 per cent of GDP and have driven up visitor arrivals, “yuh” dead wrong.

Yes, nature did take a nap for seven years and my source of information is the *United States Centre for Coastal Geology*. The information which I have extracted, and this is important because it shows the level of delusion and if you challenge something in a debate, you try to wish it away by some smart aleck remark.

People in Opposition could make smart aleck remarks. Governments have to deal with constructive criticism in a level-headed way and without boring everybody because this is really quite interesting to see about mother nature's nap. Two fundamental things happen in Southern United States; first of all, in August, 1992 “Andrew” lashed them and I will give you two statistics about Andrew that are relevant. There is a table of all big disasters in the United States of America,

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not only hurricanes, but earthquakes, fires, winter storms and so forth and they have adjusted these figures to take account of the fall in the value of money.

“Andrew” caused \$15.5 billion worth of damage in the United States of America in 1992. The next nearest contender hurricane-wise was “Hugo” in 1989 and of course, you will start counting how many years elapsed between 1989 and 1992 and I will keep counting on my fingers when we go forward and see what happened in 1996.

The next contender, “Hugo” was \$4.2 billion, so “Andrew” was three and something times as disastrous, and may I let my good friend with his tourism connections know that in terms of vessels, “Andrew” destroyed in Florida half a billion dollars worth of shipping. So if you think anybody was going to keep their ship up there, you will see. To cut a long story short, in 1996, four tropical systems made land fall in the United States of America, two of which were major category 3 hurricanes and I quote from the survey the section on Central Atlantic Storm Investigation which said: “For seven years we went without threat and then suddenly it all hit.” That was nature taking a nap. So no sooner they were dealing with “Andrew” then four tropical systems passed through Florida and the Carolinas: that was a record. Every year they had studied it. There is something called the hurricane corridor, and they have studied it from 1871 to 1995 and they never had four storms passing through the corridor. After “Andrew” took tiger after the four hurricanes or the four tropical systems in 1996, where to go? They all took tiger and come down here. I am not saying the Government did not respond. I am not saying that the shipping business did not respond, and I have all the unsolicited letters they give you which were sent to me to say what a good job Tidco was doing.

The point about it is, it was not a policy that sent those yachts, it was mother nature. That is not to say the Government did not respond. So do not worry to ask me no stupidity about if mother nature was taking a nap and ha, ha, ha like we in a playground. Let us do some research and study these things. Let us see, if you say it was not mother nature how many solicitations we have sent out to the yachting capitals in Southern United States? I bet you did not send out one brochure and in those days Tidco did not travel much, we cannot say that now. So you did not impress them with your physical presence as you have been impressing them in more recent times hence the appellation posse.

We have to debate things in a serious way. If you could tell us what is the tourism policy and what steps you have taken to invite yachting to come here,

then you might be able to say well, never mind the hurricanes, it is our policy and steps that we took that caused all these yachts to come here.

I do not usually go into these more up-market areas, but I happened to go down the islands for the first time in many years and I was taken into Scotland Bay and we could not go as near to the shore as we would like because the water was filled with sewage from yachts that were parked there. There were four yachts parked there and they had their ropes strung right across the Bay so even though there was much room to park, not even a pirogue could pass. “They woulda have to limbo under de rope.” So there were four yachts controlling the whole of the shallow end of Scotland Bay. Great tourism policy boy, great policy. “Tootoo”—that is probably not a parliamentary word—mess in the water, and the Bay roped off by four yachts, great tourism policy. Great policy! But we do not know what the policy is, maybe they have told the yachties to come and dump the thing in the water here. We do not know until we see the policy and when we see the policy we might know what provisions they have to stop them from dumping the thing in the water or to clean it up, but there is no policy. We just have these delusional claims that we have carried tourism up to this, that and the other.

I suppose if the yachties start going to the six casinos in Ariapita Avenue they will say it is a casino policy that cause that too, I do not know. And maybe if the Gaza Strip come back, they will say it is the entertainment policy that sending them in the Gaza Strip too, I do not know. I think it is other manifestations and nature that send people to the casino and to the Gaza Strip. Maybe we could debate that another time because we have a lot of work to do.

Then we come to the health sector. I have never expressed my views on the health sector because I am given to emotion and I had experiences many years ago at the Port of Spain Hospital and I would weep. They are very personal and very bitter experiences, but I try as far as possible not to be driven by personal experience. I will just say in passing that one of the amazing things about the Port of Spain Hospital, I do not know if it is still like that, is that some of the operations that they—when I say operations, I should say treatments, I do not virtually mean surgery. Some of the things that are done in a hospital which make people most vulnerable to steps were all upstairs; the eye treatment centre, the chemotherapy centre, so when “yuh” finish the chemotherapy, “yuh” fall down the steps. I do not know if that has changed and I have not bothered to look. I know what I would do when I get sick. I know what I would do.

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Yesterday I was bitterly disappointed to hear Sen. Tota-Maharaj embark on another public relations speech and I know well enough that she would not take it personally either. When one makes these public relations speeches, you must not assume that people do not listen carefully and so, I was actually discussing something with Sen. Prof. Spence and I said: "Did she say St. Ann's? One of the things on which I want to comment is I would like to agree very humbly with Fr. Gerry Pantin, Prof. Ramesh and other distinguished commentators who have said we are not addressing the social infrastructure and I had planned to talk about St. Ann's to say simply this. The Government is boasting that they fixed the St. Ann's Roundabout. "Yuh" go boast about that? The St. Ann's Roundabout leads you a mile and a half away to Dante's Inferno, and I am sorry Sen. Cabrera if you think that is dramatic.

Sen. Cabrera: I find it cynical.

Sen. M. Daly: You find that cynical well, how about this for cynical, my friend? [*Sen. Daly holds up a newspaper*] How about beating your chest that you have fixed the St. Ann's Roundabout and a mile and a half away you have this. And when I raised it with the Minister, she says it is not a cage and anyway, the media should not have published it. So is it cynical, or is it dramatic to say that when the Third Reich cut the cameras out of the gas ovens, that should have happened? If the media sees this, they have a right to shock the nation with it, they have a responsibility to do it because whether you call this a cage or an isolation area, it is completely unacceptable. So go and bury your head in the St. Ann's Roundabout and do not see this. That is what is wrong with our governments. Come election time, we fix this, we do that, we do the other and we have ordinary citizens subjected to totally uncivilized conditions.

When Tidco goes on a trip, do they carry this and show it? No. I want the Minister to tell me whether we have a semantic argument about whether this is a cage or an isolated area. Did the Minister see those wire doors there and are they still used to put people inside whether they are subnormal, abnormal, "trinormal" or politicians? Do you use this to put people? If you are using this to put people, hang your head in shame. Bury it in the St. Ann's Roundabout.

I really feel strongly about it. I suppose the media would say that I spoke passionately and your concern about this is we might have embarrassed the parents of these boys. Do not get excited Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed because I am always very concerned in case where I get passionate, people think I am one sided.

You will remember, Mr. President, that ten citizens drank eggnog in 1993 at St. Ann's Hospital and there was a commission of enquiry under Chief Justice

Hyatali and this is what he said, and I would like Sen Tota-Maharaj to tell me whether she had 60 infrastructure projects or not, is this still the position with the St. Ann's Hospital? Because Berger Paint—I suppose we should not advertise. A paint pot cannot fix this, you know. In case we want to suggest that there is no cage, could we pass these around? [*Sen. Daly gives the Orderly photocopies of the picture of patients in a cage at the St. Ann's Hospital*] Let people look at this and be shocked again, worry about the embarrassment of the parents. We should be embarrassed as people who are movers and shakers in this society that that exists in Trinidad and Tobago, just as we should be ashamed that children have to “tote” water on their head before they go to school in the morning. And we are jumping up and down and talking about equal opportunity and water for all. Those are the things I feel passionately about. I could not give a fig when I have to go to my mother's house in St. Ann's, and I have to drive right around the savannah, should I be coming from the Lady Young Road or whether I could come through or not. That does not bother me. I want to know when I get into St. Ann's all is well there. I do not care if I have to drive right around the savannah. A more trivial accomplishment would be hard to find, and I do not care if my friends from St. Ann's and Cascade are vexed with me. A minor inconvenience in relation to the things that are wrong in this country and in their area and it is they who have these naked people walking up and down the streets all day.

When my mother was alive and well and could still walk, I banned her from going to the shop for fear that one of the vagrants would lick her down and break her hip.

11.45 a.m.

So 10 citizens drank eggnog and they died. And the press would not let it go away. I am not going to bore everybody with this, but my point is this: we have social structural problems in this country that have never been addressed by this Government or any of its predecessors—whatever they say. We are dealing with the same things all the time. We are in the same box and we come here in every budget debate and say, “Look how much money we spend on this”, “Look how much money we spend on that”, but the fundamental problems are not being addressed. That is a fundamental problem which, to her eternal credit, my candidate Sen. Daphne Phillips, tried to solve and she got cursed for it. We will come to that to show that all Governments suffer the same fate because we are not dealing with the social structural problems in the society. But I do not want to come off the eggnog. I do not want to drink it.

This is what the Hyatali Report said:

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“The report of the Commission of Enquiry into the diarrhoeal illness and resultant deaths at the St. Ann’s Hospital presented to His Excellency the President on May 06, 1993.”

I cannot read all of it. Paragraph 7. This is what was said about the buildings; the infrastructure on which you are putting paints.

“These buildings which the Commission had the advantage of seeing may fittingly be admired as imposing architectural monuments. But the fact is they bore all the hallmarks of formidable security prisons. Consequently, they may be fittingly condemned today as anachronistic structures which are incompatible with a modern psychiatric treatment environment.”

How many pots of paints are you putting on that? So you could say, “Well, you know I had the pleasure of going to the St. Ann’s Hospital and we had infrastructure projects”. How many pots of paints are you putting on that? And of course the Government who was there in 1993—I do not know if they even put pots of paints at all. So perhaps I should be glad that you put pots of paints and they did not put any. I do not know what they did about it. And then they quote all about how horrible, depressing and sickening it is, and time is against me. But it is good for us to have long political memories. Because in this silly season when people start jumping up and down and saying, “I did this and I did that,” let us remember all of the things that have not been done by any of the governments we have had.

And then, Mr. President, research is important: nice talk and thing is good. Surprise! Surprise! The Hyatali Commission had something to say about the boys’ Ward 13. The Boys’ Ward 13: is this too dramatic or too truthful? Cynical! What is more cynical than praising yourself for fixing a dead roundabout and have living human beings in it. Cynical! What is cynical is, this was not addressed since 1993 by anybody. The Boys Ward 13, a relatively new building, housing 32 boys, some of whom were mentally subnormal and some completely nude and kept in conditions which were quite distressing. So the media lie, eh! Hyatali lie. Sorry, Sir. The media were economical with the truth; and Hyatali was economical with the truth. Oh Gawd, the media showed this. But anyhow condemn the media for talking about this; condemn Hyatali too. Because both of them was doing their duty. So what are we? Russia? Where you send down people in a submarine, lock them up and do not take any help in order to save political face. That is cynical. If I can sing a calypso and sing it, saying, “That is cynical for you”. So let us go on to the quieter waters.

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By the way, Mr. President, I think it is important when all the boasting is taking place, I am not, for one moment, suggesting that this Government is responsible for it. It is the failure of not only our Government, it is the failure of all of us as a whole society, and we do not debate these things.

On the *Newsday* of September 05, 2000 says:

“After four years—

80 women, 32 children killed in domestic violence.

In the past four years—1995 to 1999—a total of 80 women and 32 children died as victims to serious domestic violence.”

Put up a little tombstone for everyone at the St. Ann’s Roundabout, nuh. And what is the other road that was fixed? So what; we are just going to go through life fixing roads and not worry about these things? Happily, some commentators are kind enough to describe my colleagues as the conscience of the nation and we have to talk about these things. So the debate does not degenerate into who “thief” what, and who spent more money on what. Spending money is not a solution. Yes, well might the Minister look pensive. What kind of place is this?

So when Tidco went away did you show the investors this? And what? They should not write about it? You do not think that 80 women and 32 children killed in four years is to worry? Do you think having a sterile debate about how many secondary school places we have is going to solve this? What happens if the children are not prepared for secondary school? Or, they are not secondary school material? At what stage are you going to stream them out of the secondary school and give them something worthwhile to do, so they do not end up either being the killer or the “killee.” Those are the things that we have to be debating. Not how many places and whether the school is above a rum shop. If my child is going to get a good education, I will send him or her above a rum shop because I would hope that my influence would be sufficient. So they would go up the stairs and not down the stairs. But we spent a long time saying, “ah, they put a school in a rum shop.” A big political point, boy. The Government was dismissed because a school was put above a rum shop.

Then my poor old colleague—you know you get a soft spot for everybody in every Parliament. They bramble the Minister about the Savannah. She looked out the window and saw Carlos putting down the paving and she was all right with that.*[Laughter]* I do not care if they sing about me. I do not have that fear. I just say this. I mean, let us give the Government some points.

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

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Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 5 minutes. [*Sen. Prof. Spence*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. M. Daly: Thank you, Mr. President and Senators. Let me go a little more quickly. They give the special interest groups in carnival their subvention, and the Government still has to find the prize money to pay the special interest groups. So when the Minister goes with the prize money in her handbag, they cursed her up because she said she handed it out and they did not hand it out. Well, boy, if I get my gate receipts, my subvention and \$500,000 in cold hard cash, I would kiss the Minister's foot. [*Desk thumping*] They want to curse her up for that. And that is the mentality. They are worried about Lee Quan Yue and carnival mentality. That is plenty worse than carnival mentality. It is a joke. You get curse for \$500,000 in cold hard cash to pay your members. And there is a protocol issue about who, boy let them sing. I could sing about that for days and years. That is craziness! What is wrong with this place? And do you think fixing the St. Ann's Roundabout could solve that problem? No way.

Mr. President, may I deal very briefly with this next question of the Salaries Review Commission. The whole purpose of the Salaries Review Commission was to have a body separate from the Executive, to fix the salaries of those top office holders, whose terms and conditions could be manipulated by a cynical Government. Not this one or any government we have ever had. Therefore, whether it is legal or not, I have seen lawyers write a big thing about the Salaries Review Commission is automatically law once it is made. I am not in that. Because if that is the law and the Government do not do it they are not getting paid.

11.55 a.m.

They do not like the judges; leave that out. They do not want to discuss the politicians because they say "You fix yourself"; leave that out. My point is simply this. The Salaries Review Commission is designed so that there is a separate body—a body separate from the Executive—to fix salaries of persons whose day-to-day jobs may bring them into conflict with the Government, therefore the Government should not be the paymaster and, therefore, the whipmaster in order to influence their conduct. If one then takes such a position, whether it is lawful or

not, and says that those salaries are subject to Cabinet approval, one has destroyed the constitutional value of having them separate. We could as well say, “No Salaries Review Commission. We go fix the salaries”.

Likewise, if they say that it has to be the subject of a vote in Parliament, they have equally destroyed it because it is designed to ensure that those salaries are fixed and paid without reference to the Executive or the legislation, and it is a complete travesty of the Constitution not to pay those salaries, subject to some emergency. I dare say the framers of the Constitution did not make it explicit that they had to be paid as soon as they were laid, because they understood that there might be, you know, a hurricane Andrew and things might be a little tight and one might not be able to do it. But absent some emergency, I say the Government is morally bound to implement the Salaries Review Commission Report as soon as it is published. [*Desk thumping*]

The only reason it is not mandatory in the Constitution is that the Constitution framers probably understood that there might be exceptional emergencies. If I was in Opposition and they asked me to agree to it, as a bipartisan measure I say, “Leh all ah we vote fuh it”, then the population could be vexed with everybody. Of course, what we should do, if we follow Sen. Marshall’s thing about communication, is go out and explain to people why this is not a fixing of oneself and why this body is important and why its recommendations should be obeyed. That is political leadership. Political leadership is not talking about roundabouts. Political leadership is going about and explaining why we have to do this. We not “fixin’ we self”. We are taking care of an important constitutional provision.

Alan Alexander, a former Senator and a Senior Counsel, and I have given a recommendation to the Mackay Commission that it may be necessary for Lord Mackay to recommend an amendment to the Constitution to protect not only the independence of the Judiciary but the independence of all top office holders. So if they worry that the public would not accept an increase for the politicians, well give everybody else. I mean, after all, these people not squabbling over a motor car as a prize. They are doing serious work in keeping the society together and I call on this Government without further prevarication to implement the Salaries Review Commission Report. Do it and do it immediately, otherwise they are subverting the Constitution. Think carefully about it. Do not subvert the Constitution by withholding these salaries. It is completely wrong and it defeats the whole purpose.

Now, finally, Mr. President, may I deal with—oh, well, you know Sen. Marshall and I always have a little internal debate of our own. So under my

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prodding he has left the Far East and has now gone to New Zealand. I am sorry he is not here but I wonder—as I understand it, the New Zealand model of accounting is one has to say how much money one is going to spend, what one's target is and in the step from what one decides to spend to one's target, what the unit cost of each element is. Well, having regard to the unfortunate experience the Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs had with the National Carnival Commission, I would like to ask Sen. Marshall to please do a projection for me explaining how one applies the New Zealand model to the affairs of the National Carnival Commission, and probably we will have to do Tidco next. It just would not work, of course, because that is how we waste public money.

Finally, Mr. President, to my good friends at the Board of Inland Revenue: I am a little more afraid of them than I am of the Central Bank, I must confess immediately. Anyway, these are the questions I would like to ask about these so-called tax reforms. First of all, if we are doing away with the—I would like to spend some time on this foolish notion that this is going to free up the Inland Revenue to go after defaulters. They did not go after defaulters because, “Defaulters have gun and does put them to sit in the hot sun when they come to do audit”. They only come to comfortable offices where “We ‘fraid dem and treat dem nice and give dem coffee”, whether they had to look after forms or not. They were not going by Dole Chadee to find out what his income was. They are not going and they will never do it whether forms or no forms. I suppose they will come by me again, I do not know. “Well, leh dem come, nah. Wha’ yuh go do?”

Here is the problem. The tax return is an integral part of tax legislation in this country. It is a whole system. It is not just some little idea of a form. It is a tax return which is the starting point of 15 or 20 sections—I am not counting the subsections—of tax legislation and if they remove the tax return, the whole principle of self-assessment and the whole role of the Board of Inland Revenue changes, not just meaning one does not have to file a form again. It is like taking—well, I am not good with car engines. I suppose it is like taking the battery out. This whole thing turns on a tax return. So if they remove the tax return, they are not just removing a little administrative humbug, they are fundamentally altering the entire basis on which the Board of Inland Revenue works. So that is the first thing. So we will have to deal with that some time when the legislation comes.

The point about it is this. They then say they are making the employer responsible. Let us take two scenarios, Mr. President. What about, if employers divide their wages. Forget about the Truck Act and so forth. What about if employers decide, “I will pay you some of your salary by cheque, deduct a small

amount of PAYE and give you the rest in cash under the table, for which no PAYE is deducted? The Board of Inland Revenue will get licks on the PAYE. Then, what about deductions? Take one example. A TD-1 is issued on the basis that the employee has told the employer what deductions he has. As far as I know, we still have deferred annuities, although the sum is pitifully small. So an employee says to the employer, "Reduce my PAYE because I have a claim for a deferred annuity, so I must get an allowance". They bring the paper from the insurance company, the employer adjusts the deduction favourably and then they just do not pay the insurance company; and we have been "smart men" since the Sam Cook show, so you could be sure "We doin' dat", Mr. President.

Then the Inland Revenue has a very salutary practice—it is not a matter of law—where, when one is forming a company, as I understand the practice, the promoters of the company have to show their last six years' tax returns in order to get the file number for the company. That serves two purposes. First of all, if one was not paying one's tax and "Yuh get so big now that yuh have to form a company", one is stuck unless one makes good with the Board of Inland Revenue. So that, in itself, is a compliance measure which will go away now if they remove the tax return.

Secondly, it was done in order to make sure that the promoters of companies really existed and they were not money launderers and drug dealers. They wanted to show that real people were coming to form this company and this was a way of seeing whether the people were real and whether they were otherwise lawful and compliant taxpayers. Now, anybody could say, "Well, I am a salaried person. Here is my TD-4. I am going to form Money Laundering, Inc. Give me a file number". The file number, of course, is what then enables one to get the VAT number. So we are pulling out the guts of a whole legal system in two lines, "Oh, we would not have to worry with these pesky forms again". We are taking the whole guts and heart out of the system and we have not thought it out, and I say we have to debate it. The time will come, I guess, when we come to deal with the legislation. But the whole thing is completely ill-conceived. I dare say again it sounds very good to say, "Man, we free up from the pink form". Well, of course people will be thrilled to be freed up from the pink form because all kinds of obligations go with it.

Now, what about if people change their status from salaried to self-employed? What about the grey area of directors' fees? A non-executive director is not an employee. So does he have to file a pink form or not? He is not, strictly speaking. Is he a salaried person? Well, I suppose one will argue that he is, but directors' fees really are not salary. A non-executive director is not an employee. Does he have to fill in a pink form or not? So perhaps we could investigate some of these

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things. So, Mr. President, there are many other things that we really should be discussing in this debate. But generally, Mr. President, may I summarize my feelings about this budget.

It is good bookkeeping in terms of things are in the debit and credits columns. We have no policy explanations for any of the things that are going to be productive of revenue and employment and those policy explanations have to come from Ministers of Government. Not only that, we have much evidence to show that a number of the claims that are made by the Government, the success in policy implementation, are suspect, to put it mildly, and may be hurricane or otherwise driven. Then we have a few, little, ill-thought-out schemes like the pink form, like the Green Fund—but Sen. Kenny, we are not going to rain on your Green Fund parade.

I see the Minister of the Environment—is the manatee still alive? Because he touched it—is saying “If you oppose the Green Fund you are anti-environment”. Why? Because I disagree with a tax that makes me anti-environment? That is exactly the sort of thinking about which I am concerned. That is why I got frightened when he touched the manatee; and if he comes here I would “say it in front of his face”; but they do not come here. What is the policy for the environment? Anyway, Sen. Kenny has given me a preview of his recommendations for the application of the Green Fund and I really wanted him to say it for himself.

Most of all, Mr. President—and you must forgive me my passion—year after year we debate the figures and who “t’ief” and who did not “t’ief” and what is parliamentary language; yet the fundamental social problems of our country are not being addressed by any of the governments we have had. We still have people in isolation like Russia, we still have people who think that money is more important than dignity and there is a song about that too. What is it “You keep your money and let me die with my dignity”. So there are people who are more interested in money and honey than they are in the ordinary dignity of people, and they are more interested in saying “Vote for me because I did X, Y and Z”, and claiming some pusillanimous little achievement. Who could not fix a road? I agree it is all right to taunt one side and say, “Well, you never; we did it”. But was that really a priority? You must forgive me for referring to it so often, Mr. President. It is merely meant to be symbolic.

There are many other things in this budget, Mr. President, that are symbolic of only one thing, material measurement of the country’s well-being and not one piece of non-material or intangible measurement of the country’s well-being to the point where, and I am sorry to refer to it, we think that a paint-pot, or a few nails, or a few clean mattresses will give people who are otherwise deprived of their

dignity—through no fault of their own—that dignity. I am appealing to some government to break the mould and present a budget and talk seriously, from a policy perspective, about our social infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. President.
[*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Muhammad Shabazz: Mr. President, we are again in another budget debate and I am really glad to have the opportunity to contribute to this budget debate because, to us, a budget debate is indeed an important event in the lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago—very, very important. We have said here often, for the last four budget debates in which I have taken part, that the budget must be a plan or a direction in which the Government intends to go. The budget must also be a way to assess, at the end of the year, whether the Government succeeded in what it intended to do or whether it had failed. They would come to the House and report to us that, “We did X number of things. We succeeded here. We did not get the type of success that we wanted so we propose to do so, so, so in the future”.

This Government’s main problem, Mr. President, is its inability to seem to be able to account effectively and properly to the Parliament and to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

12.10 p.m.

The Government seems never to be able to do that. The Government comes here making plans the year before and whether those plans succeed or not the Government never comes back and says that it failed as a result. As a matter of fact, I have sat in a budget debate and heard the Hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development say, “Well, if ah make ah promise, and ah can’t keep it, ah just can’t keep it.” Although, I understand that, it has to be and it must be deeper than that.

Mr. President, what really is the problem with this Government? One of the things that we need to look at in judging the Government’s performance, as I have said, is whether the Government did what it says it was going to do. I have listened to Sen. Brig. Theodore this morning—and it is not my intention to just cast aspersions and say the Government did not do this and what we did—and he made the point. When things are done, we say, we thought about it, but when the Government does not do things and things did not happen the Government says the PNM caused it. It is always that the Government takes one side and we seem to be taking another side. I do not want to walk down that road.

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The Government said “water for all” but it is only giving 92 per cent, and now it is saying that the PNM is the cause of them not giving the 8 per cent. If there is flooding in the road—anything that happens—the Government says it is the PNM. Anything that did not happen properly is the PNM. The Government took credit for all the police stations and the schools that it is building and it is not giving any credit to the PNM. Well, the hon. Minister said that the PNM started a lot of the schools and the Government completed them. I give the Minister credit for that but I will deal with the hon. Minister as we go along.

What did this Government come here for? There are two sides, a government that runs the country and I understand that; there is a UNC party, which we are not going to deal with because of the philosophies coming out of the UNC which I do not want to go into it. When one looks at what is happening with the UNC now, people are fighting and moving out of the UNC and I do not want to deal with that. Let us talk about the Government. What did the Government promise to deliver to us? The Government said who do the crime will do the time; it will see about crime; it will take care of the health system; it is going to revolutionize education; it is going to see about agriculture; and it is going to deal with poverty eradication.

Mr. President, what has happened with crime in this country? I like to hear the Government talk about how many vehicles they bought. I understand that and I commend them for that. I want to ask the hon. Minister, when he talks about the number of vehicles he bought for the police service—and we commend him on that—I do not think the Government bought the vehicles up to now. I think this matter is still in a lease agreement with some one of their people or someone of their companies, but we will deal with that. The Government put vehicles on the road.

Mr. President, I also want the Minister to account for the number of ambulances. Why is the Minister only talking about the police? What about fire trucks? I made the point here before that a man will “get chop” in a village and when one calls for the police, the police will come the same time and run down the man who did the chopping, but when you want an ambulance to come you cannot find one. Somebody commits a crime and burns somebody’s house down and when one calls for the fire truck, there is none in the fire station, and they tell me that from Port of Spain to Sangre Grande there is probably one ambulance. The Minister should account for the ambulances; fire trucks; and army vehicles that the Government bought and put into these services that are run by the

Minister. Why is the Minister only talking about 200 vehicles for the police, and right now if one makes a check 150 are down? What agreement did the Government make with the people who gave them the vehicles to repair and fix?

Mr. President, when one looks at the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago, is the Government solving crime? There was a time in Trinidad and Tobago, if you are at home in the night and you hear, “police” you would be glad to open your door. Now if you hear “police”—and you are seeing men in uniform—when they reach in your house your wife could be raped; your daughter could be put under pressure; and you could be shot and the Government is saying that it is solving crime. I am not against the police. I have been a policeman and I keep saying that.

Mr. President, we told the Government that vehicles alone would not solve crime. The Government is talking about a psychologist for training police officers. A soldier stabbed somebody 20 times and killed that person; a policeman accidentally shot somebody and killed that person. We are seeing now that even the people who have to take care of crime in the country, other people are using their uniforms and committing more crimes than ever and they are coming to us. That is the thing with this Government. The Government is saying that it is solving crime, but the nation is not feeling that. Nowhere people can walk in Trinidad and Tobago and feel safe.

Mr. President, as a matter of fact, if I am driving down the road and a police car pulls a siren behind me, I might drive to the first police station before I stop, because it may not be the police. That is what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago and the hon. Minister must understand that. The hon. Minister must come and report that. The hon. Minister in saying, yes, the Government is solving crime, must understand what is happening with the people in the street, and know that the people in Trinidad and Tobago are not feeling safe about the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, do you know that the government is now saying that it is solving crime, but the crimes that are being committed are crimes of passion—where a man kills his wife—and as though that is not crime. It is another kind of crime that the Government is not responsible for, but the way the PNM ran the country five years ago, people are now getting vexed and killing and beating their wives, and the Government is not responsible for that—it is the PNM. That is the direction the Government keeps going in all the time.

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Mr. President, the Government talks about agriculture in this country. This government keeps claiming that it is for agriculture and the biggest “mamaguy” in this country is about agriculture. We are now hearing about a disaster fund. Whenever the people in Aranguez and other areas were flooded out, there was always some assistance given to them, so that is nothing new. This Government is trying to make it look like it is a new thing. What this Government is trying to make people believe in Trinidad and Tobago is that they invented Trinidad and Tobago and Trinidad and Tobago started running properly for the last four years, and no other Government did anything.

Mr. President, the Government is not looking at the stability of this country; it is not looking at the literacy level in this country; and all these other things, because nothing happened before the coming of the UNC. On that myth, the people will deal with it effectively. It is good to see that the hon. Min. John has just returned to his seat. I want to compliment the hon. Minister on his maiden speech. I must take the opportunity to compliment him. I have not only met the Minister here, but I knew him even before he came into this Parliament and we have always had a pretty good relationship. I want to say one thing though and that is, I wish I had spoken before the Minister.

Mr. President, I am a Member of the Senate and if something happens—I have been to the Minister and I want to say this—I stood up against Min. Theodore and spoke about the soldiers’ pay. I made noise in here for it and threatened the Government about it. The Minister went and paid the soldiers—even though I believe he still owes the soldier’s some money, but they are going to get it. The Minister made sure that he paid the soldiers and I respect him for that.

I came to the Senate and spoke about the Special Reserve Police. I made noise about the matter and the Minister said he was going to work on it and he worked on it, and I admire him for that. I want to say this in the Senate, there is a man who is approximately 80 years old and who is blind by the name of “Laddy” who sang calypsoes, and supported all the calypsonians as a back-up singer in Trinidad. He got an award to go to the United States of America. When he got the award to go to the United States of America, the only person he had to accompany him was his wife, who is approximately 70 years old. His wife was born in Barbados and she came to Trinidad when she was 4 months old, and she never had a travel document. I went to the Ministry of National Security and spoke to my colleague, and he got a travel document for her to travel. Now, the Minister never spoke about it. I have spoken about it and I wish Sen. John had given me the opportunity to do the same.

Mr. President, I do not want to believe the Minister fixed the road because it is election time. I am driving on some better roads now because I went to the Minister. I had spoken to Sen. Baksh and he said to go to the Minister and I went to him. I do not believe the Minister came here blowing his trumpet saying that because it is an election year he did it. I felt he did it genuinely. I also want to thank the Minister for fixing the road. The Minister did not leave me to look out through my window and see the road being fixed. I want to thank the Minister very much and I respect that.

Mr. President, as I am on that point, I want to ask Sen. Theodore, Sen. Wade Mark, Sen. John and Sen. Daphne Phillips—

Mr. President: Under standing orders, Ministers must be referred to by title and not by name.

Sen. M. Shabazz: I want to ask the hon. Ministers on that side and the hon. Senators—next year, when this side here is in power, and we are in Government, feel free to come to me and Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed to ask for a favour. [*Desk thumping*] I do not want you to feel that we are not going to do it. We are about that. The Senators could come to us and ask for a favour. [*Interruption*] I understand Sen. Mark's story. Do not feel ashamed. Come, Minister Mark, come to us.

12.20 p.m.

Mr. President: Senator, I just reminded you, Ministers must be referred to by title.

Sen. M. Shabazz: Sorry, Sir. Feel free when you are ex-Minister Mark to come to us. The point I am making, Sir, is that this Government has certain things that they claim they did. What are their achievements? What have they achieved in the last five years. They could add to the list if they want, Mr. President, but I will tell you what their achievements are.

First, they passed the most Bills in this Senate. They have already passed 53 in the year 2000. I do not know how many have been implemented, but they are the greatest passers of Bills that we have seen in this Senate. From 1997 to now, they passed over 200 Bills and probably implemented about 30 or 40, if so many. They have passed a number of Bills and we give them credit for that.

What is the next platform of strength? They passed the Minimum Wage Bill and ensured that everybody would get \$7 per hour. Well done! Credit for that,

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Mr. President, but everybody is not getting \$7 and they cannot investigate that properly and effectively. They passed the Bill. We give them credit for that.

What is their next claim to fame? We have built bridges! I am not seeing the bridges in many of the areas I go through, but they built the bridges somewhere, in many of the areas they represent, and I congratulate them for that because they built bridges in Trinidad. The bridge to be built between Trinidad and Tobago to build peace and love, they have not built that yet. *[Desk thumping]* They have destroyed that bridge which should have been a major and important bridge in bringing Trinidad and Tobago together, but they built bridges. Fine!

What else did they do? What is their main achievement? Oh, they paid pensioners. Congrats! They raised pension by about 20 per cent, from \$420 to \$620. Well done. Raised by about 35 per cent, whatever it might be. Mr. President, they do not like us to talk that. When they say they raised pension, they do not want us to come and say that yes, they carried up pensioners' money by \$200 but they got \$5000 for housing allowance for themselves. They want us to forget to tell the nation that all the Ministers on that side got \$5,000 housing allowance in this last take here. From \$1,000 to \$5,000. That is 400 per cent!

This is the question of the whole perception about this Government. Nobody is saying that the Government is bad. Nobody is saying that the Government are not nice people. Mr. President, I do not want to reach there because I have to go there, but sometimes when I look at this Government, I am not equating them to animals or anything like that. If I am going wrong, tell me.

Mr. President, I have three dogs at home. Let me tell you that any one of those dogs, if one comes into my yard and meets one of them, they wag their tail and treat you nice. Do not come in the yard when the three of them are there. This is what seems to be happening. All of these nice people, you see when they gang up together and come together, like to defend the cause. They get so vicious. They do them before they do you. They do all kinds of things and that viciousness seems to come out of them in a kind of way that is very difficult to understand. *[Desk thumping]*

All of them are nice. I like to meet the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development in a party. We lime and talk. I watch him smoke my cigar, I drink my "sweet drink" and buy something for him and we share together. I have no objection to that, but when they come to defend the Government's philosophy, Oh Lord, Mr. President, I do not want to go into that. The point is, these are the things they have done.

What are we making noise with this Government for? What are we saying is the problem of this Government? What they see as reality is not the perception that they give to this country and that the people in this country believe to be true. Not at all!

Mr. President, you remember, they do not want us to talk about the promises they made to us. When we talk about the \$25,000 they promised mothers years ago, they say all we are bringing up is old things. Five years ago! They could talk about John O'Halloran 25 years ago, but we cannot remind them that three years ago they promised computers to all schools and no schools got all those computers they promised. They do not want us to bring up that.

They do not want us to talk about how they promised the union money just three years ago and did not pay it. They do not want us to talk about the promises they made. They do not want us to come and tell this nation that they promised to open the airport in August, they promised it in September, they promised it now in October and they will promise it to us when they win the election next year, 2001, because 90 per cent of the promises they made in this budget are to be implemented then.

What they are saying to the nation is, "Look a bag of goodies, but if you vote for us, you will get it. If you do not vote for us, God forbid, the PNM will not give it to you". That is what they are saying. All the promises are starting in the year 2001. They could mamaguy the nation with that? People are not taking that.

Mr. President, we started our budget debate in the next place making two important points that to date, we want to come back—and I want to make sure and put it in the *Hansard* in the Senate. I want to ask why every year this Government brings a budget that is supposed to have a surplus at the end of the year and when they come back to the House, it is a deficit. Every year? Not one year did they predict a surplus and when they came back to the House, the surplus was there?

They said oil would be at \$16, it went to \$30 they still come back and do not have a surplus. There is no surplus. That is what the nation keeps looking at. The nation is hearing them, but they are hearing them talking with forked tongues and not saying the correct thing.

I am not talking about figures. This Government reminds me of living in a house with six children, mammy and daddy going all right. Food to eat, everything going nice, they are going on trips to the states now and then, going on a holiday in the country, going down the islands, they want their school books and they get them .

Then, "Bam! Daddy come and dead"! Then they did not know that the \$40,000 daddy borrowed was from a bank and the money here was borrowed

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from somewhere else. Then confusion and chaos starts! Thank God for the PNM. When this Government dies, at the end of this term, we are going to see the kind of chaos they created in this country through their fiscal policies. It is poor, and the whole nation is aware that their fiscal policies have been poor and continue to be poor regardless of what they say.

They will see it when it happens. Thank God we have been able to govern the country. We understand what good governance is and how to run an economy and we will run an economy to bring this country back to save the people of Trinidad and Tobago.*[Desk thumping]* With five more years of them interfering and spending the money, we would be in real trouble. That is the reality. That is what we feel on the street and that is why we did to them what we did on July 12 last year and we will do it again. We will do them this time because they did to us.*[Desk thumping]* It is not like before. They did us first and we will do it to them. We are waiting. The people of Trinidad and Tobago are waiting on this UNC coalition Government.

Mr. President, what did they do with figures? We sit in this Senate. Besides the deficit, every year they come back here. The greatest ploy we saw—this Government is not easy. They took a man from the PNM, offer him a ministry and put in that ministry \$80-something million for him to spend. The next year, they come back here and say that Ministry did not spend that money and they removed the \$80-something million. So, the man virtually ran a Ministry with next to no money after they got him to come across on their side. That is the thing about this Government—

Mr. President: We will break for lunch at this stage. This sitting is now suspended until exactly, precisely 1.30 p.m.

12.28 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. M. Shabazz: Mr. President, I was really at the point where I was asking the hon. Minister how, in the last five years, when surpluses have been predicted, we had deficits? In 1996, a budget surplus of \$16.1 million was predicted; we had a deficit of \$208.6 million. That is really important. In 1997, a surplus of \$213.5 million predicted; we had \$636.1 million deficit. In 1998, \$297.2 million predicted, a deficit of \$178 million. In 1998/1999, \$373.9 million budgeted, a deficit of \$106.8 million. What is happening here? The hon. Minister must tell us. Why is he predicting surpluses but we are having deficits? Why?

There is another important point at which we stand and I think I must put it in the *Hansard* of this honourable Senate. We spoke about the top 10 items that this Government should look at and must explain to this country. We started off by talking about the Piarco International Airport, originally to cost \$400 million. Right now, it is at \$1.3 billion and they are only promising when the airport will be opened. It seems as though they are going to take it into next year because there is a guarantee that the PNM will have to open the airport whether we have to scale it down, yes or no, but they are not going to open that airport. They cannot do it in this year; they will not do it in this year and they must stop fooling and "mamaguying" the nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

We did not talk about cost overruns when we talked about the airport because they used a rebuttal to say that every project had cost overruns. We are saying, maybe yes. We are not going against the question of cost overruns even though this overrun is far too high for a project that was supposed to cost a certain amount. What we are looking at in this—and there were problems with the managers in the National Insurance Property Development Company—NIPDEC told them that if they should go on the open market, many of the projects would be much cheaper than they would get them if they went to private tendering, and they went to closed tendering so there was no competition. The project went directly to some people who were close to them. That is what happened. That is what we were objecting to and what we are still objecting to.

InnCogen—the people of this country want to know and want them to explain how it is T&TEC could be losing over \$20 million and will continue to lose, while InnCogen will start to make profits and will continue to make profits. T&TEC, owned by the people and Government of Trinidad and Tobago will be losing money in time to come as long as InnCogen is there and InnCogen will be making a profit. InnCogen is their creation. InnCogen is about the UNC and the UNC Government. Why are they not explaining that to the nation?

Those are the things we want to call upon them to do and those are the things they are refusing to do because they feel that the people have no right to ask about them.

We go on to other things. We spoke about the desalination plant. What is the importance of a desalination plant in Trinidad and Tobago costing \$750 million? We heard people like Sen. Prof. Kenny and others on these Benches turn to this Government to let them know. I remember Sen. Prof. Kenny in the debate talking about surface water, the amount of surface water we had in this country, we could

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afford to give water to the whole nation and they could afford to do without spending \$750 million for a desalination plant. They said they wanted it; they said they would have it at all costs and they went ahead and made the arrangement, regardless of what the other people in this country said and regardless of what this honourable Senate said.

Caroni (1975) Limited—they sat in a tripartite agreement, three groups, of which the Leader there was a member of the union because he stayed a member of the union for about two years after. They agreed they would buy off Caroni (1975) Limited and they did. Today, what are we seeing? Caroni (1975) Limited—\$301 million for 1999/2000; \$100 million for 1998.

But, not only that, we have the hon. Minister talking about no more 10-days. Do you know one of the things they like to tell people who are involved in the 10-days? About this "gimme-gimme" handout mentality. They have a greater handout mentality to their friends, the people who are building the Piarco airport. They give more to them and hand out more to them, but when it comes to the Unemployment Relief Programme in our community and all the other communities for the small people, they talk about handouts and "gimme-gimme".

I heard the hon. Minister promising no more 10-days; only 365 days. That is another thing we need to tell this Government about, those kinds of promises we know they would not hold. What has been happening with the Unemployment Relief Programme? The URP seems to have become the biggest training unit in Trinidad and Tobago. They are only training people to make bags, which is good, but what about the construction we were doing? What about the roads we were building? What about the retaining walls? What about when people's homes flooded? What about the projects that were being done? Nothing like that.

The biggest problem the URP has ever had in this country, whether it was called the Development and Environmental Works Division, whether it was called Special Works, whatever it was called, the least work we saw coming out of the Unemployment Relief Programme, is now, and the biggest problems the URP has ever had, is now.

I want to know how this hon. Minister is saying, "We will stop URP." "Mamaguy" talk! Today, they say the Unemployment Relief Programme would stop; no school books; problems for people. Many people could not move because we had no URP during the holidays. We are saying that if he could give them 365 days and solve the unemployment problem for everybody, we would, indeed, be happy with that. But he has said no more 10-days. Let us hope he will hold to that promise, but let us understand what they want to come into this honourable Senate to tell us.

I listened to the junior Minister of Works and Transport yesterday. He was very nice. He spoke about Caroni but he said we want to tell this Senate about the head of the insurance company that will be building a new methanol plant worth X amount of dollars and will employ 1,500 people. Commendable. He must tell us that and we agree; but we must tell him they do not want to tell us about the head of the insurance company who wants to buy all of Caroni rum for less than 10 per cent of what it is worth. They do not want to tell us that.

They do not want us to talk about that and we want to say here now, thanks to the board of Caroni for telling them no in a resounding manner. They cannot sell Caroni rum to any head of any insurance company, regardless of where he is, for less than 1/10 the cost of Caroni rum. That belongs to the people. They already took the money of the National Insurance Property Development Company and all that money to spend on the airport and waste it. They are taking money to waste at the desalination plant. Do not take Caroni rum and give it away. It belongs to Trinidad and Tobago. Just as how they gave away InnCogen and T&TEC; do not do it. I want to compliment the people of the Caroni board. I am sorry the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is not here.

The National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited upgrade—\$200 million. Now, I go to the gas stations. I must say if I am going home at 1.00 o'clock and 2.00 o'clock in the morning and I want bread, I could get it. So, I find the gas stations are a good thing. They call them service stations. Good thing. I think they have a new name for them, good thing. The point, though, what we are saying is, the cost of building that really was too much to the nation. That \$200 million was too much to the nation.

The first thing that happened—Mr. President, do you remember this? They employed a man at the National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited and we told them that the man would not be able to do the job. We objected to the pay, the amount it was costing Caroni to have that man at NP. Do you know what they came and told us in one of the honourable places, the Leader of Government Business? All “yuh” only talking so because his name is Soodhoo. I bet if his name was "Voodoo", you would not have talked so, a statement which, up to today, we felt was racist and a statement which we feel, up to today, he said, because nobody must object to what they say—if he was named "Voodoo", we would not have talked.

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What we told them is what happened. They had to fire the man and still pay him all his money. I go so far as to tell the hon. Minister that I believe, and we on this side believe, that one of the reasons he has not contested this election and will not contest this election, is because of the fiasco at the National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited. The problems he had with the Chief Executive Officer; all kinds of problems that made a good Minister probably look inefficient. Therefore, NP has not only been a cost to the country, but it has cost him his political life and his political career. I am sorry he is not here to hear that.

Mr. President, we go further. We spoke about a number of other things. This Minister contributed significantly. He did a lot of work in San Fernando West and did not even get the seat and we think that the NP contributed to it. Do you know what they say? We have made the point. We could talk about all the things the PNM did 10 and 20 years ago, but do not tell them about Miss Universe—that was just three years ago—when they told us thousands and thousands of people would be coming into this country.

I asked a question in this honourable Senate and the Minister came here and said we would be making money from the videos, from the cassettes and from the CDs. Nothing at all! But, Mr. President, do you think they will come back to the Senate and report that? They are not doing that but when we stand up and talk about it, they say we are condemning the Government. We are not doing that. We are saying to them that they must be accountable for the things they say they are going to do. They must be able to chart a course and show us that they are running on that course and if they cannot do that, then they are failing as far as their budget presentation and as far as the management of the country are concerned.

They do not want us to talk about the other issues. Must we talk about the question of ADDA? Must we talk about the World Beat Festival? We must bury those things; put them under the carpet and only talk about the good things that this Government is doing. We cannot do that. We have to report to the nation just as they have to. If we allow them only to report to the nation, they will not tell the nation the truth and the correct thing.

We are hearing—and you see this is where perception is a funny thing—on the Tobago issue and the ADDA issue, that there are problems with those. We are hearing that people could get arrested on that but we are hearing that they are saying, "Okay. Come and lime with us in the football. Let us talk. If we could

make certain arrangements, we 'ain't' go lock you up." We do not know if that is true but we are hearing, "We will not lock you up if you could sit and talk with us. Let us talk about the next election because it looks like we are in trouble with that. So let us try to make an arrangement from now so that nothing will happen." The ADDA issue might be buried and we on this side, when we bring it up, what will they say? We are only digging up things.

The Winsure settlement—\$36 million. Why must we not talk about that?

Sen. Dr. St. Cyr: Sixty-eight million.

Sen. M. Shabazz: Sixty-eight million to their friends. Why must we not talk about that? Why must we not talk about the \$30 million rice deal? Do you know what hurts me about that \$30 million rice deal? That happened at a time when they took a big contingent to celebrate the Republic of India and before they went to celebrate the Republic of India with the Indian government, they cancelled the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago holiday in this country. Why did they do that? Why must we not talk about that? They say no Republic Day in Trinidad and Tobago but they went to India to celebrate that republic with their friends and their family.

Sen. Mark: That was an agreement, boy.

Sen. M. Shabazz: Mr. President, you see he is calling me boy and when they are talking, we cannot talk. Okay, hon. Minister; honourable Sir.

1.45 p.m.

Why have they cancelled our Republic Day but celebrating other Republic Days in other parts of the world? They are *mamaguying* people! That is what we talked about. There was trouble with the rice deal. There was trouble with the Nariva farmers. There are a number of other problems that they seem to be creating in this country. When one talks about it, the Government finds one has no right to talk about it. What I just spoke about is \$4,251,000,000 that the Government is not accounting for. It did not come up in the Budget. They are not talking about it. If anyone talks about it, the Government gets vexed with him or her.

The sum of \$24 million was spent on the Tobago Ferry. The MF Panorama is dead. But, from what we are hearing happening in this country, at TTT which is now called NBN—which is “no bad news” to them because they do not want any bad news reported—the Government is pushing people out and bringing in other persons. Persons at TTT are bawling. It seems as though—I am not saying this

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against the reporters at TTT, because I feel that they want to do a good job—they are under pressure.

It seems as though this Government bought Panorama in TTT. After they cancelled the Panorama on the sea, they bought a Panorama. The Government brought their friends and their people to report the news as they want it. It is a sad thing, because we know that the people of TTT have been crying out to us. They have been asking us to do something to help so that they can get back on track. If anybody opposes the Government, it is licks like fire, they would lose their job or leave TTT, because they want a radio station to bring a gobbles type of mentality to reach to the people and only tell them what they want, like gobbles. That is all they want.*[Interruption]*

Sen. Mark: We are learning from you.

Sen. M. Shabazz: If they are learning from me—Mr. President, that is the attitude they have. You are learning the wrong things from me? We are correcting that.*[Interruption]* Everything wrong is the PNM and everything right is the UNC. Do you think that you all could *mamaguy* us? But the people will deal with you.

What have the Government shown for the \$61 million that it spent? Sen. Montano showed us yesterday. We could show you the Twin Towers and Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. What has the Government shown other than the bridges they have built? Do you know what is the Government's next big claim to fame? They killed nine persons in one week. Mr. President, that is the Government's big claim to fame. There are persons who are talking about human rights and trade unionism. What has the Government done for human rights in this country?

This morning I was listening to Amnesty International, and that is what the people of this country cannot take. It is not that we do not like the Government. The Government feels that we hate them.

Senator Montano made a very salient point yesterday. It is not only the six of us on this side who are opposing the Government. It is not only the 21 parliamentarians who are opposing the Government, it is the people who are marching in Point Fortin, Blanchisseuse and Couva. The media that the Government is standing and fighting is opposing them. The people in Tobago are opposing the Government. The people in Dr. Fuad Khan's constituency, who are walking away and not standing up for him and resigning are also opposing the Government.*[Desk thumping]* The councillors in the St. Augustine area are opposing the Government.

Sen. Mark: Check Jerry Narace.

Sen. M. Shabazz: If he, Jerry Narace, is opposing you he has a right to oppose you. Mr. President, you must oppose that.

Mr. President: Order please!

Sen. M. Shabazz: Thank you, Mr. President. Let us go further.

Mr. President, what riddles this Government, and what they must understand is this: their political leader says—we take the role of the Lion, we are the strong-hearted and the lion—“If you see him fighting with a lion feel sorry for the lion.” He is not a lion. They take the slippery, slimy mentality, a foxy kind of attitude. We do not care whether the fox is white, black or silver. They have a foxy attitude.

Mr. President, hear what they start with—the first thing they came with was national unity which was to steal as many parliamentarians from this side to go on that side. They got two and that is what is happening in the country now. Hear where they start. I am going to read an article by Keith Smith on page 6 of the *Sunday Express* of July 27, 1986. I quote:

“DEMOCRACY FIRST—POWER LATER”

Mr. President, this is their leader. When one’s head is talking like this—

“‘When Rampartapsingh came to my house’ he was telling me that day 10 years ago, ‘to tell me that they wanted me for president-general, I played him a game that he’ll never forget...’”

He is still playing that game throughout the country, Mr. President. That is a game that this nation will never forget: *mamaguy* and talk.

“‘I became the reluctant bride. The more he offered me the ring the more I refused it. He left a disconsolate man and I told my brother with whom I am very close that I was going to make mincemeat out of ‘Rampartap’...’”

That is how he made mince meat and is still making mincemeat out of people.*[Interruption]* Yes, he did.

“...that I was going to have him crawling on his knees, begging me to become president...”

‘Rampartapsingh returned, of course, making all the usual appeals to race. I knew I had the son of a...’

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I cannot use that word in Parliament.

‘...in the bag and, finally, I told him if he could get his Annual Conference of Delegates to elect me I would consider it...’

Rampartapsingh launched a ‘tremendous campaign’ and Panday, not surprisingly, was elected unopposed...

Rampartap had set up a stooge branch. I set up a real branch.

His was a paper tiger. Mine’s was the real thing.

No less a person than the Prime Minister, himself, or so Errol Mahabir was to convey to Panday, was ‘pleased that the Indians now had their own George Weekes.’

‘The minute I heard this I realised that what the Government wanted was to keep oil and sugar apart. I decided to play a game and again it worked like a charm. I had known George Weekes for a number of years (they had both contested the 1966 election on a WFP ticket) so shortly after I took the union I called George:

‘George, I don’t want to see you for a year. Don’t call me. Don’t talk to me...pay no attention to what you read in the press even if it sounds derogatory...I have known and loved you for years. Just trust me.

‘You see I had known that if Williams thought for a single moment I was going to align myself with Weekes, my throat would be cut before I became entrenched. So I played to the press—for example, when I was asked if I was influenced by George Weekes, I replied that I was the political scientist and if there was any influence it had to be flowing the other way...’”

After he outsmarted and got what he wanted, he joined with George Weekes and formed the ULF. That is the same principle that their leader and their party operate on. Mr. President, they did it to the NAR to get Tobago.

When the first two Tobago Senators sat there and spoke out, they were sent home. When they should have brought two stronger speakers, they seem to have brought two silencers.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. M. Shabazz: Mr. President, this Government must account. They say: “We are not going back.” I said it here; we are going back to the future, we must be. We just cannot go on this way. Could a nation really go on like this? Could we continue to go this way, Mr. President? *[Desk thumping]* The people who are sitting in their ivory towers are believing one thing, but the people on the streets are feeling and seeing another thing.*[Desk thumping]* Could we afford to go this way, Mr. President?

I want the Government to tell the nation how many houses it built. There is a myth going on in this country with respect to education. I would just like to touch on that. Nobody in Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean, any Third World developed country or any developed countries could talk about the history of education and say anything bad about the People’s National Movement in Trinidad and Tobago.*[Desk thumping]* Nobody! The records will prove it. Those of you who are trying to say that, the people will deal with “yuh”.*[Desk thumping]* You cannot!

If the Government came to improve on the education system, that is what it came to do; and it should have done that. Mr. President, I do not know if the Government feels it could change around the country, or change around the laws, the laws of nature and the laws of God. We know that not everybody—they also know that—could be a teacher, a doctor, a lawyer or an academic. When a society is training everyone to be that, we are going wrong somewhere! This is why we spoke about the vocational schools and the technical schools. This is why we recognize Servol with the work they are doing. The Government wants to train everybody in a model school or whatever type of school to become a teacher.

If there is an engineer, there must be the need for a mechanic, or a joiner. Who will build these lovely things? The architect will study how to design it, but there must be a joiner and carpenter to build it.

1.55 p.m.

When your whole society training everybody to be doctors, teachers and lawyers, we know that you are “mamaguying” people. You must have the vocational type education; you must have the technical education. As a matter of fact, we even feel that you should have sporting education and cultural education in our country; they do not understand that. They want to mamaguy people and feel they are giving everybody a free education and everything nice and easy, and while they are doing that, they are not raising people's salaries so that people could send their children to school effectively. The amount of people who still

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cannot afford to buy schoolbooks in this country today is a sad indictment on them.

Mr. President, let us just go a little further. I want to touch on two things: I want to go to the 1997 budget speech, page 13, because they are making a big joke about a number of other things. On page 13 of the 1997 budget speech under culture:

"Mr. Speaker, in the area of culture, one of the distinctive features of Trinidad and Tobago is its cultural diversity."

Two words that they talk about all the time, "cultural diversity", but they only paying lip service to culture, because dey doh know where to go, how to go, and dey mashing all the cultural things that are supposed to be happening in Trinidad, from Best Village right down, National Carnival Commission (NCC), calypso, everything: they are opposing it and dealing with it in a harsh way.

The Minister continued:

"Government intends to maximize this potential while increasing its employment generating capacity."

It sounds nice.

"In fact, Government views the various expressions of our culture, through the creative and performing Arts, as avenues for both social identity and integration, as well as, opportunities for income generation and employment. Consequently, the approach to the further development of our culture will centre on encouraging widest participation and enhancing professionalism through skills development.

To facilitate the professional development of our artistes, Government has earmarked the Old Fire Station Headquarters for the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, and preliminary work on the construction of a Centre for the Creative and Performing Arts on the Princes Building grounds will begin in 1997."

That is in the 1997 budget speech. I do not even think that the Minister ever walked on the Princes Building grounds since she is a minister. I might be wrong, but I doh even think that she ever walked there to see and to assist, since 1997.

Now, culture is a thing that we should do much more for in this country; all governments. I think that even before we should have done more for culture, but I know that we are going to do much more for culture when we return to power—*[Desk thumping]*—because we understand it. We told you about the National

Steelband. Yes, I hear you talking about diversity, but we understand that you really not making these people true ambassadors. When Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams and I got up here and told you about people like Boogsie and so forth, we are glad to see now that yuh bring Boogsie and Professor and so forth into the National Steelband, and you understand what we are saying on this side. We must congratulate you for that, hon. Minister; at least, you are listening; bring them. [*Desk thumping*]

What has happened to the cultural hall? We cannot go back, because just as Sen. John could make a promise, I am not standing in any other Government and we doh have a concert hall in Trinidad. We are not going back to the stadium to make sure, when you have a music festival, that if rain falls it is going to wash it out. We are going to build the cultural hall, because they have failed to build it. They talk about it and they do not understand what has to happen for culture in Trinidad and Tobago; they do not know.

They doh want yuh to sing against them, dey want to start a war, but when they pelt a bomb it must only hit them. When you start a war anybody around you could get lash in the war. You are opening your own calypso tent, because you only want good calypso. Yuh want everybody to sing calypso like "Jahaji bhai" and those kinds of calypso, I have no objection to it. You doh want nobody to tell you where your Government is going wrong. Yuh doh want nobody tell yuh that yuh making a mistake so yuh going to open your own calypso tent with taxpayers' money again. Yuh done have a government calypso tent where Stalin and all of them are singing in Deluxe, but yuh want to open a next one, that is the Good News Calypso Tent. [*Laughter*] That is the one that will only tell you how nice you are going, how nice yuh looking, hon. Minister yuh dress nice and thanks for giving us the money for NCC and without you we could not be. That is the kind of calypso you want to hear.

Yuh doh want to hear no calypso that telling well yuh going wrong, try to stand up strong, because de people suffering on the ground, and we suffering too long. Yuh doh want to hear that kind of thing. Yuh doh want to hear that. [*Laughter*] You only want to hear calypso that would tell you about how nice yuh going, how good yuh looking and what right you are doing.

Sen. Brig. Theodore: Are you auditioning?

Sen. M. Shabazz: Maybe; you are trying to bend the media to that; you are trying to bend everybody to that. You are trying to attack everybody. From the

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time—Mr. President, I do not know if I could say this, but if it is unparliamentary I would take it back, but they are attacking [*Words expunged*]

Mr. President: It is.

Sen. M. Shabazz: It is? Okay, I take it back; they are attacking everybody. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President: Not only take it back but expunge it from the records.

Sen. M. Shabazz: Yes, Mr. President, I take your ruling; thank you very much. They are attacking everybody. They are even attacking me when I am speaking. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, it is good to laugh, but it is a serious matter, but as Chalkdust said, in Trinidad you have to learn to laugh; maybe Chalkdust might be a good man to have in the tent to sing his good calypsoes. Probably Gypsy might be the leading singer, we do not know.

Mr. President, concerning health, on page 8, do you know how many things they promised to health? When they come here and tell us how good health is and how good health is going, we do not know that. The Minister said, "If I have to go the hospital, 10 minutes for an X-ray." I went with my little partner the other day, it was really quick, but I waited for about 45 minutes. Ten minutes for an X-ray, that is mamaguy talk, because there are some people who would go into the X-ray department with four broken bones and have to take 10 minutes for each one. So when "yuh" trying to impress the community that "vam dey push yuh in, dey bring yuh back out", it is nonsense. I stayed over 45 minutes with a friend waiting on an X-ray, so that 10 minutes must be small talk. What is happening?

The burn unit in Couva; when the place blew up and somebody died in Couva they said that they were going to build a burn unit. "We are going to have it by this year." Nothing.

The vagrant policy in this country: What is their policy for vagrancy in Port of Spain? We are coming back to deal with it and we hope on that side the hon. Minister of Human Rights doh come and tell us that the vagrants have their rights, because we know today that there is a President of the Vagrant Association and we cannot touch them because of that Minister. He gave all vagrants rights, so people licking yuh down in town, yuh just have to lock them up, send them, lock them up in St. Ann's Hospital then release them back on the road, because you cyar even do dem nothing. We in the cage. We are going to make sure that we deal with the vagrant situation.

There are so many other things we could speak about. Mr. President, how long I have again?

Hon. Senators: Five minutes. *[Laughter]*

Sen. M. Shabazz: When we look at them, what do they tell us? They know and have realized that they cannot fight the People's National Movement, a 40-year-old political organization, strongest institution in Trinidad and Tobago and in the Caribbean. *[Desk thumping]* Do you know what they have started to do now? They start to fight the Patrick Manning administration. They see that they cannot fight the PNM because they are losing with that battle, so they start to fight the Patrick Manning administration and say what that administration did, that is where they are fighting, and they are going to lose that battle too.

What are they trying on us now? Because some of our best leaders are in their party, do you know what they say? They say, "Well, yuh know what allyuh have to do to win, move yuh leader." We say that we are not going with that, because they used that trick in this country already. They had Carson Charles, Selby Wilson, Tony Smart, Winston Dookeran, five top leaders in the NAR, and dey say, "If allyuh move Robbie the party go get stronger," yuh know the NAR take the bait and move Robbie. The National Alliance For Reconstruction is dead. We are not moving.

Mr. President: Do not mention the names of people in this Senate. They are not here to defend themselves; withdraw please.

Sen. M. Shabazz: Sorry.

Mr. President: I asked you to withdraw.

Sen. M. Shabazz: I withdraw, Mr. President, I am sorry.

Dey say if yuh move the leader of the NAR, the NAR will get stronger. They moved the leader and kill the National Alliance For Reconstruction. We are not going to let them make us move our leader. We are going with our leader; we are standing up with our leader and we are going to beat them in the next election with our leader. We are not moving our leader! *[Desk thumping]* Doh try dat again! Yuh try it already and yuh win with it; yuh not going to win the People's National Movement with that, we are a strong political organization. *[Desk thumping]* We are a movement. We are the People's National Movement, a name you will respect.

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Yuh say yuh going to drive us back into the Gulf of Paria when yuh come; dey say the steel beam would have killed us and we are still standing strong, and the Balisier would live and reign continuously, forever—[*Desk thumping*]*—*whether we are in Opposition or in government, but we make a promise to the people that we will continue to give good governance. When we are in Opposition we are going to be vigilant to ensure that you do the right thing when you hold the purse strings for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, I would just like to warn them, to let them know that they have got to be a little better than they are; they have to be more serious than this. They are not going to fool the nation. The nation is watching you. You believe that you are doing good, but you are not. You do not have much time, you have two months, pick up yourself. If in the next two months I could get good governance out of you, I would be serious. Mr. President, the nation cannot be fooled.

I made the point before, that when a president cannot call a leader to a meeting or he is getting problems to have a leader to a meeting, and a man could pick up a telephone to call a leader to talk about a job, we know what is happening in your country: your country is under pressure. They are taking too many people. Too many expNmites to strengthen their party.

I would like to be graceful and give my next minute to the next speaker, but before I do I want to tell this Government that this is the time to pick up yourselves. We gave you a chance, you squandered it, you wasted it, you were divisive, you were so many negative things. You may have done a few good things like build bridges, a few roads, pave the savannah and those other things, but those things really have not uplifted the lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. You cannot continue what we started, you are unable to finish it, because you opposed us when we were in Government and when you came into government you continued to oppose us. You have lived the life of an Opposition for so long, it is time to give back government to the People's National Movement.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Daphne Phillips): Mr. President, it is indeed a privilege to have the opportunity to contribute to this budget debate 2000/2001. I wish to congratulate the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development for the consistency that he has taken, indeed,

in the last five budgets, in really putting people first, which we see again in this budget.

This is also an opportunity for me to review some of the activities that we have been engaged in, in the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs over the last five years and to look at where we want to go in the future.

Mr. President, the 2000/2001 budget, I think, can really be described as a caring budget which includes emphasis on people-centred development. This is evident by the fact that over 40 per cent of the budgetary allocations, that is, after the debt servicing has been removed, are dedicated to job creation, education, and I am including here skill-based education, health service provisions, community and other social services, including culture and heritage and, of course, gender issues.

Mr. President, the last speaker just talked about education as if the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is moving only to provide academic education for the young people of this country and, indeed, the adults as well. But what we have been doing in education is developing a number of skill-based/unskilled training institutions, such as the National Energy Skills Centre (NESC), the NISC, which is now going about the business of creating distance learning centres in communities, and we have them opened all the time, the Institute of Technology, the Community College and so forth.

These are areas of education which I want people to understand that the emphasis is not only on getting children in school, although we find that is an important area, but the emphasis is also on a number of skill-based institutions, which we are creating all through the country. That point has not been identified, particularly, by the Opposition.

2.10 p.m.

The budget also gives particular attention to certain special groups such as the elderly, the poor, pensioners, youth, disabled and single parents, particularly single mothers. I say single mothers particularly because they are indeed the majority of single mothers.

Mr. President, in the area of attention to single mothers, the poor and the youth, the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs has been doing its part and contributing to these groups and one of the ways we have done this is through a new project which we call Women Second Chances which is under the control of the Division of Gender Affairs and this project has three components and it is aimed at providing training and employment opportunities for socially

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advantaged, disadvantaged and unemployed, largely single mothers, although some men are also involved in this project.

One aspect of the project is addressed to how to school youth and children. So this Women Second Chances Project, a creation of the Division of Gender Affairs addresses both training and employment for persons. There is an agricultural component to this project which commenced in October 1999 and has been in operation since then. It is now operational in three areas; Chaguaramas, Princes Town and Mayaro and in each location, between 30 and 40 men, largely women, but also some men are exposed to training and practice in all aspects of agriculture including grow box agriculture for a three-month period during which they are provided with a stipend of \$50.00 per working day.

We found this project necessary because of the situation of poor women and the difficulty of accessing training without any kind of financial backing and support, and we are very pleased to see that in the budget there has been, in addition, an allocation for single parents particularly mothers because they are in the majority in any case who offer themselves for training and they will get an additional \$100 per month which is the same policy that we have been implementing in the Division of Gender Affairs.

Mr. President, on successful completion of that three-month project, each person is presented with a certificate, and exposed to a further one-week enhancement exercise in which time they are given information on job opportunities and options in this case, particularly in the agro-business sector. Over the last year, some 360 persons or so graduated from this aspect.

The second element of the Second Chances Project is the elderly care component and this is operated in six areas in the 1999/2000 period commencing October 1999. Some of those areas are St. James, San Juan, Tacarigua, Sangre Grande, Chaguaramas, Chaguanas and San Fernando. In this aspect of the project, women are trained again in elderly care institutions for a period of three months. They are also given a subsistence while they are being trained. They are trained in basic skills of caring for persons who cannot carry out their own aspects of daily living. They are given a certificate at the end of the process.

Some of these graduates who are also exposed to an enhancement exercise have found permanent employment, or at least some kind of sustained employment as patient care assistants in some of our health facilities. Approximately 800 women have been exposed to this training over the last year.

The third aspect is the Homework Centre component which is addressed mainly to youth and children. This involves the engagement of young persons who have obtained their O'Levels and A'Levels, unemployed and who are assigned to the project to supervise school children. At the end of the day, the children are largely the children of parents who are unable to provide after-school supervision and, therefore, are exposed to the dangers of the streets and lack of supervision.

We have negotiated with the Ministry of Education and the school principals, we also have on board some retired teachers who supervise the young tutors, and we have as well remedial teachers working on that project. Homework Centres are created to look after the interests of young children and to engage the skills and train young persons who are not employed and who have their O'Levels and A'Levels.

Mr. President, the 2000/2001 Budget provides for the continuation of this Second Chances Project in the sum of approximately \$1.8 million to ensure the continuation of it in the next year.

Another project which was created in the Division of Gender Affairs is the Women's Leadership and Enhancement Institute. This is another innovation. The institute opened first as a pilot project in May 1999 and formally launched in January 2000. So far, some 11 projects have been carried out under that institute and perhaps one of the most significant ones was a three-day conference on Women in National Leadership held in July 2000 in which actual and potential women national leaders, that is, women in all the major political parties in the country participated. It was an instructional and developmental exercise geared to address the real obstacles faced by women in national leadership.

We were also able to award women who had contributed in the past in a non-partisan way and to really address that issue of women in leadership at the national level. We recently held a seminar workshop for principals and teachers especially new teachers and principals of schools that have been opened this week, particularly in the Matura area and that too, was very successful. It also emphasized some of the new issues teachers face in school; leadership issues, issues of conflict resolution and gender issues which are faced in schools all the time by teachers. So Mr. President, the budget has provision for continuation of this institute in the sum of \$425,250.00 for the Women's Leadership and Enhancement Institute.

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Mr. President, the male support programme is another one created by the division, it commends aggressive activity in 2000 following the employment of a male co-ordinator. The male support programme covered a number of areas over the last year and I will list some of them: training of the defence force in domestic violence intervention at Staubles Bay, Teteron, Camp Omega, Chaguaramas Headquarters and Camp Cumuto; training intervention with Servol Parent Outreach Programme on parenting and absentee fathers. There was also a ten-week gender sensitization exercise for first form boys at St. Anthony's College, Chaguanas Junior Secondary, Penal Junior Secondary, Woodbrook Junior Secondary and North Eastern College.

Male counselors have been employed in two of our drop-in centres located at Lisa Gardens Community Centre and Maloney Community Centre and we also have public lectures addressed to men conducted in various areas of family life, conflict resolution, domestic violence, the non-performance of boys which is indeed a problem that we need to address and we are looking at in our society. We also recently hosted a seminar through the male programme for religious leaders on religion and domestic violence.

Mr. President, this morning one of the Senators commented that we were not addressing value issues, intangible issues in the budget. I say that many of our programmes in gender affairs are doing just that, addressing these social issues that are faced by so many of our families and communities. The budget provides finances for the continuation of the male support programme. Indeed just last night, I was in a police youth club in Diego Martin and understood that that youth club too was using the services of our male support programme to deal with the problems of drugs and other problems with young people in that area and we were very proud of that.

We have as well in the Division of Gender Affairs a project on training in non-traditional skills for women and non-traditional refers to those skills which women do not usually get trained in. Again I refer to the contribution of the last speaker on education and training and here, we are training in skills development for women and these skills are largely construction skills and other related skills like that; appliance repair and so forth, and this is a project which is part funded by Government and part funded by the Inter-American Development Bank following a successful pilot which we did in the ministry.

The national curriculum and the selection criteria for the women to be trained have already been worked out, the consultant has been employed and it is

expected that 350 women will be trained in construction and related skills and the very important thing here is that there is guaranteed employment after training in this project and in the current budget, a total of \$ million has been allocated for this project.

Mr. President, I turn to the national domestic violence programme in the Division of Gender Affairs. This morning one of our Senators quoted some figures from one of the newspapers. Those were not quite correct and I think the author quoted me as giving those figures. It was an error in the time. The statistics show that between 1990 and 1995, not 1996 and 1999—1990 and 1995—a total of 80 women, 32 children and 2 men were killed as a result of domestic violence.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. President, that looks as if it is some kind of civil war in the country. There were 114 deaths from 1990 to 1995. And if we count that as six years that gives us an average of 19 persons killed per year as a result of domestic violence. These figures only show the deaths; it does not show the suffering, the injury and the disability produced by domestic violence. That was from 1990 to 1995. Because of these horrible statistics, we conceptualized a holistic domestic violence programme to address this problem. I would just like to outline some of the areas of the programme, and to look at what has been some of the results. *[Interruption]*

Sen. Dr. St. Cyr: Mr. President, would the honourable Minister give us the comparative figures for the period 1996 to 1999 on deaths from domestic violence?

Sen. The Hon. Dr. D. Phillips: Yes, I have those—I could bring them up now. The comparative figures for the years 1996 to 1999 were 40 deaths to women, 15 children and 11 men. Now we are seeing that there seems to be a decline in the statistics. In the first period we have 80 women and 40 women in the next period; from 32 children in the first period and 15 children in the second period; from two men we have 11 men. The total there is 66 deaths. The average per year—because this period from 1996 to 1999 is four years—is 16.

Let me just talk a bit about what we have been doing. Mr. President, we certainly do not say that it is only the activities of the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs which have contributed to what appears to be a decline in those statistics, but certainly the nation has been alerted. The non-governmental agencies, other ministries, the police division, the community police and other

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policies in place, it would appear contributed to an improvement and we are very, very encouraged by that.

We created the National Domestic Violence Hotline in 1996; a 24-hour service toll free: persons do not pay for the service. The data on the hotline showed that every year the number of calls increased. For example, our figures for 1998 indicated that there were approximately 3,000 calls, and 1999 the figures are close to 5,000. It seems, therefore, maybe, one's interpretation of this is that people are becoming more aware, more knowledgeable and using these services. I am sure we may also find that the NGOs lines have recorded an increase in calls.

Yesterday, Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt was asking about the cost. She was not seeing anything in the budget for the whole domestic violence programme of the Government. We have several elements of this domestic violence programme. I would just outline the cost of each one as we go down. The cost for the National Domestic Violence Hotline is really the cost of paying the staff and the cost of covering the calls. Government takes up those costs. So they are included in the staff allocations and, therefore, we would not see it. They are included in what we get for telephone payments, so we would not see it as a separate cost. There is also a domestic violence prevention project, which is community based and that, too, is an outreach project. The cost there is inclusive of the cost of the staff and materials. This project started in 1997.

Another aspect of the project is the drop-in counselling and information centres. Again, I want to clarify a bit of a mistake actually, in that the centres referred to in the budget statement are these drop-in centres and not shelters for women. There are 22 opened now across the country. They are drop-in centres, Sen. Daly; they are not shelters for women. They were opened in 1998 and they continue. They are highly utilized particularly in some of the highly populated areas. The sum allocated in the 2000 to 2001 Budget for the continuation of these centres is \$369,000. These centres deal with all kinds of family matters and family conflict, violence, abuse, incest, rape, *et cetera*.

This domestic violence project also includes training in gender sensitization for workers, police officers, hotline listeners, members of the staff of our Ministry and other ministries, and the creation of booklets and journals and so on, on the

subject. So the cost of this aspect of the gender sensitization and documentation is really the cost of materials and the cost of staff.

We also have introduced in this year 2000 what we call a school caravan on gender issues which we started in May this year, for students who were awaiting, at the time, the results of the Common Entrance. And we found that it was a good period to introduce them to these issues. They were going into secondary schools, some of them coed. They were becoming adolescents and they were, therefore, to be exposed to these kinds of gender issues. So both the male support programme and the school caravan have an allocation of \$378,750.00 in the budget for this aspect of the programme.

Mr. President, the full cost of the domestic violence programme is violence and family life also involves a number of pieces of legislation somewhere in the vicinity of \$2 million. The holistic programme in relation to domestic which were passed. The last speaker just lifted up a number of pieces of legislation passed by this Government. I will just outline a few which impact on family life and domestic violence, with which we have to deal. The Domestic Violence Act of 1999 which was really a new Act—a writing over of the 1991 Act—was something like 16 areas of strengthening and improvement. The Sexual Offences (Amdt.) Bill, 1999, which now makes marital rape a crime and has increased the punishment for a number of sexual offences. The Cohabitation Relations Act of 1998, which impact on the material provisions for women and children after those relations have broken down for whatever reason, through death or separation. The Attachment to Earnings Maintenance Act, which makes it mandatory that the maintenance of children would be taken out at the point of earnings, and the Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous) Act, 1996. This one, among its provisions, is that a spouse, particularly a wife, can now give evidence against the husband or *vice versa* in matters of criminal nature.

The Distribution of Estates Act, 1999 also acknowledges provision for persons who are not in marital relations. The Maternity Protection Act 1998 makes it mandatory for all working women to be given 13 weeks of paid leave and not to lose their jobs or promotion in their jobs.

2.35 p.m.

The Legal Aid and Advice (Amdt.) Act, 1999 expands legal aid to a number of categories of persons, including those in domestic violence situations and

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including children. The Public Assistance Act, 1999 also expands the provisions in that area and we see some of them coming up in the budget; and the Old Age Pension Act, 1999. All these, Mr. President, impact on the quality of family life and impact on this thing we call domestic violence. I think it is all of this that has resulted in the reduction of the statistics that we have seen.

Let me repeat them again. Between 1996 and 1999 there were 40 deaths of women reduced from 80 in the earlier period; 15 children reduced from 32 in the earlier period and 11 men, increased from two in the earlier period. These statistics we got from the *modus operandi* division of the Ministry of National Security. Let me just identify that of those 11 men who were killed due to domestic violence, not all were killed by their wives or spouses. In 1996 there were three such deaths; one was by a brother-in-law and two were by spouses—the woman spouse. In 1997 there was one man killed by his son. In 1998 there were four men who were killed; one was killed by a sister, one was killed by a stepson and two by a spouse. In 1999 there were three deaths to men; two were by brothers and one by spouse. So these men were not all killed by their spouses. There were sisters, brothers, brother-in-law, sons, *et cetera*.

Mr. President, I just outlined that a part of the cost of these programmes, particularly domestic violence programmes, has been really the cost of staffing and the cost of materials. Over the last five years, we have increased the staffing of the Gender Affairs Division from five technical persons we met in 1995 to—I will outline. We have eight persons on the hotline in addition to four substitutes; we have five persons in the gender sensitization area, including the director and her deputy; we have three administrators and several supervisors in the women's Second Chances Project, which is largely an outreach project; we have three persons in the women's leadership institute; three persons in the male support programme and four persons in the domestic violence unit in addition to 20 part-time counsellors in the drop-in centres.

Mr. President, we have increased the staffing of the Gender Affairs Division tremendously over the period, which is an indication of the emphasis we have put on the gender affairs issue and the importance we place on getting these programmes through. One other thing; while most of these persons have been employed on contract, we have done a strategic review of the Ministry and we

have been successful in having the review accepted, and so the key positions in that division now are to be placed on the establishment of the public service from October 2000. We also have committees in the Gender Affairs Division working on a national policy on domestic violence and another committee working on a national gender policy.

We have heard in this Senate a lot of discussion, much talk, about the absence of policy. We are certainly building policy in gender affairs. We have a national gender policy committee working on a national policy on domestic violence. Mr. President, all of these projects which I have named, all of the work of the Gender Affairs Division right now, are really new projects. They have all been created after 1995. None of them existed prior to 1996 and all were created under this administration. [*Desk thumping*] This morning, the Minister of National Security said that in his experience there were a lot of ideas in drawers and in cupboards for many years but certainly in Gender Affairs we had no such ideas. In fact, we found none. I do not know if they are anywhere. We have not found them. We have created them according to the needs that we have understood were there in the society. So in this whole division all its activities have been new and created in the last five years.

Mr. President, I turn to our portfolio on heritage. The long-awaited council of the National Trust was launched in July 2000. [*Desk thumping*] Sen. Prof. Kenny is part of that Trust and we all know here how Sen. Prof. Kenny has defended, talked about and been so very enthusiastic about the creation of this council of the Trust and we are very pleased that it has been put into effect and put to work. You may recall that we had to create an amendment Bill and have it go through the various Houses back and forth until it had been passed. The Trust really seeks to list and to protect various items of our built and natural heritage. That is defined as important. We see this Trust as being so very important to doing the work that has to be done in the protection of our patrimony.

In the area of heritage as well, we have commenced the Nelson Island Heritage Project. [*Desk thumping*] Again Prof. Kenny is the chairman of the committee and there is now an implementation committee which is putting that project into effect. There is a sum of \$950,000 allocated in the 2000/2001 Budget for the continuation of this project. So our heritage in this area is being looked after. Indeed, this Nelson Island Heritage Project is one of two projects that we identified for the new millennium. The refurbishment of the National Archives as

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an institute of inspection has continued over the last year. The building, as you remember, as we all know, those who have studied there, used their services, has been in a dilapidated state for a long time. The refurbishing has cost \$7 million in the last year and the archives plans include the provision of a more effective and efficient research facility for clients. It is upgrading also its human resources as well as physical resources. A total of \$4 million has been provided to complete this project in 2001.

In relation to the national museum system, we have had new legislation passed in the year 2000 to allow the national museum system to better develop a more effective service. The system will now comprise all the museums that exist in the country and those to be created. It will acquire and preserve and present significant collections of our nation's heritage. The museum has opened its doors, it has been much more people-friendly to exhibitions and to schoolchildren. In the last five years improvements have been made in the museum and there are a number of projects which the museum now undertakes, a number of exhibitions and much involvement in the school system as well.

There is a museum educational theatre and there are children's heritage workshops, a history evening programme, there is a film-making workshop and a number of other initiatives created by our new curator and his staff which enhance the museum. We purchased the Naipaul House some years ago [*Desk thumping*] and we have put in place a governing—in fact, the governing body for the house has recently been incorporated and we are now working with them to speed up the process of preservation of the Naipaul House. Those are some of the things we are doing in the area of heritage.

Mr. President, I turn now to the area of culture. Much has been said about culture, how much we do not do and how much we have not done; what we have promised and what we have not done. Let us look at some of the things we have done and again, all of them are new innovations not done before. We have created very many new and bold initiatives, many of which we have said we will do and we have had, I think, several successes over the last five years. For example, we created the first full-time, salaried, now music literate, National Steel Orchestra in 1998. [*Desk thumping*]

This orchestra is complete with its own legislation and it is managed by a board of directors to be installed by the President. I say to be installed because we had—as you may remember, here in this Senate there was a problem in the legislation and we had to bring it back and it is now on the way. We have identified the members of the board for the approval of Cabinet before we send it

on to the President. This orchestra, Mr. President, received extreme criticism at every stage of its development, particularly by the PNM. We have been accused of not liking the pan and not having respect for the pan, but we have been able to put this orchestra in place and now it has its own accommodation, brand new accommodation, located on Nelson Street in Port of Spain. It is a brand new building in an area in which there is a lot of space and the ability to practise, a space for practice which will not interfere with a residential kind of community.

2.50 p.m.

Mr. President, the band has recently returned from a very successful performance in Carifesta VII, in St. Kitts, and for that engagement, the renowned pannist, Len Boogie Sharpe, tutored the band. The band also had some instruction from Pat Bishop. *[Desk thumping]* Carifesta VII was the fifth regional and international event in which the National Steel Orchestra represented Trinidad and Tobago, in the second year of its existence. The first year the band was taken up with its training; getting its musical literacy on score; getting pans; and accommodation *et cetera* in place. So those are in place and the National Steel Orchestra will continue its development regardless of the criticisms, and it has been adequately provided for in the budget, in the sum of \$2 million for the year 2000—2001. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. President, another innovation we started in the area of culture, which was not in existence before, is the first ever-annual scholarship programme, leading to a bachelor's degree in music, with emphasis on pan in 1997. We also paid for the lectureships at the University of the West Indies, and stocked an appropriate library to facilitate that programme. The year 2000, therefore, represents the fourth year in which scholarships have been offered to students in this area to read for a degree in music, with emphasis on pan, and this is a Government that does not like pan, according to the Opposition. *[Desk thumping]*

In another place, it was stated that the Creative Arts Centre funds this programme, but that is not correct. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago funded this programme.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. D. Phillips: Mr. President, thank you. I have to go much faster. Mr. President, we also created the first-ever and long-awaited Carnival Institute in 1999, which now has its own accommodation at No. 18 Victoria

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Avenue, Port of Spain. A director and senior staff administer the Carnival Institute. The objectives of the institute are for the preservation of the carnival arts, including pan, calypso and mas' preservation, archiving, training and development. The institute is still in the process of structuring its programme. It has already created carnival dolls, which we took to the Carifesta VII festival in St. Kitts, and which were really, very well received.

Mr. President, another new thing which we have done is create a National Cultural Council, the membership of which has been approved by Cabinet, and we created a national visual and performing arts policy, which this council will seek to implement, and there is the sum of \$1 million for the council's work in the coming year. One of the recommendations of that national visual arts policy is the offering of tax credits to private sector companies for their contribution to culture in the arts, and that is in the budget for this year. The Government is now providing this incentive to companies and it is designed to encourage the local arts, as well as sport *et cetera*. This one recommendation has already been implemented.

We have conducted several training workshops in various areas of the arts and provided regular assistance to community groups, orchestras, school groups *et cetera*. One project of the Carnival Institute is putting the tune "Watch out my Children" produced by Ras Shorty I to score and making it available to all schools in Trinidad and Tobago. We plan in the new financial year to have what we call "an open school for the arts" where the talents of our experienced artistes could be used. Again, this is another area of training in culture for young people. We intend to continue, again, our new "cultural immersion in schools" project and to rehabilitate the "pan in schools" project along with a team from the Ministry of Education.

There has also been a Cariforum project, which also started in 1999 which is new. Mr. President, everything we are doing in culture—the National Steel Orchestra; the annual scholarships; the Carnival Institute; the National Cultural Council; the Cariforum project; cultural immersion in schools; the open school for the arts; and the community cultural centres—are new projects created by this administration, and this is an administration that is not supposed to like culture.

Mr. President, I turn a bit to cultural spaces. We did plan to create a cultural centre for the arts or whatever we call it. When we came in office, there were plans to have a centre on the Princes Building grounds and, yes, I have walked those grounds several times. When the architect looked at the Princes Building grounds the space was too small for the kind of centre we wanted. So what we

thought we should do is, have a centre for carnival arts there. When we were trying to implement that, we found that the place was owned or controlled or leased by the Port of Spain City Corporation. We did not get the authority to go in there and use it and this is why we could not put any facility there.

Mr. President, however, there are other spaces. We are renovating Queen's Hall this year at a cost of \$10 million. The total project is over \$30 million. We are also looking at renovation of parts of the Naparima Bowl. We are in contact with some of the private organizations such as the Trinidad Theatre Workshop to work with them to acquire space.

Mr. President, I want to move quickly to carnival. For the 1998 carnival, Government instituted a decentralization of the administration of carnival, and it gave more responsibility to the umbrella bodies of pan, calypso and mas', for the administration of their aspects of carnival. We know that both the Ministry and these cultural bodies had to come to terms with the realities of implementing this measure. However, the Ministry has successively increased the autonomy of these bodies, particularly, in the timely provision of funds.

In the last year 2000, the bodies were given their full grant, as well as they were allowed to keep their gate receipts, sponsorships, advertisements and accreditation. Yet, we noted that there was a problem this year, however, we are working on that. We have also increased carnival funding over the years, from 1995, \$11.5 million when we came in, and in the year 2001, the funds are now \$19 million, after removing debt payment—a huge sum. This is again a Government that has been accused of not liking pan, mas' and calypso.

In addition, we have contributed to bodies outside of the provisions for carnival and that is in the area of annual subventions: Pan Trinbago, from approximately \$211,000 in 1995, which they were receiving, to approximately \$320,000 in the year 2001 and this is outside of their subvention.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. President, TUCO, the calypso organization which did not receive a subvention before 1996, now has an annual subvention of \$50,000. [*Desk thumping*] The increase in funding, the work done in training and so forth, and in very many areas of support for both pan and calypso, do not really go along with the claim that we do not like these bodies.

Mr. President, how much more time do I have?

Mr. President: Six minutes.

Sen. Dr. The Hon. D. Phillips: Mr. President, I just want to talk a little on the chrome factory for Pan Trinbago. Pan Trinbago indicated to us that they intended to purchase a chrome factory. We did a feasibility study which was undertaken by a consultant paid by the Ministry. The study has been completed and the consultant is in the process of comparing the prices of the cost of going into that business, as compared to doing a new chrome factory before making recommendations.

There is talk, and I heard it in the other place, that the factory has gone to Grenada. This is totally untrue. It is still available to be purchased because they know that we are doing the feasibility study and we are looking at it. I want to emphasize, though, that Pan Trinbago wishes to purchase this factory.

One other area I want to address before I close is the whole area of the world steelband festival. Mr. President, this, of course, was the idea which was born from Pan Trinbago and we have not denied that. We incorporated it into a part of the millennium project of the Government. It is partly funded by Government. In the last budget it was \$1.5 million. In this one, there is an additional \$1 million for it.

There has been encouragement of what I think are foolish and misguided statements that the Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs and, particularly, the Minister, wanted to hijack the world steelband festival and put up a banner about the rising sun and the sitar and all that nonsense. The truth, which we have already explained, is that at the launch, the committee that was responsible for preparing the whole festival—which is a Cabinet appointed committee whose members were identified by Pan Trinbago in collaboration with the Ministry—did not have the banner, and one Member of that committee decided that we needed a banner. The Ministry has one and we put up the Ministry's reusable banner with its logo, the Ministry's logo, which we have been using for the past two years without a problem. It is the Ministry's logo. One Member of the committee decided to put it up because there was no banner, people coming to the launch and there was nothing. We put the words “World Steelband Festival” and this was taken up by the PNM radio stations and made into a whole big nonsense. *[Desk thumping] [Laughter]*

Sen. Tota-Maharaj: It is a real shame.

Sen. Jagmohan: Mr. President, may I kindly ask the Minister to let us know which is the PNM radio station? I really wish to be edified on that. *[Laughter]*

Sen. Dr. The Hon. D. Phillips: I will leave that to your imagination. *[Laughter]* Mr. President, I want to emphasize to this Senate and to the nation that the World Steelband Festival cannot be successful without the involvement of both Government and Pan Trinbago and the national community, including the private sector. It cannot be successful.

It is not a matter of Government running away with it. It is a matter of our doing our best because the rest of the world is coming here to a festival and we are the Mecca of pan. We cannot afford to be sloppy and we cannot afford to lose. We cannot afford to be embarrassed, to use this World Steelband Festival for political points. We cannot afford to just oppose the Government, for those who oppose the Government, for political points. We have to work together with Pan Trinbago, the private sector and Government to bring this off successfully.

Mr. Patrick Arnold and I have discussed this matter and we are in agreement on this. We will soon hold a press conference to express these views and to see where we are going. It is regrettable though, that the national community out there is talking about all this nonsense about us going away with the National Steel Orchestra and we are putting the sitar and the rising sun and all kinds of nonsense on the banner. Nonsense!

One other point, if I have a half minute. There is also concern in the World Steelband Festival that the best of our bands are not in the competition. What I understand is that there were certain rules which decided which bands, but also, that the players of the best bands are incorporated in those bands that will be in the festival. We will really have, I hope, the best performances. We need the co-operation of all the people, including the radio and the press, to push Trinidad and Tobago and to support Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, in concluding remarks, most of all the things we have been doing in culture and gender affairs are new. I do not know what was done before. The criticisms we have heard, but we have been innovative in so many areas. We have assisted steelbands and continued the national days and festivals which we met. What we are doing now is increasing the funding and encouraging nationalization and respect for all our national days, all our culture. That is what we are encouraging.

We are continuing to assist communities in their efforts and we are emphasizing training in both the social areas and in the culture, and we think that the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs will continue to do its best for the

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development of our arts and for the development of dealing with the social problems in our country.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny: Mr. President, let me say, first of all—it is obviously not within my power—but had we a Minister of the Environment like the Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs, I think that I would have achieved something, because in my five years here, there are two things that we can look at, that when I leave this—I am leaving it shortly—we already have a National Trust and we will have a National Heritage Site at Nelson Island. I am not quite sure that we will have an environment. *[Laughter]*

Sen. Daly: Or a savannah.

Sen. Prof. J. Kenny: Mr. President, Sen. Carlos John has left just when I was going to sing his praises! *[Laughter]* *[Sen. John returns]*

Sen. Daly: He will stay for that.

Sen. Prof. J. Kenny: I would like to congratulate Sen. John on his maiden speech in the Senate. *[Desk thumping]* Warmly and genuinely. I have never had a difference with Sen. John that I know of. I have expressed views and opinions, but there is one thing I share with him which was reflected in an interview recently where he suggested that sometimes it is very boring in the Senate and he would like the speakers' time to be cut down. I must congratulate him for keeping his speech down to that particular length of time, but I do not promise to try to do that myself, because I think I have rather a lot to say. Anyway, congratulations, Senator. *[Desk thumping]* You may leave now, Senator. *[Laughter]*

Mr. President, as so often happens in the Senate, as we introduce what we have to say, we try to give the philosophical framework to what we are going to do. I have actually written about 3,500 words which I will offer to the Government and the Opposition, because I believe matters of the environment are national; they are not partisan. I will leave these with the political parties. If they appear in the manifesto, I will not mind. I will not charge copyright infringement. *[Laughter]*

My introduction, Mr. President, to what I have to say is to start off with using the general theory of relativity to give the framework in which I am going to speak. Relativity sounds way out like Einstein and Steven Hawking, but in the general theory of relativity, it is quite simple and straightforward. It is difficult to comprehend sometimes or to understand how it works, but in this general theory

of relativity, space and time are a continuum, and in this season when groups of people are not turning back, and not continuing in this way, relativity has some considerable importance. *[Laughter]*

As I pointed out, Mr. President, in relativity, it depends on where the observer is in relation to the movement and many of us experience this phenomenon, like if one travels by train or if one happens to be standing on the highway and cars are approaching and they are blowing their horns. It is a well-known Doppler effect. Astronomers use this for charting the universe.

It all depends on where one is as the observer. Both Einstein and Steven Hawking used elevators and trains. They are excellent examples of relativity. If one happens to be on the train, the noise made by that train is fairly constant. It does not matter whether the train is going in that direction or the other direction, whether it is not turning back and so forth. The noise or the mechanical sound of the train is exactly the same.

To those others who—I do not say on this side of the House, but I say “on this Bench—are mere observers. In fact, I was rather touched by a reference in the *Sunday Guardian* to the Independent Senators as being the conscience of the nation. We are observers and we are actually standing on the railway platform. We are watching things go by in different directions. As one comes down the railway track, the noise increases; and as the other one comes down the railway track, the sound increases—the pitch of it increases—and I just hope that in the interest of the nation, they remain on separate tracks. *[Laughter]*

3.15p.m.

Mr. President, this is by way of introduction to what I have to say. My 3,500 words, I will not read, obviously. My 3,500 words deal first with the broad issues which, having referred to them in my past five budget contributions, I would not bore the Senate with repeating them. I will just give them the headings, then I will turn to the Green Fund. Finally, I will turn to the Government's role and I am not talking about the particular Government but the Government's role.

On the railway track, as you move, you see signals and sometimes the signals are green, which means you move—and we move to Nelson Island; we move to the National Trust. Sometimes you see a warning signal of orange, then it is caution, but when you see a red signal, it means the train must stop and wait until it is cleared to go. This is all relativity from the Independent Bench. We are mere observers, as Miss Raymond said, without power. I think the only power that we might have is sometimes to influence events, as I am sure the boardroom at First

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Citizens Bank is obviously very, very active right now, [*Laughter*] and I will deal with these things.

First of all, very superficially, I will mention the broad issues that are of national concern—they are not really party concerns—regarding the environment. First of all, we have an obligation to protection of representative eco-systems. In other words, we have signed an international treaty which I have here—the Convention on Biological Diversity—and we promised under Article 8 to establish protected areas.

We have had, for three years, draft legislation on this matter and it keeps going down the agenda into the next session. This is a signal along the track telling us caution. We are not meeting our international responsibilities as a nation. Others are doing it, but we are not. There is a cautionary signal there.

The second broad issue is the restoration of our watersheds. They have been damaged by fires, squatting, everything. We all know them. You do not need a lecture from me. Later on, when we talk about the Green Fund, I am going to raise this matter of restoration.

The third broad issue is rehabilitation. Many people do not understand that you cannot restore a damaged system which has been damaged irretrievably. You cannot restore it to its original condition. It is quite impossible. You can rehabilitate it. You can make something which is more useful to society.

The fourth broad issue is remediation and I am sorry Sen. Gangar is not here because his Ministry has pressured many of the polluters to do something about remediating sites which are so heavily polluted with oily waste. This is a very important broad issue where we have much remediation to do. I do not know the cost. I might point out, with remediation, we really ought to be thinking about prevention of any further contamination of sites.

The fifth broad issue is the one of environmental management and I will speak of that last.

The sixth broad issue is the relationship between our citizens and the environment, our citizens and the Government, and I know that there are many different NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) and so forth but our relationship with our environment, through these bodies or through individual action, is very, very uneven. We have some people very, very committed to the

environment and we have others who pretend to be, for reasons best known to themselves.

Then, the final broad issue is an issue which has been referred to by the hon. Prime Minister in the past and that is the subject of the role of state enterprises in the pollution problem.

Everybody knows that one of the greatest polluters of the country is Petrotrin. Everybody knows that one of the greatest polluters of the Caroni River is Caroni (1975) Limited. These issues go back many years, decades. Now, we do not just simply sweep them under the carpet and pretend they do not exist. I do not want to bore the Senate with further comment on these but these are the general issues that we have to address. These are the general issues that are addressed in the National Environmental Policy, which has been laid in this Senate. I would like to turn to the Green Fund.

The reactions to the Green Fund have been rather varied. On the morning after the budget, I heard a very eminent accountant down in the Chamber of Commerce saying that this was a horrible tax. I consider all taxes, personally, horrible, to me, but as a citizen, I recognize that I have to pay taxes. But the horror of the Green Fund levy or whatever it is called is, in my view, not quite as horrible as the death of the Soodeen child who died from lead poisoning. This was avoidable. The lead was produced by one of our conglomerates and irresponsibly dumped. It has been remediated now but has to balance the society.

Industries pollute and when we go into the details of the Green Fund, I am suggesting there is another way that we might approach the role of the Green Fund. I thought that the Green Fund was a rather novel approach and I personally welcomed it, not in this form, but I welcomed the initiative and I am sorry that the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development is not here because the initiative has clearly come from within the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development.

There is a problem, however, with the Green Fund, in that while one of the first products of the Green Fund, I assure you, will be an increase in the number of NGOs and CBOs that want a piece of the action—they want the Green Fund—and therein lies the problem.

The Green Fund may do some good in encouraging people. It may, in fact, create a green URP where you dissipate funds on things that have no lasting effect. Now, I cannot predict it. I am just thinking of the possibilities. It may have some very positive effects. In fact, Mr. President, I support establishment of the Green

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Fund but not in quite this way and I have, as a very first priority for this Green Fund, the Citizens for Conservation managing it, that is, to remove the paving from the Queen's Park Savannah [*Desk thumping*] to use the Guaratal stone or the blue limestone and the gravel; take it all out and use it for building roads; then put down modern technology for that kind of ground.

Sen. Dr. St. Cyr: Underground drains.

Sen. Prof. J. Kenny: Underground drains. It is not as though we do not know these things. In fact, the hon. Minister of the Environment, when he was the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, was proposing precisely that. He went out in public and said that. When we say this, all you have to do with the ground there is put the drainage underground and recover it with topsoil. Now, I do not know where they are going to get the topsoil. I do not know whether they can retrieve 50,000 cubic metres of prime topsoil from wherever it went. I am told it went down to the stadium, but I can only see six mounds. Anyway, this is to be a first priority, to lay down a proper drained area that would take vehicular traffic; it would remain green and the Citizens for Conservation, I assure you, will be the first one to make application to this fund.

The Green Fund is another levy. We have had levies of one kind or another. They just disappear. They disappear into the general revenue and they disappear into the different activities of Government. There are different ways of doing this. I am not suggesting any of these in particular, but a levy could be an excise tax collected by customs on particular products imported into the country, especially noxious or toxic chemicals. It could be that. It could be a special tax on polluting industries.

Now, there are many people who feel that: "Listen, my industry is a clean one in the sense that I only use paper and energy", but they might argue that mining, for example, and sawmilling are environmentally destructive. So that a levy might go toward the industry. I think also that one might—I think Sen. Prof. Spence has raised this before—in fact, use the profits of gambling towards a socially, morally upright purpose, like the greening of the country and, in his case, he was suggesting the School Feeding Programme.

Now, governments have power to do many things and this was one of the things that I thought it might do. We might also use some of the sim taxes on

tobacco and alcohol. I am not suggesting you want to go to \$50 million. Quite frankly, I do not think that citizens' groups or NGOs are capable of utilizing funds of that scale. I am told the Green Fund might be \$70 million, or \$50 million, or \$30 million. I do not think any group can utilize that and the biggest danger of the Green Fund is that it might convince the nation that something is being done about the environment. Now we know, you plant a few trees, as Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt said, around a non-functioning sewerage plant and you are doing something. It is pretty; it is green. There are certain areas of environmental management, whatever the public may do, which require state intervention. I just mention one, that is, the restoration of our forests.

The Water Resources Agency retained some consultants who told us that we need to reforest 5,700 hectares of our forests. We have to do that just to safeguard our water, to protect us from having to buy another desalination plant or two. We are doing about 20 hectares of reforestation a year. Clearly, you are not going to get the level of reforestation that you need from NGOs and CBOs.

3.30 p.m.

Similarly remediation: The lead contamination of the Demerara Road costs, I am told, \$2.5 million. The people who are responsible for it did not pay. It is every one of you who paid to remove the lead from one site. I do not know what the situation is in the country, but I am told they are probably getting somewhere around 30 other lead-contaminated sites, not necessarily the same scale as Demerara Road. In no way will the Green Fund do what is necessary. In much the same way that we will spend \$2 billion on education and \$1.5 billion on national security and so on, we somehow have to bite the bullet and recognize that we have made an awful mess of our environment, and that we are going to start a series of projects on remediation, reforestation, and rehabilitation and this is going to be part of the budget. It should be part of the budget going on.

I was hoping that the Minister of Finance might be here. There is no doubt that it is now part of our history that in a budget, the environment is addressed. There is a full page and a bit. In the past, the environment and the short-term policies appeared at the end of the *Public Sector Investment Programme*. But this is the first time. If one goes through the past budget presentations for the past 30 years, no reference was made to the environment. Here we have it. Again, I

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congratulate the Government, especially the Minister of Finance for bringing it forward. [*Desk thumping*] It means to me, now that I am leaving, that in the next year there will be more attention paid—whichever train gets hold.

The other concern about the environmental fund, is the administration. Mr. President, I continue to be amazed at the multiplicity of systems that we are setting up. We have a law which is called the Environmental Management Act, now, 2000. In Part VII, clause 72, it states:

“There is hereby established an Environmental Trust Fund which shall be used to fund the operations of the Authority and for other purposes authorised under this Act, including—”

and it gives you a whole series of things. You already have a trust fund and you have an eminent public servant, Mr. Kong who is Chairman of the Trust Fund. Why is it a problem? Why can we not just appropriate a sum of money to the trust fund for this particular purpose? The trust fund cannot now be converted to a building. If the Government appropriates \$10 million a year for this purpose: rehabilitation, remediation, and public education *et cetera* for citizens groups, Mr. Kong and his trustees cannot just simply take that and decide that they all want to fly off to New York or do something like this, or build roads. They will have to give an account to Parliament. The trust fund will have to account to Parliament. Here we have something which is established. Can someone explain to me why you now want to set up a separate fund administration to do what existing law permits/requires you to do?

Secondly, under clause 34 of the same Act, it says:

“The Authority shall develop, promote and implement appropriate incentive programmes which encourage...”

What the law tells us is that the authority may develop incentive programmes.

Here we have a horrible problem of litter. Glass is eminently recyclable. Plastic is not. Paper is as bad as plastic. If we have this, why are we not thinking in terms of offering the incentives to manufacturers? Why are we waiting? This law is five years old. Again, I do not know the answer but, to me, the planning ought to have taken place, and we ought to have been thinking in terms of industries to which we give incentives.

Mr. President, one of the problems—it has been raised by Sen. Prof. Ramchand and various other people—when you put a tax on everybody, you are

taxing people who already may be taking steps to comply with the existing law. Dr. Agard, who is the past chairman of the Environmental Management Authority, has pointed out the negative effect of the Green Fund. If you are going to tax me and I am clean in the industry, I am already fine, why bother everybody else when all the people who are making a mess are allowed to continue? Why should I be thinking in terms of green technology?

Mr. President, my concern with the Green Fund is that, firstly, it is recognition of a problem, secondly, it is recognition of the potential to bring citizens of this country into the solution. But, I do not agree with the levy put on everybody. I think that we have to be imaginative. The law tells us that we can give incentives, let us do it. Of course, it is not for me to come up with the specific details, but there are other parts of the world where you get incentives.

It might surprise us to know that in Europe now, the percentage of components of automobiles which is recyclable has gone up. Some of the manufacturers are getting well over 50 per cent of the materials in the car which are now recyclable. We are importing junk from Japan, because in Japan they said after the life of a car it has to—here you have incentives being used in one part of the world, coming from the government. If you build a car and you can now get 60 per cent of the car recyclable, you will get incentives. In fact, in France one of the incentives to get cars off the road was to pay 1,000 francs to anyone who wanted to get a brand new car. We are not doing that; we are just going along and tax. It will not address the problem.

While I support the principle of it: focussing and getting people involved, giving them some hope that we can do things, we are not doing it the right way, and it is not going to achieve any positive result.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. President, before going into what I have to say here, I would just like to explain that as a Member of the Independent Bench I have always felt it necessary and worthy to speak with and to assist the Government, wherever it might be requested, because the Government has the responsibility for running the affairs of the state. I have worked very closely with the hon. Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs; I have worked with the Minister of Works and Transport, Minister Gangar, the Minister of Energy, the Minister of the Environment, and the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

Sen. Prof. Spence and I worked on a committee on the school feeding programme, but there is one thing that really puzzled me. I was appointed three

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years ago to the National Wetlands Committee and I never even got to a meeting. I was fired by the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources within a month. I never did anything. [Laughter] I do not hold it against anybody. The Minister may have very good reasons for firing me. It is the only thing from which I have been fired in my life.

Sen. Cabrera: Join a union. [Laughter]

Sen. Prof. J. Kenny: The union of Independents.

Why I mention this is because I have never really been able to understand what has gone on, because when the Ministry of the Environment was created, I had a phone call from the hon. Minister of the Environment and he invited me to join the committee. If any minister asked me for advice—I have never been asked by the Minister of National Security—[Laughter] I cannot offer much—but I agreed to go down to the inaugural meeting of this committee and there I discovered what the Minister's committee was about.

I am not talking hearsay, I am talking about official correspondence with the Minister. It became apparent to me that when this committee was set up in the ministry that it was set up to perform a parallel function with the Environmental Management Authority. I wrote the Minister politely explaining that I had to decline because I took an oath of office to uphold the law, and this is the law regarding the environment. He regretted that I could not serve, but I would just like to read a brief extract of his letter to me. It is dated January 3, 2000:

"As you are aware one of my first priorities as Minister of the Environment was to seek the passage of the amendments to the Environmental Management Act of 1995 in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, in order to facilitate the establishment of the Environmental Commission."

Mr. President, that was January. This is the crux of the problem of management of our environment.

The Authority has been working over the past five years doing what it is required to do by law. It has produced a national environmental policy; rules for environmentally sensitive spaces, areas; rules for certificates of environmental clearance; water pollution standards and it has got vehicle emission standards, but these are not law for the simple reason that the laws that have been drafted have to be laid before the Senate and the House of Representatives. The remarkable thing is that many Members of Cabinet sit here and they have actually approved of these rules, so the problem of the management of the environment is the problem of the failure in five years to establish the Environmental Commission.

With a number of eminent attorneys on the other side, the law was there, it was ever so simple to see that we needed the commission. I think that Members of the Senate would remember that I have raised it every budget debate. I have asked questions, I have actually brought matters on the adjournment of the Senate and we have had promises from the then Minister in the planning ministry who is responsible. We have had Minister Sudama first, Minister Lasse and then finally Minister Mohammed; they have all given us dates. Now here we are at a critical time and we have no commission. That is what people are bawling about outside.

We are spending several million dollars a year on the Environmental Management Authority and they are powerless. They have done what the law requires them to do, but they cannot take action against anybody for the simple reason that there are no new environmental laws, because the laws have not been laid in Parliament. I do not know the reason for this. I make no accusations at all. It could be simple incompetence; it could be a judgment of the level of priority or it could be more sinister; I do not know. I would refer later on, time permitting; if Senator John will permit me to use my full time.

Sen. C. John: Of course.

Sen. Prof. J. Kenny: I will refer to some of the projects that have taken place in this country that would come naturally under the laws that would be laid in this Parliament, the rules. Mr. President, when I went down to the Ministry of the Environment the first time to try to assist, I realized that this was improper, inappropriate of me to do this, to be part of a para-management system that would subvert the authority and the law of the this country. I discovered that the then Ministry of the Environment consisted of eight people: the Minister, his personal advisor, who came down from agriculture, his Permanent Secretary, and administrative assistant, a couple officers and then one messenger. That was the Ministry of the Environment, and yet you would see in the budget that there are vast millions going to this Ministry of the Environment, mainly because there are different things assigned to the Minister.

Everyone would have read Dr. Agard's comments. Dr. Agard is a man of international standing in science, in this particular area. He is at home with the EPA; he is at home with the people in the United Kingdom Environmental Protection Agency and so forth and he is a man who has published extensively. He is a man who has got his hands dirty with pollution; he is an authority. In fact, Sen. Selwyn John and others have pointed out to me that in his tenure—in fact, their senior consultant attorney-at-law said that without this man who brought the

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scientific content to the legislation it would not have been possible. Is that not so? Now he has been dismissed.

There was a conflict. It was clear from what he has said; it was clear from what my colleagues in government had told me, that the Minister—I am not suggesting that he has acted improperly, I am not imputing anything. What I am suggesting is simply that the hon. Minister may not understand his role as a minister of Government.

Mr. President, clause 5 of the Environmental Management Act says:

"The Minister may from time to time give the Authority directions of a special or general character in the exercise of the powers conferred and the duties imposed on the Authority by or under this Act."

It is quite simple and straightforward. The Minister may do this. The marginal note says:

"Policy direction from the Minister"

Now, the intention is clearly that the Minister would give directions on the matters of policy.

Mr. President, I have the United Kingdom Act. The United Kingdom is, of course, a much bigger country and section 40 deals with ministerial directions and says that the appropriate minister—there is more than one—may give directions of a general or specific character. That is what the UK law is, but it goes on to say:

"The appropriate Minister may give a new Agency such directions of a general or specific character as he considers appropriate for the implementation of—

- (a) any obligation of the United Kingdom under the Community Treaties, or
- (b) any international agreement to which the United Kingdom is for the time being a party."

In other words, the UK Act allows a minister to give directions, but it is limited to policy directives, and not only that, every ministerial direction in the United Kingdom Act has to be gazetted. It has to be gazetted.

Mr. President, I do not want to deal with hearsay; I will not repeat hearsay, but I have spoken to the Managing Director, the Chief Executive Officer of the Authority who has confirmed for me information that on ministerial directive he

was given a six-month extension of contract. This is not disputed by anyone. A minister does not appoint. The board appoints; that is what our law is, and I wonder, I worry.

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

Motion made, that the hon. Senators speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. Prof. J. Spence*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. J. Kenny: Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you Senators. I am most impressed with the attention that I get when I speak. I sincerely hope that somehow what I say will influence matters of the environment in such a way as I have been able to influence the hon. Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. President, I think that the hon. Minister does not understand his powers. A board has just been appointed under the Act. I might point out that five of the people on the board were five of the Minister's committee. Now, one cannot question in law the appointment; "the President shall appoint a Chairman", it does not say what competence or skills the chairman must have, but I think it is inappropriate that a minister's personal assistant/advisor should be appointed to what is a regulatory body.

This is not an interim planning commission or a carnival commission, this is a regulatory body with powers in law to tell people, "You are infringing; you are mashing up our environment," and penalizing them. I have met Dr. Moe, he is an extremely devoted public servant, and he is now placed in this position where he is personal advisor to the Minister and he is also Chairman of the board to which four other persons have been appointed.

Now, the law makes it clear.

3 55 p.m.

Mr. President, the law makes it quite clear; nine other members drawn from the following disciplines or groups namely: environmental management, ecology, environmental health, engineering, labour, community-based organizations, business, economics, public administration, law, and non-profit environmental non-governmental organizations. This is what the law requires and I have the names of the members of the board and these are all honourable people and I have

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been going through a jigsaw puzzle of trying to fit people to the law, and this is where it falls down.

I have absolutely nothing against any of the people. It is very clear: public administration or law: Mr. Kong, he served before; labour: Sen. John is there, environmental management: I think Dr. Ahmad Khan is an extremely able chemist; engineering: Mr. Ramnath from Petrotrin. I am a bit puzzled at this one, I am not sure whether he is there in his individual capacity, or he is there from business, that is, Petrotrin, but it strikes me as being a bit odd that you would have somebody from one of the admittedly most polluting industries. The Cabinet makes these decisions and they are advised by the Minister. Cabinet, maybe, in its collective wisdom says, this is the best for the country. *[Interruption]*

I will go through these; I do not want to go into the names. There is the community-based organization, the non-governmental organization that is Mr. Lutchmedial; environmental health, Dr. Roohit Doon is an eminently capable person. Then there are three people that I find impossible to fit into the lot. The first is Dr. Asad Mohammed, who is the head of land surveying at the University of the West Indies, he is a planner and there is nothing in the law which says that you put somebody there from planning. There is also an immense conflict because Dr. Mohammed is the head of the interim planning commission. How could you have a regulatory body and a planning commission which may be doing things which were in conflict with the law? There was another person, Mrs. B. Ajodha. The only thing that has been released is that she won a Humming Bird Award for community education, but there is nothing in the law that says that you appoint somebody because they have won a Humming Bird Award. The final person is Dr. Mc Farlane. I have heard on television that she is a representative of the Tobago House of Assembly. There is nothing in the law that requires the authority to have a representative—so these are my concerns that somehow we are either by accident, or otherwise, subverting the law of the land, and my oath of office requires me—

Mr. President: Senator, I want to point out to you that you have to be careful about the comments you make since those appointments are made by the President. Irrespective of the administrative procedure, the appointments are made by the President.

Sen. Prof. J. Kenny: Thank you, Mr. President, I fully understand the ruling.

Finally I will turn to some general comments. The Government has a major role in management of the environment. I would like to refer to two developments

that would normally have required environmental clearance certificates. I start with the Toco Ferry Port.

Mr. President, this is the national physical development plan for the country. It was approved by Parliament and this plan reserved Toco for agriculture, conservation and resort. The law requires that if you want to alter this plan, you come back to Parliament. The plan for Toco was something invited by the Government and it is contrary to this plan. There was something called the Tourism Master Plan and I am not quite sure whether this is official policy, but the Tourism Master Plan says: North/East Trinidad anchor—this is Toco—rain forests spectacular scenic coastal tours, turtle beaches. And what is the market positioning? Ecotourism, leisure resort. How on earth can you put a 70-acre commercial port with bunkering and all these things into something that your plan tells you is for another purpose? Your tourism market plan tells you it is for another purpose.

Mr. President, in the United Nations Biological Treaty Convention that we have signed, Article 8 requires us to set aside special protected areas and what are we doing with it? The plan up there calls for filling in 16 hectares of the sea, of coral communities and it calls for compulsory acquisition of 15 hectares of private property. The acquisition is for a public purpose but for the next 18 years it will be a private purpose. You are taking people's land and developing a private commercial port for 18 years. It is dubious, it is questionable, and I assure you, Mr. President, I have spoken with some old people there who are very nervous. They are worried, and I would not be surprised if the odd one has a heart attack. They are sitting there. "They going to take 'we' land, we have lived here for 80 years." For what purpose? A private purpose.

The other one I wanted to refer to is the paving of the savannah. I must reopen it Mr. President. Sen. Prof. Spence was quite irate, he wanted to raise it as a matter of urgent public importance. Here we have money committed before it is actually voted by Parliament, and no tendering. I used a purely legal argument, as you will remember only too well, that three laws were broken; the Savannah Ordinance; Town and Country Planning Act; and the State Lands Act.

Mr. President, the Cabinet may not break the law, everyone takes an oath of office, to uphold the law. Secondly, Cabinet cannot instruct anyone to do anything which is illegal and I cannot and do not accept the argument that the then chairman of the National Carnival Commission thought he did not need to get permission. This is totally unacceptable. That is the law of the land.

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Mr. President, as we stand on the platform, we see many things. Some of the signals are right, but it is not really working. My main concern is that we have had abject failure on the part of the Government to establish the environmental commission which is part of the law of the land.

Thank you Mr. President.

Sen. Winston John: Mr. President, as I rise in support of the Appropriation Bill 2001 as presented by the hon. Minister of Finance, Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung, I would use this opportunity to address a few concerns that have been bothering me over the time.

The first concern is the issue of political statements that have been made in Trinidad and Tobago over the past few months. I find that these statements are getting very harsh and vicious and the viciousness does not lend any kind of comfort. It reminds me of Jamaica within the political scenes over the years which were very violent. I hope that the statements made in Trinidad and Tobago do not lend themselves to develop into any form of violence. Hence, I am questioning whether these political statements are a reflection of our national psyche—this violence that has been developed from time to time. I hope it is not. For me, being involved in a political party is like being a member of a sporting team in the school you attend. We vie with one another from time to time in various sports which lends itself to the various kinds of development of the individual and the school in a holistic way and this is what I expect to be happening in the politics, re the political party.

Mr. President, I could not come here as a Senator and look across at the Members of the other side and deal with them with any kind of hate or bitterness. *[Desk thumping]* That is not my style, I will use this opportunity also, because I never did it before to congratulate Sen. Eudine Job who, incidentally, is from Moriah. She has followed me right into the Senate. *[Laughter]* I also wish to commend Sen. Carlos John; I missed his speech yesterday, I am sorry, but that was due to unforeseen circumstances. It really was good that I missed it because it allowed me the opportunity to make some representation, or to get information to make representation for my country Tobago on an individual basis.

When I say my country, Mr. President, I do not want the Senators here to feel that there is a difference in Trinidad and Tobago, but you know that is my homeland so my first love has to be there, but I have always said that Trinidad and Tobago belongs to us and I will continue to say that from time to time.

Also, one basic thing I have to say this afternoon is respect for those in authority. As a child, one of the books I had really loved was the *Students Companion* and within that book they had laid down certain basic rules which we had used in time past as guidelines for development. One of the basic rules in the *Students Companion* is to respect those who are in authority. I hope that those in authority would also respect those who are not in authority.

However, I said that because I want to set the basis, that is to say, that the President is the President, the Prime Minister is the Prime Minister, and the Chief Secretary is the Chief Secretary. We function from time to time in different circles, circles within circles and in Tobago I function within the political circle of the NAR, and you know we would have our own little in-fights and this sort of thing so in Tobago I may mention the Chief Secretary in a little way, but here, Mr. President, the Chief Secretary is my Chief Secretary and I would use this opportunity to protect him, not only from criticism, but also from the PNM who made statements that would lend a certain kind of fear for the future.

Let us at this time look at what has been happening in Trinidad over the years. We had a political party that had ruled for 30 years and I cannot understand how a party would rule for 30 years and not entrench itself in such a way that it is going to be hard to break that monopoly.

4.10.m.

However, history proved that the NAR broke that monopoly. We could remember that 33-3, Mr. President. However, after the 33-3, like any dying animal who would fight in the last stage, the PNM came back and took over. The people mandated the PNM to rule us for five years. But what did they say? They said, “nah, we do not want five years at all; we are taking four. We cannot manage you. Trinidad and Tobago is too hard to manage.” They said things like, “Uh, we can’t pay COLA at all. The former regime took away COLA and we cannot pay that.” Although they had, in their Manifesto, promised the people that when January comes they would be getting their COLA. January came for four years and they never paid. Promises, promises, promises.

There was the issue of crime and the death penalty. They said, “nah, we cannot hang nobody. We are not doing that at all. Tell people we cannot hang nobody; we cannot touch education. We cannot take a woman as the Speaker in the House so let us get rid of her.” *[Laughter]* I want to give you some other things that they said that they could not do.“ It is too hard to increase old age

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pension. Nah, we are not increasing that. Dem old people—they are better off dead; we are not increasing anything at all.” With respect to the Baptists, “there would be no holiday for you. We cannot recognize you and give you land too. We are not doing that. We cannot stand any coalition situation. We fight alone and we stand alone.” And that was the issue. *[Laughter]*

Mr. President, the thing that sums it all up; the straw that broke the camel’s back was when the PNM went into La Brea. When the PNM went into La Brea I knew they were on shaky ground. They spent \$120 million just to be told that they cannot put the LNG plant in La Brea. \$120 million. That was it. However, the result of that was 17-72, and I, as an arm member of the Steering Committee was one of those people who recommended to our leader that we would go with the UNC. *[Desk thumping]* We must remember that even after the NAR lost the election and the PNM was in power, the whole political structure of the NAR was in chaos. I was instrumental in getting the NAR in Tobago back on its feet and I went ahead to reorganize now throughout Tobago, along autonomous line.

After doing that—well, you know, within all political parties there are little problems; we also had our problems. Although I was told, at that time, by my own party that, “Here, Mr. John, you have too much ideas to work for the Tobago House of Assembly.” Other statements were also made. Like the Mayor reported; “John take your money and leave Tobago business alone.” Notwithstanding all of that, I knew that my leader makes mistakes, and in Trinidad and Tobago, we allow our leaders to make mistakes from time to time. We even allow people to take over a country and then pay them money. This is the kind of thing we do. So if my leader in Tobago makes mistakes, nobody and nobody must condemn him for he is not the first one and he will not be the last.

I supported, as I said, the coalition, and it is a good thing we went in to the coalition. This coalition Government has provided Tobago with the best services throughout all the years. They have given us the most in allocation than all the other regimes that went before. And I commend them for that. I would use for reference, a book written by Dr. Bishnu Ragoonath, the *Development in Tobago: 20th Century Challenges*. Just to show what was happening in Tobago I shall read:

“While it could be suggested that the THA played a major part in advancing the development of the island, at least in terms of overseeing expenditure on economic and social infrastructure, it may be noted that the total sum expended in advancing the development in Tobago remained far short of what the THA and the Central Government had anticipated and projected.

From the perspective of the Central Government, it may be noted that whereas the annual estimates of the Central Government appropriated substantial sums to be spent on the development of Tobago, such sums were never fully released to the THA.

[Interruption] Mr. President, I am speaking of the time when the PNM regime was in control. This is what they were saying:

“Put differently, the Assembly reported on several occasions that actual disbursement was far from what was appropriated. In this regard, the case of 1986 stands out as a case in point. In that year, appropriations in the estimates for developmental works (under both the Development Programme and Long Term Fund) was put at \$31 million, yet the Tobago House of Assembly was only able to receive a mere \$11.5 million. The Assembly was thus being starved of funds which in turn constrained the THA from adequately pursuing the full development of Tobago.”

This was the situation under—*[Interruption]*

Mr. President: Could you please identify the pages and the year of the publication.

Sen. W. John: This is page 62, 63 and the publication is *Development in Tobago, Twentieth Century Challenges*.

Mr. President, there are many examples in this book. You can all go to the Parliament Library and look through it and you could see what the PNM had done to Tobago over the years. Mr. President, that caused a mindset in the people of Tobago, and that mindset over the years was that Trinidad does not care. So even when we are in a relationship with a caring people they could not put themselves in that frame to appreciate that, because that was there for so long. Hence, our Chief Secretary tried using means that were not so conducive in the minds of the people in Trinidad and Tobago in order to get what he wanted for his people. Mr. President, the Chief Secretary is really a nice man; once you get to know him he is a nice man.

4.20 p.m.

I would say that he has dedicated himself over the years to fight for the people of Tobago. Even though he had not used the right procedure and went overboard from time to time, we know that he genuinely wants good for the people of Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*

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The meeting I went to—I must apologize also to the Senate for being absent on Monday morning when the debate started in this Senate. That was because on Friday last week I got a letter from the Chief Secretary inviting me to a meeting and that was to discuss the implications of the budget and such. Mr. President, I still must inform the people of Trinidad and Tobago that I had no input in the development of the House of Assembly's budget. I do not know what were the criteria that they used or whatever, but my duty as a Tobagonian, as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, is to represent the people.

So I went to the meeting, open-minded and objective as possible, in order to do what I think is right, and in that meeting, Mr. President, I recognized the sum feeling of the representatives of Tobago. They are really sad. They really need help. We really need help and I would ask the whole Senate, all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, let us get together in a more amicable way to deal with this relationship with Trinidad and Tobago. The relationship between Trinidad and Tobago has never been so strained. It is wider than we have ever known. [*Desk thumping*] I think that collectively it is our responsibility to mend that gap.

While I say that, I worked in the Port Authority for over 15 years so I had the opportunity, from time to time, to interact with people from Trinidad travelling on the boat to Tobago and otherwise, because during that time I spent two years in Trinidad and, Mr. President, truthfully, there is nobody as happy as a Trinidadian on the boat going to Tobago for the first time, especially the little children. Let us not deprive those children of this opportunity to be recognized as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

While I am on the subject of the boat, Mr. President, I have heard from time to time people say that we need two ferries. I do not agree with that at all. My feeling is that the minimum must be three—one specifically for cargo, the other two, roll-on roll-off passengers. If there are three ferries there would be no strain on the system and from time to time one could be taken off, sent for maintenance, and if there is any breakdown there will always be two ferries working. I could remember in 1996, Mr. President—this book talks about it—when the Tobago Act was being dealt with, we all recognized that the closest to independence Tobago came was under this regime but, because of the attitude of the people on the other side, that movement was curtailed and even now we recognize that there should have been a committee put together to deal with that situation as to whether Tobago will want independence, which is something I would not support really but which is something that we should give the people a right to decide whatever.

We recognize that the PNM is saying that now the election is so close it is not the right time to deal with that issue and that sort of thing. Mr. President, an election cannot be as important to a country as the ability that country to rule itself and to be self-determined, and I hope that all Members here will support that committee to look at the situation of the House of Assembly Act, to afford the people of Tobago a greater movement to raise autonomy and self-reliance. I hope that we really would work towards achieving that.

Now, I promised the members of the House of Assembly, Mr. President, that I would try my best to lay their concern in the Senate and, for that reason, I took a copy of their document and gave it to the Finance Minister, which is the *Tobago House of Assembly Analysis of Recurrent Estimate* and also the *Analysis of Capital Expenditure*. I wish that we would be able to use the Tobago analysis as that platform for movement forward, Mr. President.

We know that what they had requested, according to what was reported, and what they have received in the budget is very wide, hence our Chief Secretary—although at this time we find that he is really a little silent, we know that he is very peeved and we know that generally Tobagonians are very peeved because, normally, we are guided by what our politicians tell us and over the years the statement was that we have been underfunded. Even in Trinidad we will hear people who have never been to Tobago use the same statement, that we have been underfunded. It did not start with this Government, although you will find people accusing this Government of also underfunding the Tobago House of Assembly (THA).

This is something that started a long time ago. This Government has given Tobago the most, as I just said, [*Desk thumping*] and I think that if a higher level of diplomacy was applied, this stalemate that we are in now would never have been. I do not want to blame anyone at all but I know we could develop a better relationship by being more diplomatic and being more conducive to dialogue. Two secretaries, Mr. President, because they are so peeved and so concerned about what happened, gave me statements which I would state here. Scarborough Secondary School—[*Interruption*]

Mr. President: Senator, before you begin to go into the statements, I think we will break for tea. This sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.29 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.03 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. W. John: Mr. President, I could remember the first day that I graced this hall of the Senate, I met the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development whilst walking through the corridor. Instinctively, as we met, there was this bounce and we had that connection. After enquiring a little about the Minister's background, I then recognized that the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development is a man who could understand or empathize with the problems of the masses, especially the grassroots.

Mr. President, however, when I heard the Minister say in his budget presentation "doh back back" I was concerned. I recognized that although the Minister was being "rootical" he has not reached there yet. *[Laughter]* By the reading of the next budget, I expect that he would be here, and instead of saying "doh back back" he would be using the term—as used by our gracious Sen. Rev. Gray Burke this morning—"forward ever backward never". This term will make me feel much more comfortable, in the sense that our Minister of Finance, Planning and Development could empathize with the problem of the masses. Mr. President, when I say the masses, I mean, especially those in Tobago.

Mr. President, my people have been under pressure for years in almost every field, and history cannot change what was done in the past, under the PNM regime over those 30 years, and then in the last four years when the PNM ruled. I hope that in this 21st Century—I know that this first year was very tumultuous and this Government went through, from time to time, certain difficult situations, but thank God, they have come out on top and they will continue to come out on top. After this election, we would be able to rest assured that the Government of this UNC/NAR coalition is a government of the people; for the people; and by the people.

Mr. President, I will continue to work to achieve that bond and togetherness between the two islands. According to Sen. Shabazz—the bridge is not there—I will dedicate myself to be that bridge. Mr. President, through you, I want Sen. Shabazz to know that although the two senators were dismissed from the Senate, their replacements could talk and walk. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. President, I do not think that it would be wise for me to read into the *Hansard* some of the comments and concerns from the Tobago House of Assembly. I understand that the Tobago House of Assembly would have dialogue with the Central Government, and I do not want to play that I am trying to shortcut that in anyway. Along with two documents I have already given the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, I will also give him these

documents that contain the concerns of the other secretaries of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Mr. President, I can say, from time to time, when we are in Tobago listening to 92.1, the radio station in Tobago, there are many concerns that the people have been expressing very often. I think we should seek to deal with these matters as a priority and that is with respect to the maintenance of the present hospital in Tobago. The incinerator needs major repairs; the generator needs repairs; and the existing building needs repairs. I know the Tobago House of Assembly is strapped for cash, but within the next few weeks, we expect that situation would be resolved.

Mr. President, I want to talk especially, about the Scarborough Secondary School not in the context of the controversy that is going on right now with respect to education, but in another context. I went to that school some years ago and the old road that we used from Lambeau—which is actually a drive in the sea—was greatly damaged by erosive processes. I think the Government should work speedily to remedy that situation because there is a dire need.

In my community, Moriah, I wish to see the continuation of the pre-school that was started years ago. I know that in the last few years, we have not been able to do any work on that. It is my dream to have that pre-school completed; the health centre completed; and our roads fixed. So, I beg that all our people in power—those in the Opposition; those in the Independent Benches; and the whole Government will work towards implementing remedial processes to deal with Tobago in a holistic way.

5.10 p.m.

I would at this moment compliment Dr. McKenzie for some of the statements she made this morning in respect of Tobago. I know that not only the Tobago Senators would have that concern for Tobago, but all in this Senate have a genuine concern.

Mr. President, I would not want to stay too long. *[Interruption]* I know I have time and there are other things I could say, but knowing when I came in here, the type of controversy I came in under, I do not want to say too much that may be termed as negative. I do not want to throw any further needles in the relationship that has developed over the years. I want to make sure that the relationship gets better from time to time.

With all I have said again about the PNM, I genuinely have no bad feelings for the PNM. It is just that they are of the other school and I will stick to my school, work with my school and continue to deal with each individual as an individual, because I want to respect and love all man so that all man could respect and love me likewise.

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Sen. Shabazz: Rastafari!

Sen. W. John: Finally, I want to impress on the minds of our people in general, let us ask the people in power to disband this Dispute Resolution Commission. I do not think that the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago should be chartered by the court or by other outside institutions. I think that the relationship is something that the people should be able to influence in a positive way, and I would want that dialogue to be the vehicle through which all our desires would be achieved.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Nizam Baksh: Mr. President, I feel like a night watchman in the game of cricket. [*Laughter*] I am grateful for the opportunity to support the 2000/2001 Budget presentation by the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development. Permit me to congratulate my colleague, Minister Carlos John, for his maiden contribution and also the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development for his usual farsighted and effective fiscal measures which will redound to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. He did this with his usual cool, composed and positive manner as he has done it over the last four years.

As a young man, I recall that whenever a budget date was given, there was always anxiety, speculation, tension and frenzy among the populace. There was panic shopping for items such as cigarettes, alcohol and cooking gas. We can recall the long lines whenever we heard those dates announced. Over the past five years, however, this Government has quite effectively presented fiscal measures which have been to the benefit of the people of the country. Now there exists a generally positive feeling about the budget exercise and about its real benefits. Measures like the increase in old age pension over the years, increase in public assistance benefits and tax relief; simple measures which the PNM administration failed to effect are welcomed by the population at large.

When one considers the cumulative effect of the budgetary measures over the last five years, one sees that the benefits have been substantial. This Government has sought to implement fiscal measures in line with the overall projection for the development of our nation. In so doing, we have continued to reduce taxes, increase welfare spending, encourage savings and stimulate investment. The positive effects of these economic policies are evident in the opinions voiced by the population.

I want to point out too that our Minister of Finance, Planning and Development is very caring, considerate and receptive. I will support this by a

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correspondence from the National Centre for Persons with Disabilities. This has to do with the proposals in the budget. It is addressed to the Minister of Finance and it says:

“In your last budget, 1999/2000, based upon representations which had been made, you made provisions for VAT to be removed from orthopaedic aids, crutches, walkers, etc, which are used by persons with disabilities.

Unfortunately, maybe due to an oversight, the same provision was not made for a very essential aid used by persons with mobility difficulties. I refer to wheelchair users.

As you can appreciate, persons with mobility difficulties are unable to move from point A to point B unless they have access to a wheelchair. A glaring example is the child who has no access to a wheelchair is unable to attend school. We have many of these cases in this country.

The purpose of this letter, therefore, is to draw this matter to your attention and to kindly request that you give consideration to adding this item to the list of those exempted from VAT in the 2000/2001 budget.”

Mr. President, this goes to support my rationale that the Minister is very caring and receptive and today, we have had the VAT on wheelchairs removed.

When we speak in this august Chamber, people feel that it is merely politics involved, but I want to use this opportunity here today to give some of the points that were given by people in this country; some of those that we see in the newspapers just after the budget, and I will read one or two of those. The first is from the *Trinidad Guardian*, August 31, 2000, page 4:

“Sound package in Budget says South Chamber

The South Chamber of Commerce has congratulated Finance Minister Brian Kuei Tung for presenting what it considers a fairly sound economic package in the 2000/2001 budget.

The Chamber says, in its response to the fiscal measures, that the Budget is designed to maintain the current rate of economic growth whilst keeping a tight lid on inflation.”

Mr. President, on the same newspaper of the same day:

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“Kudos for Kuei Tung from economists

“Senior Economist at Republic Bank Dr. Ronald Ramkissoon believes that the 2000/2001 Budget was a reasonable one ‘considering that things on the economic front were positive, so you would want a budget that sustains that momentum.’

In a telephone interview Monday, he said in that context, the Budget had useful measures and incentives...

Ramkissoon praised the Apprenticeship Allowance programme saying it will encourage companies to implement apprenticeship programmes and make young people more employable...

He also thought that the Tax Allowance for companies that support art, culture and sports was a great incentive, and companies that already contributed to these ventures will double their efforts and encourage ones that have not done so before.

Another economist, Kelvin Sargeant of Royal Bank, said the Finance Minister's Budget has attempted to recognize the trickle down effect of growth by offering incentives in the areas of health and education and pension.

He gave the finance minister the nod for reducing tax on interest income from 10 to five per cent saying this will level the playing field between insurance companies and banks, while encouraging people to save.

Sargeant described the measure to abolish income tax filing for salaried income earners as a ‘bold move’....

He also praised the Green Fund and the allowance for companies that support art, culture and sports.”

Mr. President, these are people of the nation outside there saying these things. We are not blowing our own trumpet here.

There is another one here, *Daily Express*, September 01, page 4:

“Kuei Tung praised for bold measure

The removal of the requirement for salaried employees to file income tax returns is the ‘one bold measure’ taken by Finance Minister Brian Kuei Tung in his National Budget presentation.

This is the opinion of accounting firm PriceWaterhouse Coopers which welcomed the Minister's move in its 2001 Budget Memorandum released this week.

The measure will ‘substantially reduce the processing burden on the Board of Inland Revenue,’ the company said.”

Mr. President, I have another one here, *Sunday Newsday*, September 3, page 11. This is one by a popular commentator on the budget, Dr. Hamid Ghany, who said:

“Budgets are really official statements of political intent cast in economic language. This one dutifully fell into that category and did not disappoint as far as the political statements are concerned. The tax relief that had been started in previous budgets was continued in the form of increases in the personal allowance, mortgage relief, bank deposit tax relief and removal of the duty to file income tax returns by salaried persons. Tax relief will always be welcomed by the population and so these measures will have a positive political impact. At the same time, the continued increases in old age pensions represent the one area of continuity for which the Minister must be given the highest praise. He has effectively raised old age pensions to double what they were when he took office with this Government back in 1995.

Increases in the allocations to education and health also demonstrate a new thrust in the arena of public policy, as the Government has now decided to place greater emphasis in these areas than before.”

Mr. President, these are renowned people who have been making these comments.

Let us hear what the Leader of the Opposition has to say:

“Just an election ploy

Opposition Leader Patrick Manning said yesterday the UNC's 2000-2001 Budget was about winning the next general elections and had nothing to do with giving the truth on the economy.

‘The figures do not speak the truth. It is about their self-preservation...

‘We cannot believe this Minister of Finance...’ ‘He is not talking the truth.’

Asked whether the Budget was an election Budget, Manning replied, ‘It clearly is. It clearly is’.”

5.25 p.m.

Mr. President: Could you identify that last one please.

Sen. N. Baksh: This was an interview that was held on Tuesday, August 29, 2000.

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Mr. President, when you compare the comments made by members of the public and the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition, you can judge for yourself which way this budget is heavily weighted. I put to you that, certainly, it bears testimony for the members of the public here today. We have seen that over the last five years in the style and type of motion that the Government did.

Mr. President, if you look at the budget, the social theme there is putting people first and that is very, very important. I take the opportunity here, since we are dealing with the social aspect of it, to illustrate our Ministry's achievements over the last year, perhaps, with some reference to previous years.

The Ministry's approach was holistic, collaborative, people-centred and participatory. When you look at the programmes that were put in place for training, skills development, empowerment and the care and protection of our children, and poverty reduction, we have a number of social programmes in the Ministry which support these, together with programmes of other Ministries. That is where the collaborative effort takes place.

One of those programmes at the Ministry is the Share programme. This is designed as an emergency measure towards alleviating the unfortunate situation of the new poor. This approach is holistic and encompasses two methods of meeting the needs of poor people: one, through the food hamper distribution; and, two, through the provision of cooked meals.

The distribution of hampers was geared towards the poor and is meant to be a temporary measure. The new poor is described as those families and households that have been rendered poor through structural adjustments, illness, loss of the chief breadwinner or imprisonment of the wage earner. The method is aided through the assistance of non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations. A training component is also attached to this programme.

At present, there are about 114 NGOs and CBOs in Trinidad and Tobago, through which approximately 7,000 hampers are distributed on a monthly basis and three relief centres, also run by NGOs and CBOs, through which approximately 20,000 meals are distributed monthly.

There is also the National Commission for Self Help Limited. Mr. President, as I mentioned, these programmes are spread throughout the country. They are not designed for any particular interest group or for any particular area of the country

but, as I say, this Government looks after the total interest of the members of the community so these programmes are spread throughout the country.

The projects are intended to bring relief to the people in various areas. Some of the programmes dealt with the construction of 121 new roads; 17 water projects; 17 electricity projects; assisting 16 schools; assisting communities in constructing 14 drains; 14 social projects; 10 retaining walls; eight community centres and recreational facilities; assisting eight religious houses; construction of five bridges; and assistance in the construction of two health facilities—a total of 219 projects at a cost of a little over \$6 million, which brought relief to approximately 150,000 persons. Certainly, when you look at these figures, the stories tell that we are reaching out to our rural communities as well.

On a yearly basis, the commission receives and acknowledges up to 1,275 projects. Just to give an idea of how these projects go across the country: North, 518; Central, 359; South, 347; Tobago, 51.

Mr. President, I move on to another very important component of this social programme here which has to do with a bit of the physical aspect of it. One of the mainstays in the Community Development Division is the construction of community centres which is to facilitate the number of programmes that are undertaken at the community level with regard to the social development of the people of the various communities.

In Trinidad and Tobago, we have 242 community centres. I will give a breakdown: St. George West, 40; St. George East 40; Victoria East, 15; Victoria West, 24; St. Patrick, 30; Nariva/Mayaro, 14; St. Andrew/St. David, 21; Caroni, 33, Tobago, 25. Mr. President, you can see the spread throughout the country there. I can give a list of all the communities but that would take a little time.

We have been continuing the construction of community centres. There are 11 new centres and four regional complexes. A total of 37 community centres were refurbished within the fiscal year October 1999 to August 2000; 24 have been rededicated and the other eight will be rededicated by end of this month. The total expenditure on this programme is roughly \$2 million.

We have also put furniture and equipment into these community centres. As you know, that is an important component of the importance of the community centres. Now, you will understand that in the past the equipment that was given to

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community centres consisted of a stove, 50 chairs, a table tennis board and that was it. Today, in light of the kinds of programmes being undertaken in the community centres programme, we have expanded the equipment for the community centres. Today, we are putting in gym equipment and we are having other programmes that would bring the youths into the community centres.

We have also established honorary wardens for community centres. That is a very important aspect of the programme. In the past, history was that community centres were managed and operated by the village councils. When a village council was inactive or dormant, it meant that nothing happened in those community centres.

To date, this Government has appointed more than 80 wardens for community centres and the purpose of that, really, is to ensure that there are programmes in the community centres and to ensure that the community centres are open on a daily basis. It will also provide that the wardens meet the people of the community, not only people who are in women's groups, youth groups, the village council and cultural groups but, actually, to make an effort to motivate those people who are out of school and out on the junction "liming" or sitting on the blocks; we need to do more things to bring in those people. That is one of the reasons why the wardens were introduced into the community centres programme. We hope that in the new year, additional wardens will be introduced into the community centres.

There is another component in the community centres programme, that is, the community education programme, which is undertaken by the groups in collaboration with the Community Development Division. This programme is four-pronged and deals with domestic courses and development programmes; community leadership and development enhancement programmes; community awareness; entrepreneurial micro-enterprise enhancement programmes.

For the last year, we have undertaken 245 of these classes. In St. George East, 28; St. George West, 31; Victoria East, 23; Victoria West, 33; St. Patrick, 28; St. Andrew/St. David, 24; Nariva/Mayaro, 24; and Caroni, 54; making a total of 245. The domestic support short-term skills programme, 245 projects; community leadership development and enhancement programmes, 300 projects; community awareness and sensitization programmes, 190 projects; micro-enterprise projects, 15; staff training, seven; special courses at Christmas, 16; special training in domestic violence for staff members of the entire Ministry of Social and Community Development, three.

Mr. President, you will recognize that since we are part of the programme in dealing with domestic violence, it will be necessary to sensitize, equip and prepare our own staff members with the necessary skills for this aspect of the programme—business management for small business enterprise. This was done in conjunction with the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme and the Community Development Division.

There is another important component of the social programme here, the Community Action Revival Empowerment (CARE) programme. Mr. President, what we have done with this programme is, through the community development administrative districts, we were able to sensitize the community organizations about this programme. We also used the Community Development Division to promote some of these projects which they themselves embarked upon in their respective administrative districts. Just to give a breakdown of how these projects were implemented. In St. George West, 29; St. George East, 20; Caroni, 29; St. Andrew/St. David, 19; Nariva/Mayaro, 11; Victoria East, 11; Victoria West, 31; St. Patrick, 13; and Tobago, 1 ; making a total of 200 at a cost of a little over \$2 million.

This consisted of programmes like sales and exhibitions; community consensus building workshops; religion; refurbishment of community facilities; preservation of indigenous dances; health education; fitness; culture; skills development; upgrading community facilities; senior citizens socialization programme; education and literacy improvement; provision of furniture and equipment; youth camps; provision of musical instruments; agro-based projects; sports; family and special occasion days; conferences; anti-domestic violence; making a total of 200 projects, as I said, at a cost of \$2 million.

Mr. President, I take the opportunity to give the figures in terms of the administrative districts because, very often, this Government is accused of focussing on only certain parts of the country and certain areas. These programmes will indicate that we have spread out the activities throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

I move now to the Social Welfare Division. This is another important aspect of the social programme of the Ministry of Community and Social Development. I will give here the number of beneficiaries over the years. In 1995, 26,000; 1996, 26,000. Generally, they average about 26,000. More important here are the increases that were given by this Government, because we recognized that the

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problems with these people who are beneficiaries of these programmes—the public assistance and the old age pension—was that they were receiving was not able to meet their needs.

5.40 p.m.

What this Government did, as soon as it came into office, was that it gave increases. They did this every year in each budget. We started at \$171 in 1996. We moved on to the public assistance which was \$222. We have raised old age pension and also the income ceiling, so that more people can benefit from this. What this did, over the years, is that it moved them out of the poverty line. Compare our increases in the old age pension. In 1996 from \$356 to \$420; 1997, from \$420 to \$520; 1999, from \$520 to \$620; 2000 it is now \$720. Mr. President, look at the consistency in the caring that we have recognized for our old people. Look at what the PNM did over the period 1999—1995: \$32, and \$9.15. Yet we hear people saying that they should get more. Compare those figures.

What we are looking at in the new year is to have some discussions with the beneficiaries of the programme, to see what are their views with regard to the change in the system of payment. It appears now that these cheques are made and sent to the post offices. At the end of every month one can see, from early o'clock, the pensioners sitting and waiting to see whether their cheques arrive at the post office. Sometimes they have to return one day or even three days after. We intend to meet these people in the new year and have discussions with them and see what proposals they have, because they are the people who will benefit most. We will meet with other NGOs to find out what could be done to implement a new system to improve on this delivery.

I heard some people say that we are making promises, and the year 2000 will come and we will not deliver. I want to let them know that, already in train is preparation for the delivery of the new rates, come October 01. I am aware that the staff is already putting in place that programme.

Mr. President, let us look at other social programmes in the Ministry of Social and Community Development; free bus passes. We know the story with that. At one time we had the bus passes but no buses. Today we have the passes and the buses as well. We have a number of grants: micro-enterprise grant, training and development grant, burial assistance grant, the children grant, housing grant, purchase of pharmaceuticals, school textbooks grant, payment of house rent, clothing grant, house repairs that are necessitated by damage through natural disasters; and household articles, and the medical equipment grant. This

Government has also initiated a hardship relief programme to cut annual water rates up to 25 per cent for pensioners.

Mr. President, I want to refer to one comment by Sen. Montano, where he made reference to the PNM's payment to pensioners in terms of percentage. He said their percentage against our percentage increase was higher. Mr. President, if you talk to the pensioners and ask them whether those percentages meant anything to them, or whether there is a difference in \$32 that the PNM gave them as the increase, and the \$100 that we gave them. I am sure the \$100 is greater than the \$32. This is what matters.

Let us look at some of the PNM's record on poverty issues. This is what the Inter-American Development Bank said about poverty under Mr. Manning.

- “social services left under-funded;
- the Inter-American Development Bank reported poverty rose in Trinidad and Tobago—Interpress Service September 11, 1993

The Government social welfare package here is inadequate to deal with rising number of impoverished Trinidadians, a recent study says.

The Inter-American Development Bank which funded the study reports that poverty has increased steadily between 1988 and 1992. In 1988 it was estimated that 14.8 per cent of the country's 1.2 million people were living below the poverty line. That figure rose to 22.5 per cent in 1992.”

Mr. President, these are not UNC figures. Social services under Manning, inadequate.*[Interruption]*

Mr. President: Senator, please, the Manning administration, or the former Prime Minister.

Sen. N. Baksh: Former Prime Minister, Mr. President.

Interpress Service:

“The report found that the country's social welfare services are diffused and uncoordinated in terms of delivery, coverage and effectiveness. It has recommended that the entire social safety net be brought under one body to make it transparent and nonpartisan.”

With respect to the PNM administration records on drugs, here are some key points:

“the drug-related murders boosted murder rate; and
corruption within police department and court system;

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Drugs crimes in Trinidad—

Drug-related murders boosted murder rate. In 1994, 137 murders were reported with 31 being drug-related and 21 stemming from domestic violence.

In addition, guns were used in 36 murders in 1994.”

That is a report from the Central Statistical Office on crime statistics 1995.

“The PNM government failed to address drug corruption within police and courts.”

Trinidad Guardian June 02, 1994:

“The government cannot seriously address the crime situation until it tackles the drug kingpins that rule cocaine industry and the corruption in the judiciary and the police service.”

Again, the Interpress Service 1994 reports:

“Then remaining in Trinidad and Tobago would also mean having to deal with the increasing lawlessness of the society, much of which is linked to the drug trade. Witnesses in murder cases are being killed to prevent them from giving testimony which would lead to the conviction of drug lords, while some of the killings continue to baffle police officers, as they search for an explanation”.

Mr. President, one can see some of the information and the change over the last five years.

One of the premises this Government is launching its campaign for the next election is education. The Government’s policy is education for all. Within the last few days, we have heard the United Nations Resolution—Education for all by 2015.

5.50 p.m.

Mr. President, we are ahead of these people in terms of the fact that we have started this year already, so by 2015 we are going to be far advanced. Let us hear what the country has to say about our education programme. The *Bomb* newspaper, Friday August 25, page 12—[*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] Mr. President, I am giving all the newspapers:

"The UNC Government must be lauded for the new and dynamic thrust in the education sector.

The fact that all children would be secured a place in the school and the education system is now democratised, backed by all parents, including staunch PNM supporters!

I want to repeat that, "including staunch PNM supporters!" We are not blowing our trumpets, this is what the people are saying on the outside.

The article continues:

"Credit must be given for the abolition of Common Entrance, which has been a nightmare for children, parents and teachers for decades."

That was on page 12 on August 25.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. President, if the hon. Senator had listened to my presentation on Sen. Ramchand's Motion he would have discovered that the 11-plus has not been abolished.[*Desk thumping*]

Sen. N. Baksh: Mr. President, the article continues:

"This has been done and all children are secured a place for post primary education by the Panday administration.

It is expected that there would be teething problems for to change a system after 30-odd years is not a simple task.

Detractors should focus on the issue of educating the children and offer constructive criticisms."

I want to refer to another editorial by the *Catholic News*, which was in the *Newsday* of September 3, 2000, at page 11, this is only to support what people are saying:

"Changes in education—looking within."

They took a very optimistic view of it. The editorial said:

"This is no time to throw our hands up in despair...the success of this venture depends on all of us. Our children are set to enter secondary school and are depending on us to provide them with what has been promised. It is up to us to ensure that the school environment reflects our readiness to meet the needs of our students and the goals we the citizens have set for the future of our nation.

The Government cannot make this succeed on its own. The Ministry of Education has acknowledged that home and school must work together in meeting the goals of education, but all citizens have a part to play.

We welcome the recent statement by a concerned group of past students of six secondary schools in Port of Spain. Stressing the fact that Government has never so far been able to meet the financial demands of education, this group

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recognizes the other stakeholders as parents, teachers, religious organisations, past students associations, corporate citizens, NGOs and the general public. We hope that the past students of other schools will be invited to make their contributions.

Our Church, with a long history of involvement in education, which we recognise as a tool of human development, also has a part to play in ensuring that this expansion works to the benefit of all.

As we begin this new school year with its many challenge, let us all resolve to play our part in correcting the ills and improving what good there is in our quest for quality education for all."

Mr. President, I took the opportunity to read this one in particular so that it would appeal to all of us who have seen that anything that this Government does they want to oppose and criticize it. This is something we must also work together for—the upliftment of our young nation.

I have with me here a long list of UNC accomplishments, but I know you are aware of it. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Mohammed: Spare us.

Sen. N. Baksh: I know you are aware of it, but I just want to read another little thing before I close here.

Sen. Mohammed: We get it on the hustings.

Sen. N. Baksh: As we are coming to the end of our term let us look at the summary that is taking place:

"UNC doing a good job"

Daily Express, September 11, page 18.

"I would like to thank the present government for trying to correct the many wrongs which presently plague our country."

R. Maharaj, Barataria. It must be Ralph Maraj. [*Laughter*] The article continues:

"I think that we, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, need to recognize that everything cannot be done at the same time.

The PNM did so little, in such a long time, with so much money. I understand they may be listed in the next edition of the Guinness Book of World Records."

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This is another one in the *Daily Express* of the same date and page:

"A lot accomplished in four short years.

We see that the Government has indeed been working to improve the lives of every Trinidad and Tobago citizen. The economy of this country has been moving forward since the UNC took office in 1995.

They have reduced the rate of inflation to four per cent from eight per cent. They have decreased the unemployment rate every year from 18 per cent in 1995 to 11.7 per cent last year. And they created more than 60,000 jobs...

He even noted that the UNC had built new schools and abolished the Common Entrance exam so that every single child can have the chance at a secondary school education. All this in four short years." [*Crosstalk*]

Another articles states:

"A Government must have at least two terms"

Newsday, Thursday September 7. zHear this one:

"It was a big mistake to have kept the PNM in power for six consecutive terms. Those who have eyes to see will agree that this government has done extremely well in its first. This government deserves a second chance."

Mr. President, I would just read the headline in the next one:

"We have come too far to turn back now" [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mohammed: We cannot go on like that.

Sen. N. Baksh: Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to, again, support this Bill.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Wednesday September 13, at 1.30 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.00 p.m.