

*Leave of Absence**Thursday, September 14, 2000***SENATE***Thursday, September 14, 2000*

The Senate met at 10.02 a.m.

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

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

APPROPRIATION BILL**(BUDGET)**

[Fourth 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 Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Sadiq Baksh): Mr. President, the national budget presented by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development is another episode in a six part series designed to uplift, inspire and elevate the people of Trinidad and Tobago. While each budget can and does stand on its own as an example of fiscal management, the cumulative result of all six has been a period in which job creation has been unparalleled. Our growth rate is one of the highest in the world, inflation has reduced significantly, taxes have decreased, foreign investment and reserves have doubled.

Mr. President, the achievements of the Government since that fateful day in 1995 when it was assigned by the people of this country to manage the national economy, are both clear and considerate. Our achievements are very visible. They are there to be seen and admired by all those who have eyes to see or who wants to see. Nobody can question the noticeable improvements in the quality of life and standard of living of our people. They are there for everyone not blinded by political envy to see. Yet, there are some people who refuse to believe their own eyes. They see demons lurking where none exist, except in their imaginations, fuelled by political ambition and envy. They deliberately distort our fine record of accomplishment and seek to mislead the people of this country.

They see doors where none exist. We were accused of paying over \$90,000 for a bifold door for the new airport. That is a bald and boldfaced untruth. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. St. Cyr: How much did that door actually cost?

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh: Mr. President, there is no such door at the airport. [*Laughter*] And there is no door anywhere in any of our many successful building projects where such a door exists.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Works and Transport has played an extremely significant role in the economic and social development of our country. Our actions touch the lives of every individual in this country. All road users have benefitted from our efforts over the past five years. Residents and communities prone to flooding and landslides have benefitted. Sea and air transport users have seen improved services. Those who doubt what I say I ask you now to come and see for yourselves.

One thing about the Ministry of Works and Transport is that our achievements are there for all to see. Those who doubt can be disproved very easily. All you have to do is to come and see for yourselves the immense improvement in public works. Come and see for yourselves the 54 bridges we have built in five years.

Mr. President, there is a bridge in Guyaguayare which my colleagues on the other side took 10 years to build. We built 10 bridges in one year. [*Desk thumping*] And we added four more for a lagniappe. And if you don't believe me, and if "you ent see" no bridges, come and see for yourselves. If you doubt the number of roads we have paved, built, surfaced and the number that we would continue to build under our road programme, come and see.

It is easy to sit in this House and cast aspersions at the achievements of this Government, but if you are from Shark River in Toco and your bridge falls down, then you would have seen the employees of the Ministry of Works and Transport turning night into day installing a new bridge so that you can get to work and your children can go to school. If you are in Mafeking later this month when we would in fact open bridge number 54, you can talk to the people there whose lives the bridge would help to improve. Listen to them and they will tell you what we have done for them and all the other people in this country.

We have improved the quality of their lives, and have provided them with benefits and opportunities which they never had, and would never ever have had under any other government. You have to be awake and on the road by four

o'clock in the morning like the employees in the Ministry of Works and Transport. The last time I issued an invitation to one of my friends on the other side to join me on a rural bus at 5.00 a.m., the gentlemen showed up after we left.

Hon. Senator: That is too early for him.

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh: Mr. President, I now seek to account for my ministry's stewardship for the period 1999/2000. The allocation of Ministry of Works and Transport is \$559,688,021 for recurrent expenditure and \$152,015,311 for development programme.

At the end of August, one month before the end of the financial year, \$513,706,995 has been expended under recurrent expenditure and \$124,069,053 under the development programme expenditure. As such, the ministry has continued to demonstrate a relatively high implementation rate of 91.8 per cent in the recurrent programme and 81.62 per cent in the development programme.

The figures by themselves do not tell the true story or convey the full picture of the extent to which we have contributed to the betterment of the people of this country. My friend, Sen. Daly, pointed out that the St. Ann's Roundabout needed to do more, but when you consider something as simple as the St. Ann's Roundabout by itself, not considering the other things around, it is a simple and relatively inexpensive solution to a major problem. The expenditure does not reflect the extent to which it has improved the life of commuters. Consider the amount of money people have saved and the amount of time they have regained by just that one act. It took this Government to deliver what is now both a simple and highly effective solution to a problem that existed for years.

Mr. President, take the second bridge over the Caroni River. In terms of dollars and cents and in terms of some of the projects undertaken by previous administrations, this is a minor matter. Yet, consider the impact of that second bridge and the amount of frustration it has eased, and the time it has saved for the people of Central Trinidad. Perhaps, that is why it remained undone for so long, but my friends who are not from that area might doubt its existence. Again, I issue the call. Come and see for yourselves.

Mr. President, I will now focus on the road sector. Social and economic development can only take place with adequate infrastructure. Roads represent an important part of our country's asset. I wish to emphasize that Ministry of Works and Transport continues to strive for excellence in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of our road infrastructure.

The reconstruction and rehabilitation of our roads and reconstruction of bridges have allowed easier access to and from cities, residences, schools, churches and agricultural communities. We have reduced the amount of time our people spend on the roads, as well as the maintenance cost on vehicles.

The new Cross Crossing Interchange, for instance, will alleviate the daily San Fernando jam which has been a time-consuming and frustrating experience for commuters long before I started to go to school in San Fernando.

The National Highways Programme is one jointly funded by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank. It consists of three main components:

- Trunk Roads expansion
- rehabilitation of roads and bridges
- institutional strengthening/technical assistance

The roads and bridges rehabilitation component of the National Highways Programme is intended to rehabilitate 586 kilometres of roads and reconstruct 65 bridges while maintaining 2,000 kilometres of roads under the jurisdiction of the Highways Division over a six-year period.

Mr. President, it would take too long for me to list all the roads that we have paved, all the roads that we have improved and all the work the Ministry of Works and Transport has done to improve the lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

10.15 a.m.

Mr. President, I am sure you will remember the massive potholes that were a permanent feature of the term in office of our previous administration. I remember of a man in full diving gear, including spear guns, standing next to a massive pothole. Nobody knows what became of that daring and very brave individual. But, like the neglected opportunities of that regime, he is lost forever.

Mr. President, you would recall during December 1999, excessively heavy rainfall caused aggravated slope failure on roads throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Remember, Mr. President, these are roads which we inherited and which remained neglected for the entire history of the former administration. How many years was it? Thirty or forty? Tenders were invited on September 06, 2000 with construction expected to start on October 01, 2000. Residents in North Trinidad from Toco to Maracas, in Central, from Tabaquite to Caparo, and in South

Trinidad, Moruga particularly, will be glad to know that the Government has not neglected them and would never neglect them. We will provide them with long-lasting solutions to their perennial rainy season problems. Again, I extend an invitation to my colleagues; come and see for yourselves.

Under the agreement between the Government and the IADB, which includes the development of a plan to reduce the recurrent cost of routine maintenance by 50 per cent of the present level by the year 2002: the restructuring of the highways division into a roads authority; the development of a Routine Maintenance Management System and associated training is one of the areas identified to reduce the cost of routine maintenance. At long last, we would have a rational response to the different jurisdictions that have been inherited. Too many different authorities were responsible for bits and pieces of roads. Under previous administrations the roads have really deteriorated into bits and pieces. We are now in the process of rehabilitating all the roads regardless of jurisdiction and will formalize and institutionalize this process in the coming years.

Mr. President, the Rural Access Roads Rehabilitation Programme is a jointly funded programme by the IADB and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, with the IADB's contribution being 31.5 million, and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, \$20 million. This is one of the key areas of achievements of the Government, together with providing access to utilities, which, for several generations, had remained unattainable. Mr. President, a mere distant dream. This Government has ensured that no community would be truly rural in the previous sense of the word in this country. Everybody regardless of geography or other factors will have access to water, electricity, telephones and good roads. Under this programme we repaired 205 kilometres of roads and we constructed 42 bridges, and works are still being done on other roads and bridges throughout the country. In fact, during this year we started 10 additional bridges which include the Poole Bridge, which is the last remaining one-way bridge on the Naparima/Mayaro Road.

Again, the invitation is there, particularly for those who have never been in South or East of the East/West Corridor. It is impossible to judge our unparalleled record of achievement fairly unless you leave your comfort zone and come and see for yourselves. [*Desk thumping*] Again, Mr. President, I invite you, please come and see.

I had reported during the 1997/1998 Budget that the rehabilitation of the Solomon Hochoy Highway was to be financed mostly by grant funds from the European Union. Under this programme the major arterial link between north and south of the country was to be rehabilitated. It comprised two phases: Phase 1—

rehabilitation of the north and south-bound carriageways of the Solomon Hochoy Highway between Couva and Tarouba, a distance of approximately 30 kilometres; and the western section of the Tarouba Link Road, a distance of approximately 0.8 kilometre.

Phase 2 of the programme involved less extensive rehabilitation work and included the remainder of the Solomon Hochoy Highway and the Uriah Butler Highways, and would be undertaken upon completion of Phase 1. Mr. President, I am going to provide additional background to this project for our citizens to understand what sometimes happens in this business. I do not also want any one accusing us for buying a bifold door to put across the highway to use as a tollgate.

In May 1997, the Central Tenders Board awarded the Phase 1 contract for the rehabilitation of the Solomon Hochoy Highway to Comlysa Lain JV (CLJV) in the sum of \$122 million, with the completion time given as 24 months. The Supervisory Consultants, Alatec-Nicholas O'Dwyer instructed the contractor to begin works by letter dated May 06, 1997. However, it was only on March 06, 1998 that the contractor mobilized and started works. During the period March 1998 to April 1999, the work accomplished by the contractor was deemed unsatisfactory.

As at April 30, 1999 the overall completion rate of the project was 19 per cent, with an expenditure of approximately \$31 million. It was evident to the Supervisory Consultants and the engineers of the Highways Division that the contractor's performance was at a sub-standard level. After consultation with the Chief State Solicitor, a termination notice was issued to the contractor on May 11, 1999. Breaches of the contract were:

1. Failure to rectify or prevent constant slippage of the official work programme;
2. Failure to appoint a suitable site representative; and
3. Failure to accelerate and provide the increased resources and inputs required to achieve the official work programme.

Consequently, a strategic action plan was developed to:

1. secure the works and all assets pertaining to the project,
2. complete works on the southbound carriageway and reopen it to two-lane traffic, by using a combination of in-house resources and bonded contracted services.

This phase was expected to be completed within three months at an estimated cost of \$6.6 million, which was provided for from the Ministry's 1998/1999 budgetary allocation.

Rehabilitation of the parallel section of the northbound carriageway between Indian Trail and Claxton Bay: This phase was to be implemented using local contractors and was estimated to cost \$15 million. Works were expected to commence in January 2000, and it was proposed that the sum of \$15 million be provided from the Ministry's 1999/2000 development programme for this phase.

3. complete the remaining works between Claxton Bay overpass and Tarouba Link Road using the international competitive bidding process while, at the same time, encouraging maximum participation of local contractors.
4. prepare for the possible arbitration and litigation as a result of the termination.

Mr. President, I reported to this honourable House in 1999 that officers of the Ministry of Works and Transport completed Phase 1 works on both carriageways and reopened to vehicular traffic. Efforts were made to continue the project using the European Development Fund. However, the requirements of this institution would have delayed the project even further. Interim works would start shortly on the Solomon Hochoy Highway, between Indian Trail and Tarouba with their expected duration of approximately three to four months.

The Southern Roads Development Project is a jointly financed project by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean Development Bank. Originally, the CDB's contribution was to be \$17.5 million or TT \$110 million, and the Government's contribution US \$11 million or TT \$69 million. The project comprised of two contracts. The first is the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from St. Joseph Village to Golconda. The second is the dualling of the San Fernando By-Pass, from Chaconia Avenue to Cross Crossing the construction of a new grade separated interchange of Cross Crossing, and the construction of a connector road from the new interchange to Golconda Village. The original completion date was July 2000. This date was revised to the end of September 2000, to address the problems which were encountered with the retaining wall adjacent to Sunset Strip, Green Acres.

Mr. President, as we all know, there is a cost to development. Since the project started, all the users of this road, especially those from further South, have patiently put up with the inconvenience. They know that when the interchange is

completed it will bring great relief to them, both in time and money. The Cross Crossing interchange is the most complex-grade separated structure ever undertaken in Trinidad and Tobago.

While we do all these things we recognize that environmental responsibilities in the Ministry is of importance and, as such, we established an environmental unit within the Ministry. The Ministry of Works and Transport impacts on the environment, and it is our business to ensure its protection, preservation and conservation. In keeping with global trends within the unit, we have a landscape architect planner and seven environmental monitoring inspectors. This unit, although small, has been involved in many projects such as the St. Ann's Roundabout—which my colleagues would have seen—and others like the manatee project, which, perhaps, unfortunately we have never seen. Again, however, Mr. President, I extend an invitation to my colleagues. If they doubt what I say, come and see for themselves. We in the Ministry of Works and Transport deal with concrete accomplishments, not paper. What we have done is out there for everyone to use, enjoy and benefit, and to see for themselves.

10.25 a.m.

Mr. President, the Road Improvement Fund (RIF)—the Minister of Finance in his 1993 Budget Speech proposed the establishment of a Road Improvement Fund. This is financed directly by the imposition of a road improvement tax of 5 per cent on motor vehicle fuel. Receipts were estimated at \$50 million annually and would be used solely for road repairs, maintenance and improvement. Under the RIF, the main criterion for selecting roads is the cost benefit ratio of the necessary road repair works, the volume of traffic and the existing conditions of the road. These rehabilitation works involve mainly patching, paving, resurfacing, strengthening and drainage.

Under this programme, we have patched 319,590 square metres of road surface; improved the drainage of 165,835 metres and resurfaced 307 kilometres of roads in Trinidad and 11.5 kilometres in Tobago. Some of the key projects undertaken in this programme are, one, the reconstruction of the M2 Tasker Road, the widening of the South Trunk Road, reconstruction of the bridge and roadway at Calcutta, construction of the Tarouba exit ramp and access onto the Uriah Butler/Churchill Roosevelt Highway, Charleville.

Mr. President, the traffic management branch of the Ministry of Works and Transport has as its mandate the management of all regulatory aspects of traffic management in Trinidad. Its prime objective is to make the roads safe and accessible to all road users and to disseminate information on road safety to the

public. Over the last five years the branch, with an annual recurrent budget of \$2.5 million, continues its thrust in the development and implementation of traffic schemes and safety measures throughout Trinidad and Tobago in an effort to reduce man-hours lost through traffic congestion and, at the same time, improve the safety of commuters on the nation's roadways.

Some of the projects and safety measures undertaken were: approximately 270,000 metres of roadways were demarcated at over 1,200 sites in Trinidad. This included specialized markings such as crosswalks, transverse and oblique parallel bars, merging, diverging and edge lines. Approximately 2,250 signs in varying dimensions and categories were cleaned, repaired and replaced throughout the island. Road reflectors were installed at both edges of the South Trunk Road and the Old Southern Main Road, La Romain and Otaheite. Road delineations were also installed in the median at the San Fernando By-Pass between the Mon Repos roundabout and Tarouba Link Road. Safety devices were installed at the west access of the Poole River and the Naparima/Mayaro Road, significantly reducing the occurrence of accidents or run-offs into the Poole River. Traffic safety devices for delineating accident-prone spots have been highlighted through in-house designs, and a number of these devices have been repaired and installed in such areas.

A number of traffic projects have been implemented to ease the flow of traffic:

- the relocation of taxi stands from a number of areas throughout Trinidad and Tobago to ease problems within the inner city;
- experimental traffic programmes were conducted in Arima and San Fernando in the vicinity of Coffee Street and the library corner;
- new traffic programmes were implemented in Maraval, Chaguanas and San Fernando;
- various traffic surveys and counts were conducted throughout Trinidad aimed at the formulation and evaluation of a comprehensive traffic management system; and
- new traffic lights were installed at Macoya Road, Eastern Main Road and the El Dorado Road intersection.

Mr. President, over the period 1999/2000 the branch, through a partnering initiative with the private sector, undertook a number of programmes geared

towards improving road safety, especially in times of poor visibility. This involved the installation of retroreflective road studs and raised pavement markers which assist in visibility at night. To date, 31 sites have been completed. Those of us who use the nation's highways, who traverse every area of this country to do our jobs, would have observed the big difference on our roads. During this year we have put in place a programme of sponsorship for road signs dealing with road safety. The first would be the school-crossing signs, the painting of all roads in Trinidad and Tobago with thermoplastic material and the installation and upgrade of new traffic signals at certain intersections.

The transport division is another area of focus. In my last budget contribution I reported that the Ministry of Works and Transport worked assiduously towards amending the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Chap. 48:50, to allow private vehicles five years and over to be inspected, subject to biannual inspection at approved private garages. I also indicated that the tentative commencement date for implementation was November 1, 1999 with a moratorium of one year to allow sufficient time for vehicle owners to comply. Today I am happy to report that the first garage opened for testing on November 1, 1999. To date, however, 60 such stations have started operations throughout Trinidad and Tobago. At the end of July 2000, reports indicated that only 30,000 vehicles were inspected. It is estimated that approximately 260,000 vehicles fall into this category and are still to be inspected prior to the deadline date of November 1.

Mr. President, we are going to be looking at measures that will encourage people to further come in and have their vehicles inspected, but we are working out some details on that at present. We also spoke about the institution of a new registration plate system to replace the existing ones. The intent of this measure is to reduce the number of irregularities that have been occurring over the years. Because of our information system at the transport division, we are now trying to upgrade that information system to allow the implementation of such a programme. The division is also working towards the installation of emission testing centres at both the main office in Port of Spain and San Fernando. This is to ensure that all motor vehicles which are due for annual and biannual inspection are subject to stringent emission tests before the issue of an inspection certificate.

Mr. President, as I mentioned before, the transport division is faced with a fast-growing motor vehicle population, together with an outdated organizational structure which is stretched to its limit in dealing with the demands of the population. In addition, the availability of information is critical to policy formulation in all areas of transport. For this reason, in 1998 the consultancy firm

of Ernst & Young undertook a study of the transport division and furnished the Ministry with proposals for transforming the information and organizational aspects of the division. Implementation of the initial recommendation did not occur in the projected time frame.

Based on this, it has been recommended that due to the dynamic nature of the information systems, a review should be done to ensure the appropriateness of what had been proposed and the future development of the transport division. The Ministry has been reviewing a number of unsolicited proposals from both local and foreign agencies in anticipation of the transformation exercise. However, in an effort to create equity and transparency, the division is in the process of developing a request for proposal, which is expected to be advertised in fiscal 2000/2001.

During the past few years the following amendments to the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act were made. The Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amdt.) Act, 1997, No. 25 of 1997—groundwork laid for motor vehicle inspections. The Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amdt.) Regulations 1999—private garage vehicle inspections and the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic (Enforcement Administration) (Amdt.) Act, 2000, No. 20 of 2000—traffic wardens, new ticket system and penalty points. The Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amdt.) (No. 1) Act, 2000, No. 21 of 2000—traffic wardens and the new ticket system with penalty points.

The Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amdt.) (No. 2) Act, 2000, No. 22 of 2000 creates the offence of dangerous driving. The Motor Vehicles (Third-Party Insurance) (Amdt.) Act, 1996, No. 36 of 1996, proclaimed in 1998, amends the insurance law. The following legislation is being developed, Mr. President: the Motor Vehicles (Registration of Charges) Bill; the Motor Vehicles (Amdt.) Bill to introduce the informal school bus system and the Motor Vehicles Road Traffic Bill to introduce the breathalyser breath alcohol testing.

Mr. President, again in the transport division, this Government is committed towards the improvement of public transport in this country. Since assuming office in November 1995, the Ministry of Works and Transport has sought to upgrade and modernize public transport in Trinidad and Tobago so that the travelling public can benefit from an efficient, reliable and comfortable service. In 1996 the Public Transport Service Corporation assumed full responsibility for the management and operation of the Port of Spain transit centre at South Quay. This

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initiative sought to streamline the maxi-taxi operation within the city centre by centralizing the service at South Quay. The express commuter service provides excellent service to commuters on six routes.

The Ministry of Works and Transport has taken initiatives to increase the existing fleet from 49 buses to 97 units in the year 2000. Communities such as Point Fortin, La Brea, Chaguaramas, Chaguanas and Tobago continue to benefit from this enhanced service. The Public Transport Service Corporation also introduced new and direct services from Princes Town, Siparia and Point Fortin so that commuters can now enjoy savings in terms of time and money. Mr. President, it is the first time that one could actually purchase a ticket and travel from Point Fortin straight to Port of Spain, or from Princes Town straight to Port of Spain. We are working now to introduce a system where a commuter in Matelot would be able to board a rural bus, change to another bus and come straight into Port of Spain. [*Desk thumping*]

In June 1999, a rural transport service was introduced. Fifty-five used Mercedes Benz buses were introduced on the roads of Trinidad and Tobago. Today, Mr. President, I am proud to say that over 750,000 people, including pensioners and schoolchildren, have benefited from this service. In order to reduce the hardships of our schoolchildren, a fleet of 146 maxi-taxis is being managed by the Public Transport Service Corporation on behalf of the Ministry of Education. The service extends into areas such as Icados, Cedros, Barrackpore, Guayaguayare, Mayaro, Matelot, Toco and Blanchisseuse, and caters for 13,500 schoolchildren.

The Ministry of Works and Transport has taken initiatives to bring the school transportation system in line with international standards and proposes to acquire 70 buses to service remote areas of Trinidad and Tobago. In 1998, the school transportation system provided 12,671 seats per day on 141 routes and serviced 50 schools. This is part of this Government's care and concern for the education of our young people and our willingness to put resources into ensuring the future of our country. It is a stark contrast to what we inherited—thousands of pensioners with bus passes for free public transport but public transport without buses. You would notice our approach, Mr. President, to our senior citizens—more buses, more pensions, more amenities, facilities, benefits and opportunities. See for yourselves. [*Desk thumping*]

Five years ago when this Government delivered its first budget, I stood before this honourable Senate and stated Government's intention to focus on the critical issues of flooding and erosion which were affecting the lives and fortunes of our citizens in terms of loss of man-hours, agricultural crops and livestock.

10.40 a.m.

We recognized then that drainage cannot be viewed in isolation as the provision of an adequate drainage and irrigation infrastructure does not simply alleviate flooding of roadways, villages, and agricultural areas, but rather complements government's other measures to promote growth and development.

Mr. President, during this five-year period, we also witnessed a change in the weather patterns, which had a direct impact on the measures, which had to be undertaken, and the revolutionary measures that we needed to institute. The drainage and flood control programmes included work on the Caparo River. This involved the widening, dredging, embanking and realigning of the Caparo River between Perseverance Road in the west, and Brasso Caparo in the east.

The Caroni River project alleviated flooding in Kelly Village. We dredged the St. Ann's River outfall and improved the drainage in Port of Spain. Water management in the Caroni irrigation area was improved. This helped many farmers who cultivated the area. There is dredging of the Diego Martin River Estuary continuing, as we speak. I can again take those interested in the truth to see the areas for themselves, and to view the work that we have done to improve the quality of life of our people.

During the past five years, the drainage division also undertook numerous projects under the recurrent and development programmes. Recurrent works were done on a national basis and included such works as manual desilting and clearing; lining of channels; gabion basket works; repairs to sluice gates; paving and walling of channels; welding; realignment; and deepening of main watercourses. The programme was comprehensive and national in scope, improving drainage from Morvant to Manzanilla; from Laventille to La Lune; and from Chaguaramas to Cedros.

Mr. President, under the development programme, we completed projects like the one on Mosquito Creek where an entire generation of southerners had to turn back sometimes when the road was flooded. There was also the Felicity main drain; the San Juan River; the Endeavour Main Drain, the Guayaguayare Sea Wall and other projects. In addition to the works being undertaken, for the first time

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coastal studies have been commissioned for the purpose of providing relief to residents and commuters adversely affected by coastal flooding and erosion. These areas include Manzanilla/Mayaro, Los Iros/Erin, La Romaine/Mosquito Creek, Cedros/Icados and Orange Valley. This project started in January 2000 and it is expected to be completed in April, 2001. It includes a feasibility study, environmental and social impact assessments, detailed designs and contract documents for selected sites, which will facilitate invitation to tender for construction works. To date, the final design stage one and the inception report for the Orange Valley Fishing Depot have been submitted by the consultant at a cost of \$1.39 million.

Mr. President, the drainage division in 2000—2001 will continue its drive to provide an adequate drainage and irrigation infrastructure, in order to complement government's effort to promote growth and development. This would assist in encouraging investments to fuel the economy by providing easy access to all regions of the country. Adequate drainage infrastructure would alleviate flooding of roadways, villages, and agricultural areas, and would result in the promotion of a healthier environment. In this respect, the division has programmed three key projects at an estimated cost of \$6.9 million, which include additional work on the Caparo River and the Felicity Main Drain.

Mr. President, over the years we have been looking at coastal erosion taking place throughout Trinidad and Tobago and we are doing these studies for the first time, so that our key defensives will be given the consideration due to it. In addition to that we are looking at the possibility of studying the Gulf of Paria, and we will shortly initiate a symposium to get all the information, so that when we study the Gulf of Paria we will be in a position to utilize this as a sensitive economic area for future development of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We will be contacting our counterparts in Venezuela to institute this as a joint project. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the study of the Gulf of Paria to ensure its full utilization.

Mr. President, in the area of maintenance, it is in this area that this Government has distinguished itself. We have made maintenance a major component of all our construction programmes, and we have sought to develop a culture of maintenance ignored by our predecessors that is so sadly lacking in national life.

Over the fiscal year 1999—2000, the division carried out minor and major works under the recurrent programme to 745 public buildings. Some of these projects include 272 office buildings, 151 schools and 48 police stations. In

addition, the division also rendered assistance to community groups in the form of labour and technical advice. Several major projects are either in progress or in the planning stage. These include major improvement works at the Government Printery, Knowsley Building, and revenue offices in Tunapuna, Siparia, Central and the San Fernando Police Station. It also includes the Queen's Park Counselling Centre.

Mr. President, what we are actually doing is implementing preventative maintenance programmes, which are now outfitting some of our major buildings with facility managers to ensure that continuous maintenance takes place as part of the programme of ensuring government buildings continue to be there for future users in Trinidad and Tobago.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh: Mr. President, I now move to the Piarco Airport development programme and, specifically, the construction of the new terminal building. This is a project on which I have been reporting since my maiden speech in this Senate since 1996. At that time, I stated that there were certain projects in the air sector that this Government had found in train and which it would pursue. Indeed, this was one of those projects and the history of this project is instructive.

The Piarco International Airport was opened in 1931, and the existing passenger terminal building in August, 1962. By 1968, C.C. Parker and Parsons, Brincherhoff Limited Transportation Consultants were contracted to determine a long-term development programme for Piarco. In 1972, another study was undertaken by Phelps Dennis and Taylor, and another in 1980 by Transport Canada.

In 1985, a feasibility study was undertaken by Aviation Planning Services entitled "A feasibility study construction, operation and ownership of a new passenger terminal building and car park facilities at Piarco International Airport. In August 1985, the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago prepared a conceptual master plan for Piarco and Crown Point International Airports.

On March 19, 1997, Cabinet granted approval in principle for a practical land use plan for Piarco and Crown Point International Airports and the appointment of a land use steering committee.

On June 15, 1997, the committee received 13 proposals for the implementation of the land use plan for Piarco and Crown Point International Airports.

On August 27, 1987, the committee in pursuance of its mandate provided a short list of firms and consortia and issued a request for proposals.

10.50 a.m.

On February 1, 1988, proposals were received from four shortlisted firms and consortia. On June 9, 1988, the proposals were ranked in order of preference and on July 1, 1988, the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago announced that Trinidad and Tobago Airports Associates of Canada had ranked first and commenced negotiations. The overall development of the master plan for Piarco International Airport was estimated at approximately US \$250 million.

On August 19, 1988, the first ranked consortium failed to satisfy the conditions precedent to contract award and the negotiations were terminated. The Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago then commenced negotiations with the second ranked consortium, FKA-DDCL Ventures Group headed by Bechtel International Limited.

On December 15, 1988, Cabinet appointed a team to negotiate terms and conditions for the implementation of the land use plan for Piarco and Crown Point International Airports.

On March 28, 1989, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago received a US trade and development grant in the sum of US \$475,000 (TT \$2.99 million) for a feasibility study. The Bechtel Airport Development Group undertook a Piarco International Airport Land Use Feasibility Study and Howarth and Howarth International undertook a master study and prospective financial analysis commercial land use for Piarco. The Howarth and Howarth study was an input into the overall Bechtel study.

After these studies were completed in August 1999, the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago prepared a preliminary master plan. On April 19, 1990, the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago signed an agreement with Zipperly and Hardage Associates (ZHA) of Orlando, USA for pre-construction works. This was on the basis of a US \$2.9 million (TT \$18 million) loan from the EXIM bank.

In 1991, the Maritime financial group offered to head a syndicate of local financiers to study the project and developed a financing proposal for non-recourse bank debt. This initiative ended without a final report being submitted.

In December, 1991, Zipperly and Hardage Associates completed the pre-construction engineering designs and studies and developed a final master plan. A preview centre was also completed. The Zipperly and Hardage Associates engineering designs were based on the Bechtel study.

On February 24, 1992, the International Civil Aviation Organization commissioned a study for the Inter-American Development Bank on the feasibility analysis, environmental impact, terminal retail plan and the detailed cost/benefit. The study was undertaken by LEA-TRA Airport Consultants.

On April 16, 1992, the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago issued a request for proposals in search of a joint venture partner to develop Piarco International Airport on a build/own/transfer basis. The preferred developer, Pegasus Aviation Properties was selected in November, 1992, but that process was aborted. The unsuccessful proposer was a consortium between the Maritime Group and Birk Hillman.

On May 20, 1993, another request for proposal, again based on the build/own/transfer concept was issued. This document included Crown Point International Airport and a cargo terminal at Piarco International Airport. A preferred developer, Pegasus Hughes Airport Systems, was selected in September 1993 but the developer declined continued involvement in the project in March, 1996.

Sen. Mohammed: Continue the report. Paragraph 10.

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh: Mr. President, the chronicle highlighted, points to the fact that the adequacy of the terminal facilities has been a matter of historical records. It took this administration to build it.

The figure quoted by the Opposition Leader to date has been \$1.3 billion. One of his esteemed colleagues has taken it to \$2 billion.

Sen. Mohammed: And more than that to rise.

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh: These figures are being placed against an original estimate of TT \$661 million. The new terminal building will cost \$769,904,000.

The supporting projects—

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. President, could the hon. Minister state whether any loan has been taken out to pay for that, what would the interest payment for the loan be and, therefore, the total sum, if that were the case? Thank you.

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh: Mr. President, the supporting projects will cost \$77,487,000—the installation and upgrade of the public utilities; the upgrade of the Golden Grove Road and the institutional strengthening programme for the

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Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago; a land use plan of the Piarco Airport Estate and the development of a site for the relocation of Oropune Village. The fees we referred to would comprise Birk Hillman and Nipdec fees.

Really, the construction figure which we are looking at is \$769,904,000 plus VAT. In analyzing this figure, it is necessary to now go into the details of the project over the 1997 period to present.

The present project started on March 1, 1997, with a projected period for completion of 18—24 months. Construction was suspended on April 7, 1997 to allow for the undertaking of a commission of enquiry as requested by key stakeholders in the industry. Terminal building construction was re-started on September 14, 1998. This was a delay of approximately 17 months.

After the stoppage of works due to the commission of enquiry, the Government decided that the construction of the new terminal building must be completed so that the country will be properly prepared to meet the challenges of the new millennium. We regarded it as more than a bi-fold door. We see the airport as a window of opportunity for this country. If it is a door, it is a doorway between our country and the rest of the world. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mohammed: Shameless.

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh: What we have are gates, 18 in all, which would keep the people from getting wet when they board or disembark from a plane. It is, perhaps, possibly there that our people will see the improvements that we will bring to Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Mohammed: You put John O'Halloran to shame.

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh: Mr. President, an unbiased assessment of the performance of this Government and the Ministry of Works and Transport, will show that we have made remarkable progress and that our achievements have been unprecedented. These achievements could not have been realized without the dedication, commitment and support of the officers of the Ministry and the productive efforts of the staff and workers at every level.

Sen. Mohammed: Scandalous!

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh: They have all responded admirably to the challenge [*Crosstalk*] I presented to them five years ago to be part of the solution—

Mr. President: Order please. Order.

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh:—to the country's infrastructural problems rather than be part of the problem. I, therefore, wish to place on record, my sincere thanks and appreciation to each and every one of them. *[Desk Dumping]* Today, five years later, I could safely stand, put my hand on my chest and say that the Ministry of Works and Transport is better off today than it was five years ago. *[Desk Dumping]*

Today, Mr. President, the Ministry of Works and Transport is a highly motivated, shapely focussed organization, dedicated to the successful implementation of the Government's progressive plans for the future modernization, development and expansion of the nation' infrastructure and the upliftment of the lives of all our citizens.

Mr. President, notwithstanding what they say, we are proud of our stewardship over the past five years. We pledge to build on our successes and set even higher standards in the next five years to come. Our deep sense of pride is accentuated when we consider the extent to which our achievements contribute to the greatness of our nation. For example, we have build roads, but roads are much more than asphalt and gravel.

Mr. President: Two minutes to wrap up.

Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh: We have modernize our transport system, but that system is more than a fleet of buses. We have constructed a record number of bridges, but they mean more than beams and railings.

Mr. President, all that we have done in this sphere are enduring manifestations of a nation on the move. They are tangible evidence of the continuous improvement in the quality of life, which has been witnessed here in Trinidad and Tobago over the past five years. They have helped to make our lives safer. They have assisted in job creation and the enlargement of our disposable income. We have enhanced the use of leisure hours. In fact, we have delivered not only the physical infrastructure, but unlimited opportunities for the growth and development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, on a personal note, it has been a pleasure for me to guide the Ministry of Works and Transport over the past five years. It has also been a honour and a privilege for me to serve in this honourable Senate It has been a tremendous learning experience for me. I am grateful to you Sir, and to all hon. Senators for your guidance and understanding. I am grateful for whatever commendations you have given to me in the performance of my duties as a Government Minister. They have been the wind beneath my wings. *[Desk Dumping]*

I am also thankful for your well-intentioned constructive criticisms. They have served to inspire me to do better and as a reminder that none of us have all the answers to the problems which beset young nations like ours. They have made me even more aware that what I have been thought in school that if you wish to succeed in life make perseverance your bosom friend, experience your wise counselor and caution your elder brother.

I thank you very much.

Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams: Mr. President, it seems like in this debate, we have a number of swan songs, some openly, some subtly given. Amidst the swan songs, we also have some people who gave us future projections and, in that light, I would like to add my share of compliments to the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Works and Transport, Sen. Carlos John, who certainly was not singing a swan song when he sang and who, certainly, said to himself, "I am taking over", and gave us the policy that he intended to follow if he gets into government again.

But, Sen. John, through you, Mr. President, even though other people saw signs of nervousness, I never saw any. I was very proud of you when you made your delivery and I can assure you that regardless of what you said and how long you spoke, you spoke three times as long as your colleague on the left when he made his maiden speech.

11.05 a.m.

Mr. President, for those who do not know I have served many years in the trade union movement myself, quite a number of years, even reaching President Elect, therefore, one needs to recognize the service of a unionist. I want to congratulate Sen. Selwyn John on his 50 years of service. I am sure even though he planned to go into some semi-retirement that his advice would not be lost.

Mr. President, today, I would just want to step aside a bit, I hope, and talk about one of the more vulnerable groups in society to whom I felt we needed to pay attention.

Before I do that I have to respond —sorry I have to do it—to some things I have heard from the hon. Minister of Health. I did not intend to go that way at all in this debate, but I think it is important that we put the record straight. One of the things that I know is that the past administration did introduce the reform in the health service, and it was expected that the present administration would continue that reform. I have always said it and I would say it again, sometimes when governments come into being they feel that whatever they do should have been

done before, forgetting that this is continuous and that you need to advance whatever was there before.

Therefore, I was a little saddened when I heard the hon. Minister of Health talk about refurbishment of hospitals and what were not refurbished not getting her facts right. She moved to St. Ann's, she moved to Port of Spain General Hospital, and I want to tell you, Mr. President—that I must give credit to the former Minister of Health who did do a great deal in terms of upgrading the health facilities, and nobody can deny that. You may deny it, and from that you move on, rather than say, very pitiable, what you think should have been done. I really feel that was not fair to the former minister, because I would have wanted her to say what she or her ministry has done within the time that they were there.

Mr. President, everything is not clear. For example, you have a new Couva Health Facility now. I could have gone on to say, yes, I went in there and all the nurses said that the Couva Health Facility is not a properly designed one; you go in one door and you come out the same door; all those could be little criticisms, because that is what you are boasting about; one entrance and one exit. I could talk about things like that, but the time for that has passed.

I would hope that as people go around and see what is happening, we look at the more fundamental things. For example, in San Fernando there is a new wing to the San Fernando General Hospital which had been built by the former administration, the stone had been laid by the former Prime Minister. The Accident and Emergency Ward is there, the theatres are in the new wing. What have we done with that since? Where have we moved since? This is what we need to know. Because of the Regional Health Authority and the Ministry of Health we have a big problem in San Fernando which we need to address, and that is the thing we should be talking about.

In the old wing, as I would say, the Ministry of Health, as you would say, we have both the Regional Health Authority and the Ministry of Health personnel with an administrator, and in the new wing where there is the Accident and Emergency Clinic built by the former administration, they have now put in another administrator. So you almost have two administrators running the San Fernando General Hospital; recipe for confusion. That was not done by us, that is what has happened now, and you ask yourself why is that happening. How could you bring that together? No matter what you do, those RHA personnel in one wing underneath the Ministry of Health's administrator are not listening to the Ministry of Health; those Ministry of Health personnel in the other wing under the RHA

administration are not listening to the RHA administrator. Those are some of the problems that we have, which people need to know and correct.

The hon. Minister talked about the cataract operations. Where do we live? Have you not heard all over the years that we have had these cataract operations taking place? Do not tell me that since 1995 there were 2,000 cases and they still have 2000 cases. We had the local ophthalmologist team, they would come out and do it over a period of two weeks, everybody knows that. How could you forget "Cansee"? They would come to Trinidad, go to the hospital and they would perform these cataract operations all the time. Then you had Orbit, "the aeroplane hospital". The personnel stay at Piarco, and we send our nurses out there to work with them.

In fact, when they come down they are so glad to have our nurses, because our nurses perform at a very high standard. That has been happening all over the years. [*Desk thumping*] This is nothing new. The last time, I understand, it was stopped in 1997. Who stopped it then? We have been doing this for years, it was stopped in 1997, that was the last time Orbit or any one of them came in. Now you have 2000 in 2000, who are you trying to embarrass when this has been happening all the time? Let us be honest with ourselves, it has been happening all the time.

I want to tell you something, and this is for the record. This weekend we have the local teams working in north and south. Is it not strange that it happened the weekend before we started our debate? I just thought about it—so we could say we put in that team—the Regional Health Authority bought the equipment—check me out—at Port of Spain hospital today, the equipment disappeared; "doh" blame the nurses, they do not need the equipment. The equipment has disappeared from last weekend after the cataract surgery. Where are we going from here? I think we need to look at those things and give credit where credit is due. If you are doing something you are doing it in good faith, you do not want to come and boast in the Parliament the following day saying, "I was there yesterday." You are doing it because you really care about the people and because you really feel you need to do it.

I am very serious about that. The Lions Club has been arranging to have cataract operations in this country—how could we forget?—and that is a non-governmental organization. We cannot put those things aside, and we must be very serious about what we say. [*Desk thumping*] We boast about going off to Mount Hope, and the hon. Minister told us one of her family members was

injured, or something like that, and he got good patient care. It is the same nurses who were walking up and down; the patient care has nothing to do with the hon. Minister or that Government. The good patient care came because the nurses are a dedicated set of people—[*Desk thumping*]*—*and if you want to boast about the patient care, why did you not pay them? Why did the budget not have some money in it for them? That is what we are looking at.

That has nothing to do with the Minister, who wants to be very emotional about how nice those nurses are. Those nurses are always nice, that is why they came to the streets to tell you, "We could do better, help us." They were crying out. Then she said that the lab technicians went to work on Saturday when they were not supposed to go. Those lab technicians were also out there with the nurses at some time. Who bothered about the lab technicians? Why did they go on Saturday? Did you give them extra money? They went because they wanted to go.

Those same lab technicians who told you, "Give us some more equipment and give us more money, we will do a better job." You did not bother with them, but you came here, very emotional, "The lab technicians went out on Saturday and they were so good!" Yes, they are good and we compliment them. They have always been good. [*Desk thumping*] What would be done to recommend those people? Emotionalism does not help us, we have got to see what is happening.

It is the same Eric Williams Medical Hospital that they had said was a "sleeping giant" they awakened. What sleeping giant? When people ask where "de money gone", that is where the money went. [*Desk thumping*] Everybody is rushing to the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. I went there myself and I was proud to go there. When anything happens, that is the first place one goes—to the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, and that is where the money gone.

After it was built, because of the size, it took a lot of money to bring it up to "state". We did admit that, and, therefore, we feel that each successive government will try to make another portion of it functional until we get that fully functioning, whatever you do. You do not cry down that institution and say things about it, because that has been built with our money. The pediatric hospital that we built, that is where the money went. Do not tell us about the health services; do not tell us that it is a sleeping giant. How long was it sleeping? People have been going there from the time it started right until now. I had surgery there; many people from here went across there, and we are very proud of the people. The Minister of Health himself went there. Therefore, we have got to be extremely careful when we try to criticize.

This budget should tell us: what have you done, not what you felt other people should have done, and the reason you are in Government is to continue the process. You are here to continue ensuring that the Regional Health Authority is established in Trinidad and Tobago and that that regional health authority works. If you cannot do it, move! [*Desk thumping*] but do not criticize what was done. There is no other way I know to say that.

Sen. Tota-Maharaj: That is why you all moved. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: I want to also say something: sometimes we have to ignore certain things, because sometimes we get caught. I heard the Senator say that the People's National Movement stopped the nurses training and that training has now been re-introduced. What we needed to know is what is happening with nurses in training. NIHERST started training nurses; a little cost was attached to it, they are giving an Associate Degree. The Government is paying the tutors for that programme and, if you have a problem with that, why not face it and see where the problem is?

Mr. President, do you know what this Government did? In September they started another nursing programme run by the Ministry of Health as well. They are wearing a different uniform. So you have two nursing programmes now in Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Tota-Maharaj: Mr. President, I think that information is quite misleading, because everything is done in collaboration with the Nursing Council, the Academy, the Registered Nurses Association and NIHERST. The Ministry of Health is not doing its own thing, so that is misleading. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: Do not worry to wrap the desks. I never said that the Ministry of Health was doing its own thing—I said that there are two nursing programmes. The Registered Nurses Association and the Nursing Council told me that there are two. [*Crosstalk*] I am saying, listen please, we have two nursing programmes out there—hold it, do not get anxious—one giving an Associate Degree; it is the same programme—one run by the Ministry of Health. This is a small country, Trinidad and Tobago.

In the Ministry of Health's programme, of course, they tried to go back to the apprenticeship type scheme that we had before, where you do not pay. NIHERST has a fee attached to it. One is giving an Associate Degree, one is not. At the end of the day you have these two groups coming out there. I do not know how they are going to equate salaries, because I am coming out with my Associate Degree and you are coming out with a Certificate of Nursing. This comes from the Nursing Council. I am just saying that we need to look at that situation.

Anybody who is into any kind of training programme should look at it, because the Government is paying the tutors for the NIHERST programme, so it is almost your programme in another way, because it is two. You have the two that have started, and you have to listen. [*Crosstalk*] Why one?

Sen. Mark: What would you have done?

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: You could have worked with NIHERST or the Nursing Council and have two groups, the same numbers, because you want to increase the supply, but there was not a need to start a separate programme.

Here we were told, "You stopped nursing and we started it in September." You need to get it right, and one of the things I do when I stand here is that I get my facts right. I go straight to the horse's mouth to find out. The nurses themselves feel that we could have rationalized this programme, because at the end of the day both groups must get the certificate from the Nursing Council; they must go to that Nursing Council for registration. There are two sets, one in this uniform, one in that uniform, right down there at Mount Hope going through one door, the other group going through the next door and coming out together; one with Associate Degree and so forth.

I am only saying that these are the things that we need to talk about and look at, because these are the things that make a difference in how we do things. Yes, we can divide and rule in this place. It is those same nurses out there who told me, "We have no change after what we have done; we went out there, we have asked for things, things have got worse." They said that things have got worse, no help was given.

I want to advise the hon. Minister, I heard her saying—I know she is into this thing and she tries her best. She takes her weekend and goes off to the hospital; she said, "I went personally to see it," I think it is good to go with as many of the technical people as you can, because sometimes as politicians when we get a ministry we do not have the technical knowledge to go with it and we depend on the technocrats at our ministry to help us. Sometimes it is good that as politicians you go with the technocrats to see what is happening, rather than going by yourself, because you can go alone and see anything that people want you to see out there. In fact, it is not only the Minister of Health who does that, sometimes the Minister of Education does it, sometimes the Prime Minister wants to go out and see things himself—we will come to him—but we need at all times to take someone from within, who can guide us.

My problem is today that I need to state that what is happening in health is not an emotion; it is not about emotionalism; there are no tears about it. We have got

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to get down and understand there is a big problem out there. According to Sen Rev. Teelucksingh, I would have liked the minister to tell us where we have started with that scourge of AIDS which is out there. We do not have anything in place. I would have thought that something like that you would have started to think about and put it to this Parliament, because we have got to think about that. Regardless of which side of the fence we are, that AIDS is a problem and we have got to attack it. [*Desk thumping*] Worldwide, people have been doing it; it is very close to our doors, we are getting some frightening statistics and, therefore, we need to come to the Parliament with proposals to show that we have now done something different. We have to do something about it. These are the kinds of things that we want the Minister to address.

11.20 a.m.

The tears and the emotionalism and the good things that we say about our nurses which we know, and the good things that we say about our lab technicians which we know, do not help us in the end. They need to be comfortable and to be adequately rewarded. They were given 7 per cent over a period of three years which they turned down.

I just remembered that the Minister said that they were moving from the Ministry of Health to the Regional Health Authorities, and I remembered the difficulty. Although the Regional Health Authorities Act might not be perfect, there was a method by which they could have moved from one to the other. Sen. Selwyn John was able to get his amendments in to secure the members of his union. There is a way to get it.

The Minister gave some idea that they were going to use something creative to move them across. What are the creative things they are using? Right now, it is attrition. This is one of the very creative things used. So that when you leave, or you die, you are not replaced. They tried the 25 per cent incentive to move people across, that did not catch on. There were legal implications to that and it was stopped. Therefore, what attempts are you now moving to ensure that this becomes a reality? We have serious problems and, therefore, we need to attack them. I needed to clear this up because I feel that it is unfortunate that people would come to the Parliament and say things which are incorrect. They have not done the research to prove the things they are saying.

I move on from the Ministry of Health. I know the Minister is a new Minister and it is unfortunate, but there are so many things needed to be done there. For the longest time I said San Fernando Hospital needed to have that roof replaced. Do

you know what they are trying to do now? Build a suite on the third floor for the doctors and when they looked up they saw the roof problem bothering them. They are trying to force their way into the space. They need a roof. We asked for that roof for the longest while. *[Interruption]* Yes, we want one here too. But you are getting a suite for the doctors. So you have to look at your priorities and see what you need to do to get things right. Some of us do not like what people say, but this is the place where you have to say what you have to say and you move on.

Mr. President, I move on from the Ministry of Health because there are a lot of young persons going into nursing and I wish them well, and I want to wish the Minister well in whatever he does after this Parliament is over. I go to that very vulnerable group that I talked about and I really want to make my contribution around this particular group and that group is called, the young people of Trinidad and Tobago. I really wish to focus on them because I felt that they had not been well-treated by this administration. People would not like it but I would say so. I want to tell you why I said so and probably when it was done the results might not have been something which was planned, but these were the results.

When this administration came in—I was on the outside and I looked in to see what was happening—I noticed that that was the first group they started to attack. How did they decide to attack that group? By looking at anything which had to deal with youth and trying to move it away. This is unfortunate and I will leave this Parliament remembering, I sat here and I said: “You did not do it for the young people.” Somebody had to say this is what we want.

We had inherited programmes from the previous administration. The Youth Training Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) was something which we inherited from the previous administration and we built on it because it was good. *[Desk thumping]* That was a good programme. It was no PNM programme; it was an NAR programme that was there and we continued and expanded the programme because it helped young people. That is what we did.

What did they do? They met the on-the-job training programme. That was a good programme. If you did not like the way it was being handled, then make adjustments to suit you, but not close down the programme. Even the on-the-job programme where the young people were being trained as teachers, was also closed down. Do you know how that came about? I was a teacher at the Teachers’ Training College and I knew people used to leave the secondary schools and go straight into teaching because the Saturday classes which we had long ago with the monitors were no more, and we had to find a way to help that situation. Therefore this on-the-job training nine months or a year, I think it was, for those

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recruits to teaching. They would spend time in the programme before they go into the classroom. There was no way you should have closed that programme because right now we are suffering from the results of the closure.

The other apprenticeship-type programme was where you spent some time at the firm. There might have been problems in the administration, I am not saying, no, but I am saying you do not correct something that is wrong by closing it down entirely because you have the skill to do it. How come at the end of the term you are sneaking back the programme in a different form? Before you closed that one, why did you not come up with one? You cannot close one for three years and at the end of five years come up with another. It is unfair to that group. Those people were sent home in the middle of the programme. They did not even wait until the programme ended.

The Geriatric Adolescent Parentship Programme (GAP) was another programme which went on for some time, thanks to the Minister, with a struggle. It was not getting bigger by increased funding, but it was on the books. I would have loved to see much more going into it because here was a chance where the young people were sitting at the feet of the older people and being guided—a mentor-type system which we lacked.

Then there are the youth camps. What did the youth camps do? Do you know how many young people used that as a support system? You closed all the youth camps and now I read about a month ago that you intend to bring them back. Why did you close them in the first place? That was a place where children could have gone. People are talking about a number of children out on the streets with nowhere to go, and I am saying that we made provision for places for the children to go. [*Desk thumping*] Those youth camps were there for the children and a number of them learnt skills in the youth camps.

If you are honest with yourselves you would admit it was an error. Those youth camps should not have been closed. That is why I say that is a very vulnerable group. Do you know how we knew that you knew it was wrong? Because I am seeing, quite silently, they are trying to sneak in—that word “sneak” has become a particular word for you this year—those things. You cannot sneak them in now.

Do you know what they also stopped? The Deans of Discipline and deans in schools. Why would you stop deans in schools? The teachers needed the support. But I want to tell this honourable Senate, last month end, those who were deans got an allowance in their pay packet. After the years passed and there were no deans, last month end the deans called me and said that they got the money in

their pay packet. Because you knew you should not have stopped the dean system. You knew it was necessary to assist with the discipline of the young people of this country. Why did you stop it? Money? Money was not the problem. If you did not like the people who were put in place and you wanted to change them, do so, but the system for what it was worth was excellent. How did you get money now to sneak in to give those deans? I do not really know how you got it, but the money is there and the deans are happy about it, but they had to wait until this has happened.

I am saying that is what focussed my attention on the young people and that is why I said that you had a particular dislike for them. For a Government that boasts all through this debate of being a caring Government, I have heard it from every speaker, how much you care, but whom do you care about? How could you be caring and you are looking at these vulnerable young people and taking advantage of them? You say you care in every way, you care for the young. Sen. Rev. Gray-Burke in her contribution said she had 25 young street children and she is caring for them. They have them in all countries, but I want to tell the Senator she is going to get more than 25, so I hope she has more space. Because we are missing something somewhere.

The Minister also talked about care for the elderly. I am one of the persons who spoke with the Minister in terms of the package for the elderly and those on public assistance. I told him to increase the package and he did and that whole bench is blowing their trumpet about it. Yes, we have got the increase but you have to blow your trumpet and say: "PNM was giving \$365 and we give \$720" This must be put into context, it is inflation. What we could have done with the \$365 you cannot do with the \$620 now. You could not.

I want to tell you something. Even the \$100 you got now, the people do not have access to medical care now, they have to buy their medicine. So the \$100 would be spent on medicines. I am not saying that you should not give the \$100 We are grateful that you give the \$100, but you have to look at how you go along life's journey. You gave the \$100, which they need; they need more than the \$100 if you could have afforded it, because in our society we need to take care of them, but on the other hand, if we care, make sure that \$100 do not go to the drugstore, because they are not getting drugs when they go to the health services centres again. They are not getting free dental care because the health centres are closed up. Parents are taking their children to private doctors.

I am saying, yes, we care, and we have given them the increase, but at the same time, we have to look at it so that the money we give them could be used in the way we really intended it to go, because prices have gone up, everything has gone up and some of us who have gone to primary schools know what happens when you needed to go to the doctor or the dentist.

So we have to look at all these things. We say we care and, therefore, we look at the same vulnerable group and I cannot help, as a former practitioner in the field for years, but mention these things. We have universal secondary education, that is another situation where we have young people involved. Some people on the other side want to go out on the highways and byways and say that the PNM is against universal secondary education. If you only look at our plan from 1993—2003 and look at it well, you will see that it is not so.

What we were against is how you introduced universal secondary education to Trinidad and Tobago, that is what we are against, the method of doing it. I know that sometimes wild statements are made. For example, the Prime Minister said the Common Entrance Examination should be removed and every child must get a school place. I do not know whom he consulted before he said that, but as a Government I know that you found yourself trying to fulfil what he had said. I am saying if you have to go that way, there were certain support systems you should have put in place. That is all I am saying. The time you want to do it is too short because election is emerging. So I am saying if you are using the election to guide the destiny of the children, I am against it. That is all I am saying. You had to hustle it. So even if you had to stuff them in and close the doors, as long as they were in, you were happy, but we heard today how many were out. The worst thing that could happen to you in any part of the country is expectation. When you raise people's expectations and you cannot fulfil them, the results are disastrous and, therefore, there are a number of persons out there with disastrous results.

It is not that you cannot go that way, but when you spoke about quality education against quantity, you had to understand what that means. As far as I am concerned, I am still saying it is quantity because I am going to look at some of the things which would tell you whether it is quality or quantity a little later on. But you went with quantity and you went very fast. Some of them are inside buildings but we would learn later on what they are doing inside those buildings.

I want to look at the Minister's contribution on the budget debate on July 25, 2000 and I would go through it very quickly. She said:

“Clearly, there was no education for those who remained unplaced. The issue for those children was not one of sacrificing quantity for quality; the issue was, clearly, they had no chance whatsoever.”

I am saying to you, only 25 children were on the streets; 10,000 were still outside there but those children were put somewhere. Some were repeating, some were in post primary centres. There were support systems for them. Be honest with yourself. We did not have 10,000 children walking the streets of Trinidad and Tobago each year at all. She also said on page three:

“Mr. President, they could not, at that time, see how this could have been achieved; and it was felt by the prophets of doom and gloom that the only way it could have been achieved was to crowd the existing schools. Mr. President, the statistics are clear. In the assisted schools, the investigative journalism of Sasha Mohammed has shown clearly that that did not happen.”

I agree with her. The assisted schools were not overcrowded, the overcrowding came in the government schools, not in the assisted schools. You had to overcrowd schools because you needed to push all of them into schools. She went on to say:

“I am overcrowding schools and sacrificing quantity for quality.”

That is what she said people said about herself, and I am saying that was true, but there is a way you can get around that.

11.35 a.m.

Some people asked me if it is only in Port of Spain that children did not perform as others. No, it is throughout the country. So when you are talking about model schools, talk about Form 1 Specials which we have created throughout the country. I need to go through all these things because some people do not understand. I need to get it clear that we talked about model schools and the Minister said that throughout the country there were special schools. I agree with her. Marabella Junior Secondary is a case in point. In that school, 137 children of the same ability as the model school children were placed in the Marabella Junior Secondary. Where are they? They had to be divided up into each of the Form I classes. Each teacher got some. The teachers did not even know that that particular group was going to join them.

They came without books; they were told not to buy any books and stood by it. The teacher was supposed to make special units for them; teach that group as individuals, and after the end of the year they were to remain right there in Form

I. The others would go up and they would repeat. I am telling you that it is Marabella Junior Secondary. I am telling you my source because I want you to understand what is happening. Do not move; do not quarrel about anything. This is what happened. If you did not research it, I did. Those are called special schools. So there is a group of children sitting there, and the teachers are still discussing how to teach them, because they are with the others.

I am saying, if we had planned properly we could have achieved what we wanted to achieve without this heartache and hardship. We could have achieved it. But we did not plan properly and that is why we ran into this and all that it would take at this time is some planning. Let me just go to this other point here. On page 15 of her speech she said:

“Mr. President, firstly, the Government is seeking to bring on board teachers with special skills in remediation for Mathematics and English.”

This has never happened before with all the studies and concerns over the years. Let us get this clear. There are two issues: One is that students would not have gone to school and they do not belong in those schools. And this Minister is saying that they had never had studies or remedial teachers. I want to tell this Parliament that I was at the Ministry when they had facilitators for mathematics and reading. The reading facilitator was led by Ms. Hyacinth McDowell—I cannot remember who led the mathematics. We had large groups of teachers attached to the Ministry who would teach remedial work, and they would go out and teach other people in the schools. They were there. Do not tell me they were not! This Government sent all of them back to their schools. That is what I am saying. So that now there is a need for them, they have gone back to look for them.

Why do you think that somebody was so foolish that they did not see the need for remediation? That is why we were there. The reading facilitators and the mathematics facilitators were attached to the Ministry. I am sure some of you know that. For some reason you called off that programme because you did not plan on this. If you had only looked at it and had an idea of what education is, you would have known that there is always a need for remedial people. There will always be a need for remedial personnel. Therefore, that is what happened. At this point in time there is a big drive going back to the schools to look for the remedial teachers.

Finally, there are two things I saw here. When you talk about the books for some of those children—you know the “Chicken-licken story”—the Minister said: “I keep saying that if a parent does not want to buy that book do not buy it.”

This is confusion. Do not tell the parents which book they want to buy. The parents do not know; they are looking for guidance from us. So you cannot say to them if you do not want to buy that book do not buy it. What are we doing? I am saying—and I did not say it before—I was one of the persons who used to work on the textbook committee at one time, and we had been trying to introduce in the schools, textbooks with grammatical relevance as well as cultural relevance. That is what we were trying to do. We had our authors trying to balance both, because we said we are second language speakers—English—and, therefore, we were trying to ensure that we taught English to them in a very structured way and we needed the books to do it. So the grammatical relevance, as we would say, should be there.

We are also saying that children need to identify with those in the books; those are their heroes; they should be the people they know. We have long passed the foreign things. So when you bring some of those books that are there, you have spoiled the whole business of relevance to the children, both grammatically and culturally. That was our complaint about the books; not the name “Chicken licken” and a dance over it. It was a more fundamental criticism. It was not relevant. Anybody here who knows anything about teaching, would understand how difficult it was to teach something irrelevant.

When you were going to school and you were reading some of the books, some were not grammatically relevant. You could take books for a small child and on one page you could get a number of grammatical structures when you tried to teach a particular tense. We are trying to move from that to somewhere else. That is what has happened.

I am just saying, it was not the best thing. I am just saying, fundamentally, we made that mistake in trying to do it. So those people who need to identify with the heroes, some of whom have passed on in this country, cannot; some of us who need to identify with the culture of the country, cannot. That was my problem and the whole thing is about cultural relevance.

Very quickly in the other place—I just want to make this note here—the Minister did make some pertinent remarks regarding the examination. Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Mr. President: Senator, I heard you say, Mr. Speaker. It is in the other place. Are you quoting from the Minister in the other place?

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: Yes.

Mr. President: No, that is not allowed unless you are quoting policy.

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: Thank you very much. I was saying that the Government took hard decisions, that they bit the bullet and that they found places for every child; they gave every child an opportunity. Yes, it was a hard decision for them to take but the objectives of their goals were not fulfilled.

I am going to move from this and go strictly to two reports. When they came into office they were privileged to have the Education Plan 1993—2000. Then they commissioned a report on the Secondary Education Modernization Programme. The final report was given in 1997 on the restructuring and decentralization of the Ministry. It cost a few million dollars or whatever it was, and I want to know at this point in time whether any of this was used or not used, or the consultants were just paid and the money was just siphoned outside.

One of the statements in that report when you look at the critical problems—and I am going to read it. That is why I was speaking to Sen. Rev. B. Gray-Burke. The report states at 1.10—

“Many students drop out after gaining a place in secondary schools. In 1995 to 1996, 12,300 students registered for Form 1 in Junior Secondary Schools. In July 1998, 10,490 of these students registered for Form IV in the Senior Comprehensive and other secondary schools.”

The data was supplied by Rudy Maharaj, July 30, 1998. They were saying here that there is a difference of 1,810 students not coming into Form IV who began in Form I. What this paragraph is telling you from your own critical problems here is that universal secondary education brings with it a large number of drop-outs. I went and looked at it, and wherever it was put in place, the drop-out rate was higher. That does not mean to say we cannot go that way. But let me give the reasons.

“There may be various reasons for students dropping out of the school system, some related to not having sufficient readiness for success at the secondary school level.”

Well we saw that clearly. So you are going to anticipate the drop-out rate is going to be high. It goes on:

“...parents not being able to pay for transportation and books, teachers lacking skills for working with multi-ability groups; low expectations of teachers; insufficient time tabling...” *et cetera*.

This came out of a report which had been commissioned.

11.45.a.m.

What I am trying to say at this point—this is not your doing—is that because of these situations quoted we are going to have a greater number of drop-outs. I tell myself, if we had only looked at this we would know that we needed to put the support systems in place because if we do not put the support systems in place Sen. Gray-Burke will have 10 times the number coming. We need to have the support systems put in place and nowhere in all that I have seen, as far as the education plan and programme are concerned, was there anything said about putting support systems in place. I say, some of the support systems that might have saved us have been removed, so that after the third form we are going to have a larger number of drop-outs. We must have vision about what we are doing, and you know what we say about vision. We must have that vision to know where we are going.

They are seeing things not as they are now but what they will be. In the next five, 10 or 15 years, where do they expect those children to be? They should have looked at the vision and seen what was going to happen and try to put in the support systems now that are going to send all the children to secondary schools. That is why I am saying that even some of the programmes, as immature as they might have been, could have been part of the support structure. With some new innovations we would have made it, but we did not plan it properly. We concentrated on getting them in the schools and therefore we now suffer from what is going to happen.

I would never let the Brigadier leave with his swan song without telling him that because of the mould from which he came and what we expected, that no way the Civilian Conservation Corps should have been allowed to go, no way, [*Desk thumping*] because they were doing an excellent job. He came in and he increased it and I would have thought by now he would have told me he had 10,000 every year coming in. We need to put whatever support systems in place. We do not have them. We passed the Community Mediation Bill, is it, for first-time offenders. I mean, yes, we are seeing about the first-time offenders but we wanted to go one step before that. The prevention rather than—we did not have it and we are not having it and if we continue to blind our eyes and pretend that I am trying to be just critical here this morning, then what is going to happen?

They ask, “Would the PNM send back the children?” No, we are not going to send them back. We have to continue it but we know what we have to do because it is all here, even in the reports which they commissioned. Look, the Secondary Education Modernization Programme is here. All of what they commissioned tells them what is necessary and what they commissioned also told them that one thing

that is necessary is quality education. I think that was the first thing they asked about. Quality education did not have in the first place to do with the infrastructure. It had to do with the curriculum. It had to do with the teaching and learning strategies and things like that which make quality education and that is why we say they concentrated on quantity. Do you know why?

I went to the curriculum department. They are all my friends in there. Sometimes they call because sometimes I even had to help people with their problems—curricular engineering was a part of my trade. When school opened on Monday the teachers in the school did not have the curriculum to teach and they still do not have those curricula. They are telling me about quality education. They do not have the tools. Yes, the Minister said somewhere that people sat for the first time and worked on it, but it was so late that schools have opened and they are not ready. So how are they going to get quality education when they do not know what they are going to teach? I am not blaming Senators sitting here. I am sure that they wish people could have done things a little earlier so that some of these things could have been avoided, but it has to be done. What are they going to do now? They have not reached the schools as yet. Nobody got any curriculum. What are you going to do? Something has to be done.

The training of the teachers—there were some crash courses over the vacation. They even brought some people from Tobago to give them some crash courses. They had to cry out because they did not even get what they needed in remuneration to run some courses before they go back. They are employing retirees now and some of the retirees, unfortunately—they have to do it because they have more school spaces—some could make and some just could not make. One gentleman went to a friend of mine who was interviewing him and he asked, “What hours do I work?” She said, “8.00 to 3.00”. He said, “No, no, no. I thought I was coming for a little two hours”. We had a little difficulty seeing about the retirees who did not expect that is what it would have been, because we have to find—[*Interruption*]

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. J. Yuille-Williams: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much. So there are a lot of problems, and let me just wind up this whole thing.

I need to ask them, what is the definition of school? Let me tell them something. Sen. Daly talked about the children in cages at St. Ann's. Well, you know, we almost have some in cages. As a practitioner I read on the paper where one principal said, "We will not open the doors for them to go outside for any recess or anything. We will keep them in here so they would not get intoxicated by what is going on". That is a cage in itself, you know, and we say we care. If we know what is the definition of school we have to know about fatigue levels and whatnot. We have to know that children have to go out and socialize. We have to know that they have to run on that ground and play. So when I read that a principal or somebody, a manager of a school, had said "We are going to lock the gates. They will not go outside so they cannot get whether it is a drink or whatever it is, they cannot mix", I ask myself, what is school? What is our definition of school? I knew it is the haste in which they had to do it that caused us to have so many flaws.

I also want to tell them that this could be redeemed but we have to put everything into it. [*Interruption*] No, it is the man in front of the school upstairs there. That is a PNM principal. The man said—in the school near the rum shop. I think it is his saying. But there are several of those who have that problem. Some of them do not have grounds or whatnot for them. Therefore we ask ourselves, what is their philosophy? What is the definition of a school? I am saying very seriously, I will go back to where I started, it is the young people paying for it. They are paying now and they will pay later [*Desk thumping*] if all of us do not really pull together. This is no laughing matter. I cry out for them.

Something is drastically wrong and for the few weeks that they are there, they should see if they could put things—well, I know they cannot put it right, but at least start thinking and not going further so that every day we cannot fool people. Because we are fooling people right now. As I said before, we have nothing against Universal Secondary Education. We have no intention of sending anybody back to the school but I know that we know what we have to do. We are going to put that system right, but why are they putting these children through this trauma at this time? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, I have a few minutes. I have to move to talk about the Minister of Works and Transport. Do you know why? Because when that Minister came around, and I know my friend, Sen. Wade Mark whom I know so well, felt badly at some time because this Minister of Works and Transport was touted as the best performer. My poor Senator friend, Mr. Wade Mark—they took Ministry after

Ministry away from him. I watched him and I said, “Wade, you are strong. Hold on.” I know that he was touted as the best performing person and many of us got fooled with it.

I sat here this morning and I saw him reading a litany of roads and whatnot, talking about reflectors and signs that any URP worker and I, myself, could put in a few reflectors and signs and all that kind of thing. When we should come to talk about serious business we are talking about all those things. Before I go into that—*[Interruption]* I am not talking about the airport. It was not mine. Before I go into that, the last thing he talked about was the airport. Do you know something, by the way, Mr. President? This is the area of the 10-point plan and the hit parade. The Minister has his own hit parade. He had more than 10. I decided to find 10 for his hit parade *[Desk thumping]* because we had to find something for 10.

No. 1 on his own was the airport. Do you know why? When the new Minister came, one evening I asked for him. I said, “Where is Minister John?” He said, “He has gone to the airport to make an assessment”. I said, “Are you going to let him make an assessment?” Then I turned to Minister Wade Mark, the hon. Minister of Public Administration—I am sorry to put this in public—and I said, “Minister Mark, you are going to let Minister John come and open the airport after Minister Baksh did all the work?” I remember teasing him. He told me, “Nah man! Sadiq will open it.” I asked because he told me he went to make an assessment. “What has happened to you? How come Mr. John had to go to make an assessment?”

Something had to be wrong with that Minister. It was his. It was his for all the pride and joy of Trinidad and Tobago. Somebody had to come in here—*[Interruption]* Give me a chance. I said nothing to the Minister when he was talking. *[Laughter]* Somebody had to come in here to do that to get this thing finished because this was a piece of the election ploy. “Independence we are going to open it”, and I know everybody in there must be praying and doing all kinds of things. They “must be going down on the ground and all” to make sure it will be opened. They did everything, even bringing in what they thought was a magician. Nothing helped. It could not.

I say that is No. 1 on his hit parade as failure of the Minister. He could not, even though he told me it was going to open. Do you know what he told us this morning? “Come and see. Come and see some road down the road”. I see it already. How come he did not tell us to come and see the airport? How come he

did not tell us that the Prime Minister was waiting to see if one sheet of galvanize fell? How come he did not tell him to “come and see”? The Prime Minister is trying to get there. There is nothing for him to come and see, he failed in that respect and somebody else had to take on. I hope that he will be given the—well, it cannot be done now because the time is running out. That hon. Minister told me even he would open it. It is still not opening and therefore that is his swan song. That is the end of him. He has failed in that respect. I knew he was chastised for failing and that is why somebody else was brought in.

Worse than that; he came here this morning to tell us about a bifold door. I have in front of me the Package 9 documents and this was—yes, take notes—Nipdec Tenders Committee, the Chairman of Nipdec, David Hardy. The actual award was July 1, 1999:

| “Item | Engineer’s Cost Estimate | Tender Amount |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| 11.3 Bi-Fold Door | \$472.50 | \$98,340.00” |

[*Desk thumping*] David Hardy, the former Chairman. Do you think that is all? On the cost comparison summary sorted by dollar variance, 11.3 the bifold door and they quote the figures again, \$472.50, \$98,340, Variance Over/(Under)—well of course this is variance over—\$97,867.50. Variance by percentage—20712.70 per cent. Look, it is here. You will hear more about this, Mr. President. David Hardy, check him out. That is where it is. Yet the Minister came here this morning and passed the bifold door—because this is not only bifold door you know. This has everything else. Forget that. Do not raise it. Do not aggravate people. Tell us why he did not open the airport. Why was he fired from the airport? Why did Sen. John have to take over his thing? So that is his hit parade No. 1.

Then moving faster across the Solomon Hochoy Highway—I travel on that highway every day and I remember last year the work was stopped. I remember it was stopped to restart the following year, and I said it here several times. Do you know what we heard today? It was completed and reopened. So that is the end of it. We are going to have to live with that disaster for the rest of the time. Go down that road and see. We had said it. If he had told me that they are going to reopen it, I was not going to be so mad, but he cannot tell me that that was completed. It is not completed. Sen. Baksh travels on that road every day. It is not completed.

What they have done now is, at the end of the highway they say they are widening the road. They dug up some earth, threw some aggregate on it and they

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put something there overnight. It is as rough as ever. Go down by the Technical School and you will see what I am talking about, Mr. President. Come on man! Failure again. But is the highway still his own? I do not know, but I think no. Therefore on his hit parade that is No. 2.

The Tobago ferry, which was a failure for which we paid so much compensation, that man who was the best performer, who had the Tobago people suffering for days—they could not carry it. It was ferry to come, ferry to go, ferry in October—that is his own. He is saddled with the ferry. That is his hit parade No. 3. Much has been said here about it. That is the best performing Minister, you know.

The Toco port—he went up there—and Prof. Kenny talked about it—to disturb the people who lived there for all the years, who enjoyed what it is, because he wanted to put up a port there for the financiers and whoever to use. Did he forget the ecosystem? Prof. Kenny almost shed tears here—he is not here now—yesterday as he talked about that system. But one thing we noted is that it has brought that community together and they have sense [*Desk thumping*] and they are not going to let it go. [*Desk thumping*] It has brought more people together against it. He is going to make a ferry port. He said he is making that to go to Tobago, this time we know it is a port they are putting there for some other reason. We have enough problems with the port at Point Lisas and therefore—he pulled back on it for now. Well, it will be for good because he would not be there to do any more of it [*Desk thumping*] and I am saying that is No. 4.

The Cross Crossing Interchange—we heard that Minister boasting about that. Have any of the Senators ever gone to Cross Crossing? They are going to laugh from the time they arrive until they pass it. It is the worst piece of workmanship we have ever seen. Go down there and they will see what is happening. The Berlin Wall. Have you heard about the Berlin Wall, Mr. President? The wall was cracking and we felt that it was going to fall on the people. The engineer told me that for a few months they had excavated it but they had not paid the contractors so it was filled with water for a long time and then they started to do the work. He said that is the cause of all those cracks in the Berlin Wall.

Do you know why I call it the Berlin Wall? The people who are living on one side of the wall are separated entirely from humanity because the wall is so high; and even the Berlin Wall in Germany they have broken down, yet we have to put a Berlin wall here. Besides the Berlin Wall, if you go there you will see what has happened. Just like the Pleasantville entrance, overnight they did some paving and they have left all the loose dirt there waiting to fall; yet I heard the Minister

talking about a feeling of pride for that Cross Crossing Interchange. They ran some Barber Green over it very quickly so it looks like something. Any one of us who travels there knows it is nothing any government could be proud of.

12.00 noon

Mr. President, what makes it worse is that for all my years I know the Ministry of Works and Transport used to do such good roads. The Ministry of Works and Transport did some of the best roads we have in this country. [*Desk thumping*] I understand that there are over 100 professionals who left and went off. The Minister destroyed that Ministry and no wonder the Government had to go and look for support from the Tourism and Industrial Development Corporation (Tidco), Maintenance, Training and Security Company Limited (MTS) and the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (UDECOTT) because Government has nobody in the Ministry of Works and Transport who could handle these assignments. All the professionals have gone and it is just in shambles and, therefore, for support the Government had to go and bring a man who it feels could interact with these people and get the job done—Lord, have mercy—of course, he could bypass everything and do what he has to do.

Mr. President, there was a desire to get it done in time and he had the reputation for getting things done in time—whether people are hearing or not hearing—he is a very nice fellow, he does not have to hear—and, therefore, if that is the Minister's strength and Government wants to use it, I do not blame them but we know why things happen that way.

Mr. President, the Unemployment Relief Programme was under this Minister—

Mr. President: Senator, you have two minutes to wrap up.

Sen. J. Yuille-Williams: It failed. He moved from there; it went to local government, and now I am hearing the new Minister telling him what he would do, so there is a shift which we did not know.

Mr. President, traffic control in this country is under whom now? Who is designing the traffic control for Ellerslie Park and up there? Who are the people going to? The whole traffic control was taken over by the other Minister. That is the Minister's own now. The Minister meets the people. I know he meets the people. He is a very gracious person. This was taken away from him because nothing is being done. The Prime Minister has said to him, give up and resign.

Mr. President, the Minister lost the last election for the UNC and he came out and said it was my fault. [*Desk thumping*] Do you know how the Minister is rewarded? He is the candidate for San Fernando West—the Minister is not here—but I want to tell him that he has to come there and answer all these charges. I assure the Minister that we will be there on the hustings to ask him why he is still there—if he does not resign by that time, because I feel he will go before that time—and why he is a non-performer. Therefore, he cannot go into a place like San Fernando West, which has been totally controlled by the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] Minister Gangar did try coming but he did not get in and he ran right out. [*Laughter*] This means the Government is sacrificing a minister.

Mr. President, I want to close at this point because I want to tell Senators when they hear these big alarms—“I am the best”; “look at me”; “come and see” and all those things—I am now going to invite the national community to “come and see and judge” that Minister of Works and Transport.

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

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Mr. President, I am glad for the opportunity to make some comments on the 2000 budget statement. If I had to choose a title for my presentation it would be: “What Is Wrong With Nationalism”. My presentation has a strong subtext and it is this, without intellectual independence you cannot become an independent people. Our intellectual failures are reflected in our economic policies; in our practice of politics; in our cultural and tourism policies; and in many cases, our personal lifestyles.

Mr. President, the main section of my presentation has some unity. It has about four movements. The first part you can call it the budget and the society; the second part has to do with restructuring and decentralization of education, but I am using the restructuring and the decentralization of education as a way of talking about the necessity to restructure and decentralize the whole society; in the third section the theme is education as politics; and in the fourth section I am dealing with the role of the teacher in the making of a new society. I do not want to frighten anybody and say the role of the teacher in the revolution, but that is what I really mean.

Sen. Gangar: You got to watch what you are saying.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: I know.

Hon. Senator: Watch your words.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: I know.

Hon. Senator: All your partners are there waiting for you.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: I thought they had gone home for lunch. Mr. President, before I go into that, I want to take a few byes, extras and overthrows. First of all, I want to make a very brief comment on agriculture and about the connection between culture and agriculture, also the growing necessity in this country for us to pay attention to creating and preserving the food supply. There is no economy in the world which has any strength if that economy does not pay careful attention to the food supply, and agriculture is important in the preservation of the food supply.

Mr. President, I just want to read a little paragraph from an essay by George Lamming called “Culture and Sovereignty” in which he says on page 283:

“The original meaning of the word ‘culture’ had to do with the tending of plants and the care of animals. In other words, this word, and the process it describes, has its roots in the practice of agriculture, and it has never lost this sense of nurturing; of feeding; of cultivating; whether it be a body or a mind that is under consideration.

The first and essential meaning of culture is, therefore, the means whereby men and women feed themselves; clothe and shelter themselves; the means whereby they achieve and reproduce their material existence. No food; no life. No food: no book, no religion, no philosophy, no politics, no performing arts.”

Mr. President, so that is my brief comment on what I feel is the kind of neglect for agriculture in the national budget. The second side issue I want to take up again, very briefly, has to do with tourism.

12.10 p.m.

I just want to read some figures relating to visitor arrivals. In 1994, there were 36,252 visitors to Trinidad and Tobago who stayed in hotels. In the same year, there were 149,726 who were categorized as on a private holiday—36,000 as against 149,000. By 1996, there were 38,000 and 145,000.

Mr. President, when you look at this, you know that the 145,428 people who come to Trinidad and Tobago to spend a holiday are the former citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who are coming here for a holiday to visit relatives, who may be doing it two or three times a year, who have investments, business and expertise, who are living abroad. I feel that Tidco cannot claim they brought these people. We do not have to spend a cent to bring them, but these people are the most important segment of our tourist arrivals.

I suggest to Minister John, if he still has contact with Tidco, to ask them to build a mailing list of all these Trinidad and Tobago “salt water Trinis” we call them, and whenever there are investment opportunities, write to them; whenever you want contributions, write to them. Let us forge a link with these people who, obviously, while living abroad, still regard themselves as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. If you want foreign investors, those are the foreign investors I would be happy to embrace but I feel that the tourism authority ought to recognize that very significant fact about tourist arrivals and it is also a social, cultural and patriotic fact to which we ought to pay attention.

Thirdly, Mr. President—this is a short one—I do not see anything in the budget about solar energy. Year after year, I come and beg about solar energy. They make promises about solar energy. Sell out all the oil and let us use solar energy if you want. Sell out all the gas and use solar energy. We have solar energy. There is no incentive, no encouragement, no education, nothing about solar energy.

Fourthly, on my side plate—Caroni (1975) Limited. I do not agree with people who say that Caroni (1975) Limited is not making a profit. For years, the distillery side of Caroni (1975) Limited has been underdeveloped. In my opinion, systematically and deliberately underdeveloped because people want to buy that off and make money off the sugar industry. People are already making money off the sugar industry. The rum industry of Trinidad and Tobago is essentially part of Caroni (1975) Limited so when you count the figures of Caroni (1975) Limited, you should really count the profits of the rum company. The failure of Caroni (1975) Limited is its failure or inability to have done something about the distillery operations. The failure is a wider one.

We produce such a lovely cocoa and I do not know why we are not making chocolates, chocolate liqueurs and so forth. We have to import it from the Dutch, the Germans, the French and so forth. I am a defender of Caroni (1975) Limited because I feel that the economic powers that be have divorced the most important side of Caroni (1975) Limited from Caroni (1975) Limited, that is, the distillery side—divorced and underdeveloped it so that other people can make the money.

Finally, on my side plate, looking at the provision for culture, in the development programme, I really feel that not very much is being done. We see something about a Centre for the Performing Arts, but no money has been allocated. I could look at the development programme and say, well, nothing is being done that has been promised, but I also want to make a suggestion which I have made before.

I believe that the time has come for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to recognize that our artistes of all types are workers. In the early parts of their career, they are self-employed workers who make very little. In the early parts of their career when they have the energy, the life and they really want to get on with their work, they have to worry about their daily bread. I believe there has to be an arts council of Trinidad and Tobago, the function of which would be to receive applications from artistes outlining projects they would like to do with a timetable about when they want to complete them and we should award them stipends for six-, 10- or 12-month periods to complete their work.

It is the only way to save the artistes from having to spend 18 hours a day trying to make a living and three hours sleeping on themselves trying to get on with their real work. We cannot ask an artiste to have two jobs. His job is to be an artiste and we benefit from his work, but to encourage him, we must not talk. We must say, "Look, here is a grant to complete a certain thing", but we cannot do it for everybody who comes in. That is why we need an arts council who will vet the application, look at what the person has done before and say, "That is a promising person. Yes, give him a six months. He said he can finish this work in six months." We may even need to establish artistes' colonies, where we can give the artistes a place to sleep and a place to work during the six-month period. Of course, we will get a lot out of them because we can attach various teaching and lecturing programmes to those grants.

Still on the artistes, I think some consideration has to be given to developing a pension scheme for artistes and sportsmen. If they do not know how to put away their money and take care of themselves, I feel we should offer them the opportunity to say, "Here is a pension scheme. You contribute 5 per cent; the state will contribute 10 per cent, so that when you cannot work anymore, you will have something coming in."

Those are my side issues. They are side issues only because I just have a penchant for unity in what I am saying and I could not integrate them into the main body of my contribution.

Mr. President, I begin with some observations relating to the question of the public debt and the balance of payments. I make these observations in the sad light of what I see as alienation and a lack of meaning and purpose for many people in our society today. I am not sure, as one of the radio stations tells us, that having your say is a satisfactory substitute for having your way.

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I begin with the words of the poet, Edward Brathwaite, from Barbados. Some words that I feel are very apt at the present time, words about the trivializing of the word; words about what the trivializing of the word portends for a civilization and perhaps for a government.

Mr. President, the poem begins by talking about the word with a capital "W".

“...the Word is love
and has been absent from our butterflies.
...the Word is peace
and is absent from our streets
We seek, we seek,
but find no one to speak
The words to save us;
search
there is no destination;
our prayers reach
no common
sun
no
sum
no good beyond our gods
of righteousness and mammon”

I feel that is the state of our society today and I would have liked to see the budget addressing that condition.

The hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development gave us his word that we reduced the public debt and we more than doubled our foreign reserves. If all that he really meant to impress upon us is that the economy is sound, nobody can disagree. But I would nevertheless like him to answer or explain the circumstance, that for each of the last five years, the predicted surplus on balance of payments did not accrue and what we got was a deficit. I would like to

understand how a rise of \$11 billion in the total public debt can lead to the statement:

"We reduced the public debt;"

Allegations have been made in other places about possible improprieties in the financial arrangements for the airport terminal and letters have emerged suggesting that the contingent liability is greater than we have been given to believe. All these things are very serious because they have a tendency to erode public confidence and I, for my part, would be made more comfortable in my mind if the Minister would take the opportunity, in his winding up, to clear the air.

I cannot conceive of a billion dollars. I do not know what it would look like or feel like and, as a teacher, I could not dream of being paid a fraction of that. So, if somebody says, "I ran up some expenses, yes, but it is only \$11 billion", I can be fooled by the "only". I will go with the "only". Only a billion, but I do not know what a billion is.

Now that one has been alerted, however, I am asking—not as an accusation, but out of humble respect for the mystery and beauty of numbers—the hon. Minister to supply an explanation as well as accurate and complete figures so that if he is being misunderstood, if the budget figures are being misunderstood, we would have the facts before us and we would not be subject to the ping-pong of accusation and denial that leaves so many of us not knowing what to think.

I come back to what is agreed. What is agreed? There can be no doubt that ours is an economy that is guaranteed to be secure. It is guaranteed to be secure for some considerable time and not because of our doing. It is guaranteed to be secure because we are spared hurricane, earthquake and volcanic eruption and we are blessed with two commodities—oil and natural gas—that are in the demand. Commodities that people are bound to buy and any economy that has something that people are bound to buy, that economy has a good future. We are lucky. Our problem is one of management and distribution.

12.25 p.m.

Right now, Mr. President, I am going to take some basket and I am going to declare that we have a high gross domestic product (GDP). We have big restaurants and hotels, we have BMWs, Mercedes Benz and Peugeots, shining

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motor cars on the roads. We have mega supermarkets and enchanting shopping malls. Let the banks issue a bond, and long before the deadline it is oversubscribed; this is prosperous for those who are rich and high. [*Interruption*] Yes, sorry—[*Laughter*—]—for those who are rich and grand.

These people are consuming yes, but they are not stupid, they are putting away some for the future. They are sending their children to the American or the Canadian school or they are waiting for the opening of the Church of England eco-smart schools in Trincity. The materialism, the selfishness, the greed, the consumption, the privilege, and the elitism based upon money; that tells us this is a prosperous country.

The grill works, the security systems, the barriers sealing off settlements also tell us something about a society that lives in fear, but not the fear of God. It is a society that is fast becoming a society that has left itself nothing to believe in, and we have seen manifestations in the alienation of our young people; their self-preserving lack of involvement in the political games of the older generation.

There are other signs of the times, Mr. President, that indicate more obviously a society in crisis. There is the rich, there is the prosperous, but we cannot deny the daily evidence of poverty, labour unrest, organized crime, fumes and fuming on the highways, casual brutality against women, children and the aged, environmental irresponsibility from the disposal of garbage to the burial of lead, inadequate health care, beggars, vagrants, drug addicts, little children begging, selling, soliciting, eye sockets with AIDS walking around in misery. Mr. President, you can always see on the same road wasted human beings and rubbish heaped in hills out of which pumpkin vines grow, and you can see disconsolate bed springs, old cookers and fridges taking rain, as if some metaphysical poet is yoking the elements to declare in metaphor that in this land rubbish and people are one.

Progress made the Amerindians disappear. Progress paved the savannah. When I look around, in the words of the calypsonian, what do I see? I see craziness increase; bogus priests and corrupt police, no peace. The struggle does not cease, as man turns to drugs searching for relief. I see a frightened humanity, a sad and confused society, and it saddens me. How shall it be in time to come? Can this world withstand this constant misuse and abuse by the hands of man as they try to shape this world in a way to fit in with all their plans? Time is running out, as we eat and drink, species on the brink of being extinct. Yes, and I think no one can deny that the price of progress is high. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark: Lyrical; you are waxing!

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: "I wish I did write it—[*Laughter*—and I wish allyuh let meh sing it."

Hon. Senators: Sing it!

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: What I would have liked to see more of in the budget statement is a conviction, not that society must dance to the globally programmed and economically .Sen. Prof K. Ramchand inscribed tune of the budget, not that the society must dance to the tune of the budget, but that the budget was shaped to the needs of the whole society, and was an instrument invoking the creativity and the imagination of the society, giving people space and resources to discover and invent their own answers to who they are and where they are and where they really want to be.

Mr. President: We break for lunch at this stage. The sitting is now suspended until 2.30 p.m.

12.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Mr. President, I think you know that stop and start causes corrosion. I would not charge you for the wear and tear, but I hope you will find it in your heart to give me five minutes extra for having to warm up again. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President: Do not bank on it.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Mr. President, I have been trying to say that I wanted the budget to be informed by a sense of the deep crises in our society and I wanted its provisions to come out of a vision of what we have to do to bring about wholeness.

I continue from where I left off and say a few words about the gross domestic product (GDP) after which I would turn to an abbreviated version of what I wanted to say about education. I say again that a high gross domestic product is not an indication that a society is a healthy society or even one that provides equal opportunity or one that has worked out a way in recognizing basic human needs while still affirming that merit, hard work, initiatives, skills, training, education and productivity must be rewarded. A very high gross domestic product does not remove the possibility of 90 per cent of the wealth of the country being in the hands of 10 per cent of the population and 10 per cent of the wealth having to be passed among only 90 per cent. A high gross domestic product conceals the fact

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which is welcomed to investors that a large part of the gross domestic product does not remain in the country, but repatriated in the form of company profits, savings on salaries paid in US dollars.

A high GDP is an advertisement to the world that this is a country willing to ensure a ready supply of cheap labour in addition to all the other concessions and inducements. It is to me, a source of apprehension and shame that the word is going around in the most influential newspaper in the United States of America that this twin-island nation is experiencing a burst of investment and growth. This means in other words we are foolish and we are ripe, to say no more. This must be the only country in the world where foreign investors do not have to use the only heroic quality of investors and that is the ability and willingness to take risks. We insulate them from all risks and almost make it profitable for them to fail.

Mr. President, let me pluck it out. I am not happy about the policy which depends too much or for too long on foreign investors, and let us speak plainly about it. Foreign investors are not charitable organizations, their aim is to make the biggest gain in the fastest possible time and they have no anxieties about over exploitation. If they can catch all the fish in our sea one time in one big net, they will be glad to take the profit and go and look for another sea to fish out. Knowing that, we must work very deliberately towards a day when we can claim—not as Sen. Gangar claimed the other day—not a pound of the flesh, but the larger portion, or even the whole hog. Once we have captured the market and developed the skills, we invite foreign investors because we have use for them. They come because they have use for us. Mr. President, there is no love in that.

Mr. President, my discussion of education will help to explain why, in an economically strong country like ours, we have fallen into the trap of pursuing globally directed economic policies that are not much different from those policies previously mandated under structural adjustment. We are still being structurally adjusted and our economic policies do not come from the inside, they are responsive to forces from the outside. So I come to education and I hope what I have to say about education will make a little clearer, the larger point about originality and coming from the inside when you devise policies.

First of all, I want to register with appreciation that of the \$10.2 billion available after debt servicing, pensions and gratuities, this Government has allocated \$1.74 billion to education. I think that is remarkable, commendable and wonderful.

Mr. President, I am going to defer my comments on the detailed plans which we can read in the *Medium Term Policy Framework* in the *Public Sector*

Investment Programme and the *Budget Statement* itself. I am going to defer my comments on the detailed plans about how the money is going to be spent. I am going to look at one aspect which the Minister or whoever it is speaks about in the *Medium Term Policy Framework* on page 30 where there is a phrase that the Government is going to pursue continued decentralization of the Ministry of Education through the establishment of regional education districts.

The first thing I have to say is that we do not have to establish those districts, they exist, and secondly, those districts were mandated by the Education Act of 1966 more than 34 years ago. That Act authorized the creation of educational districts, the creation of denominational boards, authorized the creation of local educational advisory councils in each region liaising with the National Advisory Council, authorized the creation of committees of management for government schools while it was authorizing denominational boards for the denominational schools.

A complete blueprint for a system of education based upon educational regions which were either deliberately not followed, or of which successive governments in 1966 were ignorant. They come into office and do not read the Education Act which tells them to form committees of management for government schools, and it says if it so happens that they cannot, then let the school supervisor and the principal form a committee of management. We had to say that there was a very strong centralizing impulse which prevented the establishment of the committees of management which would have gained the same kind of experience that the denominational boards were able to gain over the years and which could have argued for the same kind of financing the denominational boards have got. So that is one of the great sins of successive governments, ignoring the mandate of the Education Act of 1966.

Mr. President, I welcome moves in the Ministry of Education and statements in the budget about decentralization and the establishment, or re-establishment or the firming up of the educational returns. This country is so mixed up that we are going to health regions, education regions and all kinds of other regions. What we really need to do is sit and divide the country into regions and each region would be health region, education region and so forth. I would look forward to the day when in each region there is a major hospital. So the Minister of National Security would not tell us that he does not have an ambulance, the ambulances will be working within the regions. A region that has the equivalent of a government

administrative office linked with the other seven or eight regions at the centre. That is what I understand by e-government.

It ought to be possible for me to walk off the beach in Icacos and go to the building in Bonasse and request a birth certificate. I do not have to catch taxi or go to town and escape Mr. Humphrey's bottleneck or go into the new bottleneck he is forming because he is transferring the bottleneck from one place to another. I do not have to face all that. I go in my short pants and get my birth certificate, and I do not ride taxi, bus, maxi or anything. I am sick and there is a big hospital in my region. It does not take me four hours to reach a hospital and then I am thrown in the waiting room for another five hours.

Mr. President, I think this country needs to go for regionalization on a very large scale and the use of e-government and we would find there would be all kinds of kickbacks on that in the sense of the development of community spirit, the recreation of community spirit and within each region you will have all the facilities necessary for a citizen to have a good life and that is one way in which we would be reversing the colonial process.

Mr. President, if you read books by Walter Rodney how Europe underdeveloped Africa, it tells you what all the colonizing powers did. They created the cities and towns to suit themselves. They built the roads to suit themselves and the purpose of the road was to bring stuff from inside to the port for them to send it home. So you now have the plantation and the port and we are still suffering from the plantation and port syndrome.

We have to develop cities that serve the regions around them. A city is not to be a place of exit for shipping out the goods, or a place of entry where they can bring soldiers to keep us quiet. That is not how you form a city. Even in the formation of cities we are still very colonially-oriented and I think the creation of regions may well give us an opportunity to improve, not only education and health, but ourselves in the way of building communities.

Mr. President, on whether we go for regionalization or not, I think what this budget tells us is that education is the key to our future development and the discussion as it goes, speaks about training, skills, the culture of the feelings, about all the things that education can do. I talk now about education as the most profound kind of politics in which you can engage; education which might bring a change in values, attitudes and lifestyles. Education, as I try to explain it, can bring about a change in the way we practise politics, a change in our economic theory, and a change, as I said, in our lifestyle.

1.45 p.m.

Because out of education can come a sense of who we are and how we relate to our environment. In an article in a book called *Conversations* entitled “The Imperial Encirclement”, George Lamming says:

“Any education which equips us for how to be with each other has got to be political education. It has got to be an education, which, first of all, lets us know, helps us to understand, what is the context of power, the character of that social reality within which those individual personal relationships take place,”

We have made a transition from a syllabus handed down by the colonizing power to a syllabus designed by ourselves. But we have not won. There is a problem. Those of us devising the syllabuses are products of the system we are trying to replace. Lamming is very compassionate, if scathing about them. “The validating elites.” That is Lloyd Best’s phrase. But we, the “validating elites,” are the products of the system we are trying to replace. So that is a big bind for us. We are very fragile; we are very ambivalent and the reason I have cut off a lot that I wanted to say earlier is that I want this Chamber to hear this description of the validating elites. It continues:

“This minority which has been elevated by the struggles of working people into a new political and technical bourgeoisie poses a critical problem for us. They are nearly all the children, certainly the grandchildren of poor people. A great social investment in education by their poor parents and guardians, as well as the various social settlements of the imperial power, has brought them to dominant positions of power and authority. But they are a fragile class in the process of formation. If we trace their immediate ancestry, we shall not find there, either by blood or adoption, any great landowner, or merchant banker; no industrial capitalist or great ship builder: they are unique as a dominant ruling group, without any historical social experience of ownership or control of the means of production in their own country. It makes for a great fragility in their negotiations with an external power, and illuminates one of the most vulnerable areas in the national defence of the region.

For their recent elevation from poverty has made them desperate to consolidate their new material interests, and reproduce themselves by rapid personal and private accumulation. This exercise in self-production through

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rapid accumulation of money and the conspicuous display of social power, is bringing them into conflict with the base from which they sprang.”

It is a problem of education to bring this understanding to our society. And those who are devising the curriculums; who are setting the syllabuses; who are preparing their exams; who are building the physical structures cannot come from the outside. They have to be the intellectuals from within the country who know the rhythms, the echoes, the fields, the music, and the needs of the people of the country. They come from the inside and devise a system of education to be quite different from any imported system of education.

Mr. President: The Hon. Senator’s speaking time has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Mr. President, I am saying that because of the kind of educational system that was imposed upon us and the kind of authority that imposed it upon us, we have many tasks and the tasks proceed in many faces. The first one was for us to take over the system; the second was for us to find ourselves and then devise our own system.

A mock interview that I devised in the newspaper on August 08, 1999 was headed: “Clever Washingtongue Interviews Ken Ramchand”... This was a newspaper reporter who likes to wash his tongue on people, so I call him Cleaver Washingtongue. He was asking me about education and I was telling him about what happens when you have to educate poor people. This is me speaking to him, Mr. President.

“KR: But when you are dealing with the pedagogy of the oppressed, or the education of formerly colonised peoples you have to define your terms for yourself, because you are really beginning all over again. Cleave unto this Cleaver, education is part of the process of emancipation. You are liberating a whole society into a sense of its self and its potential in the world.

CW: Don’t tell me when to cleave. I can pull blade for myself. ‘Pedagogy of the oppressed!’ Isn’t that being over-dramatic and political? Are you sure there isn’t a Marxist agenda in all this political talk? We are just discussing education. Can’t we keep politics out of it?

KR: I don't see how we can. We have a long history of education being an instrument of control. Soon after the African peoples in the West Indies were told that they were free, the question of educating them arose. In 1847, a Circular Despatch from the Colonial Office laid it down that the Black population should be schooled in religious education (Christian), the requirements of small farmers, and a grammatical knowledge of the English Language as "the most important agent of civilization for the coloured (meaning Black) population of the colonies,"

That was the premise of education.

"CW: But wasn't it a case of either that or no education at all?"

KR: I suppose the Colonial Office thought they were being liberal. But there was very clearly an intention to keep Black people indoctrinated and in their place. The same Despatch expressed the sentiment that 'the lesson books of the colonial schools should also teach the mutual interests of the mother country and her dependencies; the rational basis of their connection, and the domestic and social duties of the coloured races. Nothing could be more colonising in intention and purpose than that. Incidentally, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is the title of a famous book about education in countries like ours.

CW: Oho. I have no quarrel with that. I mean, with what you say. But as the local bard has put it, we pass that stage now, you don't think?"

Many people feel we pass that stage, Mr. President. But we have not.

So if education is revolutionary; if education is going to complete emancipation; if education is going to create independence; I do not have to argue too hard about the importance of the teacher. Mr. President, I remember great teachers from my childhood right through University and every...*[Interruption]*

Mr. President: What is that? Cellular? Please. I will suspend the sitting for a few minutes. Stay in your seats. The sitting is suspended for 10 minutes. I would like to see you in my chambers.

1.55 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

2.06 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. President: Hon. Members, I just want to say that I dealt with the infraction and I hope that there will be no further cause for any suspension of the Senate for the same reason.

Sen. S. John: Mr. President, please accept my sincere apologies for the infraction.

Mr. President: Accepted.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Thank you, Mr. President. I had just come to the point of speaking about the importance of the teacher that, if education is politics, and if education is revolutionary politics, then the teacher is playing a major role in the revolution and in the creation of a new society. I remember great teachers from my childhood right through university and they all had in common the gift to make one experience one's own strength and possibility. This is why, wherever one goes, one remembers those people who made one know that one had muscles and who made one know that one had wings. Every one of us remembers a teacher who was a formative influence in our lives. I do not have to argue with it.

However, what we are seeing today, Mr. President, as societies collapse all over the world, as values dissolve, as egocentricity and individualism establish themselves, as the world becomes a place where there is no respect and very little manners, we find that the teacher has lost a great deal of the moral authority he used to have. The teacher is regarded as just another person who is giving us trouble. Parents come in and try to beat up on him. Children feel they do not have to obey him, they can backchat him in the same way that they backchat their own parents, and this teacher has to endure also the fact that he is being paid a wage that has him virtually on the poverty line.

Mr. President, a Principal gets \$5,162 a month; a Vice-Principal—\$4,737; a Teacher II—\$4,258; a Teacher I—\$3,441; an Assistant Teacher II—\$2,266; and an Assistant Teacher I—\$2,094. There is a very large gap between the wages teachers have and the wages that people with corresponding qualifications and positions enjoy, therefore, that gap needs to be closed. Poverty is hell, Mr. President. Poverty attacks one's sense of self-worth. If one is a teacher and is going to school and does not have clothes to wear—I have seen teachers going in water-washed clothes—old clothes. I have seen teachers who do not wear socks. These are people who have a salary that does not allow them to dress to the standard required of their role in the society.

I find the parents are very worthless too in all of this. Every time the teachers decide to act up, if a poll is conducted, all the parents say the teachers should not act up and the reason they are saying they do not want the teachers to act up is because their childminders will not be at work. What they say is, "What I am going to do with the children if the teachers are on strike?" The teachers do not

only have to teach, the teachers have to mind the child, and the parents who should be their greatest supporters very often come up against them.

Mr. President, there are bad eggs in every profession. I know teachers who leave school at lunchtime, they go drinking and they come back just before the bell rings. I know teachers who count their days off and make sure they take all their sick leave and all their leave. I know teachers who sign and go back home. But, Mr. President, I know many dedicated, idealistic and frustrated people who stress out themselves doing this thankless job from day to day, week to week. They take home work; they are working late at night; they get their papers marked; they have classes of 35, 40 and 45; they have to set exams, give tests, mark, give grades, take lip from the children and they do it, Mr. President, and there is no compensation.

We are very lucky that the majority of people who are in this profession are idealistic. They do it because they love it and they do it because nothing can beat the pleasure of seeing a young person suddenly ignite because of something one has shown him, some book one has given him, something he has heard one say and one sees the curiosity blaze up and one knows it was worth it. At the higher level it is to see somebody who one knew as an undergraduate suddenly become a scholar. He has completed his Ph.D. and they look at him and say, "Well, I knew this little fella when he was just an undergraduate and now he is a scholar in the world". The joy it gives one to see young people fulfilling themselves, becoming alive to the world; that is part of the payment of the teacher. But he needs his money too, Sen. Mark.

Mr. President, I am aware that certain negotiations are going on and I know that things are very dodgy. There is a confrontational situation and I am appealing to the Minister to use his good office. I know that Sen. Mark is a very powerful man, Mr. President, and I am—*[Interruption]* Yes, I think it would be a great pity if there were a clash between the teachers and the Government at this time. I know that there has been an agreement about the gap that is required to be filled. There is a dispute about whether there should be any back-pay for 1999, and there is another dispute about whether 25 per cent of the money due should be payable only upon examination of performance.

Now, I think that is very wrong. If someone owes me money for a triennium, the person cannot then say, "I owe you \$100. You will get \$75 but the other \$25 will be based upon performance." Morally that is not tenable, Mr. President. So I appeal to the powers that be to settle this dispute with the teachers and bring them up to a decent standard of living. They should recognize that if they are going to

use performance criteria to decide whether to pay them salaries, they must have a thing where they say, there is a basic increment of 50 and there is another increment of 50 for which one can get merit. But, every human being in a changing world where money is losing its value and the cost of living is going up needs that basic increment almost automatically. Once someone employs me, I have to get the basic increment.

Mr. President: Two minutes to wrap up.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: You did not take out any for the “licks”? [Laughter] Yes, Mr. President, okay. [Interruption] That was just a joke, “eh”.

Mr. President, I have tried to talk about education as political education. I have tried to talk about the creation of a new society. I said my subtext was nationalism. What is wrong with being a nationalist? What I want to say is that the educational system and the teachers have a role to play in creating nationalism. I just want now to close with a short passage from George Lamming describing what the national spirit is and what it is we, all adults, all educators, every citizen in this country, should try to cultivate among our fellow citizens and young people.

Mr. President: I hope you can do that in one minute, Senator.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: “The national spirit is deeper and more enduring than...”

Simply the anticolonial struggle. The national spirit:

“...is original and necessary as the root to the body of a tree. It is the source of discovery and creation. It is the private feeling you experience of possessing and being possessed by the whole landscape of the place where you were born, the freedom which helps you to recognize the rhythm of the winds, the silence and aroma of the night, rocks, water, pebble and branch, animal and bird noise, the temper of the sea and the mornings arousing nature everywhere to the silent and sacred communion between you and the roots you have made on this island.”

National spirit:

“...is the bond between each man and that corner of the earth which his birth and his work have baptised with the name, home.”

Thank you, Mr. President. [Desk thumping]

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark):
[*Desk thumping*] Mr. President, let me first of all thank and congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development for providing what I would describe as the continuity in this the 2001 Budget that will allow Trinidad and Tobago to build on the platform for progress that this Government has steadfastly provided since 1995. Let me also take the opportunity in his absence to congratulate my ministerial colleague, Sen. The Hon. Carlos John, on his magnificent maiden contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, over the last five years, our Government has consistently sought to address the important social issues necessary for real progress to take place in our republic. We have provided a level of infrastructure that is unprecedented in the political history of Trinidad and Tobago. However, we recognize that the best infrastructure in the world is useless without the human capital to operate it. The public service of Trinidad and Tobago will remain, for a very long time, the pillar of this country's economic growth and social development. Without a vision, a philosophy and a well-trained public service, this country cannot progress.

The vision that illuminates and drives our achievements in public administration is that we are continuously seeking to improve our own organization to conduct the affairs of the nation in a very purposeful way and with the highest degree of professionalism and integrity. Mr. President, the public service is no longer a place where one puts all those people who cannot find a job elsewhere. What we are trying to achieve in the public service is a professional organization delivering service of the highest possible quality, in the fastest possible time, using the least possible resources. That is the kind of public service that we are seeking to establish in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. This is what this budget is about and what previous budgets have been about; and our future budgets will also seek to ensure that.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. President, the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development has presented a wide-ranging action plan for continuing our transformation of the social infrastructure of our country. From the point of view of the public service, this Government, recognizing the importance of the public service to the development of our country, created one entity to deal with all the public sector human resource issues within the public service, and that is the Ministry of Public Administration. The first Government to recognize the importance of establishing and paying single attention to public service transformation, is the United

National Congress of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is a very advanced move, because any form of behavioural change is not immediately measurable, particularly if you are hoping to achieve what is called sustainable development rather than the PNM philosophy of quick-fix solutions.

Mr. President, negative behaviours that have taken over 40 years to develop cannot be changed overnight or even in five years. The results of our work in reorganizing, reengineering and restructuring the public service will never be tangible in the strictest sense of the word. We have to focus on what I call the intangibles such as attitudes, mental shifts, motivators, and satisfiers—the creation almost of a culture of excellence within the context of change in our republic. We have to replace a climate built on confrontation with attitudes of collaboration and cooperation.

Mr. President, I would submit to you that the most important achievement of my Ministry is the extent to which we can, and have been able to, influence the success of the transformation of other ministries and other departments. Without any doubt, we have been able to improve the quality, the speed, the relevance, the effectiveness, the transparency and accessibility of government services in this republic. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. President, what we are trying to do now is to continue to develop a culture of professionalism within the public service, and to build intellectual capital that will be the basis for the future development of the public sector and ultimately our country.

Mr. President, when we look at the situation that we had inherited, I would like to capture this within three particular frameworks in terms of concerns. The first concern is how well we have managed the goals and objectives that we set for ourselves in the previous budgets; in our policy documents; and in collaboration with our stakeholders, the most important of whom are our employees. The second concern is the extent to which we have been able to improve the delivery of those services that are entrusted to or are within the purview of the public service. In the final analysis, we must always remember that we are in the public service, a service organization, and it stands or falls based on the quality of the services that we provide to the population of our country.

Mr. President, the third area of concern is the importance of how prepared we are as a people for change and for improvements in service delivery, as well as to the extent to which we are creating a supportive environment for self-efficacy, technological advances for flexibility, autonomy and empowerment. We would like to see a public service in which public officers at all levels would be citizen

friendly, customer friendly—that they will never need to get permission from higher up to deal with problems that they confront, in a very effective and efficient manner.

Mr. President, five years ago we did not inherit a stable industrial relations climate. While we have not reached zero tolerance level for industrial disputes, we have come a very long way. I inherited a situation where negotiations had foundered and the Chief Personnel Officer was negotiating agreements for all public officers in the various public sectors, long after the relevant period had passed—like Sen. Shabazz, the PNM was sleeping during that period. *[Laughter]*
[Desk thumping]

Mr. President, I am very happy to inform the Senate that the negotiations, which started last year, between the Chief Personnel Officer and the public sector unions and employee associations are in respect of the current period. This is a historical first where we are negotiating with trade unions within the public sector for the first time within a current period. That has never happened before. *[Desk thumping]* In fact, our Government is very committed to promoting the culture of the legitimate bargaining process, without any form of political interference.

Mr. President, I do not interfere in the Chief Personnel Officer's negotiations. I may offer advice, but I am not the person who you come to—Sen. Ken Ramchand—for settlement. That is a matter for the Chief Personnel Officer, and what you are trying to do is to get me entangled in a matter that the PNM was involved in when they were there. We say that we are leaving negotiations to the negotiator. That is the Chief Personnel Officer. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. President, the Government has, in fact, inherited a lot of problems, a lot of grievances and a lot of difficulties; but we are about strengthening the public service. We are not about undermining the public service and that is why we resist getting involved in these matters in the way that many people would like us to get involved. Mr. President, I must tell you that I am a happy person because I feel that over the last five years, this Ministry and this Government have made tremendous advances in promoting the welfare and well-being of public officers.

The PNM between 1991 and 1995 refused to pay 30,000 civil servants, over 2,000 prison officers and many other categories of workers falling under the statutory authorities of Trinidad and Tobago. They refused to implement the award given by the special tribunal, unless the Public Services Association signed an agreement to buy out the arrears of increments, as the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association, the Police Association and Fire Services

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[SEN. THE HON. W. MARK]

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Association did. As such, when we came into office in 1995, we signed an agreement with the Public Services Association and the Prison Officers Association, First and Second Division, without prejudice, and they were able to get all their cash, bonds and their non-cash instruments.

I also want to indicate that I saw somewhere in the newspaper a phantom 10-point action plan by an “airy-fairy, wishy-washy” Opposition. One of the first items they had on that “wishy-washy” phantom action plan, was that they are going to pay public officers immediately. Where was the PNM between 1991 and 1995 when they did not pay public officers a single cent? In fact, because of their vindictiveness and wickedness, they refused to implement the special tribunal award. We did that and now they are saying, do you know what? “Vote for me, I will pay you quickly.”

2.30 p.m.

Now, people are not fools. Public officers are not stupid. They know that when we came into office, we settled outstanding agreements for 1990—1992, 1993—1995 and 1996—1998. We did that. The PNM was there from 1991—1995, not a single settlement was reached and they say they love people, they care for people and people come first. We paid out \$1.6 billion to workers in this country, whether it be to policemen, firemen, teachers, nurses, doctors, daily-rated workers—\$1.6 billion in cash and non-cash payment. Put that in your pipe and smoke it. The PNM cannot deal with that. That is what the record is showing. We did that and the PNM said they care about people. What people?

Sen. Cabrera: Themselves.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. President, I say that those who forget the mistakes of the past are condemned to repeat them.

We introduced for public officers, for the first time in the public service, paternity leave. We did that. We were equalizing the field. We introduced paternity leave for the first time and, as you know, that is a very modern human resource management practice. That is what we did. We also introduced injury leave for the first time for public officers. We made payment for the first time.

Increments were suspended in 1987. We restored increments for every single public officer in 1996 and it came fully into effect in 1997 up to this time. That is our record. We did that.

We introduced for the first time, vacation leave for principals and vice principals. They never had that before. We introduced that. We provided

legislation for the first time for compensation for death or injury arising out of and in the course of duties for members of the protective services. We did that between 1995 and the present period.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Public Administration also enacted the Law Reform (Pensions) Act of 1997 which provided improved superannuation benefits for public officers and members of the Defence Force. Temporary officers of the public service are now guaranteed, once they work for 10 and/or more continuous years, pension rights when they leave the public service at 55 years of age. We did that. Thousands of public officers are now entitled to security in terms of, not only pension, but right now, the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago is considering regularizing thousands of workers who are Clerks I in the public service and making them permanent for the first time—we are doing that—apart from the 1,000 Special Reserve Police that the Minister of National Security addressed. Where was the PNM? Like Sen. Shabazz, sleeping. [*Laughter*] The PNM was sleeping, like Sen. Shabazz, during that period. That is what they were doing.

Mr. President, the prisons. We enacted recently—and I brought it here—an amendment to the Prison Service Act which provides for enhanced pension benefits for prison officers. They were getting the same entitlement as civil servants. They are now getting the same entitlement as their counterparts in the police and fire services. We did that. We promulgated, for the first time, the Fire Service Terms and Conditions of Employment Regulations. None existed for 40 years. They were subjected to the civil service rules. This administration did that. This is fact. This is the record of this administration.

We, for the first time, promulgated a code of conduct for the civil service. It never had a code of conduct. Remember that famous case of Endall Thomas. We settled that in 1996. There is a code of conduct now for civil servants; there is a code of conduct now for teachers; there is a code of conduct for fire officers; there is a code of conduct for police officers. We did that.

Mr. President, we recently settled the Defence Force. They have been crying out to be de-linked from the rest of the protective services. We de-linked the Defence Force and they have gotten their increase. From next month, they are getting their new salaries and by the end of this year, the Minister will try to see how he can deal with the arrears. We did that.

The daily-rated workers of this country, we settled them in terms of outstanding payments. We settled collective agreements of the daily-rated workers. The PNM had those daily-rated workers, some of them regular, acting as

if they were stars in Hollywood for years. We made them permanent, hundreds of workers—18,000. To crown it all, we are about to sign, after some 40 years of struggle by the daily-rated workers, a pension plan for the daily-rated workers of Trinidad and Tobago. We did that. That is our record.

We are about to also agree with the National Union of Government and Federated Workers, representing daily-rated workers, on a group health plan for daily-rated workers in Trinidad and Tobago—another advance. [*Desk thumping*] We are not talkers; we are not jokers; we are performers.

We have performed. We are hopeful, like Sen. Prof. Ken Ramchand, that the current round of negotiations involving the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association, the Public Services Association and all the other public sector unions, would end in a satisfactory manner. We hope that would happen. They are now discussing these matters and we hope that good sense would prevail and everybody would understand, even though it is an election year, that the Government could not sacrifice the economy. The Government will not overthrow the economy just to give people big increases and forget the future. We cannot do that. If we cannot arrive at a reasonable settlement, there are procedures to be followed to go and settle it, but do not hold the country to ransom or blackmail anybody.

We on this side have done a lot to improve the conditions of our workers in the public service. I am very happy that the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, for the second consecutive year, addressed the plight of our retirees, our public officers who have retired—over 15,000 of them. Dr. V. C. Gockin, a great man of this country; if you see the condition in which he lives. The pittance that he receives—

Mr. President: Senator, do not call names.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Sorry, Sir. I withdraw that. One of our great sons, we intervened to help and we are trying to help as much as we can. It is not an easy task but we are trying. We want to make our people happy. After all, the Almighty Lord put us here to be happy. We want people to be happy. That is what we are about, making people happy, not evil.

We say that we have a policy that is designed to improve the conditions of life of people. These are the facts. It is no wishy-washy 10-point plan and no wishy-washy 10-point plan phantom could wash away this, or dislodge it. That is a fact. That is why I believe that the other side is so desperate and trying to persuade the

masses to support a platform of what I call race, slander and corruption. That is what they are on and I will bring to the attention of this Parliament the dirty tricks campaign of the PNM to tell you, for instance, how wicked, vindictive and devious these people are, they are prepared to burst and rend the country apart, just to get into power, using Africans against Indians and using Indians against Africans. I will bring to the record of this Parliament what they have been doing.

Sen. Tota-Maharaj: That is a shame.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: I saw a document recently—just excerpts—and I saw, for instance, how these things were numbered and the questions which were posed, reminded me of Pilgrim's Progress and the Muckrakers. It reminded me of that. They do not look up at all; down. Give them a celestial crown; they refuse that, too.

I have the fax number which I will not reveal at this time. I have the consultant to whom they communicated the document in Washington. I have the name of the associates or the consultants that got the document from the PNM. More than that, I have the name of the former Senator who sat on this side under the PNM between 1991—1995 who is now a consultant to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. They sent it to Washington. Hear some of the questions they asked and the person responded in the following way. A document, faxed—

Sen. Shabazz: I want you to quote date and time.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: In fact, Mr. President, the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago addressing a political rally at the Centre of Excellence referred to what is called the "Muckrakers Manifesto" and I want to quote from his address.

Mr. President, on page 9 of his address to that major conference, he identified a number of specific items that were part of this so-called manifesto. Designated number 33—forgiving of the Guyana debt fell into that framework. That was a question they posed in terms of their manifesto. Also, on-the-job training programme was also raised. Best village was also raised. Youth Camps were also raised. The Civilian Conservation Corps closed down. He sent that to Washington. They were designated question number 7, question number 8, question number 42, question number 23 and question number 41.

Mr. President, I would not tell you that when the question was raised, this was the gentleman from Washington responding, the former Senator who used to sit here.

Sen. Shabazz: Quote.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: I am not quoting. I am summarizing. I am telling you what is taking place in the country.

Can the claim be made that this was an action that particularly affected the Afro-Trinidad and Tobago population, that is, the closing down of the On-The-Job Training Programme? That was what the consultant was asking the gentleman, the former Senator, to clarify.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Quotation.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: I am telling you there is a document in circulation. I have gotten an extract of it. I have not gotten the big, fat one. I just got an extract of it.

Sen. Shabazz: Point of order, please. Mr. President, if the hon. Senator is quoting from a document, would he have to state where the document is from?

Mr. President: Just let us say that if, in fact, the hon. Minister is quoting from a document, he will be obliged to give the date, the source and the title of the document. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. President, I am not quoting directly from a document. I have extracts. I do not want to call names innocently here, Sir. That is the point I am making and I am sure the President would not want me to call the name of the former Senator in question. I do not think he is here to defend himself and I do not think it is fair because Sen. Daly is very strong on that point, so I do not want to quote people.

2.45 p.m.

This is the Best Village Competition, the question was: "Was there a predominant African participation, in this, to the extent that this scaling down could be interpreted as disrespecting Africans?" [*Interruption*] That is a summary.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Point of order, Mr. President. Again the hon. Minister seems to be quoting.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: No, I have it written here. This is something I wrote.

Sen. Prof. Spence: What is the difference between quoting and reading an extract? That is quoting.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: I am not quoting, I am summarizing what I have.

Mr. President: If the Member denies quoting, then we have to accept what he says.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: I am not quoting, Sir, I am summarizing. [Interruption] No, only the President could tell me that.

Mr. President, the closure of the youth camp—I raised these points to tell the Senate that every point that was raised here this morning—[Interruption]

Sen. Shabazz: Mr. President, the hon. Minister says that his document was written by an ex-Member of this Senate, it was sent outside, and these are the questions that were asked. It is from the document that this person sent; he is taking these readings. Would you be kind enough to rule again, please?

Mr. President: I said earlier on if, in fact, the Member denies that he is quoting from a document, then I must accept it, unless it is very very patent that he is quoting from the document.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. President, with respect to the same points that were raised this morning by Sen. Yuille Williams: the closing of the youth camps—the “fella” asked them: “How has this affected the African population in summary?” Mr. President, all I am trying to tell you and this honourable Senate is that the PNM is on a campaign of race, slander and corruption! That is what they are on. The evidence is there! [Desk thumping] That is what they are on.

Mr. President: Hon. Minister, in the interest of the debate, I think the point has been very well made, sufficiently made, I should say. Shall we now move on?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: This is why I believe in the old Ras Shorty I saying—[Interruption]

Sen. Shabazz: Ras Shabazz I. [Laughter]

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: “Who God bless no man shall ever curse.” I believe in the old Ras Shorty I. I am not worried about this.

Mr. President, this is why I can understand why, for instance, a former MP resigned from that side. I could understand why. When he was quoted in the newspapers—I could remember it well, I do not have the quotation here—he is reported to have said in his contribution in 1991—the Member for Caroni East. Do you know what the Member for Caroni East said in his contribution, Mr.

President? He said he was happy to be extricated from the amalgam of that side. He was very happy. He said that side represented the symbol and institution of discrimination, tokenism and cosmetics. He described them. He said the only living epitome after Martin Luther King Junior, Mahatma Gandhi and the living legend called Nelson Mandela is the hon. Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Who said that?

Sen. Shabazz: Dr. Eric Williams.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Do you know who said that? The former—I would not call any names.

Mr. President: Do not call names please. Could you just move on please?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Yes, Sir. All I am saying to this honourable Senate is that the country has to be aware of what is unfolding here.

I want to go back to my Ministry. In terms of public administration, we have been able to establish what is called the human resource management divisions in all our ministries. As we speak today, close to about 30 human resource managers have already been appointed in ministries. The objective is to establish human resource management divisions, replacing the old personnel management concept and getting into strategic planning and direction. The human resource managers are the ones. I believe the public service is moving ahead of many parts of the private sector in that particular area. I know technologically, we still remain backward, but we are getting there. This is why we need another five years. We cannot complete it in five years. We need another five years.

Sen. Shabazz: “Yuh” begging.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: We have established human resource management divisions over the last five years, and the transformation of the public service is taking place: it is moving on.

We have introduced from February 01, 2000, a new performance management appraisal system in our public service. We have gotten away from the old staff reporting. We want people to link their individual goals with the organization’s objectives. We want performance to be properly measured and standards established. We have trained thousands of public officers in order to get on board with this new thrust in our public service of Trinidad and Tobago. We are moving forward.

The public service is a very complex organization. The PNM never paid attention to the public service of Trinidad and Tobago. They used it! But they

never built the human capital base. The only people, Mr. President, who were able to bring about some flicker of hope, in terms of the development in the public service, was when we went to the international financial agencies or donor agencies. To say that they established a ministry and funded that ministry, to bring about human development, human capital, intellectual capital or introduced infrastructure, they did not do it. They did not do that properly.

Imagine in 2000 our public service is still not connected. The Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago—I will talk about that later on—just took a decision, about two months ago, to purchase a modern communications backbone for the entire public service of Trinidad and Tobago, where we could be connected on-line, on time, in real time. The same point that Sen. Prof. Ramchand was making earlier: if he is in Cedros or Icacos he should not have to come to town for a passport, he should get that on-line. The PNM had \$70 billion! Singapore, which was almost on par with us back in the 1960s have about \$80—\$100 billion in reserves, and their entire public service is connected. We are still on a manual information system. We are trying to revolutionize the public service. We have to take all these initiatives within a policy framework.

When I came into the public service, I did not get a policy. I saw initiatives taken by my predecessor. When I came into the public service, as the Minister of Public Administration, I established a policy direction for the public service. It came here—Sen. Daly requested and demanded it—and we tabled it here: a policy agenda for the new public administration. We introduced a technology policy for the first time in the public service. We introduced, for the first time, a training policy in our public service. These things were not there before. I could understand, Mr. President, the PNM was sleeping during that period—autopilot.

We are working towards an enhanced selection and career management programme. Within our public service, again, people are recruited, people are being given serious responsibilities but we do not have, for instance, the proper procedures and systems in place to select our people. We want to work with the Public Service Commission to do away with seniority in our public service and promote people on a system of meritocracy. If one is bright and young, attended university and is qualified, do not keep these people down because you are senior! Mr. President, that is the kind of revolution that we are seeking to bring about in our public service so we can attract, retain and maintain bright, young professionals who are desirous of becoming part of our public service.

2.55 p.m.

Mr. President, Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt brought a Motion here on the police, on the whole question of an employee assistance programme. We have taken a decision, I shared her concerns; I know the tragedy that is inflicted upon many public officers in the absence of this programme. This Government has taken a decision to hire Petrotrin to do an employee assistance programme for us, a policy document that will be public service wide. We are supposed to get that report in the next month, and we are hoping by the end of the year we can set up a pilot in our public service. It will cover the police service, the teachers, the civil servants, fire officers and prison officers, daily-rated workers included, a public service wide employee assistance programme; that is what we are doing.

We are also trying to improve the quality of life of our public officers. We have acquired a number of new quarters for our public officers. We have sought over the last five years to ensure that our public officers lives are made a little more comfortable. For instance, in terms of office accommodation, we have acquired, as I said, many buildings for these persons.

In fact, over the last five years we rented or leased accommodation for several ministries and departments totalling about 108; 108 buildings were leased. We rented a building for the Ministry of Social and Community Development to improve the workers conditions, to improve their environment; the Ministry of Tourism also. The Elections and Boundaries Commission, an independent institution that was at the Salvatori Building, if you go now they are now on Frederick Street in very comfortable surroundings. All these things we did to improve the quality of our public officers.

Mr. President, our ministry also deals with the acquisition of property by private treaty, that is, again, designed to improve the services that the country and the people need for community centres, fire stations, health centres, and police stations. All these things were done; libraries is another example. During that period we also acquired properties: Temple Court, Naipaul House, drop-in centres, Guardian Life building. We have now purchased the Chancery in Ottawa for the first time for our High Commissioner.

Mr. President, we have sold, over the last three to four years, 108 government quarters valued, in terms of money, \$70 million. We have also allocated some 30 quarters to non-governmental organizations; 13 quarters have been allocated for use as government offices; 21 have been allocated to public officers. We are, in fact, working on an office campus, a public service office campus in St. Joseph. We are building an office complex there on about 175 hectares of land, where we want to put, for instance, government ministries.

We are going to decentralize our government ministries from Port of Spain and they are going to St. Joseph, with the exception of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development and the Attorney General's Office, the rest are going to St. Joseph. NIHERST, Institute of Business, the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago will have their quarters there. It is a very long-term plan; it is going to be phased in between the period 2001 right to 2015. *[Interruption]*

St. Joseph, the farm, 175 hectares of land, that is the size of the property.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Is the hon. Minister aware that that is prime agricultural land?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Yes, I am very much aware and we are going to preserve the finesse that you are talking about within that arrangement. I will explain that to you later. We are trying to improve the working conditions of our public officers.

In addition, if you go to Siparia you will see our public officers still labouring and working in very desperate conditions, wooden buildings, buildings that are unacceptable. We are about to build a Siparia Administrative Complex along the lines of the Tunapuna Administrative Complex. We are also doing that in Rio Claro; we are doing that also in Chaguanas; we are housing our public officers, improving their conditions. I think that, for instance, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed.

We are going to establish a home for the Customs and Excise Department, construction will start in January of 2001. They would be right there where the old post office used to be, that area; a magnificent structure for our Customs and Excise Department. We are about working towards the development of a public service that is integrated; we want an integrated public service where, for instance, our people can go and shop in one spot, and, if they want a passport, a driver's permit, a birth certificate, they could get that on the spot in five minutes. It is a public service integrated approach, but we need the technology and the infrastructure to establish that.

That is why the Government has decided to purchase a modern communications backbone to connect all our ministries and departments. That is going to help speed up the delivery of services, not only among government departments, but between government departments and the public of Trinidad and Tobago.

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. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. President, as you know, we inherited a very demoralized public service, just as Minister Theodore inherited a demoralized police service. The PNM almost beat the public officers into a state of submission, they almost break up the trade union movement during that period, and we had to find a mechanism to restore pride and increase recognition among our public officers; we did that.

We established a national public service week for the first time, where public officers can, in fact, display their services to the country, where they can interact. For the first time we honoured retirees in our public service. When a permanent secretary retired, before we came, they had to go into their shallow pockets to organize a function. [*Interruption*] I know “yuh” coming with the Salaries Review Commission Report.

Sen. Daly: Does the Minister think that lack of implementation of the Salaries Review Commission Report will keep the permanent secretary's pocket shallow and demoralize the top public service officers?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: I think that is a matter that has taken the form of a motion in another place, Sir, and I would not want to deal with that right now. [*Laughter*]

I understand my friend's concern, but I want to tell you that we are seeking to promote recognition and pride among public officers. So when you retire now Sen. Daly, if you were in the public service, you do not have to dip into very heavy pocket, you do not have a shallow pocket, you will have a heavy pocket. It is those people with shallow pockets that we are trying to help here, very deep pockets, Sir, very deep pocket.

The public officers are happy. Do you know, Mr. President, that every year since we established National Public Service Week, this is the fourth consecutive year, 600 to 700 public officers are honoured every year, and the daily-rated workers are being recognized as well. People honoured cried long tears. We had it at Cascadia for three consecutive years, and fathers, mothers, when they come they bring their spouses, they are happy; for the first time they were recognized by a government, their employer. The employer never recognized them—[*Desk*]

thumping]—heartless, wicked, vindictive, selfish and they want a second chance! For what? To go back into the past? Man, Mr. President, we have come too far to turn back now. [*Desk thumping*]

We have not only recognized our retirees, we have also developed programmes in many ministries and so forth, where in every ministry for the first time they have internal awards for all workers, whether it is in the police service, the fire service or the civil service they have their own internal functions, whether it is the Treasury or the Inland Revenue Department, every year an allocation is put aside to recognize our public officers and their contribution to Trinidad and Tobago. Where was the People's National Movement? What were you doing in five years? You come now and say you want a second chance, man we must have an abortion here for the People's National Movement. [*Laughter*]

We are trying to advance the interest of this country, advance the interest of the people. In addition, we are building relationships with the private sector, we are promoting corporate governance. We have reached almost the conclusion of a social compact among the social partners: business, Government and labour. We want to take the country forward, that is what we are about.

Freedom of information: we are about to promulgate, proclaim the Freedom of Information Act. I have been assigned the responsibility of chairing the implementation committee. In fact, tomorrow morning we have a breakfast meeting for members of the media, Sen. Daly. We are inviting the media, all members of the media, so they can understand how this Freedom of Information Act will be implemented and how they will benefit from it.

For the first time the media in this country will have access to information legally, and it will be legally enforceable. What they have under the Constitution is the freedom of the press, but they do not have the right to access information. This Government has given the media the right to access information in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We have done yeoman service to the media in this regard. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, as you know, proper governance must be based on accountability; it is bound to be based on openness, and transparency. These are the principles that we are advancing under the Freedom of Information Act. We are about the future, not the past. Let the dead bury the dead. We are about the future. They talk about us condemning young people, we do not like young people. The People's National Movement between 1991 and 1995 subjected 50,000 young people to the street corners of this country. We in this year 2000

have put 30,000 children—I mean to say, all might not go in one time—but 30,000 children will now have the chance to have universal secondary education. [Desk thumping]

Regarding crime, Mr. President, do you think crime comes just so? Do you think crime come just so? No, no, no, man, it takes years to build up, and you want to blame us! Blame us for what? Not one secondary school that PNM, the Opposition, built during the period 1991—1995 and "dey say dey care about young people!" What care about what young people? You used young people, you abused them! Talk to Morris Marshall, he must be rolling in his grave now! You abused that young great soul of this country and then dumped him. [Interruption] Nafeesa, her father is rolling in his grave right now. [Laughter]

As far as I am concerned, I am not worried about Nafeesa, not even her brother supporting her, so I am not worried about her. [Laughter] We have a bomb to drop on that woman, when she get that bomb is a nuclear bomb. [Laughter] She cyar escape yuh know. [Laughter] Fooling herself!

Mr. President, as far as I am concerned I am not taking on Nafeesa, we will deal with her on the hustings, not in this Parliament. As far as I am concerned, the future is here. We are the future, that is what our motto stands for, we say that we are the future.

What I have sought to do is to put in perspective our attempts to create a supportive environment for a new public administration in our country.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. President, we have sought to build on the technologies now available and treat them as opportunities rather than mere challenges. We have too long suffered the inadequacy of infrastructure, of training and incompetence, of attitudes and behaviour and the lack of response to clients and customers who are, at the same time the taxpayers of this nation.

We are fully aware that we have now entered the core co-addict age. This places a greater onus on our public service to see ahead of the curve and try to predict the unpredictable. In this new age, the competencies and skills for development and even for survival would be based on the ability to acquire new knowledge, and indeed to unlearn such knowledge just as rapidly as we grapple with the ambiguous, the unknown and the unpredictable.

We are proud of the investments we have made, we have a human capital and we know that there are many proud sons and daughters of this nation in our public service who will take up the mantle. In five short years we have come a long way and we just cannot turn back. We cannot turn back now, Mr. President.

I again compliment my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance. The vision of an ideal workplace for the public service is an attainable one. We have demonstrated the political will and creating the opportunities for our people to achieve the necessary skills. With the will and skills in place, we need only to ensure that we have an environment that is sustainable and supportive of growth. This requires a commitment to excellence, a call to duty, a call to service, and a passion for our country, Sen. Shabazz. We can provide the environment in which public officers can achieve their fullest potential.

Mr. President, I feel confident that in these five years we have laid the foundation for a new work ethic, a new work environment for the public service. We will continue to build on it, improve on it and to network it linking the entire public service together in a continuous chain of efficiency, effectiveness and empathy with those whom we serve. The United National Congress has built the country's bridge to the 21st Century. We have crossed that bridge together and we are not turning back. The future of our country lies in the hand of the masses, they are going to think very hard, they are going to feel very deeply, but in the end I am sure they will choose wisely and vote for the United National Congress when the next election is called in this country.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Sen. Prof. John Spence: Mr. President, usually in budget debates I speak on areas which I hope I have some knowledge and that is usually on education because I was an educator for many years, and on agriculture because those are the areas with which I am most familiar.

On this occasion, I have recently spoken on education in Sen. Prof. Ramchand's motion, and of course there is nothing in the budget that one has to say about agriculture because it does not deal with agriculture. My first inclination was to get up and say just that and sit again, but I thought my duty was to do a little more than that, so I shall try and I hope my colleagues will forgive me if I repeat some of what I have said recently because those are the areas with which I feel most comfortable.

I decide to take a different approach and go through the Budget Statement and see what there might be of interest for somebody looking from my perspective to see the things with which I would agree and applaud and those with which I might perhaps take issue.

Before doing so, I congratulate Sen. Carlos John on his maiden contribution in the Senate. I very much regret that since it was his maiden contribution, I have to call attention to an error in arithmetic that he made at the very start of his

contribution. It is interesting, Mr. President, that his statement which I should point out as flawed was followed by desk thumping. As soon as I heard the statement, I realized there was an error because I was listening to what he said. I can only assume that his colleagues were not listening to him and so they desk thumped for the final line and did not realize that he had made a mistake.

He compared the expenditure on human resource development in 1995 and 2000, but in 1995, he took the total budget and then used the expenditure on education, training, health and social areas and got a percentage of 23.6 per cent in that way. When he was doing it in 2000, he first subtracted the Government's debt. In other words, he was comparing—I think the old saying is—apples with oranges, but since we are in the tropics I would say oranges with pommecytheres.

If one does his calculation for 2000 in the same way he did the calculation for 1995, the percentage is 25. So the difference between 23.6 and 25.6 per cent, a difference of 2 per cent is hardly worth the desk thumping.

Mr. President, I would also make a few other comments on other contributions that were made, not in any order or scheme, but just things which occurred to me as we went along. First of all, I support Sen. Selwyn John's plea for publicity to parliamentary proceedings. I really think in the era in which the hon. Minister of Public Administration was boasting about the Information Act which allows the public to have information if they know how to go about it, we should be more open, at least as parliamentarians in letting the public know what we are about and what we say on various matters. There used to be a programme called *In Parliament*. I do not know if Sen. S. John knows that it was his Government that stopped it fairly recently. I do not know why, but it is a great pity. I have raised this matter in different fora and, as you know, I got the support of the Attorney General who promised to go even further than I would suggest and have a channel for the Parliament.

I do not think that is necessary because we have the information channel and all we need to do is what is done in the United Kingdom; broadcast the full proceedings of Parliament and not necessarily at prime time, but who wants to look at it will look at it, and who does not want to be bored by it will not look at it.

Then there was the point made by Sen. Mark that Petrotrin will now be contracted by the Government to help with employee assistance. I thought Petrotrin was an oil company, and it seems very strange to me—perhaps nearly as strange as Tidco paving the roads—that Petrotrin should be in the area of

psychological attention to employees. I just do not get it. I am told they have a small department where they do this with their own employees, but why Petrotrin? We really seem to be going out of order with respect to our state enterprises.

Mr. President, going on to the budget itself, the hon. Minister has pointed out that we are very much on target with respect to macro economic indicators and I congratulate and applaud him for that. As has been pointed out earlier he has followed up on previous Ministers of Finance and done extremely well with regard to that area. He has kept inflation low, he has had sustained growth over the period of time and he has been able to balance the budget so that we do not have our fiscal balance going out askew.

There is one area which I think has already been mentioned by Sen. Dr. St. Cyr which I think we need to emphasize and that is in respect of the public debt. It is a very great pity because much of what he has achieved and what he rightly boasts about could be undone by this problem of the public debt.

Mr. President, there is one area that he does not mention which surprises me and that is the rate of exchange. It seems to me, and I do not think it is any secret that in Trinidad and Tobago there is a managed rate of exchange and this is extremely important for maintaining a low rate of inflation, and we have done well by managing the rate of exchange. I think that is something, perhaps he might say it is really the banks that are doing it and not the Government and that is why he does not boast about it. I think that is something as a nation we can boast about.

In spite of pressure on the Parliament, oil prices are low, we have been sensible about it to manage it. We do not have a true float and we are able to manage it in that way. I get a bit concerned when we quote all these external agencies as to how well we are doing. I feel a little uncomfortable when the IMF says we are doing well and I really hope we would think more of how we ourselves see what we are doing rather than what these other agencies think about us.

Mr. President, on to other matters that are referred to in the budget, the hon. Minister made a very brief statement about the Piarco International Airport. I think it is a great pity that he was not able to say more about this because this is an area with which many people are concerned and it has been mentioned by previous speakers that we may have indeed a substantial overrun on the cost of the airport. This morning I interrupted the hon. Minister of Works and Transport to ask him whether he could tell me if the money for the airport was being

borrowed and whether that would mean there would be accrued interest and, therefore, the figure of \$730 million, even that figure, not counting the additional things, was clearly a part of the airport. He was speaking strictly about construction of the terminal itself would not in fact mean that the price would escalate. He kept completely ignoring my question.

Mr. President, I am a bit disappointed that so many government Ministers after five years in this Senate should find it necessary to read their text rather than debate it. Surely we have come here to debate and after five years, we should have acquired some capacity to debate rather than read our text. Clearly what happened to the hon. Minister is that he could not break to make a comment to me, even to say I will tell you later on or I will tell you, or write you afterwards because if he had done that he would have lost the thread of his reading and would not have gotten to the end by the time his time was up. I find that very disappointing. He told me afterwards that indeed, the money is to be borrowed and perhaps the Minister of Finance might address this in his winding up, and there will be interest to be paid. Therefore, the cost of the airport is going to be even greater than the figure that is now given.

In addition to that, I listened to Mr. Frank Mouttet on the radio yesterday morning and he quoted some figures which had been given by, I think, Dr. Rowley. I am not quoting from the other place but I am referring to Frank Mouttet's figures which he gave on the wireless. It was rather alarming. I would not go into details but the difference between original estimates and final payment contract prices is really quite alarming and I do not see how Mr. Mouttet could have said this on the radio. These figures would not go away so I do not see how the Government and the Minister of Finance could just ignore them. Politically, I cannot see how they could be ignored because there must be some explanation. If there is an explanation, why not give it? This is the age of public information and information available to the public, so give an explanation why an original estimate of \$105 million gets up to \$183 million when the contracts are given. Why be quiet about it? Let us all know what is going on.

Mr. President, the next area on which I would like to touch which the hon. Minister mentioned in his presentation was that of the environment. The most important contribution that he made in this regard was the creation of the Green Fund. As you know, there have been different reactions to the Green Fund and the business community is not too happy that it should have been added on and other people have welcomed it.

3.25 p.m.

I do not think that any of us would really be able to say that we do not welcome the provision of some resources towards addressing problems in the environment. That must be stated. My main concern—and this to me is the real danger—is that we do not assume that the provision of this fund will substantially address the problems of the environment. I think it is a good thing to have the fund because it will do some little things that would assist along the way. Perhaps that is a good thing because we would get more people with community projects aware of the fact that they must do something about their local and immediate environment. However, if we think that by setting up this fund we have solved the problems of the environment, we are deluding ourselves and that is the real danger.

The hon. Minister referred to reforestation. I think this fund may come up to about \$70 million per year if they have the full percentage and all the money comes in. Sen. Prof. Kenny has referred to reforestation and the cost for the area that has been denuded in the western part of the Northern Range is colossal, but we have to do it. It is a disaster if we do not. To think that \$70 million will address it by people having little projects and planting a few trees here and there will not do it at all!

First of all the area that we are doing each year—20 hectares, which we have to get up to 5,700—will take 280 years, if we do the arithmetic. That is the speed at which we are going. That is what we are talking about when we say that this fund will do nothing.

Worse than that, at the same time the eastern part of the northern range is being raped. I am not blaming the Government for that. Previous governments allowed the western parts to be raped but the same thing is happening in the east so the bill is building up. We cannot even tackle the present 5,000 hectares, more is going there.

In addition to that, and I have opposed this from the time it was mentioned, there are plans by the Minister of Housing to build a North Coast Road which will allow very easy access. Sen. Prof. Kenny and I may differ slightly in this because he feels that we should be able to police our environment, therefore we should be able to build a road. That is sensible. We should be able to build a road. We should not have to protect a thing by not getting access to it, but that is a fact of life. If we build that road we make it easier for the rape of the eastern part of the northern range and we have done nothing to prevent that process from taking place.

Sen. Prof. Kenny will say what it is like even now, in the areas that he has walked through from La Laja going down. That is the environmental problem and that is not going to be addressed in any small way by this Green Fund. So the Green Fund is good but do not let us delude ourselves as to what we are doing.

The way we really have to address the environment is by having the agency that we have created by law and by much effort on the part of this parliament; we passed the bill, found it was not passed in the way it should have been passed, and we passed it again. All of that effort has gone to naught because the Government has not appointed the commission. The commission is a court of appeal and the authority cannot charge people until they have an opportunity to appeal.

So all the excellent work done by the Environmental Management Authority, by Selwyn John who is on the board, excellent work by the past chairman, the board and officers of that organization will go to naught if we do not have the commission. What is the difficulty in having a commission? Can we not find six people in Trinidad and Tobago who can sit on a commission? Why not? What is the problem? Does Minister X put up Y and does Minister Z put up B and Minister Q does not agree with what Minister X and Minister Y say?

It is a simple matter to appoint the board. Could we have some explanation from the Government as to why? The hon. Minister of the Environment actually said that it will be appointed soon, but he did not give a date. Could we have a date? Is it before the end of the term of this Government? This is not just serious, it is alarming! Because in the meanwhile, not only the private companies, but the Government itself, are doing things which, clearly they should not do and would not be able to do if we had a strong, independent Environmental Management Authority.

As a country, that is what we need. The hon. Minister of the Environment is defending his appointment of a Chairman. I want it to be clearly understood that in no way am I criticizing the prerogative of the President in his appointment of the Chairman of that board. In no way would I do that, but it is clear from this article that the hon. Minister has made the recommendation for this Chairman. I am criticizing the recommendation the hon. Minister admits to making. Clearly we cannot have an independent body chaired—at least if it were a civil servant, he could not be dismissed easily because there are certain things you must do before you can dismiss him. However, a person who is on contract as a personal assistant to the Minister can be terminated at the drop of a hat. How can there be a body that is independent of Government and also independent of the Minister if the chairman of that organization can easily be terminated in his substantive appointment? I am not in any way blaming the person involved for accepting the

chairmanship because clearly he was in a fix. If he had not accepted, he would have been terminated. He had no choice but to accept.

On the one hand we are boasting about what we are doing for the environment by setting up a fund, and on the other hand we are completely frustrating all the legitimate and legal efforts we need to take in order to address these very serious environmental problems. We are a small island. Even the big continents are worried about their loss of land and so forth. With a small island like this the mistakes are so difficult to correct. Some of them we cannot correct.

Reafforesting is a big job. First of all we have to plant the trees, but that is not enough. Fires go through the planting and we have to protect them for three or four years, perhaps five years, until they are at a height, stage and strength at which they can resist fires. Then the fires can go through and they will survive. All of that we have gone through in the northern range. We have done some establishment. We can see the pine trees at the top. Whether we should have planted pine or not is another matter but we got the pine trees up there at great effort.

What are we doing with respect to the environment? Are we serious? Why not do the simple, important things that are within our power to do and which will have a marked effect? It is because of this I have my reservations about whether the fund is not a distraction and a public relations effort with respect to the environment. That is the real danger—that the population will be fooled into thinking that a fund has been set up. Marvellous! Let us congratulate the Government.

The fund in itself is a good thing, but if it is a public relations exercise to distract our attention from the fact that the Government has not appointed the environmental commission, then we are in real trouble. I have great difficulty, not with the fund itself, but what the implications may be with respect to things that we have not done.

The next area in the Budget presentation that is dealt with after the environment is agriculture. This really is very abysmal. I get more and more depressed the longer I stand here and talk about agriculture. It is perfectly clear that, as a whole, our population has failed to understand the importance of this activity, which Sen. Dr. St. Cyr constantly points out to us, is basic. In spite of what we say, if we read the Budget Speech we will see that the Minister, in what he said, recognizes this.

It is not the fault of the Minister of Finance [*Interruption*] I am sorry, but the buck has to stop somewhere. Who appointed the Minister of Agriculture in the

first place? Not the present Minister, the Minister before; and clearly nothing came from that Ministry or that Minister which the Cabinet could bite on to put forward a proper programme for agriculture.

Yes, the Disaster Fund is good and, obviously, the social service is not an agricultural development tool. Everybody looked forward to the farmers who were flooded out getting some money. I applaud that, too, but do not let us assume that that will solve the agricultural sector.

3.35 p.m.

What is worse than that is, here is a thing from Price Waterhouse Coopers which says that we failed. We delude ourselves all the time. It says:

“The Minister...”

Who is only the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. The Hon. Minister of Finance, I think, quoted this in another place:

“The Minister ought to be applauded for the initiatives which appear to be working as evidenced by the growth demonstrated in the Gross Domestic Product from 2.1 % in 1998 to 3.3 % in 1999 and 2000.”

Price Waterhouse Coopers really feel that we have done something to improve the agricultural sector. First of all, the arithmetic is nearly as bad as that of the hon. Minister there because I have done the arithmetic and I got 3 per cent in 1998 as well. I asked Sen. Dr. St. Cyr to check for me because perhaps I am doing something wrong. Perhaps my arithmetic was wrong. Early on in my career at school it was one of my weak subjects. I managed to catch up later on but, you know. So what are they saying? We have done nothing to improve the agricultural sector and, in any case, we did not.

Mr. President, when I first read this I thought that even if there was a dip in 1998 there was probably a good explanation for it, because in 1998 we had the disaster of the froghopper outbreak, and sugar is such a large part of our agricultural GDP that if sugar goes down, the whole GDP in agriculture goes down. That year we went from, I think, 110,000 tonnes of sugar to 70,000, a substantial drop, and that, no doubt—so the GDP in 1998 would even have been higher than 3 percent if it were not for that outbreak of froghopper. However, I am not going to bore my colleagues with again saying what I think ought to be done in the agricultural sector because I have said it so often in the past. Indeed, I have a

motion, which is still on the Order Paper, and I think perhaps I will have an opportunity to contribute to that motion again, I hope, in the not too distant future.

In past budget debates we even have had some contributions from Ministers of Agriculture. I have not seen the hon. Minister of Agriculture's contribution in the other place but I understand that it really was not about agriculture and certainly we gave him the opportunity in my motion to come here and give us Government's agricultural policy. Look at what has happened with us. Sure, I applaud the Minister of Finance for the way that he has handled the economy. I am going to applaud him again later on for what he has done with respect to certain aspects of the social safety net because I think those are good.

Mr. President, nobody has come here and said anything yet about agriculture. Perhaps we are going to hear it before we go home this evening at 10.00 o'clock, or whenever it is, but so far we have heard nothing. We have given the Government the opportunity to give its policy on agriculture. The Minister came here and he was supposed to give it. He did not speak. He still has an opportunity so I hope he still will. We have given him the opportunity to speak on science, technology and research. We had some contributions but, quite frankly, I do not think they were policy statements.

We gave the Minister of Education the opportunity to speak on the education policy—nothing to do with policy. All to do with—and I will come to that in a while, because education is also mentioned here—putting all the kids into secondary schools. The fact of the matter is, as I have said recently—not to give the figures but just to say it again—all the parameters with respect to agricultural production are negative for the last five years, and before as well. The records of *Hansard* will show that I had made these points during the time in office of about two previous governments since I have been here in 1986.

The problem now is that as a society we do not believe it is necessary to have an agricultural sector. At one stage I stopped talking about agriculture and talked about quality of life because I believe if the whole country is in concrete, our quality of life disappears. So I think it is essential for us, for our mental well-being, to have an agricultural sector, even if it is just a matter of driving through to see what green fields look like and crops look like, as in many countries one can do this to get away from the urban sprawl. But of course past governments—a previous government, the PNM government, put farmers in Wallerfield and put houses in River Estate and now this Government is putting—the Minister is

building not in Wallerfield on poor land but on prime agricultural land in St. Joseph and they are building a village in Orange Grove on prime agricultural land.

In this Senate I have asked the Minister of Housing not to do that. I told him that if he drives five minutes up the Churchill Roosevelt Highway in the other direction he would come to very poor agricultural land, Piarco fine sand. It is fine. It acts like a clay, so it has poor drainage and it has no nutrients because it is a sand. Do not put agriculture on that. The last little bit of alluvial soil is in Orange Grove but that is where we are putting the building. So clearly we have decided we do not want agriculture in this country. Do you know, Mr. President, what the present programme is, I heard a day or two ago? I think it is ADB and Caroni. Caroni, of all companies, is going into an agricultural enterprise with some young people to produce vegetables in grow boxes.

We have so used up our prime agricultural land that now we have to create—grow boxes are things in which soil is created by mixing up humus with a little bit of soil and a little bit of sand and so one makes an artificial medium in which to grow the plants. One is no longer growing them in the soil. I suppose we have to do that soon, because everything else—either we will be on concrete so we have to put the box on top of the concrete, or we would have used up all our good soil so we can only use—and what of Caroni (1975) Limited? I mean, the constant information that is given to us is that we are going to privatize and I am sorry, I have said it repeatedly, I have to say it again because, perhaps like a drop of water on a stone, eventually one may make an indentation, or Bruce and the spider. “If at first you do not succeed, try, try, try again”.

We must take the land from the ownership of Caroni (1975) Limited and vest it in the state because we are going to divest that land. If this Government does not do it, some subsequent government is going to. Trinidad is an exceptional place because the Government owns a large part of its prime agricultural land, but we want to alienate it. We were lucky when we were able to buy that from Tate & Lyle when they were leaving the country, but we are going to alienate it. We are going to give it to the private sector to put up buildings and factories and houses and shops, and we would not have any sugarcane land, either, any land where sugar cane is grown now. What we do is we vest it in the state and lease it back to Caroni.

The PNM could have done it. They gave Caroni \$2 million. Why did they not sell the land to the state for the \$2 million they gave them to write off their debts? Now we give them, what is it, \$300 million a year? I think we give them officially \$100 million and then it turns out that we have to give the other \$200 million later

on, otherwise people do not get paid, or the cane-farmers—so we give them \$300 million. For the \$300 million let them vest the land in the state and then lease it back to them for peppercorn rent. So when they decide to privatize and sell, they are not selling the patrimony of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and the same thing applies to the oilfields.

The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries has repeatedly told me that this is what he is going to do, but it has not been done. Petrotrin and whatever it is still own that land, or I think they may have left it in the original companies, whatever it is. The land still is not vested in the state, so we are going to alienate that land and I resent it for my grandchildren that they should not own that land which we of this generation own. So, you know, it really is, when it comes to agriculture, very depressing. That is why when I listen to the enthusiasm of people for the budget, I am sorry, I am enthusiastic only about certain aspects. I am very happy that we have not really gone through the sky.

The rate of exchange, Sen. Dr. St. Cyr was telling me, in Suriname, is some fantastic figure—2,800:1, and it used to be 1.7:1. Well, thank God for the Minister of Finance. We do not have that. Our rate of exchange has not changed. I mean, clearly it has been, you know—but it stayed there at 6.29. Thank heavens for that. So that I certainly have to give praise and be very thankful for that. So in that sense it could have been worse, but it could have been so much better as well if we had only recognized that and not blamed the Minister of Finance. He has to present it. It is not his fault. It is the fault of the system that did not select a Minister of Agriculture who knew what he was doing.

Perhaps if Minister Sudama had been there from 1995 we might not have been in this position today because he is an economist, and a very bright person at that; but, you know, what have we done with respect to agriculture? Absolutely nothing! I was disappointed in the NAR. They tried a little thing with Carson Charles. He tried a little thing there. I told him he was doing it the wrong way but he still tried a little thing. The PNM, well, I do not think very much was done there, but I said, “Ah, we are now getting a Government with its base in the rural sector; a Prime Minister who is from the cane-farming industry”.

I sat with the hon. Prime Minister for one year working out the problems of Caroni (1975) Limited. I was Chairman of that committee and he sat on it and we worked together for a year working out Caroni. So when he came into power in the NAR in 19—whenever it was—the first thing I did was to go to him and say, “Well, now we can”—of course the NAR did nothing. Then, well, the PNM was a different story but then, you know. The Prime Minister at the time said that was

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the best report they had seen on sugar—not me, because I did not do it. I was just, what you call it, moderator to the people on the committee, including the hon. Prime Minister and the back-up team we got to do the work, including Dr. St. Cyr’s wife who was in the Ministry of Finance, who did a survey, sociological study of the workers and farmers in the cane industry. Nothing!

All we do now is sell out Caroni, you know, and the government at the time was to blame as well—the PNM. They put a banker, excellent person, very bright—Deputy Governor of the Central Bank. I would not name him. He was put in charge to implement the rationalization study of Caroni. He was Chairman of the Food and Agriculture Corporation and nothing has changed now, you know. That is the sad thing. He was there so nothing happened. I know shortly after that the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources at the time, and I would not name him, not Mr. Mohammed, I must say, rang me up wanting me to say that the thing was being implemented because there was a debate in Parliament and representative Panday, as he was at the time, was giving them some flack for not having gone forward with the report. I was supposed to say that they had gone, and I refused to say because nothing was being done. So up to this day nothing to do with Caroni. So, Mr. President, agriculture is very depressing and nothing at all, not even from a Government with its roots in the rural sector.

In the NAR days—I may have given this anecdote already so forgive me if I have. In the NAR times I said to one of the NAR Senators, you know, he was a lawyer, “Look, you have 16 representatives in the Senate. Why do you not put a farmer as one of your 16?” It is the same thing now. I said, “Look, there are 16 representatives. You have a trade union person, you have a religious person, why do they not put a farmer?” He said to me, “Well, you know these farmers, I mean, look, I can represent. I am really from the rural background. I am from the cane-farming area you know, so I really—they cannot speak very well”. I would like to take them to a few farmers’ meetings and find out whether farmers cannot speak. So not one of these three governments has seen it fit to have selected a farmer in one of their senatorial speeches. They have trade union people, religious people, you know, all sorts of people—no farmers. So they are not interested. No farmers on this side either here. I claim to be a small farmer, so I suppose on the Independent Benches at least we can say there is a small farmer.

Then, Mr. President, we come to tourism. Well now, I appreciate that the tourism development plan has been passed and we recently passed a modification which allows the concession that has been given there to continue, so I think at least we have the infrastructure for development of the tourism sector and I praise the Government for that. My concern has always been, and still is, the way that

we may develop the tourism sector. In spite of what we may say about preserving the environment, the pressures for accessing that investment are so great that we have to be particularly careful, especially about Tobago.

As you are aware, Mr. President, I fought very hard to have the Tobagonians themselves—but was unsuccessful—say what should be the case with respect to agricultural development in Tobago. We just did a survey in which Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie and myself participated and it is clear to me—I cannot really discuss the results because they have been given in to the commission to study—but let me say this. I believe that the people in Tobago—and there is nothing in that survey to contradict this—would rather have a development which did not alter their social or physical environment to any marked degree. So that the building of large hotels all around Tobago certainly would not be supported by the people in Tobago. So if we are going to develop tourism in Tobago, and I keep using the example, let it be the sort of activity that we have at the Asa Wright Nature Centre.

3.50 p.m.

Anyone who has been to Asa Wright Nature Centre will know what I am talking about. That is the sort of development that you need around Tobago.

We already have the southwest of Tobago, which has “gone through”. There is nothing we can do about that, but do not make the mistake of spreading that throughout the whole of Tobago and the pressures are very great. People buy large estates. I have seen it on the Internet. I saw a brochure in Scotland when I was there a few years ago of a 60-acre estate in Tobago near to Englishman’s Bay, with all sorts of development plans that were being made for large-scale development and the prices, I can assure you, are pretty steep. I can imagine what that person must have paid for that estate, compared to the prices that he or she is now asking for it.

Mr. President, it seems to me that the Tourism and Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO), perhaps would be better placed to worry about tourism development in Tobago than to build roads in Trinidad or Trinidad and Tobago or wherever they are building them. I think that is a digression from their activities that can only do harm to the organization. It cannot do any good to the organization. It can only do them harm. It must involve some of their personnel, some of their effort and some of their expenditure of energy to supervise that sort of project.

Clearly, the CEO has got to monitor that activity and that is a distraction from its industrial development and tourism portfolios and that is how the development

may slip through when he is not looking because he is distracted looking after roads. How come we do things like that? Form a new company, if the Ministry of Works and Transport cannot build the roads. Put a new road building company, but do not ask TIDCO to do it. Set up a new company. It does not take very much to set up a new company—the road building company of Trinidad and Tobago which is going to float a bond for \$180 million and the Government will give them a letter of comfort and underwrite it and so on, but not TIDCO. We are not really serious.

I applaud the support that is being given to culture and sport and the tax concessions that are being made there which will allow for that activity to be enhanced. I applaud the building of the sport stadia: that is extremely important. I applaud the launch of the National Steel Orchestra that is also important; the Ghandi Institute of Culture; the National Cultural Council and so on. I applaud the establishment of the National Trust which, at last, has got there. So there are those things which we should applaud: those are positive things which, I think, no one can quarrel with at all.

The next area in the budget presentation which the hon. Minister dealt with was Tobago. I started speaking a little bit about Tobago a while ago in respect of tourism but there is another area that we cannot fail to mention in this budget debate and that the ferry service to Tobago. How in goodness' name could we have allowed that situation to arise where we would have a period of time where there was no communication at all by ferry between Trinidad and Tobago? In spite of the Prime Minister calling for people to resign, not one head has rolled. Nothing has happened. All that has happened is that people in Tobago have suffered and, perhaps, we care but we could not do anything about it.

I think we are such a soft society. The only thing we are not soft with is when we come to hanging people and I believe it is only a few people who want the hanging. If left to the rest of Trinidad and Tobago, I think, even though they want hanging they would not do it because they are so soft. We are so soft that we cannot discipline whoever is responsible for allowing the ferry service to disappear between Trinidad and Tobago for a week or so. And before that, having a ship just limping and you do not know whether you are going to get there or not. Even now what are we doing? We are putting money for a ferry?

Mr. President, Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie read the Calder Hall Council's questions about the ferry. Could we have some more details as to when, where, why and how? Is it feasible to get the ferry in the time that has been stated by the hon.

Minister? Are we really going to have two ferries as we used to have in the past? We used to have two ferries and, clearly, you need two ferries. Perhaps, I think someone in his presentation, said we should have three ferries. We should certainly have two ferries between Trinidad and Tobago, and I am not talking about the ferry between Toco and Tobago because that I think is a waste of time. How could we have allowed that situation to develop?

So when we are patting ourselves on the back for the good management of the economy which was good, or the money we put in the social services which was good, or the efforts we are taking to have each child go to school, which is good—although we have done it in a bad way, let us think about the people in Tobago and the ferry service. There are other problems in Tobago with the Tobago House of Assembly and what is happening there with financial accountability.

Mr. President, that arises from the Tobago House of Assembly Act which we passed in this Senate. It is on record in the proceedings of this Parliament that when the Select Committee Report was brought to me I refused to sign it because we had not finished our job and it is recorded in the *Hansard* that there are two reports on that select committee. A majority report and a minority report, which I wrote and my report was one sentence, we have not finished our job therefore we should not submit this report now. Of course, you could have foreseen it. Clearly, we have made a mess of it and who is to blame? I do not take the blame because I tried to stop it! What have we done? We have passed an Act in which we have given—this is section 25(1) of the Tobago House of Assembly Act, 1996 and it says:

“Without prejudice to section 75(1) of the Constitution, the Assembly shall, in relation to Tobago, be responsible for the formulation and implementation of policy in respect of the matters set out in the Fifth Schedule.”

There are a number of matters in the Fifth Schedule which cover a wide range of all the areas of activity which include the museums, archives, public buildings, tourism, sports, culture and arts, community development, co-operatives, agricultural fisheries, food production—

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. Rev. D. Teelucksingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: So there is a whole wide range of things, which they are responsible for under the Fifth Schedule. But the problem really resides in the wording of that clause and the rub comes in without prejudice to section 75 (1) of the Constitution which states:

“There shall be a Cabinet for Trinidad and Tobago which shall have the general direction and control of the government of Trinidad and Tobago and shall be collectively responsible therefor to Parliament.”

So by putting that in, you negated the whole of the Fifth Schedule. How could we have done that? A more stupid arrangement would be difficult to find, because you have set it up so that when there is a problem you say no, no, that is the Tobago House of Assembly. When it is something that you want to take credit for you say no, that is the Central Government. When it is something that you do not like over there: the Tobago House of Assembly is doing it! Or, when the Tobago House of Assembly does not like what is being done in education, it is not us, it is the Central Government!

How could you pass an Act of Parliament that sets up that sort of situation? That is what we have done. That is what we did in this Parliament. It is absolute nonsense! I do not want to be harsher and say it was deliberate. I am not saying it is deliberate. I am saying it is nonsense.

Mr. President, I have got hold some time ago of the Welsh Assembly Act. Now, Wales is not separated from England by water. It is the same land mass so they do not even have the problems of communication which we have between Tobago and Trinidad, and yet they have been able to produce an Act which gives total autonomy to Wales in spite of the fact it is one land mass; there is no boundary; and there is no line where you have to produce a passport.

4.00 p.m.

They have been able to do it very simply. This is what they have done. “Transfer of Ministerial functions to Assembly” under “Assembly Functions” in the Government of Wales Act 1998 at section 22(1) says:

"Her Majesty may by Order in Council—

- (a) provide for the transfer to the Assembly of any function so far as exercisable by a Minister of the Crown in relation to Wales,"

All they have said is that every single minister is mentioned. They have a scheduled list and they can add or take off and all that happens is that the minister gives his responsibility to the House of Assembly in Wales. There is no doubt

about tourism in Wales because the Minister responsible for tourism has delegated his responsibility—but he has not done it; it has been done by Act of Parliament—to the Welsh Assembly and the Minister cannot go in there and tell him anything because he has given up his power. He no longer has that power. Quite straightforward, clear and simple, and if there is going to be any amendment to the Tobago House of Assembly Act, I suggest we look at the Welsh Assembly Act because they did it in a very straightforward manner.

But, the Parliament of Great Britain has the power, by Order in Council, to take back that delegation of power. If they find that the THA is making a masquerade with the finances, they can take back that power, then they have absolute power over the finances at the central level. Or, if they are selling all of Tobago to the Germans and they do not like that, they can take back land matters from Wales.

Why have we got to set up...? That is why I find it so difficult to restrain myself from saying it was deliberate, so I will restrain myself and not say it because it is so foolish what we did. We have to solve that problem. It is soluble. There is no way it is being solved. We can look at the Welsh Act. It is quite easy to do and it is possible to set up a system where—you see, I do not agree with the interpretation that is being made of this section of the Constitution with respect to the Welsh Assembly Act. Since the high-powered lawyers say that this means the Cabinet is still in charge, I have to accept what they say.

I do not think that we could have been so stupid, therefore I think that at least when we passed it, we must have thought that we were giving the Tobago House of Assembly the power in spite of that particular section. I think what we thought we were doing actually was to say that the power still resides in the Parliament to give, as it does in the British Parliament and the Welsh Act. They can give or they can take away.

That is where the power of Cabinet and Parliament lies, because Cabinet can decide it does not like what is happening in tourism; it is going to go to the Parliament and take that one out of the Fifth Schedule. That is where the responsibility and the power of the Cabinet lie, not in the day-to-day thing after it has been given; not that you have given it, but we are still in charge. That is playing for confusion.

Mr. President, I hope that we do something about Tobago. One, to solve the ferry; two, to make sure that tourism development does not destroy the island,

neither the social fabric nor the physical natural environment; and three, that we solve the problem of the Act.

The next item in the budget is education. Mr. President, I would be grateful if you could warn me when I have five minutes left. [*Assent indicated*] Now, we keep on saying there is a revolution in education. We decided that because there were not enough school places and that some kids were not being placed in secondary school and we have put those kids in secondary schools, which is quite correct. I praise the Government for having decided that all kids would go to secondary school. As I said previously in the debate on Sen. Prof. Ramchand's Motion, that is good and we are to be blamed for not having thought of it before, for not having done something about it before and they could have done something about it. They could have done it differently and achieved a good result getting all the political mileage out of it. That is what I cannot understand—all the political mileage. That is why it is just that somebody was not very sensible because you could still have gotten the political mileage. All the kids are going to secondary school. It does not mean they are going to secondary school tomorrow.

The post primary centres should have been re-vamped. They should have been expanded. They should have had proper remedial teachers at them and then they go to the secondary schools when they are ready. We did it the year before. It was already halfway there because the hon. Prime Minister announced and it was implemented, that they could continue to take the 11-plus when they were up to 13 or 14 so we already started to understand that the kids could go into secondary school later on, if they were not ready at the earlier stage.

In doing it in the way we have done it, we have deprived children of being able to repeat, and that is 2,000 or 3,000 children who could have repeated and gotten into better schools than the ones they have gone to or not gotten into the special classes. We have deprived them of that. We are saying they could still take the exam but the exam is not there so they cannot take it because it is a new exam.

We have deprived those kids of that. We have put kids into secondary school when they are not ready for it and so, as Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie was saying, they are going to drop out in Forms III and IV and they are going to be on the streets then. We have taken them off the streets at age 11 knowing that they are going to come at age 14 or 13 because they cannot cope. What is worse than having kids in a class where they cannot cope with it?

Now, we say that we are having special classes. I think Sen. Yuille-Williams was saying, at least, in one school down south, there are such a thing as special

classes so I would like the Minister of Education to come to us with a detail from school to school, the details of these remedial classes, these Special Form I classes, whether teachers are being paid secondary school salaries or primary school salaries and what is up?

Look at what has happened in Tobago—600 kids not placed. That is 50 per cent of the 11-plus population. Is that correct, Senator?

Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie: Yes.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: All they are boasting, they are boasting for Trinidad, not for Tobago. Worse than that, 112 kids were told to register at a certain school. The principal telephoned the Ministry of Education and said, "Look, these kids are not for my school." Well, then, do not register them. They registered them. The kids' parents bought uniforms for that school. When the kids turned up, "No. You are not in this school. You are at another school." Who is going to pay for those uniforms? Has the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development set up a fund? Is he going to find the money to pay the parents for those uniforms? It will be—I nearly used unparliamentary language. It would be a great disgrace if he did not. He jolly well has to find the money to pay those parents for the uniforms that they have bought.

Mr. President: Five more minutes.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: I will spend the last five minutes just referring to the general economic situation that has been managed extremely well, except for the problem which Sen. Dr. St. Cyr has raised, of the national debt.

Now, in a sense, when I listened to Sen. Dr. St. Cyr, I, regretfully have come to the conclusion that in a way, we might have spoilt all the good work that we have done in the last five years and in the five years before that if we have got ourselves into this situation.

I would like the hon. Minister, because Sen. Dr. St. Cyr pointed out that the debt is now about 40 per cent. We have to pay back 40 per cent of our money. The debt service ratio is 40 per cent but I ask him: If we assumed that the same amount of debt that the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development had to put into the budget from since the previous Government, whether this Government is committing like sins which would have to be accounted for?

We know there is some in the airport because I asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport that question and he did not answer me then but he said to me after, "I could say that there will be some debt involved there." We know that Tidco is doing roads and that is a debt. I think Sen. Daly has pointed out that there are other letters of comfort floating about. What is the total additional indebtedness, not in accurate figures, but roughly? \$1 billion, half a billion, \$2 billion, \$4 billion? If it is \$4 billion and that is what I asked Sen. Dr. St. Cyr to do for me, then our debt service ratio now rises to about 45 per cent. That, to me, is serious.

All credit to the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development for what he has done in the past. I hope that as he departs he has not led us down a path which he might have been able to extricate us from but which some future Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, if he is not here, might have more difficulty in extricating us from.

Now, if he can demonstrate to us that that debt service ratio is such that the indebtedness will mean that we have invested in productive enterprises that are going to bring in income, if he can demonstrate that the airport can bring in extra income and it will help to service that debt; fine. But, really, we should be able to demonstrate that before we incur the debt or, if we have now incurred it—the population as a whole—the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development is duty bound to demonstrate that to us.

Unfortunately, the Government seems to take the view that, "Look, that is what we did. Talk 'nah'! I do not have to respond to you. Talk. It does not matter. I mean, the media would not report it anyhow. They will only report if we cuss somebody or say something sensational." The most important contribution in this debate, as far as I am concerned, was made by Sen. Dr. St. Cyr. Not one word in the press. The Government should say thank God. [*Interruption*] It is a free press but it is the duty of us parliamentarians to make sure it gets out.

Therefore, through you, Mr. President, I am supporting the hon. Senator in his call for parliamentary programmes. We could still do it. If the Government really believes that the population should be informed, tomorrow it could decide. Unfortunately, Sir, information will be taken away from Minister Mark because I would have appointed him if he were still in charge. Tomorrow, the Government could decide the whole of this Senate debate is going to be broadcast over the Information channel. I challenge the Government. I say it does not dare broadcast

it! [*Desk thumping*] The Government does not dare broadcast this debate over and tell the population what is being said, especially on these Benches.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed: Mr. President, I know that we are fast approaching the end of what I consider to be a rather historic debate in our parliamentary Chamber. I use the word "historic" because in the last four days, we have been sitting here and as we sit on this side and listen to the Members of Government on the other side make their contributions, I must say that I admire, in some instances, I do not want to use the word "sincerity", but, certainly, I saw some of the Government Ministers on their feet making their contributions and, at the end of the day, they came across as though they were farewell speeches they were all delivering. For that, I commend them, because clearly, they are feeling and experiencing what so many thousands of people in our country are feeling at present.

Mr. President, before I go on, I take this opportunity at the commencement of my contribution, to congratulate the latest addition to the Ministry of Works and Transport, the hon. Minister—I do not know which of the junior Ministers he is regarded as in the Ministry of Works and Transport—Sen. Carlos John, for his maiden contribution in the Chamber a couple days ago. It was certainly very interesting to sit here and listen to him as he was on his feet. I thought I was listening to a Prime Minister speaking.

4.15 p.m.

Mr. President, it is clear—at least the feelings that we are getting on this side—that the hon. Minister has, perhaps, delivered his very last budget speech in this honourable Chamber. I suppose only time will tell what will be happening to him in the future.

Sitting here over the past five years and listening to Members of the Senate make their contributions, whilst we sit on the Opposition Bench, we are here, we have a responsibility and a job to perform. Our business is to be a check and balance in our society. Our business is to keep the Government on its toes at all times. Our business is to convince this nation that our party is the alternative government in waiting.

Over the years when Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung, the hon. Minister of Finance, participates in the budget debates—when he makes his contributions—I

know he gets his “blows” and he takes it with a smile in many instances. At the end of the day, with all of it, one cannot help but—*[Interruption]* I would not say love—perhaps, admire a kind of honesty with the shrewdness, the “gyaan” and the strategies that he deploys in terms of his preparation of these budgets. I use those words for obvious reasons.

Every year, after the budgets are presented, for the last five years, we have heard, seen and proven to the nation that in many instances the facts and figures that are quoted by the hon. Minister are certainly questionable. This budget was as deceptive as all his previous budgets, if I may say so hon. Minister. I know it may be his last. I would have liked to be a lot kinder in my comments on the budget but, regrettably, because of the seriousness of the situation, I just have to carry on with my responsibilities as being a Member of the Opposition and having to keep the nation abreast of what is happening.

Mr. President, when we looked at the Budget Speech, the one that was presented in the other place, at page 2 the hon. Minister boasts, as usual and has become customary in his budget speeches, that we did this and we did that:

“We created 60,000 new jobs

- We achieved one of the highest growth rates in the world
- We reduced inflation significantly
- We reduced taxes
- We doubled foreign investment
- We reduced the public debt; and
- We more than doubled our foreign reserves.”

Mr. President, to this date, I sit here and I am yet to hear about the Government’s policies and its strategies for creating employment opportunities in our country, on a sustainable basis and more so long term employment opportunities. With these 60,000 new jobs, have you ever heard what initiatives the Government introduced that brought about these increases in jobs?

The Minister said they reduced the public debt. How can he boast about reducing the public debt when, in Appendix 16 of his own budget document, the *Review of the Economy*, it is clearly stated that the public debt went up from \$18.8 billion in 1995 to \$29.9 billion by the year 2000, an increase in the public debt by

over \$11.2 billion. When confronted with these figures, the hon. Minister came to this Chamber on Monday when he presented his speech in the Senate, and sought to do some damage control with respect to those figures, by saying that the increase in the public debt—Therefore, he acknowledges that there was a significant increase in public debt. But as is usual, he tried to place blame on the People's National Movement or the previous government for that increase by saying that part of the debt was incurred by the previous administration, but it was never brought to account.

Mr. President, over the last couple days, we have been sitting here. We have heard and seen documents, and we are very mindful of the fact that, under this current UNC regime in government, so many debts have been incurred and, to date, we are yet to be provided with the accounts for these debts. We really have to wonder—whenever the next general elections are called and they are removed from the corridors of power—what their liabilities will be in terms of the quantum. I heard Sen. Prof. Spence made mention of it. He indicated that he asked Sen. Dr. St. Cyr to do some preliminary calculations on this matter.

Mr. President, we just have to look around us and see some of the projects that are taking place. We are unable to find the allocations for these projects in the budget documents. In the last few years we have been hearing so much about the airport project, the national library, the desalination plant, and now we are hearing Tidco, an agency that was formed to promote tourism in our country, is now engaged in the business of raising money to pave roads.

UDECOTT, a company that—I am assuming, operates under the Ministry of Housing and Settlements—is supposed to be responsible for the construction of houses. The Ministry of Housing and Settlements, one would have thought would be engaged in the business of building houses. Today we are seeing, hearing and reading where they are now engaged in the business of building of overpasses, highways and roundabouts. Something seems to be going wrong in our country. It is just a matter of time.

I think, for the records, we must indicate that there are several initiatives that can be identified, which previous regimes had, in fact, put in place that were responsible for the economic growth that is taking place in our country today. When one looks at these initiatives one would see that the present UNC regime is not responsible for initiating any of them. All that they have done over the last five years has really been to operate this country on autopilot. Perhaps we should say thank God for that, because if they had attempted to tinker with it, God alone knows what would have happened.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. MOHAMMED]

Thursday, September 14, 2000

Mr. President, we know of the incentives that had been given by previous governments to boost construction in our country, in order to create jobs in our country. We know of the initiatives by the previous PNM administration with respect to the reforming of our taxation system in our country. We know for a fact that, for some years this country—prior to the advent of the United National Congress—had been going through structural adjustment programmes. We know about the initiatives at trade liberalization with respect to the foreign exchange regime. I remember in 1992, I believe, there was a floating of the exchange rate.

We know of the attempts at rationalizing the state enterprises in our country. We know of the attempts by the previous PNM administration to create that kind of environment that would encourage the inflow of foreign investment into our country. We know of the many fiscal incentives that had been created to encourage tourism in our country. We know of the many attempts that had been made to diversify our economy over the years. Through you, Mr. President, I wish the hon. Minister of Finance, in his winding up, would tell us what initiatives they introduced over the last five years, that could be linked to the current state of our economy that has been on a growth path, not with the UNC administration.

4.25 p.m.

It is a recorded fact that the growth in our economy started from 1994. It was under the previous People's National Movement administration that after many years of our economy being in a state of decline, in 1993 because of the policy initiatives of the People's National Movement there was some stabilization in our economy and then there was actual growth in the economy. [*Desk thumping*] There was actual growth in 1994 and 1995; the records are there to show it. If they want to be truthful to the people of our country they would not deny the fact.

Sometimes I think that the hon. Prime Minister of our country today has been, over the years, the greatest fan of the late Dr. Eric Williams. I say this because in 1997 the hon. Prime Minister was attending a seminar organized by the Tourism Industrial Development Corporation in Boston. If I may just make reference to this article I have in my hand; it was published in the *Express* of September 20, 1997, the headline is:

“5.8 % inflation rate remarkable, says PM

‘For the past decade, and especially in the last three years...’”

This was in 1997 that this statement was being made. The UNC administration came into government late 1995. He said:

For the past decade, and especially in the last three years, Trinidad and Tobago has been well managed, admitted Prime Minister Basdeo Panday on Thursday.

Delivering the feature address at the Tourism Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO) Investment Promotion Seminar in Boston, Panday described Trinidad and Tobago's 5.8 per cent inflation rate over the past three years as remarkable.

'Quite extraordinary for a small open developing country,' he said. '(It) points to prudent management (which) is reflected in the tight control of government spending.'

Even the Prime Minister of this country has given credit, and he has to give credit, to the previous People's National Movement administration with respect to this inflation rate that he is boasting about. We have to take the credit for it, not this UNC administration.

This article goes on; it is interesting:

"Despite these incentives, Panday claimed that Trinidad and Tobago's most significant resource was its people. 'Starting in the 1950s successive governments have laid great emphasis on ensuring that access to a quality education is a fundamental right,' he said." [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, what does that tell you? When today, because of elections being in the air and for cheap political purposes they go around the country condemning and saying that the PNM did nothing for education, and the PNM is responsible for putting children on the streets, and the PNM does not want students to go to secondary school, we are against universal secondary school education. Nothing is further from the truth.

If they want to be truthful I could refer them to the People's Charter of 1956 which has a clear statement that the PNM is committed to universal secondary education for all students. Over the years the People's National Movement is on record for and is responsible for the construction of so many primary and secondary schools in this country. They are shameless to come today and make these wild allegations!

When they are confronted with it, their communications officer goes on the newspaper to say that they are referring to the Manning administration between 1991 and 1995. That is how they have been affecting and using the children of our nation to score cheap political points. [*Interruption*]

Mr. President: I was waiting for you to complete your sentence, but since you stopped we will break for tea at this stage.

4.29 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.02 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, maybe it happened for a good that we had the tea break a while ago. I think I was making the point that in terms of the boast of the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development in his budget statement, where he was seeking to take credit for the growth in our economy, the initiatives that really brought about this growth had been started some years prior to the UNC regime coming into government.

I think even in the World Bank report of the year 2000, a recent report from them in a memorandum by the President of the World Bank, it is stated clearly that the Government continued to implement the economic programme of the previous government. It states that under the 1988—1994 reform programme the economy was successfully stabilized, so reference is being made here to the fact that even way back in 1988 this programme had started.

Mr. President, I think it was on Tuesday that we were able to listen to the contribution of the hon. Minister of National Security, the hon. Sen. Brig. Theodore. It is a pity that he is not in the Chamber now, but when I listened to the hon. Minister as he started off his presentation and during his contribution, I felt a great sense of disappointment, and, indeed, some genuine concern at the tone, manner and content of the hon. Minister's contribution. In his contribution he spoke repeatedly and commented on the neglect of the police service, and he made it into a very political kind of contribution, which I felt was unfortunate, because I think we in our country all recognize that when it comes to dealing with the crime situation, this is an issue that affects all of us as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

In dealing with crime as a nation, as a people in a nation, we really need to take steps in a collective kind of manner that can bring about some improvement to the deteriorating situation that we are experiencing and witnessing in our country with the crime situation as it exists today. This has been a problem in our society, and instead of blaming administrations for the problems that exist, I think that we need to focus and try to think of some innovative ways in which we can tackle this problem.

Prior to the UNC coming into power in 1995, they went around this country campaigning on a platform that those who do the crime must do the time. Over the years we hear them boasting and bragging about how many new vehicles they brought for the police service, how many Cherokee jeeps they got and how many new stations they built and what not, and they do as if there were no police stations before. It is as though the history of Trinidad and Tobago started in 1995, and this is what I find to be so unfortunate.

5.05 p.m.

Mr. President, I remember not too long ago we had a debate in this Chamber which dealt with the Police Complaints Authority and in that particular debate I recall distinctly referring to several reports and studies that had been done over the years in our country with respect to the police service. I think regardless of our political affiliations we recognize that there are real problems that exist out there and which affect the police service that need to be grappled with in order to bring about some improvement in dealing with the crime situation in our country. It is not just a case of giving the police more vehicles.

The hon. Minister took a very political approach and made mention of the Barataria Police Station. The fact of the matter is that although that police station has been there, I have had experiences where I have had to call on that station for help to assist people in the community and on one occasion I was specifically told that there was no vehicle to come to the scene. In fact, they had to send to St. Clair for a vehicle in order to get some assistance in the area.

Mr. President, when that station was built—and I must thank the hon. Minister—because every time I am aware of a problem, I raise it with him and I know he tries to assist. It was the effort of businessmen in the community that enabled that police station to be equipped with a police vehicle. On a voluntary basis, some businessmen were able to contribute and donate one or two vehicles and lo and behold, the vehicles are there. But after a couple months or weeks, something went wrong with the vehicles and they were unable to drive them. Even with the new jeeps, this is happening. This is a real problem affecting us in the country.

When they talk about all the great things they have done for crime, right in the community of Barataria, I have been a victim of crime. On at least two occasions my car was taken from me. The problems are there and they are well-documented, they are aware of them and one would have expected that instead of boasting and

trying to take credit, they should have tried in a most systematic, holistic, serious and decisive way to deal with the problems that affect the police service.

Mr. President, I really have to wonder how serious is this Government, and more particularly, how serious is the current Minister of National Security in respect of dealing with crime in this country in a serious way? I am asking this question because I know the hon. Minister of National Security. He is somebody whom I have always looked up to as a man of integrity, but when he spoke on Tuesday, he came across to me as a very troubled Member of the UNC Government. He is sitting in a Cabinet and I am sure when he looks around and knows what is happening in this country, he must be concerned and bothered and I am calling upon him that if he is really serious about dealing with crime, I would like him to take some decisive action with respect to certain situations that exist in our country today. Because if you want to tackle the crime problem in our country, as a Government, you need to have the moral authority and the will to do it and so far in five years, we see that is sadly lacking from this regime. It is no wonder that their record on crime in this country would show that they have been a total failure, and I hope to God when the campaigning starts that they do not go boasting about crime because the track record is there for all to see.

Mr. President, this morning we heard the hon. Minister of Works and Transport as usual, boasting about things as though he is the greatest performer in this Government and my colleague, Sen. Yuille-Williams, dealt with his hit parade. I would not go back into that aspect of it, but at one stage he was giving a chronology of events or referring to the events over the last couple years with respect to the airport project and he started off way back in 1931, 1962 and in the 1980s. That chronology of events is well-documented in the Report of the Committee appointed by Cabinet concerning Piarco Development Project dated April 21, 1997, better known as the *Deyalsingh Report*.

We in this country would remember the findings and the outcome of the Deyalsingh Enquiry into the happenings at the airport, and it was clear when this report was presented that there was very strong evidence of corruption. Even though the records are there to show that the hon. Attorney General had advised those who were tendering for the airport project, that the tendering process ought to be reopened in order to have other persons bid for this project, the Government went ahead notwithstanding the advice of the Attorney General and awarded a contract to a particular contractor that the country knows of very well. *[Interruption]* A famous contractor, one of the boys.

Mr. President, I think it was on the 31st even after the *Deyalsingh Report* became public and I think it was even recommended that there be a stoppage of the contract, this Government, under the Minister of Works and Transport—I do not know if he is a junior Minister now, or if he is the senior Minister, or Minister No. 3 in the Ministry of Works and Transport, but I am referring to the hon. Sadiq Baksh—would have been there at the time when, notwithstanding the recommendations and the advice of the Attorney General, they proceeded with haste to award the contract. What is very evident, is that the entire Cabinet of this country has to be held responsible for the manner in which that contract was awarded.

They thought they could fool the nation and it was on March 31, 1998 when NIPDEC handed over the previous contract that had been existing between the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and the famous consultancy firm known as Birk Hillman. That contract that was handed over to NIPDEC—and the hon. Prime Minister likes to talk about the buck stopping wherever and what not, he always finds some way to take himself out when problems arise. They thought that by handing it over to NIPDEC the Government would escape unscathed, but the records are there for all to see and this entire Cabinet of this country has to be held responsible to the people of our country for what has been happening with that airport project and the wanton waste of taxpayers' money.

Mr. President, when that contract was handed over, part of the contract required Birk Hillman to account for moneys that had been spent with respect to the airport and they were duty-bound as well, if requested, to provide reasonable explanations for these moneys.

If one looks at the *Deyalsingh Report*, it is there, the hon. Minister Sadiq Baksh made reference to it too. Birk Hillman, as we would recall is a company that had, in fact, tendered as a partner with Maritime Insurance Company in the early 1990s, I am sure the Minister of Finance would recall those days, perhaps he was sitting in the Cabinet of the PNM then. Those were the days when there was the Project Pride that was coming on stream and it was because of allegations of corruption being raised that the then PNM government put a stop to that project. In fact, I think a Commission of Enquiry had been ordered, and based on the findings, the then PNM government took decisive action to stop the airport project because of allegations of corruption.

Mr. President, it was around that time I think the hon. Minister of Finance may have left the then Cabinet saying that he never took a vow of poverty. The *Deyalsingh Report* clearly confirms that there was some collusion between Birk

Hillman and those who were awarded the contract, yet Birk Hillman was hired by this UNC Administration as consultants for that airport project.

NIPDEC had called on Birk Hillman to account for moneys they had received from the Airports Authority and a detailed listing of the moneys received had, in fact, been provided when requested. I have in my possession a couple pages of the listing of the expenditure by Birk Hillman with respect to that airport project and this covered the period October 1, 1996 to June 29, 1998 and it is a document that spells out the various types of expenses, under what headings they were being claimed for, and the amounts. There were labour expenses; telephone expenses; office supplies; postage; advertising; computer; printing and reproduction.

Mr. President, there is an item at page 6 of this document—

Mr. President: Could you give the name of the document please?

Sen. N. Mohammed: Yes, it is a detailed listing of the moneys that had been spent by Birk Hillman with respect to their consultancy work at the Airport Project that—

Sen. Cabrera: On a point of order. May I inquire as to the source of that listing?

Mr. President: I didn't quite catch your question.

Sen. Cabrera: I am inquiring through you, Mr. President, the source of the listing to which she is referring.

Mr. President: I am not too sure—

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, I will answer him.

Mr. President: All right.

Sen. N. Mohammed: It is a document from Birk Hillman Consultants Incorporated that had in fact been provided to NIPDEC when requested and at page 6 of this document, there is an item, 8466 making reference to a payment to Overseas Communication Investments in the sum of US \$1,691,000 which amounts to over TT \$10 million.

Mr. President, this issue was raised in the other place and when it was raised, imagine, over TT \$10 million—

Mr. President: Do not go into the other place.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you, Mr. President, I was not going into the other place in that sense. When that issue arose, imagine this is just for consultancy work, the questions that arise, are: Who is Overseas Communication Investments and why did they receive TT \$10 million or more? The hon. Minister of National Security is here and I am pleading with him please as Minister of National Security to take note of the information so that if he is really serious about dealing with crime in our country then he will be able to grapple with this issue.

5.20 p.m.

Mr. President, I am informed that around the time when this statement was provided, a team from NIPDEC had raised certain queries about this payment. In fact, they were supposed to have gone to Miami to investigate the situation. At that time whoever was in charge stopped them from investigating. But some investigations were carried out by a very reputable firm in the United States that deals with companies, and looks at the credibility of companies, the firm of Don & Brad Street. They were unable to come up with information pertaining to this famous company, Overseas Communication Investments. The questions as I said that arise are. Why were these payments made and who is Overseas Communication Investment?

When this became an issue, an advertisement appeared in the *Express* newspaper of September 9, 2000 and it was an advertisement by Birk Hillman Consultants Incorporated. I would like to read this advertisement for the record.

“Certain statements were made in Parliament tending to reflect discredibly on Birk Hillman Consultants Inc. (BHC).

BHC wishes to state that it is false to say or imply that it made any payment to Overseas Communications Investment Corp. on behalf of NIPDEC or that NIPDEC made any payment to Overseas Communications Investment Corp. as alleged or at all”.

Clearly, that is a lie because the document in my possession shows that a payment was, in fact, made to this company called Overseas Communications Investments Corp. The ad goes on:

“Overseas Communications Investment Corp. is an investment holding company wholly owned by shareholders of BHC. It is incorporated in Florida and has never made any payment to any public official or public servant.”

It goes on:

“NIPDEC was afforded full inspection of books relating to the Airport Project and full explanations of everything relating to it were given on the basis of confidentiality, which unhappily, has not been observed.

A financial transaction between BHC and Overseas Communications Investment Corp. was queried during the inspection. This transaction had no bearing on the contractual relationship between BHC and NIPDEC concerning the Airport Project. Accordingly, there was really no obligation to give NIPDEC any information about it, as was pointed out at the time.

BHC further denies that it has made any payment of any kind to any public official or ‘ghost company’ for the purpose of obtaining any contract as alleged or at all and resents the unwarranted attack on its integrity and reputation.”

Mr. President, I am basing this on the documents that I have available to me, and I have seen references to a letter that was written to the Prime Minister of this country by the hon. Minister of Finance, I think it was in 1996, indicating his plans to go to the United States. The letter is dated July 30, 1996 to the Prime Minister which reads:

“Dear Prime Minister,

As we discussed last week Thursday after Cabinet, I would like to proceed to Miami unofficially as I have been able to secure appointments of American Airlines and a firm called Birk Hillman which is very experienced in constructing airports. These appointments would take place on Thursday and Friday of this week. For obvious reasons, I will prefer this to be a private trip.

I trust this has your approval rather than an official one as these are merely preliminary discussions.”

This was in 1996. The records are there and we know what happened. It is the same Birk Hillman that was trying to bid for the airport in 1992/1993, is the same Birk Hillman who eventually got the consultancy contract and we are seeing where these mysterious payments were made and what have you.

Mr. President, after this *Express* advertisement there is an article published in the *Sunday Guardian* of September 10, 2000 and there is a little caption in this article; “Quandary over investment company” and it says:

“Included in the invoice is an item claiming US \$1.6 million for payment to a company called Overseas Communication Investment Corporation (OCIC). In an advertisement published yesterday, Birk Hillman said OCIC was an investment holding company in Florida and ‘has never made any payment to any public official or public servant.’

OCIC’s official address is given as 2100 Salzedo St., Suite #300, Coral Gables on the web site of the Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations. The registered agent of OCIC is given as Arazoza, Comas, De Torres & Fernandez of the same address.

The only company director whose name appears on the return is Javier Yanes of 782, West Lejeune Rd, suite 350.

Further checks revealed Yanes is associated with a company called Yanes Security & Investigative Services. It could not be ascertained what service was provided by the firm of private detectives.”

Mr. President, why would \$10 million of our taxpayers’ money have to be paid to a firm of private detectives in connection with the construction of an airport? This is a scandalous state of affairs in our country. These are matters that have to be investigated and the Government must come clean and I wish the hon. Minister of National Security will take note of this and not turn a blind eye to it because this is evidence of corruption in our country. It is a criminal activity in our country. It is part of the crime problem in our country and we need some decisive action from this Government with respect to this. But you know the corruption does not end there. We have been hearing for the last couple years—since this Government came into power and these contracts have been awarded in such a high-handed manner and with such haste—of the famous construction package 9, that deals with building enclosures and the interior, and we know who got that package, one of the “boys”: one of the financiers of the UNC administration.

Mr. President, we heard this morning when Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams, contrary to what the Minister of Works stood up in this Parliament and said, where he misrepresented the truth of this situation, by trying to deny that there is any door estimated at \$450 when the records are there to show that in fact, there was a bi-fold door where the engineer’s estimated cost was \$472.50 and the tender amount was in fact \$98,340. That is not all. There is an item high up on this: \$1.6 million dealing with bonding and insurance where the estimated cost was \$3.9 million and the tender amount was \$17.9 million. Do you know who got

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those bonded and insurance contracts? It is the same Maritime Insurance. Who are they?

Who are these people that have been involved in these companies that have been getting these large sums of money, while poor people in this country have to suffer; when the farmers in Aranguez cannot yet get their compensation for the floods that they experienced last year. Why pensioners are being fooled into believing that this Government is caring for them so much and giving them so much. They could have gotten an increase easily up to \$1,000 had this amount of money been available to the country. Instead, it is a few friends and financiers who are benefiting; and the masses, the rank and file, the people of this country continue to suffer. It is a shame! It is a scandal!

Yesterday I heard Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh in his contribution, make certain references about corruption in the past. Mr. President, I have never in my life as a citizen of this country witnessed such glaring evidence of corruption in our country. *[Interruption]* The reality is that the people of this country are not stupid. At the end of the day there is a God above and the truth will prevail and the people of this country will adjudicate. If it was that there were allegations of corruption in the past, past governments have paid a price for it. The ultimate day of reckoning is when you go to the polls. In 1986, the Government changed in this country and since then our citizens of this country know how to use their index finger, and I have no doubt that they will exercise their right judiciously on this occasion in order to put this country back on a proper course so that the people of this country can benefit rather than a few greedy people. *[Desk thumping]*

5.30 p.m.

Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh: Thanks for giving way. Mr. President, I just wanted to remind the hon. Senator that, throughout my presentation, if I quoted the past government I also quoted the present; and that is very important. I have been misinterpreted not now, but in other instances, and just want this to be corrected. I was not really talking about corruption. I was talking about finding measures to correct corruption, both in the past and the present; and that is extremely important.

Sen. Daly: That is what he said, past and present.

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. D. Montano]*

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. N. Mohammed: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Mr. President. I want to assure the Reverend Senator that I meant to cast no aspersions on him and I agree with him 100 per cent that we as a nation have to find ways and means to put a halt. We just cannot go on like this any more, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*] I agree with the hon. Reverend Senator when he made reference to the fact that some people are really greedy. [*Desk thumping*] Greed is consuming people in this nation. I would like the hon. Minister to deny these facts, you know. Tell me they are not true. However, that is not all.

On December 7, 1999 the Airports Authority wrote the General Manager of Nipdec advising that a Cabinet Note be prepared for the excision of another package. This one is contract package No. 13 dealing with specialty equipment. Do you know who got that package not too long ago? Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. President, are you familiar with a company called Calmaquip? Who is Calmaquip? It was for a contract worth \$183 million. Only today I got information that at Nipdec they currently have files under lock and key. They are busy shredding files and trying to destroy evidence and people in there are being transferred, even out of the country, because of what is happening. [*Interruption*]

Mr. President, who is Calmaquip? Calmaquip is a Miami-based firm linked to Maritime Insurance Services. [*Desk thumping*] It first emerged, Mr. President, in the period 1987—1991 when they were trying to get the contract to provide equipment for the Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex and they are quick to blame—they always like to blame the PNM and talk about cost overruns and so forth. Never before have we seen such blatant acts of greed and corruption inflating the cost of everything. They were the persons who, with a joint venture partner in the 1990s, with Maritime and Birk Hillman, were bidding for the Piarco expansion project and Project Pride. They were involved in the supply of specialty equipment for the maximum security prison. Hon. Minister of National Security, tell me that is not true.

That is why, the Patrick Manning administration and, in fact, the then Prime Minister of the country, the hon. Mr. Patrick Manning, refused to allow them to continue with this and put a halt to it, Mr. President. He stopped them in their tracks and that is how they jumped into the UNC. They have had a free hand since then and the rest is history. The records are there to show what has been happening in this country because these same persons who operate in front of or behind the scenes with these companies, they are the ones to whom the hon. Prime Minister pays credit and homage. In 1995 there was a picture with the three of them being hugged by the Prime Minister and they are being wined and dined.

Mr. President: Senator, you are stepping beyond the bounds now.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you very much, Mr. President. So that when the hon. Senator talks about greed, Mr. President, these are the facts, and the hon. Minister of National Security is sitting right there. He is part of the Cabinet. I ask him as a man of integrity, as the days of this Government seem to be numbered, to really see what he can do. Even if he takes the evidence to the police, Mr. President, the hon. Minister of National Security holds the portfolio as being in charge of the police.

To this day we are yet to hear the outcome of the investigations into the Hansraj Sumairsingh murder in this country—that political assassination. We have no difficulties in taking the evidence to the police. In fact, I have no doubt that it is there already. All I would like is for the hon. Minister of National Security to give an assurance that action will be taken. [*Interruption*] This is not “ol’ talk”, Mr. President. These are the facts and everybody in this country is seeing them. The airport up to this day cannot be opened. I understand a river overflowed last week and that is why they had to cancel it again, and look how sad it is.

In the budget documents this year, *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies 2001* at page 410, there are items being claimed here as payments to be made with respect to interest alone on the various loans and bonds that have been issued with respect to the funding for this airport. This, hon. Minister, through you, Mr. President, is one of the unaccounted for. In respect of these loans, in previous years when we have been asking, where is the money for the airport and so forth, we could not find any record in the books. So, Mr. President, this is just interest payment we are talking about for this year and it is we, the taxpayers of this country, who will have to take that bounce. It is over \$112 million in interest alone for this year. They say, “We have come too far to turn back now”. Well, Mr. President, we say that we just cannot go on like this any more. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, I come to my dear colleague, the hon. Sen. Carlos John, our now famous Minister of road paving and—infamous Minister of road paving. Yesterday and the day before—[*Interruption*]

Mr. President: Senator, Senator, please be more temperate in your language.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you very much, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*] I come now, Mr. President, to the contribution of my very dear colleague, the hon. Sen. Carlos John who recently joined us in this very honourable and august

Chamber. It is a pity he is not here at this point in time, but suddenly there is an election road-paving frenzy taking place in this country. You know, recently we heard about a feeding frenzy in the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation controlled by the UNC. Now we are hearing about a road-paving frenzy.

If you come to Barataria, Mr. President, you will see the frenzy with which there are paving roads—left, right and centre.

Hon. Senator: So are you not happy?

Sen. N. Mohammed: Of course I am happy. All the people of Barataria welcome it. For the last five years no roads have been paved and they have been starving the regional corporation of funds. The corporation is supposed to get part of that Road Improvement Fund in order to carry out roadworks in the constituency. I am glad my colleague, Sen. Shabazz, got his roads paved first. It is the people who are benefiting. [*Desk thumping*] Now that they are in the Barataria/San Juan area, it is the junior or the senior Minister of Works who is doing it, yet the current Member of Parliament for Barataria is trying to take credit for it and talking about all the manholes he is fixing and so forth.

Mr. President, we know that it is only since the hon. Minister, Carlos John, came there, that something is happening. The hon. Minister of Works, [*Desk thumping*] the senior Minister of Works, the Hon. Sadiq Baksh—or is it the now junior Minister of Works? I really do not know whether it is he or Chandresh Sharma—or who is who—but for five years he did nothing for us in Barataria. So we thank the hon. Sen. Carlos John for giving us—[*Desk thumping*] Mr. President, Tidco is supposed to be the agency in this country to deal with tourism. Now we hear that Tidco is engaged in the business of paving roads in our country, so I am anxious to see the number of tourists who will be coming into Barataria/San Juan with these new roads. [*Desk thumping*] I look forward to that hon. Minister.

Mr. President, MTS—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Daly: “We goin’ St. Joseph.” [*Laughter*]

Sen. N. Mohammed: We welcome them. It is the people who will benefit from the roads. We are glad for the people. It is a pity it took five years, though, and we know that it is just an election gimmick. It might very well be too late.

Mr. President, MTS is involved in building schools now. Imagine this! There was an estimate for the cost of building 10 new schools in the country at some \$130-something million last year. Earlier this year we heard it went up to \$238

million and now I am sure it may have reached or crossed \$300 million. If one is building 10 schools in this country it now means that a school, instead of costing \$10 million, is going to cost \$30 million. Where is that money going? What kind of value are we getting for that kind of money, Mr. President? I make mention of this because what we are realizing now is that these agencies are being used to raise funds and to issue bonds in order to finance the road enhancement programme, because they have realized that they cannot get by the very stringent requirements under the Central Tenders Ordinance of this country where there are checks and balances to ensure that things are done in a fair and equitable manner.

This has emanated from a decision of the High Court of our country that was delivered some time ago. It is a decision of the High Court in High Court Action No. 1413 of 1999 in a matter between Jusamco Pavers Limited as the applicant and the Central Tenders Board. This court matter was an application for judicial review by Jusamco Limited where it was clearly stated that, with respect to the operations of the Central Tenders Board, the Government or the statutory bodies ought not to have any kind of interference or involvement with tendering procedures. We see they are now circumscribed by this judgement. It is a court order. This matter went to court and the court has ruled on it and in order now to bypass the tendering procedures that is why they are going through Tidco, MTS and UDECOTT.

Imagine UDECOTT, a company that comes under the Ministry of the venerable hon. Minister, John Humphrey, a Ministry that is supposed to be involved in the building of houses in our country, we now hear they are involved in the building of an overpass at the Uriah Butler interchange. I understand Minister Humphrey's daughter is the designer of that overpass or arch, or whatever it is. Mr. President, we just cannot go on like this any more. What are the checks and balances? With the MTS contracts how are we monitoring, or how do we know that people who are capable of building schools properly are, in fact, getting those contracts? Or is it a set of fly-by-night companies that are being formed and all their friends and family are getting these contracts and there is no way that we can keep tabs on the money? Where is the money going? That is the unfortunate thing. We just cannot go on like this any more.

Mr. President, I can go on and on but I cannot forget my friend, the hon. Minister of Public Administration. I cannot leave him out of my contribution. When I heard a little of his contribution—*[Interruption]*

Mr. President: I will simply remind you that you have three more minutes.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you very much. In those three minutes, Mr. President, all I want to do is to summarize my good friend's contribution in two words, as reminding me—*[Words expunged]* After five years in Government, we are seeing the hon. Wade Mark, coming from Opposition—*[Interruption]*

Mr. President: Senator, during the course of this debate there have been many personalized statements made, but this last statement is one that is objectionable. I ask you to withdraw it and that it be expunged from the records. It is not a proper statement to make.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you very much, Mr. President, and I am guided by your ruling. But Mr. President, if I may just put—*[Interruption]* I withdraw the statement, too, Mr. President, or the description of my good friend's contribution.

For the record, let me just say that in 1991 the PNM had promised to pay public servants whatever moneys were owed to them. Within three months of governance the PNM restored the 10 per cent cut in salaries and COLA that had been removed by the previous government. *[Desk thumping]* In 1995, the hon. Prime Minister who was then in Opposition said, "A debt is a debt that must be paid in cash". Up to now, public servants have not gotten their payments in cash. It is a fact that in 1995 the PNM signed a consent order in the Court of Appeal to pay public servants arrears of increment owed for the period 1987—1995. I wonder if they have as yet honoured this?

As the hon. Sen. Prof. John Spence mentioned, in terms of agriculture in the budget, there seem to have been very little measures or mention made with respect to our agricultural sector. Last year the Minister of Finance came here and boasted about agricultural incentives. Since the time of the PNM there have always been agricultural incentives in terms of our agricultural sector. The question is whether the moneys are really being allocated and the people will get their money. They talk about a flood relief disaster programme. Last year floods hit the farmers in Aranguéz and they are still waiting for their compensation, Mr. President. I ask the hon. Minister of Finance, do not wait until the election is called to pay these farmers. Give them their money now. The marketing situation—disaster.

5.45 p.m.

Mr. President, the San Juan market, a subversion of the Local Government Authority, where the Minister of Local Government has bypassed the regional corporation and the Minister is now seeking to take credit for the San Juan market. That is a matter for the regional corporation and we call on this government to stop subverting the local government bodies and authorities in this country and give them that autonomy and allow them to carry out their functions.

Mr. President, on that note, I just want to wind up by saying, five years later from 1995, the people of this country have had the opportunity to judge. We have had previous PNM governments; we have had an NAR government; and now the country has had a UNC regime in power. With these experiences, and now that an election is around the corner, the people of this country will be the ultimate adjudicators with respect to who is fit and proper to govern the affairs of our nation. We of the People's National Movement are confident that the people of Trinidad and Tobago have recognized that the PNM is the only viable alternative to save this country from the slippery slope that we are sliding on. We just cannot go on like this anymore under the UNC. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Finbar Gangar): Mr. President, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in this honourable Senate on the Appropriation Bill 2000—2001. I think it is rather unusual for me to speak at this very late stage of the debate and to be the penultimate speaker. So many have gone before and at this late stage, after almost 40 hours of non stop debate, I think it is very difficult to summon the energy and enthusiasm, both as a speaker and as a listener, especially on such an esoteric subject as oil and gas. I want to begin my contribution this afternoon, by once again thanking the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, for yet again outdoing himself in presenting a budget which is dedicated to building Trinidad and Tobago, for a better future, more jobs, better education and more caring.

Mr. President, when one looks at criticisms of this particular budget from both inside and outside this Parliament, it would appear that they are based along almost identical lines in all cases, that there is no policy; there is no vision and that the details are lacking. With all due respect to all the Senators in this honourable Senate, particularly those on the Independent Benches, we in this country have grown up on a culture where we are accustomed to a four-and five-hour budget speech, and that is what we have grown up on.

We have had a radical departure in the last six budget speeches, in that the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development has not gone through the repetitious mode of reading through *A Review of the Economy*; going through a detailed *Revenue and Expenditure Statement*; and also going through a detailed *Medium-Term Planning Framework*. That is there for all to read and maybe some of the commentators are too lazy or they do not exercise enough judgment in going through these particular documents, in order to ascertain what the budget really contains. You see, we were accustomed listening on our radios in the

1960's and 1970's to the late Dr. Eric Williams speaking about every country in the world; every excursion through Saudi Arabia, OPEC and the entire world political and economic scene for three hours, and then in the last hour going through the taxation measures. People must become accustomed to change.

I have listened to the various political pundits, the economists—in and outside this Senate—and they have talked about how the budget lacks detail; the Minister did not say where he is getting his revenue from, but as I said, if you go through those yellow documents, you can clearly see what is required. The question about policy, whether this Government has a policy. Now, I am a firm believer in policy. The energy sector in this country has published a Green Paper and we have followed slavishly that Green Paper over the past five years, but there is more to policy. There must be an overarching philosophy and that is what is important.

When one looks at the philosophy which the Minister of Finance Planning and Development has propagated over the last five years, it is basically building a better life for the people of Trinidad and Tobago and we have done that to even our most ardent detractors. You could look at it from an economic point of view; you could look at it from the way people in Trinidad and Tobago are living now. The fact is that Trinidad and Tobago is a better place in which to live and everyone recognizes that. Contrary to what Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed has said—the people will decide very shortly—in her very rambunctious contribution—the people will in fact decide.

When you look at it from a question of numbers gained in 1994, the real gross domestic product was 16,630.40 billion; in 1995, 17,263.90 billion; in 1996, 17,925.00 billion; in 1997, 18,501.9 billion; in 1998, 19,326.7 billion; in 1999, 21,010.5 billion; and projected in the year 2000, 22,661.6 billion. I am quoting from *The focus on Trinidad and Tobago, 2001* by Ernst & Young.

When one looks at the per capita real, in 1994, 13,859 billion; in 1995, 13,280 billion, a decrease; in 1996, 13,788 billion; in 1997, 14,232 billion; in 1998, 14,857 billion; in 1999, 16,162 billion and in the year 2000, predicted 16,187 billion. If you look at the percentage change in the gross domestic product, in 1994, 4.20 per cent increase; in 1995, 3.50 per cent; in 1996, 3.83 per cent; in 1997, 3.22 per cent; in 1998, 4.46 per cent; in 1999, 8.71 per cent; and predicted in the year 2000, 7.86 per cent.

Mr. President, I want to submit to this honourable Senate that if those numbers reflect no policy; if they reflect no vision; and if this country is in fact

running on autopilot, as so many Senators have said in this honourable Senate, then I would say that we must do away with all our policies and let the country run by itself, because the performance of the economy over the last five years speaks for itself.

Mr. President, when one looks at the performance of this administration in every aspect, you take yourself back to when we took office in 1995, and this has been catalogued by all the Ministers who have made their contribution. This reminds me of what President Kennedy said at his birthday party in 1961. He said that when they got into office, the one thing that surprised them was to find out that things were just as bad as they had been saying that they were. That is exactly the position. This country was in economic shambles in 1995, and to say that they were responsible for the economic growth, during the period 1996—2000 is absolute hypocrisy. [*Desk thumping*]

5.55 p.m.

Sen. Mohammed: I think the hon. Minister is misrepresenting the facts because the records are there to show that in terms of economic growth, the economy was growing since 1995. He is misrepresenting the facts.

Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar: Mr. President, I think that interruption was of nuisance value. I will continue with my contribution. The entire tone of Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed's contribution was in that vein.

I want to tell her something. She talked about the Government using Tidco and MTS to fix roads and build schools. That arrangement, Mr. President, and Members of this honourable Senate, was put in place by the PNM government during the period 1991—1995 when they amended the Central Tenders Board Ordinance to allow the Government to contract with wholly-owned state enterprises without going through the tendering process. The records are absolutely clear. Can she get up now and say that I am honestly misleading this Senate? I am educating her about what they did during the period 1991—1995.

More than that, Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed should know that I have been in this business, working with a state enterprise from 1974—1995, and they are leaving this honourable Senate.

I tell you that prior to every election, Trintoc, in those days, was raped and pillaged by doing work for the then PNM administration just before the election. I know because I did much of the work. You would remember, Mr. President, when they put that monstrosity in King George V Park and there was protest and they

had to stop it. Remember, they intended to put up some stands there. Just before election, they had to take them down. They immediately called Trintoc in those days and asked, "Could you do it for us and move them away?" As a project engineer in those days, I had to fix the water lines in every school in the entire County of St. Patrick West. Then, we had to fix bridges in Maraval. The only difference between now and then is that the companies were never paid for the work they did. [*Desk thumping*] I refer to the Brian Lara Promenade that was done with money from the National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited and the National Gas Company and that money was never repaid. That is the difference between what we are doing and what they did.

Sen. Gillette: Shame!

Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar: Let us get back to the issue of energy. I assure Sen. Shabazz—apparently when I was out of the Parliament on one day, he pronounced my political obituary—that my political career is far from over. I also tell Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams that she will be seeing me in San Fernando East and San Fernando West on the hustings in this election. [*Desk thumping*]

We get back to the energy sector. That is the one thing that has come here for the last five years in six debates and nobody ever says anything about the energy sector. It is either we all accept that it is very well run or we know so little about it. I do not know what it is.

I quote some statistics to drive home my point. Let us look at the production of commodities. That is where we get our money. Over the last five years, the energy sector has contributed TT \$36 billion to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago from the commodities.

In November 1995, the production of methanol in Trinidad and Tobago was 77,282 metric tons. In July 2000, the production of methanol was 216,703; an increase of 180 per cent. Could they lay claim to that growth?

Let us look at ammonia. In November 1995, the production of ammonia was 184,980 tonnes. In July 2000, the production was 327,323 tonnes, an increase of 72 per cent.

Let us look at natural gas. In November 1995, the daily production of natural gas was 770 million standard cubic feet per day. In July 2000, the figure was 1,600 million standard cubic feet per day, an increase of 105 per cent.

Sen. Daly: That is gas!

Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar: In November 1995, the proven natural gas reserves of this country was 12 trillion cubic feet. In July 2000, the amount was 24 trillion cubic feet, an increase of 100 per cent.

In November 1995, the crude oil reserves was 550 million barrels of oil. In July 2000, it was 660 barrels of oil, an increase of 20 per cent.

We come to steel products. In 1995, the daily production of DRI or the monthly production of direct reduced iron was 81,260 tonnes. In July 2000, it was 134,608 tonnes, an increase of 60 per cent.

Billets—in November 1995, the monthly production was 49,348. In July 2000, the monthly production was 69,257—an increase of 40 per cent.

Wire rods—in November 1995, the production was 47,356. In July 2000, the amount was 59,937—an increase of 27 per cent.

Refining—November 1995, the refining throughput average was 100,000 barrels per day and in July 2000, it was 170,000—an increase of 70 per cent.

Mr. President and this honourable Senate, how much credit could they take for that? This has been a phenomenal increase.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Thank you, Mr. President. I wonder if the Minister could tell me something about solar energy to stop me wondering.

Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar: Mr. President, I meant to deal with that particular issue later on in my contribution but as the hon. Senator has raised the issue, I want to talk about solar energy even for one or two minutes.

This Government is actively pursuing and we have a commitment to pursue what is known as clean energy, renewable sources of energy. In Trinidad and Tobago, this is an extremely difficult thing to do, primarily because the price of energy is so cheap. While we continue with the research, even with giving the most generous tax concessions, even if we give a 90 per cent rebate on solar energy equipment tax refund, it is still uneconomical to compete with natural gas derived electricity, simply because domestic electricity in Trinidad and Tobago is arguably the second cheapest in the Western Hemisphere. That is the only reason why we have not and cannot pursue renewable energy, particularly solar energy in Trinidad and Tobago, on the scale which we want because it is uneconomic and, again, it is paradoxical because of our God-given resources of natural gas. I am glad the hon. Senator brought it up.

It is very clear that the policy prescriptions which this administration has put in place in the energy sector—I mean, we have not only written an energy policy; we have put it in place. It is very gratifying when you read the 10-point plan put in by the People's National Movement articulated by Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Manning, in the national press, that every single point he mentioned in the energy portion of his 10-point plan is in the Energy Sector Green Paper of this present administration.

I would not accuse Mr. Manning of plagiarism; I would not accuse him of fudging; I would not accuse him of anything; I want to congratulate him for following the policies which this administration has put in place [*Desk thumping*] and whenever the PNM returns to power, maybe in the next 15 to 20 years, he can continue. That is what we talk about, continuity, and in the next 20 years, I will claim credit if he has any success at that time. [*Laughter*]

I would like Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed to smile a little bit. [*Laughter*] The debate is not meant to be taken that seriously. We are all good friends, I think.

Sen. S. John: Minister, are we hearing from you that although the Opposition is claiming that oil is a declining asset, you are actually saying we have had an increase in production?

Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar: What I have said to this honourable Senate is that under a very aggressive exploration programme of this Government, we have increased the amount of proven reserves of oil in this country.

Getting back to the PNM's approach in their plan for energy, one of the plans is, that the development of the sector must be for the benefit of the people. That is in their plan and that is a commendable thing but I just want to read what is in the UNC administration's Green Paper on energy policy. It says that the main policy goal for the energy sector is to optimally exploit the country's hydrocarbon resources by ensuring its efficient administration in order to obtain the greatest returns to the country for the benefit of its citizens. What they have done is to really paraphrase that and say that the development of the sector must be promoted for the benefit of the citizens. I have no quarrel with that.

Again, they say they are going to develop a gas-pricing policy that is also part of the Government's master plan for natural gas. It also states that the role of the state must be as a facilitator. I say that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has already assumed this role. I want to congratulate them for adopting this particular policy.

6.10 p.m.

Sen. Montano: I thank the Minister for giving way. I would just like to ask him: What were the specific policies that led to the increase in the exploration on the part of the oil companies in Trinidad?

Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar: I did not walk with my Green Paper on the energy policy but, let me just say, I know we have a nine-point plan in the Green Paper of our energy policy. The first one is to maximize the production of local crude oil and natural gas through a system of fairness and equity to our upstream producers. What we have done is, we have moved away from the normal royalty and taxation licensing agreements, to what is known as a more equitable and fair system of production-sharing contracts. Under this particular administration, we have awarded 13 production-sharing contracts of which allow both the producers and the Government to share the risk, as far as exploration operations are concerned. That is the policy initiative for the education of my good friend, Sen. D. Montano, which has led to the explosion of activities in our upstream sector.

In 1995, when we took office, there were 12 companies operating in the upstream sector of Trinidad and Tobago. Today there are 24. Again, the very aggressive policies of the Government have been able to achieve that. *[Interruption]* What taxation policy are you talking about? Mr. President, maybe I need to explain to him, under the old system of upstream exploration, there was a regime of taxation, which was based on royalties, supplemental petroleum taxes and petroleum profit taxes. That is the old regime of taxation. Under the production-sharing contracts, we have a system where that is no longer applicable. Now, it is really a sort of pay as you earn. If you find and produce oil above a certain level, and the price of oil is above a certain level, then the Government takes a share. It is a sliding scale. In other words, if you produce 10,000 barrels of oil per day, and the price of oil is \$30, your taxation may be around 80 per cent. If you find 2,000 barrels per day, and the price of oil is \$10, then your taxation may be 30 per cent. That is the incentive where you share risk upstream as far as development costs are concerned. I hope I have made myself absolutely clear to Sen. Montano. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. President, Trinidad and Tobago's energy sector has attracted over US \$4 billion in foreign investment over the past five years, excluding Atlantic LNG Trains 2 and 3 and the Caribbean Nitrogen Company. When you add Atlantic LNG and Caribbean Nitrogen Company to this, you will get almost US \$6 billion. This extraordinary level of investment has enabled us to achieve what can only be described as phenomenal growth and development; both in the upstream and

downstream segments of the energy value chain, over the five-year period of our tenure. Our LNG production now is unprecedented in the entire Caribbean region, and there is more to come as we continue to play a leadership role in natural gas development globally, and in the production and trade of petrochemicals.

Over the past five years, the energy sector of the country has been the largest, single contributor to the national economy, notwithstanding our laudable attempts to diversify our economy. This sector, inclusive of the petro-chemical industries—as I said before—has contributed a staggering TT \$36.6 billion to the gross domestic product at current market prices over the four-year period 1996—1999. Sen. Dr. St. Cyr, that is where the growth is coming from.

In 1999, the relative amount of foreign exchange earnings for the sector was 73.4 per cent of the country's total, while the sector's contribution to total revenue was 20.6 per cent. These figures are expected to rise significantly in the year 2000; given the present level of oil prices. They will even rise further and spectacularly when Atlantic LNG Trains 2 and 3 are on stream.

Half of my time has already gone. I just want to talk—*[Interruption]*

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, I beg to move, under Standing Order 9(8), that this Senate continue to sit until the conclusion of the matter now before the Senate.

Question put and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL

(BUDGET)

Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar: Mr. President, looking at the international trend with respect to what is going on right now, it is very instructive to understand it and put it in its proper perspective. Over the last five years we have gone through ups and downs in the international oil industry. In 1998 the price dropped below \$10 per barrel, concomitant with the Asian crisis. Today, even as I speak, the price is still in the low 30s, notwithstanding the three per cent increase, which OPEC has put into place. I want to remind this honourable House that is the third increase by OPEC for this year. That is the first thing we have to understand.

In 1999/2000 we budgeted on an average oil price of \$16 per barrel. The actual price was \$27 per barrel. This year we have chosen to be just as conservative and go at \$22 per barrel. Based on the oil prices of last year and our budget scenario, we were able to put—through prudent financial management of the Minister of Finance—\$415 million in an oil stabilization fund. What we have to understand is what is the outlook for oil. Let us look at the output for oil first.

With respect to oil, OPEC has increased oil production three times this year, without success in bringing the prices down.

The world economy is growing at approximately three per cent per year. When one translates that into oil production, it requires an additional two million barrels per day per annum to sustain that particular growth. More importantly is that OPEC's share of the market has now risen to above 40 per cent. It would appear that the non-OPEC countries have very limited room to increase their production, while OPEC, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, is reaching that particular limit. It would appear that the good fortune of Trinidad and Tobago will continue, as far as oil is concerned, into the foreseeable future.

6.20 p.m.

Mr. President, now we turn to the question of natural gas. When we started the Atlantic LNG negotiations in March of 1999, the price of natural gas in the United States was between \$2.50 and \$3.00. Today, because of the price of crude oil and the price of natural gas abroad it is now \$5 per million btu. What has that translated into with respect to Trinidad and Tobago? It has a number of positive effects on Trinidad and Tobago.

The first one is that because of our entry into the LNG market and the LNG pricing for Atlantic LNG Train 1, Train 2 and Train 3 and because that pricing arrangement is based on a net back pricing arrangement you have the price in the market either in the United States or in Europe, and you subtract the cost of transportation; you subtract your shrinkage cost, subtract the liquefaction cost, you subtract your gas transportation cost, and then you get the price at well head, and the Government's taxation on the price of gas of the well head is 55 per cent. So if everything else remains constant, except the market price, your price of the well head and the government's taxation take is phenomenally increased, and that is what is happening at this point in time.

The other positive effect of natural gas pricing rise in the metropolitan countries, particularly in the United States, is that it makes the gas-based industries in the United States totally uncompetitive with the gas-based industries in Trinidad. If you are producing ammonia and methanol in the United States and your main input is natural gas at \$US 5 per million btu, the equivalent price in Trinidad and Tobago for that same natural gas is between \$160 and \$180, depending on the gas price, almost a third of what the price is in the United States. As a result of that, Trinidad and Tobago ammonia and methanol have become increasingly competitive, much more competitive than those plants in the United

States and Europe. Those plants are closing down, and it allows Trinidad and Tobago to cement its position as the world's largest exporter of methanol and ammonia in the world today.

Mr. President, we continue very aggressively with our efforts. We are not going to rest on our laurels; we continue very aggressively with our oil exploration, our oil production. We have a number of measures in place. I would like to inform this honourable House that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has approved the sale or the purchase of Texaco's one third share in Trinmar at a cost of US \$115 million, and that sale is due to be concluded at the end of September. Hopefully, by October 1, 2000, Trinidad and Tobago will be the sole owner of Trinmar, which is really the jewel in the crown of the energy sector of Trinidad and Tobago; it is by far the most profitable operation.

We intend in Trinidad and Tobago to increase our land production or our indigenous production outside of BP Amoco from 56,000 to 90,000 over the next three years. There are numerous initiatives which are going to be put in place: the Land and Galeota Development, further work in Trinmar, which should bring the production pretty close to 50,000 barrels per day, up from the current 35,000 barrels per day and, of course, Petrotrin is pursuing a number of joint ventures: Brighton Marine, Moruga West, South West Peninsula, Point Ligoure, East Brighton.

I spoke at length of how well we are doing in our gas industry. Earlier in the year, there was genuine concern as to the gas reserves position of the country, when we were in the process of negotiating our Atlantic LNG Train 2 and Train 3. I want to say that since those negotiations have been completed we have drilled three exploratory wells, and those wells have all been successful in a big way, and our gas reserves position has increased by almost 20 per cent since the signing of the Atlantic LNG agreement. We have drilled the wells successfully in Block 2(c), Block 5(b) and also in BP Amoco's current acreage.

The Mannequin I well so far on conservative estimates has indicated 0.75 trillion cubic feet. The Aripo I well, 1.35 trillion cubic feet, and the Red Mango well we have 1.8 trillion cubic feet. It would appear that the proven reserves of this country will be significantly increased by the end of the year when we will approach almost 30 trillion. We are continuing to explore on a continuous basis, based on our policy perspective that we have to keep in this country a reserve to production ratio of, at least, 25 years, and in order to do that we have an aggressive exploration programme upstream which is driven by an equally aggressive programme for monetizing our natural gas.

You cannot stimulate upstream activities if a market is not in place for the gas downstream. This Government has been able to balance in a very subtle way our upstream and downstream capabilities. We are in the process now of evaluating and going to award very shortly some new blocks: Blocks 1(a), 1(b), 3(a), 3(b) and block modified U(b). As I said, we continue to expand very vigorously our upstream capability.

We are not going to stop there. We are just about to embark upon a major geological survey of the very deep waters off Trinidad and Tobago, off the continental shelf. The future of oil exploration in the world today lies in deep water exploration. All the world's major oil fields in the last five to 10 years have been found in the deep waters. We looked at the Gulf of Angola, the Gulf of Mexico and we looked at what has happened offshore Brazil.

The general feeling of geologists is significant hydrocarbon potential in the region of 1 billion-barrel oilfields may exist off the continental shelf of Trinidad and Tobago. There are significant and sufficient examples in this hemisphere of high hydrocarbon prospects in the deeper offshore region. We only have to look at the examples of Mexico and Brazil in this connection, the interest shown by oil and gas companies operating here confirm that we are, indeed, on the right track.

We have gotten all the major oil companies that want to operate in Trinidad and Tobago, to sponsor a detailed geologic survey which will cover an area of 12,000 square kilometres. The data will belong to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, but funded by the oil companies. This will mean that we would have information that will help to attract even more investment and further strengthen and expand our reserve base in both oil and gas.

Mr. President, we have reached the stage in the development of our natural gas industry now where we believe we have achieved a certain amount of critical mass. We believe that we must sit back and look at what we have achieved and where we want to go. On that basis, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago would soon engage on a natural gas master plan to ensure that we get expert advice to ensure that all pass aspects of this critical subsector are adequately managed.

It must be understood that natural gas, since 1996, has surpassed crude oil as the main driver of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago in terms of energy equivalent. We will take into account in our master plan, reserve management, exploration and production, reserve depletion and institutional development.

Our natural gas master plan would address our existing regulatory framework, whether amendments are required, the future role of the National Gas Company, the cost of gas production on a producer and field basis, an analysis of the current gas transmission and sales models, analysis of current pricing and gas sales pricing models, and analysis with recommendations of the benefits to the country for downstream industries, ammonia, methanol, iron and steel, aluminum, LNG, ethylene and what is the optimum portfolio mix.

Mr. President, notwithstanding the fact that—[*Interruption*]

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. The Hon. W. Mark*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar: I want to thank Senators of this honourable Senate for allowing me the additional 15 minutes.

I was on the question of refining, and notwithstanding our significant improvement in the competitiveness and higher levels of production, the Petrotrin refinery at Pointe-a-Pierre needs to be further upgraded. This new phase of the project or phase two is aimed at sustaining the competitiveness of the refinery and minimizing business risk from a shrinking market. Detailed studies have been completed, and we will embark during the next five years on this expansion.

Mr. President, with respect to the retail marketing sector there are a couple things I want to say up front which would be of interest to this Senate. It is a very topical problem: all over the world at this point in time, particularly, in Europe, there has been a revolt in the pricing of fuels, particularly, in gasoline. I would say it is a credit to this Government that we have resisted the temptation to allow the price of gasoline, or fuels in general to float on its own.

Gasoline prices in Trinidad and Tobago are fixed at the pump; we are only one of the very few remaining countries in the world which has this particular system in place. Thankfully this is in place, because if at the current oil prices we had allowed the price of gasoline to float at the well head, it would have been fair to say that instead of paying \$2.85 per litre, we would have been paying over \$5 per litre for premium unleaded gasoline. We have resisted that temptation.

One of the reasons why inflation in this country has been kept to almost manageable levels, not almost, very manageable levels, less than 4 per cent, is

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because the price of domestic fuels have been maintained. I want to tell this honourable Senate—I would not bore them with the formula—but based on the price of gasoline in the world market and what the Government and the producers have been able to subsidize the local domestic market; the total subsidy for domestic fuels in this country from the period January to August 2000, stood at \$279,130,000 that is the total subsidy.

6.35 p.m.

We have to be very careful as to how we tamper with the liberalization of our retail marketing sector. While the trend today is to deregulate, liberalize and allow market conditions to determine the price of the buck, the feeling of this very caring Government is that the resources of the country belong to the people and if it is one thing we can give back to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, it is low cost fuel. That is our objective. [*Desk thumping*] We have stuck rigorously to that.

You know that over the five years, 1995—2000, we have only had one increase in the price of gasoline and it was not really an increase; it was as a substitute for the removal of licence. So I just want to say, to the eternal credit of the Minister of Finance, that we have not increased the price of gasoline. [*Desk thumping*] And that singular act has kept the cost of living down; has kept inflation down, because it is proven by many economists all over the world that the price of energy is the one factor that fuels inflation. That is self-evident to anybody.

I want to start winding up my contribution. We have had so many successes in our five years of office and numerous downstream industries, as I said. We had Atlantic LNG, Train 1; Farmlands MissChem; PCS Nitrogen; Ispat DR3 Mega Module; Cliff & Associates; the Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited Expansion and the TTMC IV Methanol plant. All those were built and commissioned during this administration. What does the PNM have to show? One methanol plant, TTMC II. That is another story; and a disastrous fiasco in La Brea which we are still paying for. The sum of \$300 million sank into the hell-hole of La Brea without any returns and they are talking about corruption and mismanagement. They have a lot to learn still.

Our policy initiatives as far as natural gas downstream industries, will continue. The whole country and the whole world knows about our emphasis on

aluminium, on ethylene, on gas to liquids. There are no secrets about that. That is a new wave of downstream industries as far as the gas-based industry in Trinidad and Tobago is concerned and the Government is aggressively pursuing those initiatives.

We have thought long and hard about our position as regards ammonia and methanol. But it would appear that soon Trinidad and Tobago may be the only country in the world producing ammonia and methanol if the current trends continue. We already have the CNC I ammonia plant being built, as Sen. Carlos John has said; we are also contemplating in the new year, Caribbean Nitrogen Company, No. 2 and there is firm expression of interest from another marketer to build another major ammonia plant in Trinidad.

We have already concluded negotiations with ATLAS for their methanol plant in Trinidad. As Minister John said, there is also a firm expression of interest for yet another methanol plant. The days where building an ammonia and/or methanol plant in Trinidad and Tobago were a big thing, are now gone. These things are now a matter of course—routine; no big thing. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, I want to wind up my contribution this afternoon—I have five more minutes. A few weeks ago we debated in a very positive way the Minerals Bill, and due to a very collective effort from both sides of this honourable House, we were able to reach a consensus as regards that Bill. I am particularly pleased at this achievement. For many years the question of quarries and mining has been a serious problem in this country. No Government had the will or the skill to put it in place. We have done it and I want to thank everyone. I want to thank Sen. Montano for his contribution, Sen. Daly, Sen. Prof. Kenny. I want to specially thank Sen. Montano. He was not here when I gave my closing contribution and all his suggestions have been incorporated in the final Bill. [*Desk thumping*] We have put accountability and transparency in the quarrying business in Trinidad and Tobago and this will continue for the foreseeable future.

The days where a Minister would get up in the morning—I do not want to implicate my public officers, but, you know, you hear talk; I do not get involved in talk, but it is said that at this time two or three months before election, the giving away of quarries on the most ad hoc basis would have been very much in vogue, in evidence, at this point in time, if there was another Minister in charge. No quarry has been given out in this country without the competitive bidding process over the last five years, and of that we are very proud. [*Desk thumping*]

The achievements of the energy sector would not have been possible if we did not have a very dedicated and competent staff in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. I came from a state enterprise and the feeling in that particular state enterprise was that public officers in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries were no good. Mr. President, I want to tell this honourable House that the level of dedication, commitment and pursuit of excellence which I have seen in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries has allowed us to manage the sector in the way it has been managed and the results are self-evident. I thank my staff in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. [*Desk thumping*]

We are undergoing major restructuring in that particular ministry now. If I may take some credit, it has not been easy, but I got my Cabinet colleagues, when the exodus of professional staff from the ministry was taking place—and that is why I am in favour of implementing and giving our senior public officers their just due. [*Desk thumping*] I was able to convince my Cabinet colleagues that we could not afford to lose our geologists and geophysicists. They were leaving the ministry with a salary of \$6,000 per month and going to any of the gas companies and getting \$25,000. I got my Cabinet colleagues to agree to give them a professional allowance which effectively increased their salary by 80 per cent, and we have gotten a hundred times that in terms of production and commitment to duty. It just goes to show what we can achieve. The diligence and expertise demonstrated over the past five years in my ministry have exceeded the call of duty, and on behalf of the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, I wish to publicly commend their efforts.

In closing, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries has taken a very proactive role in playing its part in the education process of this country. The National Energy Skills Centre has become a household name in this country. It is a remarkable success story. [*Desk thumping*] We have built on that and gone one step further and put in place the Institute of Technology which will open its doors on January 29, 2001, by the hon. Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday. We would open a paradigm shift in the education system in Trinidad and Tobago.

Through donations and negotiations we have been able to put 1,600 computers in primary and secondary schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago. We have been able to fund 23 scholarships per year for nationals in the training of our energy

sector. We have been able to run computer courses for 15,000 junior secondary school students. We have put it in place for adults throughout Trinidad and Tobago and by the end of the year we would have 20,000 people computer literate. Right through Trinidad and Tobago! [*Desk thumping*] Every parliamentarian, Opposition or Government has been offered this particular facility.

Mr. President, we are now riding the crest of a wave of golden opportunities in this beloved country. In the energy business, timing is everything. We have put the right components together at the right time, in the right place. The future awaits us. We are now ready, willing and able to take our rightful place as the little energy giant of this millennium. We have brought prosperity to this country. Without energy and the performance of the energy sector, you cannot build roads; you cannot build schools; you cannot increase old age pensions; you cannot have water for all. That is what you use it for. I am not one to engage in political sloganeering, but you will forgive me if I end my contribution by quoting the words of the Minister of Finance, "We can't turn back." Thank you very much, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance, Planning and Development (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. President, when the previous speaker started he said we have had 40 hours of debate. Now I begin and it is 41 hours of debate. [*Laughter*] The point I want to make is that you will appreciate, therefore, that given the late hour of the evening, I will undertake to be mercifully brief, in view of the fact that, for one, our numbers seem to have decimated somewhat; the Opposition is now down to one-third; the Independents are down to less than 50 per cent; of course the Government is 100 per cent, as always. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] So as I said, I really would want to be very brief.

I think basically, from all of the comments I have heard, you will permit me to say that I could probably summarize the responses to the budget on the other side in two areas, and I will deal with them both: the airport and the debt. I think that is a fair comment and I think everything else can be considered as side shows or side issues which, you will forgive me if I say I prefer, given the lateness of the evening, not to touch on.

I do want to put on record, though, that this is my sixth budget and I have finally a sixth budget where every single Member of the House spoke. I guess

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there is a feeling by many now that there was no way six budgets could pass and we allow anyone to escape unscathed, as it were. So much so that I want to thank the Senators on the Back Benches, in particular, for all the support they have given me. I thank all Senators on this side who have commended me and let me add my open congratulations to Sen. Carlos John for his comments. [*Desk thumping*] I was too far to see the need for any support which I understand he took in advance of his contribution. [*Laughter*] But I understood it was well worth it. In another jurisdiction, as a matter of fact, I am told that the Chancellor of the Exchequer actually is allowed to have a shot of scotch. I am daring, but I do not think I am that daring.

6.50 p.m.

I do appreciate very much the comments that my colleagues on this side have made during this debate and previous debates. I want to state, on record, that I have always appreciated the comments from the Opposition Benches. Some have stung but they have not been enough to get me to change my disposition. I say stung in the sense that they were good political talk. I have certainly learned from you Sen. Montano. So if I have not said it before, I appreciated some of the things you have said, and many of you may not know this and I would continue to say it, that with each budget, I had actually reviewed the comments that were made in the Senate. I do not do it in the Lower House and I do not want to say why. I actually take them into consideration in preparing the new budget. So I want you to know, in particular, that I have learnt a great deal from the comments on the Independent Benches, as well.

Therefore, I would like to place on record, my own appreciation of the fact that I have come here many a time and appreciated the quality of the debate here because I know it is given without the amount of partisan politics. I, therefore, would want to let you know that you have, over the last six budgets, helped me, in some way, to shape each succeeding budget as it were. [*Desk thumping*] I know if you were able to speak after me, you would have said that this would have been my concluding budget statement. But let me talk a minute for the airport. The airport has been bashed a lot and there seems to be a great deal of controversy surrounding this airport.

I would not spend very much time because I only want to spend five minutes talking a bit today. We seemed to have had—and we are not alone in this incidentally—we collectively, Trinidad and Tobago. We seem to have had great difficulty in finding a way to build an airport. I do not understand what is the preoccupation of succeeding administrations with respect to the airport. I do know

that there is one good bright silver lining to that cloud going forward. After this administration, the next administration would never have an opportunity to get embroiled in whether we should or should not have a new terminal building or a new airport. Not for a while, I would think.

So I think, fortunately, we can say that we can start the year 2001, and we are not going to have any more airport controversy. I say this very frankly, because I am fairly confident that the airport would be commissioned very early next year, where I would imagine everybody would be in it and around and it would be too late then—unless a very spiteful administration should come afterwards, break it down and start the controversy all over again. That would be a horror if ever one had to tell a story.

I say that because I want to begin by trying to offer an explanation as to the reason why I had made that trip to Birk Hillman. It is not unusual—and I know I can say it at this level and not say it in other places—for anyone who is bidding to offer other services for our country to make and I use the words “other services”. I met Birk Hillman for the first time when he made a presentation at the Hilton to the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. At that time they offered me—and they had connections and contacts with American Airlines and with cruise ships that I did not have. At that time I was Minister of Tourism and one of the most critical needs that we had here was the question of the airlift. I had no idea how to go about selling Trinidad and Tobago as a destination, and they offered me this literally unofficially. In other words, I could not go with a Cabinet Note—maybe, I was too young and inexperienced even then at that to say I want to go and talk unofficially to these people and I do not know what is going to come out of it. I mean Cabinet would laugh me out of town. So I asked the Prime Minister to go on an unofficial trip—and maybe in hindsight knowing what I had got out of that trip, I should not have used the expression “unofficial”.

I have always said that I have lived the last but not the last—I have lived my entire life like an open book. Some people criticize my lifestyle and some people have felt that I am a bit too loose—whatever that may be—especially in my very personal life. But I much prefer to live an open life where people know what I am about. Even if they want to bash me they would get over it very soon in any case. So I live my life as an open book. I have absolutely nothing to hide in any relationship that I have had. If I am guilty of meeting people, or using something for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago, I have met thousands of people as the Minister of Finance in the last five years, then I am guilty 5,000 times, because I have met people.

I will tell you something. As a policy—and I have said this before—I have never met anyone as the Minister of Finance alone: I meet them with a Permanent Secretary or a Ministry official. So when I went to meet American Airlines, I did not want to go and meet American Airlines without Birk Hillman. I did not know them. I did not want American Airlines to come and say I offered them a bribe, or they offered me a bribe. That is the thinking that goes on. And I was successful when I went to that meeting in July 1996 to get American Airlines to start thinking of Tobago as a destination. It took another five, six months. Mr. John who was already on Tidco could bail me out of that. He had seen all the documentation. It took months of trying to push that. It is not easy to convince an airline as big as American Airlines with a huge organization. I was not even sure whether I was talking to the decision-makers, although I was told that these were the decision-makers. I met a Vice President who was responsible for the Caribbean and Latin America and another guy who was responsible for marketing. I left there with the undertaking that they would at least look at the possibility of putting on a flight.

The only explanation I could give—and it does not matter to me—as I said, whether it meets anyone's satisfaction or not—is that I was able to convince them to put on the American Eagle from Puerto Rico to Tobago. I was satisfied at the time that it was going to help us because I do not remember the exact number; but I remember at that time air lift was crucial. There were problems with the Air Bridge in 1996 and so on.

I have no axe to grind. I made no public announcement about it afterwards, mainly because it is not my style. As you know, since that, I give up. I always believe that it is the Ministry of Tourism's responsibility for the second time around. It did not matter to me because I really did not want to go and see what I have to do. I also met with the cruise lines incidentally. But I would be honest with you, I met with the wrong people; I met with the—I think they called themselves the Federation of Cruise Ships or CCA, or something like that. And the Cruise Ship Association really does not put on cruises. If I had a connection with Royal Caribbean, Holiday cruises or Carnival cruises, it would have been much more effective. As I said since that time I have given up the portfolio.

So you understand when I say that I have absolutely nothing to hide in terms of giving an explanation as to why I went on that trip; why I consider it to be unofficial because I could not guarantee that I would have been given any kind of accommodation. I was glad to see that by December 14, 1996, we had an

inaugural flight for American Airlines to and from Puerto Rico and since then they put on several other flights and so on.

But I would like to talk a little about the history of the airport/airports. Since before 1990/1991 people have been talking about them, and successive Governments, since then, have got themselves embroiled in a lot of controversy with respect to whether we should or should not build an airport. So I have a letter to ask the question too! The same questions are being asked again and I hope, as I said, my answer is satisfactory. Even if it is not, I would never think that I would ever be able to satisfy all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I have a letter dated November 10, 1992—I am only showing this to indicate to people how much we got caught up in this airport-bashing thing. It was addressed to the hon. Patrick Manning dated November 10, 1992. From a gentleman named Gordon McKay and Associates Limited of 310, Bristol Road, Ontario, Canada.

“Dear Prime Minister,

You would recall our meeting in Toronto in August 1991...”

And I think he was the Opposition Leader then.

“...when I had the opportunity of discussing with you the ongoing negotiations with the previous Government, that our client Amway Enterprises.”

Mr. President, you would forgive me—I would only read the excerpt that I think is pertinent to you. The point I am making about it is he went on to say:

“On your request, an Amway proposal was submitted to you through Dr. Lenny Saith on December 16, 1991.”

Even before he came into Government. The point I am making is I am not going to sit and ask the hon. Patrick Manning, what he was doing in Toronto meeting with people to build an airport. I suppose because he is in Opposition he does not have to answer. I am in Government so I have to answer. It does not matter to me. The letter contains a lot about some of the gentleman’s concerns about Pegasus and why Pegasus was given an advantage and so on.

7.00 p.m.

I merely want to indicate to you that for years—and I suppose I can answer the same thing. I get letters in my mailbox like everybody else gets letters in their

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mailbox. It is ridiculous. That is why I say, the one good thing I could say thank God for is, come the new administration, whoever it may be, they would not be embroiled, hopefully, in another airport scandal. We hope we can put it to rest.

Now, I heard many Senators say something, and I want to talk a bit about it. As Minister of Finance I have a responsibility, as many of us have said, for incurring debt and getting value for our money. One of the things that I requested today of the Ministry of Works, before I came to wind up, was, “Give me an idea as to what per square foot this airport is costing me in US dollars, and give me an idea what it costs in US dollars to build comparable airports”, and they pulled out some for me. I will talk about St. Croix; the US Virgin Islands; Montego Bay, Jamaica; Orlando, Florida and Aruba. I hope that Senators understand that the comparatives, in my view, are fair because we are talking about people in the area. I will even go to Miami, Caracas, Venezuela, San Juan and then I will talk about Piarco.

Let me give Senators an idea as to what the cost per square foot is; and these are new constructions and/or renovations. In St. Croix the cost per square foot has been US \$195. In Montego Bay it is US \$253. In Orlando, Florida—and I do not want to hope that we could ever compare ourselves with Orlando—US \$280. In Aruba it is just—US \$195. These are all costs per square foot. In Miami, Florida—\$295. In Caracas, Venezuela—\$163. That is the lowest so far, if Senators remember the numbers. In San Juan, Puerto Rico—\$200 per square foot. In Piarco—\$162. This is what was given to me by the Ministry of Works and Transport—US \$162, right. But you know—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Brig. Theodore: Go and see. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: “You ain’t see? Go and see, right?” So, we could talk about things.

Now, let me explain something. I accept that there is cause for concern, based upon the information that we have been provided in the last two weeks, but I am not too sure if I am hearing a proper case. When Senators talk about the Minister of National Security and the DPP, I would advise them to make sure that they carry a proper case, because I would really want to have those things explained. Unfortunately, in my winding up, I am unable to give an explanation for those great disparities, but something occurred to me while you were speaking—through you, Mr. President—Sen. Mohammed. The Senator said that these are an engineer’s estimates and she was comparing them with a tender estimate.

Now, from what I know of tenders and so on, when the tender documents go out, they may probably have a description of the articles and maybe some sizes and stuff like that, but there will be no prices; and people pick up tender documents and they try to second guess what each item is. Now, I do not tender for contracts and I also want to state that there is no one at the back here who has ever awarded a contract, that I know of, but we all get blamed for it. Maybe because we are politicians and Government Ministers and a Cabinet, we accept the responsibility for anything whether it goes right or wrong.

In submitting a tender, some people put in tender amounts. What the Senator has explained to me is that she has compared an engineer's estimate with the price at which the tender came in. Let me just make one comment before I finish. What she has not convinced me of is whether the tenders were awarded at that level, and the Senator has to convince me that it was awarded at that level before I can assume that there has been some hanky-panky going on, but she has never produced that proof. She merely—well, not her, but for the last two weeks I have been hearing everybody read, "This is a tender estimate of" some ridiculous price, \$77,000 for painting the airport, and some other price, millions of dollars to pay them. I do not know, I am not—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Mohammed: Thank you very much, hon. Minister, and if I may, I would just, for the record, Mr. President, indicate that the figures came from contract package No. 9, which was in fact accepted, and my information is that those figures were the amounts that have actually been paid.

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: I would not say that the information the Senator has, is or is not correct. I merely state that listening to her, it occurred to me that she is merely saying that the estimates versus the tenders were way off. Until I am satisfied—and that is why I say here that I am going to ask Nipdec and they have to deal with the information and come clean. I have absolutely nothing to hide, and therefore I would expect that over the next few weeks Nipdec would account to the people of Trinidad and Tobago with respect to what actually transpired. *[Desk thumping]* Whether the contracts were awarded at that level or whatever else happened, I do not know. They must come and tell us how many people picked up tender documents, how many people tendered, what were the tender prices and I would be happy. *[Desk thumping]* I would expect that Nipdec, as I said, on behalf of all of these people here, would come clean.

Sen. Mohammed: Maybe we need another commission of enquiry.

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: That is not so. That is the Prime Minister's—*[Interruption]* Yes, but there was a Prime Minister—you see, that is another

endangered specie. The Senator seems to forget that Prime Minister Manning ordered a commission of enquiry by a certain gentleman named Collymore and he changed the man's report. Or, did the Senator forget that he changed his report? She forgot that easily. *[Interruption]* So let me say, the two things that we have in common so far are two commissions of enquiry, two botched up. I am not going to argue or to defend. I like to look historically and argue and I would like—as I said, I hope it would end up being investigated.

Let me move on a little bit then and state that I want to recognize—and I know it is late in the evening—Sen. Dr. St. Cyr has never failed to amaze me. If I had to say, and I do agree with Sen. Prof. John Spence, the high point of our debate certainly was the contribution he made. *[Desk thumping]* He continues to be extremely lucid. His capabilities for analysis are still very sharp and one could see that his years of experience and training are borne out in his contribution. I too, as I said, want to appreciate very much the fact that he has analyzed the budget numbers so succinctly and I say that because literally, as he was doing it, the same numbers kept coming back to my head.

I know that the summary of the fiscal operations was not given to him, yet he was able to summarize it quite quickly for me. I notice, as I said, that the numbers he was talking about were quite familiar to me in my development of the budget, so I know that his analysis is quite correct. That is why I wanted to say that I have never failed to take cognizance of his comments in past budgets. I want to state on record that I think everyone knows me as a Minister of Finance who has been extremely optimistic in every sense of the word. Even when things were bleak, I continued to be very optimistic.

I am an optimistic person by nature, but I am also one other thing by nature. I am an expansionist by nature and I believe that if one allows the economy to grow and gives it the right fuel—and I do not want to talk about the Ministry of Energy and gas and oil—I believe that, with the right policy prescriptions, the economy can grow and grow quickly. The point I am making is that I recognize as well that Sen. Dr. St. Cyr is by nature—and I hope he will forgive me for being personal—a fairly conservative person. Is that a good comment? So I think, to be quite frank, we make a good team, because we are literally on opposite ends of the spectrum. *[Interruption]* I meant a team in the sense that the debate comes out the best because he is way over on the conservative side and I am way over on the optimistic side—not too optimistic not to be able to be realistic. So there is some, maybe I would call it, optimistic realism in my thinking and in where I want to go.

So that, yes, I would share with him his concern about the question of where the debts were going and I want quickly to talk about—just give me a minute—how I end up saying that we have reduced debts. When I was developing the budget I did so, you would not believe, from a document that I had prepared for presentation when I went to make—and I will leave this document, incidentally, with the powers that be so that they can put it in the library. It is nothing more than a document that shows how I presented Trinidad and Tobago's story to the foreign investors. At that time it occurred to me that our external debt, our US dollar debt, had been coming down literally very, very rapidly since 1991.

Let me just say quickly, as an aside, I am not one of those who feel that I must bash the PNM as far as policy is concerned, because I am on record here and overseas as saying that it is fortunate that we had three Ministers of Finance who understood what had to be done. Forget about whether they were pursuing the same policies or not. It so happened that the policies were fairly well entrenched and many people do not understand that the economy is not something that one can just run around. It is like a huge barge. If one wants to go somewhere else one has to start turning it from now. One is not going to turn it until one reaches way down there.

There it is, US \$2.4 billion in 1991 was our foreign debt. By 1998 it had dropped to \$1.4 and Senators can see quickly—I am not giving a slide presentation but I hope everyone can see—how nicely it has been going down. So when I started to say in the budget that we reduced the debt, I actually had “We reduced our external debt”. When I got into some discussions with the technocrat I felt that I would have to explain, exactly as I am doing now, to the people of Trinidad and Tobago what I meant by “reduced the external debt” and, to be quite frank, I asked him to drop the line “We reduced the external debt”. In editing, they only dropped one word, “external”, and they left the words, “reduced the debt”.

Now, let me also tell this honourable Senate, I could leave with you the key indicators and I will show how I can boast that we reduced the debt as a percentage of GDP. Let me explain further that the debt to GDP is the ratio that all foreign bankers use to judge whether one is managing one's debt well or not. They do not use absolute terms and I know that in absolute terms our debt has gone from \$11 billion in 1991 to \$19 billion in 1995 to \$13 billion, and I will quickly talk a little about the composition of that debt.

Let me give you the numbers for debt since 1991 to 1999 and, as I said, I am going to make a copy of this available to everyone for their own information. These numbers are provided to me, incidentally, by the Central Bank, not by the Ministry of Finance, so I can give Senators the source from which they come. The total debt in 1991 represented 67.5 per cent—forgive me, I have to add two numbers. They have it under “External Debt” as a ratio and “Internal Debt”, so I have to add—67.5 per cent of the GDP in 1991. By 1995 it had come down. It had gone down to 56.2 per cent. By last year, 1999, it was down to 46 per cent, and by the end of 2000 we expect it to be down to 45 per cent.

So it has been reduced as a percentage of GDP and more because the GDP has been going—the debt has been rising but as a ratio the debt has not been rising as fast as the GDP has been. So the ratio is coming down and that is why I said we have reduced the debt, but in terms of my own comment, I was really specifically dealing with the external debt more because I used this, as I said, as a basis to start writing the budget. Now, let me also indicate that I believe we may be getting close to the area when we have to be concerned about it in absolute terms. I understood the words of caution that Sen. Dr. St. Cyr had given me that, in times like now, we could get a certain amount of euphoria and get carried away and go into debt that, if there is a sudden turn in the economy, one might find that one strangles.

Let me also explain quickly that when I gave the numbers for public debt in the *Review of the Economy*, local debt is, as it says, local debt. I want to say up front that I disagree with Sen. Montano when he says that if one could borrow offshore cheaper, then the right thing to do is to borrow cheaper by going offshore. I do not think so. I much prefer to bring our foreign debt down—and our foreign debt is coming down—we stood up very, very well against other countries like even Uruguay, Chile and so forth in terms of our foreign debt as a percentage of our exports. I mean, within three years our foreign debt as a percentage of our exports should be down to about 3 or 4 per cent, you know. It could be as low as that. Because whereas it started off, as I said—and I could give you those numbers again. Whereas as a percentage of exports—I am sorry, I would have to go through. I have it here so I can give the foreign debt as a percentage of exports quickly. As I said, this is a presentation that I made for—

7.15 p.m.

Incidentally, as I said, our foreign debt is still 22 per cent of the gross domestic product and our local debt is about 22 per cent of the gross domestic product, but if you compare ours with Uruguay their foreign debt was 70 per cent

of the gross domestic product. If you look at Chile it is 50.8 per cent and that is only foreign debt, but our foreign debt has come down substantially and it is down to about 15 per cent now and as I said, within another three years it could get down to as low as three per cent.

Mr. President, in terms of the debt numbers that I gave you they included local debt, which is all the local debt we have incurred; external debt which I have just talked a little about and which is coming down; and contingent liability. Let me explain that contingent liability is every single letter of guarantee that we have given. They do not include letters of comfort and let me explain where the letters of comfort are.

We have given a letter of comfort for argument's sake to the Water and Sewerage Authority and the Water and Sewerage Authority has given a guarantee to DESAL that they will buy their water. I have given a letter of comfort that if the Water and Sewerage Authority is unable to meet that guarantee I will comfort them, but there is no quantified amount, so I cannot tell you how much that contingent liability is going to be. I could quantify the maximum in terms of if they had to take all of the water from the DESAL plant, how much the Water and Sewerage Authority has to pay, but I cannot assume that the Water and Sewerage Authority will not sell any of the water so I have not booked that because that is not really quantified at this time.

Mr. Speaker, we also only give letters of comfort to very small loans. We cannot get away with giving letters of comforts for upwards of \$100 million and so forth. In cases where it is \$100 million or more you have to give a letter of guarantee because the banks are not going to be comforted with a letter of comfort for anything over \$100 billion. So you could assume that the only letters of comfort that are not here are very small or unquantifiable in terms of things like the Trinidad & Tobago Electricity Commission and/or the Water and Sewerage Authority that in the terms of InnCogen and/or the DESAL plant, which as I said I have not quantified. So you can rest assured that, in terms of the amount of money I give you here is fairly accurate give or take those letters of comfort. So all those letters of guarantee I have given are included here.

Mr. President, more than that, all the letters of guarantee that I have given I have booked and that is what accounts for some of the high debt service. We may not need that money because in some cases, like the Airports Authority, if they need one-third of the interest cost, I have booked 100 per cent of the interest cost because even though I am an optimist I am still conservative in certain areas. If it

appears as if our debt service cost has reached 40 per cent, I will have to admit two things: it has a certain element of padding in it deliberately, because I prefer it to be conservative in having padding than not have it. Secondly, it has in it a feature that we did this year, and which we are repeating next year, where as a practical approach, I have actually gone and paid off high cost debt and I will give you an example of what is the high cost debt.

Some of our high cost debts have been floating and they were as high—and I use the word “high”—as half per cent below bank rate and we know when bank rates reach 18 per cent, half per cent means that the Government, which is supposed to be the prime borrower in Trinidad and Tobago, is now borrowing at 17½ per cent. That did not make sense to me when I could borrow at 11 to 11½ per cent. So, I had to pay off those debts and issue new debts. To do it I actually have to find the money to go and pay off the debt so I actually have an expense, but when I raise the debt again it does not reduce my expense so I now incurred an expense for which I get absolutely no benefit, except that I am going to get a future benefit in terms of lower interest cost. So that cost of 40 per cent is high but as I said, it has an element of padding and an element of restructuring old debt. I hope I have been able to explain that. It is more conservative...

Sen. Daly: Just in relation to the airport, can you give us a ballpark figure for the Government’s exposure by way of guarantee?

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: I have already signed a guarantee of up to \$850 million and it is not finished and that is not a letter of comfort. That is being booked and included in a contingent liability as far as a book. As I said, I have not completed the airport project. I still have to do some more financing. I think it is going to get up to maybe a billion dollars—the Minister of Works and Transport will have to help me with that and I still have a small piece to do before September 30, that is not included here. In terms of all our guaranteed debt, it is included in a figure in the contingent liability. You can go home and sleep and assume—I know you may say \$30 billion is still a lot.

Mr. President, let me say something and I make no bones about it. I told the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development I am not leaving any debt outside of our books. I met as I said and I did rattle off some of the debt. Let me also assure you that in my view, \$4 billion of un-booked debt as at the end of 1995 is almost 22½ per cent of the outstanding debt. I could assure you that when I leave office we will not have 22½ per cent of our debts off the books. If it is as much as 5 per cent it is going to be a lot. Maybe between 5 and 10 per cent but it certainly

would not be at the level of 22½ per cent as it was left. I took the bullet and I bit it. It is what has caused some of my so-called fiscal operations to go awry.

I have been accused of budgeting a surplus and arriving at a deficit because I had to book that debt. I was not going to leave it off. I was prepared to be honest with the people of Trinidad and Tobago and show them the numbers and I was prepared not to hide. The debt did raise from \$18.8 billion to \$29.6 billion. I am not ashamed of that. Why should I be? I incurred \$7 billion debt in five years, pretty much the same number as the previous administration and I booked \$4 billion. I could understand the arguments that it is always a little roll over, but it will not be at that level.

Mr. President, I am not knocking the administration for it. I know that we came out of tough times. I know that we had to make tough decisions coming in from 1986 into 1991 into 1995. So I am not knocking anybody. I cleaned up the books. I am not afraid of that and the best time to do it is when the economy is moving. You can not clean up your books when your economy is coming back down. I would hope that future Ministers of Finance would not allow this economy to come back down. We are very, very, sound.

Mr. President, I feel pleased when I go to investors and I hear them say for a change they are hearing a good story. They have heard so many bad stories and again, I do not want to knock anyone. Our neighbours in Jamaica, when they go their story is not nice and bankers tell me, "how am I going to lend them?" And countries like Jamaica incidentally cause us to work harder that is why we had to go and get a credit rating, because if you did not have a credit rating nobody is going to speak to you. You could not even get an appointment with a banker or any financier so you had to go and do certain things.

Mr. President, I can only end by saying that we have developed very quickly, certain policy issues that I just want to remind this Senate of in terms of the budget. Our budget will continue to promote savings and investments and sustain economic growth. To give some quick examples, in terms of savings we are floating National Enterprises. We have expanded small business, we have reduced liability for taxpayers and hopefully that translates into some increased savings. We are making income from capital more readily available because we have reduced the tax on interest on savings. I would like to have been able to remove it completely. I could not afford it this time. I could have afforded it if I wanted to budget a smaller surplus or no surplus at all, but I did not think it was right for me

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. B. KUEI TUNG]

Thursday, September 14, 2000

to do. I am glad that Sen. Dr. St. Cyr said I did not act irresponsibly. I thank him very much for his comments. I too felt that I had gone as far as I was prepared to go without giving away the whole show. It was easy for me to go and give a balanced budget and give away \$180 million as you know. I have done that.

Mr. President, I am going to be coming back to the Parliament to create—remember I created an infrastructure development fund when I had not spent all of the money from the sale of the Trinidad and Tobago Methanol Company Limited (TTMC). I now, because I do not have the legislation finished in time to legalize the Revenue Stabilization Fund, I am now going to come to Parliament to create a similar fund as the infrastructure—not legal yet. If I do not do that, I would not be able to transfer the money out of the Consolidated Fund so I have to do a sort of semi-legal budgeting.

I think this Budget has protected vulnerable groups and I do not need to repeat that. I did not want to spend too much time on preserving the environment. Let me assure Sen. Prof. Spence that we do not see this as a cure all or the only thing we have to do. We think it is a start and we think that we need to start putting aside some money and putting it in the hands of environmentalists and I do hope that people like Professor Kenny and yourself will get involved in maybe even helping us to manage the fund.

7.25 p.m.

Finally, we feel that the budget has done a number of things like developing human resources but, more importantly and just to end on that note, I think the one area that I am satisfied with the budget is the improvement of our national identity in terms of what I want to do for art, culture, sport and so forth.

Let me thank all Senators, again, on all sides, for their contributions and let me end by thanking very much the hard work that has been put in by the parliamentary staff. It has been 42 hours now of hard work. We appreciate it very much. We are all about the nation's business and I know you all play a very important part—all parliamentary staff, including security and the *Hansard* people. Let me thank you very much on behalf of the Government and other Senators.

Mr. President, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

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

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, could I have a division?

Mr. President: You have called for a division.

Sen. Martin Daly: Why? Point of order, sorry, Mr. President. I thought the whole point about a money bill was we had no vote. How can we have a division if we have no vote?

Mr. President: He is correct.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, before moving to adjourn this honourable Senate, may I inform hon. Senators that we are going to be addressing the following Bills at the next sitting of the Senate.

We are going to deal with Bill No. 15, an Act to amend the Petroleum Act, Chap. 62:01. We are going to be dealing with Bill No. 17, an Act to provide for the assessment, care and rehabilitation of socially displaced persons and for related matters. We will go on to Bill No. 2, an Act to provide for an application to the High Court of the Supreme Court of Judicature for relief by way of judicial review and for related matters. We will then proceed to Bill No. 18, an Act to provide for the consolidation of the confiscation of the proceeds of drug trafficking. Mr. President, the Motion on Education will be addressed first. We want to deal with that Motion standing in the name of the Minister of Education, Motion No. 1.

Mr. President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, September 19, 2000, at 1.30 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.30 p.m.