

*Leave of Absence*

*Thursday, January 25, 2001*

**SENATE**

*Thursday, January 25, 2001*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, leave of absence from sittings of the Senate has been approved to Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand for the period January 24 to February 11, 2001.

**SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT**

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, I have received the following communication from His Excellency the President:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

\s\ Arthur N. R. Robinson  
President.

TO: MRS. LAILA SULTAN-KHAN VALERE

WHEREAS Senator Professor Kenneth Ramchand is incapable of performing his functions as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ARTHUR N.R. ROBINSON, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 40(2)(c) and section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, LAILA SULTAN-KHAN VALERE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Professor Kenneth Ramchand

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the  
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the  
President, St. Ann's, this 25th day of January, 2001.”

**BOOK PRESENTATION**

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, I have received the following book, *Views from the Ridge—Exploring the Natural History of Trinidad and Tobago*, authored

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by one Julian Kenny, with the following inscription: "Presented to the President and Members of the Senate and the staff of Parliament by the author. January 17, 2001".

On behalf of the Senate and members of staff, I wish to thank the author, Julian Kenny, who is, of course, our Independent Senator. [*Desk thumping*]

The book would be placed in the library of the Parliament and is available for anyone who wishes to peruse it. It is not to be taken away.

#### **SESSIONAL COMMITTEES**

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, I have appointed the following Members to the following sessional committees:

#### **Standing Orders Committee**

Mr. Ganace Ramdial (Chairman)  
Mr. Wade Mark  
Dr. Tim Gopeesingh  
Mrs. Glenda Morean  
Prof. Ramesh Deosaran

#### **House Committee**

Mr. Ganace Ramdial (Chairman)  
Miss Gillian Lucky  
Mr. James Lambert  
Mrs. Joan Yuille-Williams  
Mr. Christopher Thomas

#### **Committee of Privileges**

Mr. Ganace Ramdial (Chairman)  
Miss Gillian Lucky  
Mr. Wade Mark  
Mrs. Christine Kangaloo  
Mr. Martin Daly

#### **Statutory Instruments Committee**

Mr. Ganace Ramdial (Chairman)

Mr. Wade Mark  
 Mrs. Raziah Ahmed  
 Mrs. Christine Kangaloo  
 Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh

#### CONDOLENCES

#### (Mrs. Muriel Donawa-McDavidson)

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, we now pay tribute to a former Member of Parliament who passed away on January 15, 2001 and was interred on January 18, 2001. I refer to the late Mrs. Muriel Donawa-McDavidson.

Mrs. McDavidson became an elected Member of Parliament in the year 1966 and again in 1976, and during that 10-year period, served as a parliamentary secretary and a minister in various ministries.

During the period 1976—1981, she became a member of this Senate and served again as a parliamentary secretary for that five-year period.

Between 1981 and 1986, she was again an elected member, again serving in various ministries as a minister in those ministries.

At the end of 1986, she became a full-fledged Minister and when she demitted office, she was the Minister of Sport, Culture and Youth Affairs.

Between 1986 and 1991, she again became an elected Member and served in the Opposition as a backbencher. We can say that the late Member really enjoyed a very chequered parliamentary career.

I offer my condolences to her husband and to members of the family and I have asked the Clerk of the Senate to send an appropriate letter of condolence to the family.

May her soul rest in eternal peace.

Members who wish to pay tribute may do so now.

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette):** Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to the late Muriel Olympia Donawa-McDavidson in this honourable Senate.

Mrs. Donawa-McDavidson had a long and illustrious political career which spanned almost three decades. Most of you are aware of the fact that Mrs. Donawa Mc-Davidson was a foundation member of the PNM and was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1966.

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She was a pioneer for women's rights and the rights of the poor and downtrodden in our society. She campaigned for a better quality of life for all our people and for women to play a more active role in our national affairs.

The indomitable Muriel will not only be remembered as a politician, but also as a strong community and social activist who contributed, in no small measure, to the political and social development of Trinidad and Tobago.

**1.40 p.m.**

Mrs. McDavidson began her life in public office as a pupil teacher in 1945 at Coffee Street EC School. She was a Member of Parliament for Fyzabad, San Juan and Laventille during the period 1966 to 1986 and was appointed a Senator in the Upper House in 1976. She served at the highest level of decision making in this country as a Minister in the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Minister in the Ministry of Education and Culture to assist the then Minister of Community Development between 1979 and 1981. She was the Minister of Sport, Culture and Youth Affairs in 1986.

In the later phase of her political career, and as a dedicated and determined nationalist, Mrs. McDavidson embraced and became involved in this Government's quest for national unity. Our vision, and the vision of our Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday, of a united Trinidad and Tobago became her vision for the politics of Trinidad and Tobago. In 1996, Mrs. McDavidson became active in the UNC and, in 1999, worked in the Ministry of Public Administration as personal assistant to the Minister. As some of my colleagues stated at Mrs. McDavidson's funeral, she achieved in death, the national unity among political parties that she and this Government fought for assiduously. On a personal note, I have found the late Muriel Donawa-McDavidson to be friendly and encouraging and always with a positive outlook on life.

While Mrs. McDavidson's physical presence may be removed from the political landscape of Trinidad and Tobago, this Government will keep her legacy alive. Our Prime Minister proposed on Tuesday, January 16, 2001, to establish a book award in the name of the late Muriel Donawa-McDavidson. Initially, this award will go to a project to research and record the life story of the late hard-working and colourful politician. Furthermore, as the Prime Minister stated, the Muriel Donawa-McDavidson Award is to be granted to scholars and authors writing books on public figures who have contributed to the building of this nation.

Mr. President, let us, in acknowledging the contribution of this great citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who worked side by side with Dr. Williams and others in

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the quest for independence, commit ourselves to the task of national unity. It will be the most fitting tribute this nation can pay to the memory of Muriel Donawa-McDavidson. On behalf of the Government Benches, we wish to pay our condolences to her husband and members of her family. May she rest in peace.

Thank you.

**Sen. Danny Montano:** Mr. President, we on this side feel that we have lost one of our champions; one of our old soldiers. It is a very personal thing on this side. Mrs. McDavidson stood shoulder to shoulder with my father in 1955 in the council in San Fernando when my father was mayor. She had just been elected. That was her first entry into politics.

Mrs. Muriel Donawa-McDavidson has been always extremely active. In fact, at the age of 15 years, she began to write letters to Dr. Williams asking him to form a political party and to begin taking the country forward. Of course nothing much happened until some 10 years later. She represents the very best, I think, in almost all of us and we must be conscious always to remember the good things in persons after they have passed; to remember not the mistakes they made, but the positive contributions that they made. Certainly, Mrs. McDavidson made her contributions and she stood as a giant, and her shadow still stands as a giant shadow over all of us and a model for all of us. I am happy to know that her name will be remembered in a tangible way and that when the history of Trinidad and Tobago is written, her actions and involvement in moving the country to independence, and to becoming a republic, would be remembered.

As I mentioned, she entered active politics in 1955, 45 years ago—a generation ago—indeed, as I said, standing with my father who, fortunately, is still with us. We must recognize that a generation has passed leaving with us a legacy that we must remember; a legacy on which this country is based. We must not ignore the legacies that they have left us even if they are not written—the traditions and the legacies and the principles that they stood for. We must remember and hold those legacies fast to us. That is the legacy of our sister, Muriel.

Mrs. Muriel Donawa-McDavidson was an ardent politician from childhood; a fierce nationalist, and we are all proud of her. In the words of the bard who said “the good that men do are oft interred in their bones and the evil lives after them”, let it not be so with our sister, Muriel. Let it be always that we remember the good things that she did; her strength and her courage; her wisdom, her leadership and her fortitude.

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Mr. President, we on this side would like to send our deepest sympathy to her husband and members of her family. We pray that God will take her soul and that she would look upon us favourably and come to us in our private moments to help us and guide us. We pray for her soul.

Thank you very much.

**Sen. Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie:** Mr. President, I had the distinct honour and privilege to work as a community development officer under the late Mrs. Muriel Donawa-McDavidson.

As a young officer we were always encouraged by that type of bubbly nature that she displayed. She was always very active, very pleasant and upbeat, if I may say so. She had foremost in her mind, as she worked in charge of the division, to look after the welfare of children, women and rural communities. She was one who thought that regardless of where the location was, whether it was in Toco, Tobago or in Port of Spain, we should all share in what was good.

Mr. President, I distinctly remember that one year her project was to have a Christmas tree lit in all the communities under the division. As young officers, we wondered where we would find the electricity to connect the light bulbs, since in many of those communities where you will find a tree that was not in somebody's yard you could not find an electricity supply. However, there was one thing you could not tell her, and that was that it could not be done. The word "cannot" was never in her vocabulary. We, as young officers, had to find the trees, the lights and bulbs. We had to ensure that in every village people could go and admire a tree that was lit at Christmas time and enjoy it as the people in Port of Spain would have done.

I should tell you, Mr. President, that when she went around looking at trees many times she found more bulbs than leaves on the trees, but there was a tree being lit in every community.

Mr. President, I am sure that those of us on the Independent Bench know that Mrs. Donawa-McDavidson contributed to the development of this country, to the women, children and to rural communities, in the best possible way that she could have done.

**1.50 p.m.**

We know that we will miss her, but I join with the author who said, "Dust thou art to dust returneth was not spoken of the soul."

So, on behalf of us, Independent Senators, I offer our sincere condolences to her family, relatives and friends. May her soul rest in peace.

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**Mr. President:** As a mark of respect, I ask everyone to stand for one minute's silence.

*The Senate stood.*

#### OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

*Senator Laila Sultan-Khan Valere took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.*

#### FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (1999/2000) BILL

Bill to vary the appropriation of the sum of the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 1999/2000 [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

*Motion made,* That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of the Agricultural Development Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1999. [*The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Yetming)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts and financial statement of the Intellectual Property Office for the year January 1, 1999 to December 31, 1999. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the receipts and payments statement of the National Carnival Commission for the financial year August 1, 1995 to July 31, 1996. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming*]
4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the receipts and payments statement of the National Carnival Commission for the financial year August 01, 1996 to July 31, 1997. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming*]
5. Annual audited accounts of National Enterprises Limited for the year ended March 31, 2000. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming*]

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6. Annual audited accounts of Urban Development Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1999. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming*]
7. Annual audited accounts of the National Insurance Board for the year ended June 30, 2000. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming*]
8. Initial, Second and Third Periodic Report of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. [*The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette)*]
9. National Sport Policy of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Gillette*]
10. The Cinematograph and Video Entertainment (Amdt.) Regulations, 2001. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Gillette*]

**FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (1999/2000) BILL**

**The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Yetming):** Mr. President, I beg to move,

That a bill to vary the appropriation of the sum of the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 1999/2000, be read a second time.

The House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago met on Monday, January 22—

**Sen. Montano:** Thank you, Sir.

Mr. President, clearly the attire of the Minister of Finance is a bit different. He is wearing a very nice shirt—I have no objection to the shirt—but this is the Senate.

I refer you, Sir, to Standing Order 84 and to May's *Parliamentary Practice*, page 392. If you would consider that, I would have a solution that would solve the dilemma for this afternoon's sitting. Would you care to have a look at the Standing Order?

**Mr. President:** On your point of order, Senator, I would like to point out that the question of attire is entirely within the domain of the Chair. I know that issues have been raised in the other place about the attire and are now being raised here.

Sitting in the Chair, I advise that I will take appropriate action in the process of time. I advise Senators that the Chair has ruled on the question and I would not wish any Senator, including the Minister, to make any reference to his attire during this sitting.



**2.00 p.m.**

**Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming:** Mr. President, the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago met on Monday, January 22, 2001 to debate the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (1999/2000) Bill, 2001. The Bill is seeking to vary the 1999/2000 appropriation in the sum of \$3,666,998 under three Heads of Expenditure, namely: Head 18, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development; Head 8, Elections and Boundaries Commission and Head 26, Ministry of Education. The House of Representatives also noted the transfer of funds between subheads, under the same Head of Expenditure, in the sum of \$64,645,543. The transfer of funds under the three Heads of Expenditure was as follows: under Head 18, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development—a decrease of \$3,666,998; under Head 8, Elections and Boundaries Commission—an increase of \$2,476,143; and under Head 26, Ministry of Education—\$1,190,855.

Mr. President, the transfers were required under the Ministry of Education to implement Government's policy of ensuring that every child receives a school place in secondary school. It was necessary, therefore, to purchase a number of places in private secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago for the school term that started in September 2000. Funds were also required for the rental of accommodation for the Port of Spain model school. The other area of expenditure was to provide funds for the Elections and Boundaries Commission to enable the commission to implement exercises with respect to the local government by-election held in the municipal electoral district of Rio Claro North and the recently held parliamentary general election.

Savings to meet these costs were available under Head 18, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development, subitem 12, "Settlement of Arrears to Public Officers", since the number of officers who accessed the facility was lower than anticipated. On the transfer of funds between subheads under the same Head of Expenditure, Senators are also asked to note that with effect from August 1, 1988 Cabinet delegated its authority to approve transfers between subheads under the same Head to the Minister of Finance working on the advice of the budget division of the Ministry of Finance. Consequently, the transfer of funds in the sum of \$64,645,543 between subheads under the same Head of Expenditure was approved by the Minister.

These transfers were approved on requests made by the respective Ministers as circumstances in ministries and departments changed and priorities were

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reordered. A statement showing the approved transfers is attached as Appendix I, and explanations for some of the most difficult transfers are attached as Appendix II of the agenda. These were provided to the Members of this honourable Senate.

In conclusion, I wish to state that the variations in the allocations of Heads of Expenditure were not increased in the 1999/2000 appropriation which was already approved by Parliament. Mr. President, I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

**Sen. Danny Montano:** [*Desk thumping*] Mr. President, we have a new Minister who is very welcome. Of course, I cannot speak about certain things but he is very welcome. Unfortunately, he is even briefer in his contributions than his predecessor, so we should have an early afternoon, and I look forward to that. Of course, what is really going on here is that the Government is trying to close up their books for the financial year ended September 30, 2000 and, of course, a number of accounting entries have to be made to sort out the overages and the underages in different ministries and within the same ministries, but under different Heads and so on, which, after a few years of being here, I think I have finally begun to understand them. However, he was very, very brief in his contribution and I would still have some questions for him.

The first one, of course, concerns the increase of \$2.4 million for expenses under the Elections and Boundaries Commission. Now, of course, I think everybody knew that we were going to have an election. Nobody knew whether it was going to be before or after the end of the financial year, but one would have presumed that the appropriate allocations would have been properly budgeted. Certainly, as we now know, of course, the elections were after the financial year, so it is a little strange to see this allocation being made prior to the end of September and for a two and a half million-dollar allocation and, I really do not know; it just says "Expenses". We do not know specifically what expenses it was done for and I would have liked a bit more detail on that.

Under the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development, of course, the Settlement of Arrears to Public Officers, there was a saving of some \$3.6 million and the Minister, again, was extraordinarily brief saying something about people having access to facilities or something. Quite frankly, I would like to know what we are talking about, because the last time I recall talking about the arrears to public servants—this was the arrears from way back when, 1986 and so on—I was assured by the then Leader of Government Business that all those arrears had been settled. So I would like to know exactly what this is.

Does this mean that the liability on the arrears has been brought forward to the current period, or does this mean that this was an overstatement of the liability? Exactly what is the position? With what are we left? Are we going to have to pay this money out during the present financial year, or is it all finished? Has it all disappeared? I just do not know. From what the Minister said, I just cannot guess as to exactly what he was talking about.

You know, Mr. President, of course we already had the debate on the budget but there are always things that come up that tend to surprise one and, of course, in subitem 26 under the Ministry of Finance—sorry, I beg your pardon—item 001. No, I am looking on the wrong page. I do beg your pardon. There was interest to Caroni (1975) Limited of \$90 million that had to be funded. As the Minister of Finance would know as a former banker, I do not know what Caroni (1975) Limited's borrowing rate is at FINCOR but I know that the loan was at FINCOR. That \$90 million that has to be paid on Caroni (1975) Limited's behalf by the State and, therefore, by the people, by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, by our tax dollars because it is we who are paying for it, is \$90 million in interest.

Assuming an interest rate of 15 per cent, that is a \$600 million loan. I would like to know what the plans are for that loan in the coming year. Are we, the people, just expected to continue haemorrhaging and subsidizing Caroni (1975) Limited, to this extent at least? I mean, this is just interest. I mean, there is also the \$600 million approximately liability that we, the people, owe on behalf of Caroni (1975) Limited. What is going to happen with that? What are we doing with that? You see, Mr. President, I read this morning that the Minister has announced that the sale of the National Enterprises Limited (NEL) shares is about to be done. They are going to be sold on February 5, 2001 and they are expected to raise some \$200 million. I would like to know what they are going to do with the \$200 million.

Those are State assets. They belong to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to know whether the \$200 million is going to be used to fund recurrent expenditure, in other words, to be used as a subvention for Caroni (1975) Limited to help pay another \$90 million or \$100 million in interest in the current year. In other words, is our asset being completely lost, or is the money going to be set aside in some fund?

You would recall, Mr. President, that about 18 months ago the then Minister of Finance announced that he was going to establish an Oil Stabilization Fund. He announced with some pride, last year in September, that the fund had reached an amount of some \$415 million, and that was going to be sterilized. That fund was

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going to be used as a cushion so that if the price of oil fell below the Government's benchmark of US \$22 a barrel, then it would be drawn-down to cushion the losses, so that the effective price of oil would remain at US \$22 a barrel in terms of Government's revenue stream. Now, some would agree with that approach and some would not. If we did not have the level of debt that we do have, I think that I would agree with that approach, but I am on record as saying that I did not agree with the establishment of the Oil Stabilization Fund at this time when we consider the staggering level of the public debt. That is the problem.

So what we are facing is a situation where there is recurrent income from oil revenues coming in, that is recurrent income being sterilized in the Oil Stabilization Fund, and then we have capital receipts from the sale of our fixed assets, from the sale of our investment, being used for what purpose? To pay for Caroni (1975) Limited? Mr. President, I have difficulty with that and I would like to know exactly what the Minister intends doing with the sale of the shares of the National Enterprises Limited. He is selling off what I have described as the family jewels and I would really like to know what he intends to do with the money. That is the point. Our debt as at the end of September last year had reached the level of \$29.9 billion. It had risen to \$11.1 billion over the five-year period. Now, I will agree that it was not this Minister who did that. He has met the situation as it is but I would certainly like to know what he intends doing about it because there are liabilities that are not included in that \$29.9 billion.

There are situations, Mr. President, such as off-balance sheet financing, and I will explain what that is. We have a situation where a generating plant, InnCogen, was put down here. It is foreign-owned and, therefore, we say, "Well, whatever debt exists on that is not a debt of the people of Trinidad and Tobago." It is, however, because we are using the electricity from that plant and, therefore, we are the ones who have to pay for it and we have a guaranteed contract—a take or pay contract—for 30 years, to buy electricity from InnCogen.

Any first-year accountant will tell you, Mr. President, that that liability has got to be brought to book. If you were to add up what we, the citizens, have to pay to InnCogen, via T&TEC, over the next 30 years, that is a debt that has to be paid. That is a debt that must be paid and it is foreign-owned, which means that what we pay is not staying here in Trinidad and Tobago, it is going overseas, because it is not owned here. So it is like a foreign-owned debt but it does not show up anywhere on the \$29.9 billion that we had booked, and that liability could be in excess of \$10 billion, just by that alone, over the next 30 years. The same is true of the desalination plant.

We have more rainfall than any other island in the Caribbean. The rainfall here is over 70 inches a year. That is over six feet of water right through the country every year, and we have to put down a desalination plant, again with a 20-year contract, that is going to cost somewhere in the neighbourhood—in terms of what we have to pay for the water—probably in excess of \$10 billion, and it is not showing up anywhere as a liability.

**2.15 p.m.**

Mr. President, I would like to know what he plans to do with the \$200 million we are going to get from the sale of National Enterprises Limited (NEL). Is he going to use that to continue to pay for Caroni? It is not that I want to see Caroni shut down. I think I would have a different plan for Caroni and I think I would know what I would do, what I would recommend, but I am not being asked to recommend that, therefore, all I can do is to ask the Minister to tell the country what he is going to do with the \$200 million.

Mr. President, in the Ministry of National Security, salaries were decreased from the budgeted allocation of \$609,480,000 to \$598,041,000. A decrease of \$11,439,000. When I saw that, I was quite surprised because I do like to look at the newspapers and in the *Sunday Mirror* of January 21, 2000, the headline is “Panday Facing Revolt”. It says clearly in the first paragraph:

“Members of the Defence Force are prepared to have their wives march for them in protest over Government's refusal to pay them millions of dollars in backpay.”

That is what we are talking about here. That is what the notes I received seemed to indicate. The matter was not settled before the end of the financial year and they say it was not settled until the end of the year. We know that the soldiers have not been paid yet at all.

Then we have an extraordinary situation where the Prime Minister comes to the other place and he says there is a coup or there is going to be one, that somebody is planning a coup.

**Mr. President:** You know very well that what transpires in the other House is the business of that House, not this Senate. Please refrain.

**Sen. D. Montano:** Mr. President, I appreciate that, but it was in the media and it is a national issue, so the issue is that we have a dangerous situation arising here and what is happening? Is Nero fiddling while Rome is burning? We casually take \$11 million out of the soldiers' pockets to do something else with it. Mr. President, I have difficulty with that.

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We hear odd stories where someone who, apparently, the Prime Minister wishes to appoint as the Minister of National Security, is attending security meetings. Who is the Minister of National Security? What is going on? When the police and the army say, “We have no information about any coup or anything of the sort; we do not know what he is talking about,” where are we going? How could they let this happen?

In the Ministry of Education, the Minister reads very well indeed and says that the allocation was reduced by \$15.9 million for miscellaneous purchases and, of course, it was used to purchase school places in secondary schools and so forth, and for the rental of the Ibis High School.

Mr. President, exactly what is the philosophy of the Government? The previous Minister of Finance said that the Government was committed to putting a computer in every classroom. Everybody thought that was a good idea. He was roundly hailed for that kind of approach. Approximately \$30 million was set aside in the budget of 1999/2000 for that and we come along to find only \$14 million was actually used and there is some \$15.9 million unused. It was not used because the Government decided, instead, to buy places.

Within the space of about six or seven months, the Government changed its mind. In other words, it did not really know at the beginning of that year that it was going to find places for every single schoolchild. It was made up halfway during the year because they knew they were facing an election. They said, “Hold on, this is what we will do. We will take the money away from the computers and put it in the classrooms.” Of course, we had the furore of everybody trying to find a classroom and nobody knowing where the model school was, and the building had to be sold and purchased, leased and organized, and all sorts of things. That is the kind of fiasco we have with the people's money, Mr. President.

I was passing through Maraval this morning where we have had enormous traffic jams because of the paving that has been going on. What are they doing now? They are starting to dig it up. Right in front of a sign at a gas station that says, “The digger's law: every road that has been recently paved must be immediately dug up again”, they are starting to dig up a newly paved road. Mr. President, the word “stupidity” comes to mind! It is the people's money they are spending. It is the people's tax dollars. Every time we pay VAT, that is what we are paying for.

Mr. President, I heard the Prime Minister on television saying he was going to pay the Tobago House of Assembly \$1.6 billion over the next three years because

the Dispute Resolution Commission had recommended that. Of course, Morgan Job somehow did not agree with that, but then the Prime Minister made it very clear that Morgan Job did not speak for the Prime Minister and he was going to pay the \$1.6 billion.

I would like to know from where he is getting that \$1.6 billion. Is that part of the budget? I did not see it in the budget that we debated back in September. Where is it? Is the Minister going to come and bring a variation of appropriation? Is it going to be an increase in the appropriation or variation? If it is a variation, from whom is he going to take it? That is just over \$500 million they have to pay this year. Who is he going to take it from? From the schools again? From the hospitals? Who?

Mr. President, is it just more rhetoric in the election season? What we are talking about here is the people's money. It is the people's money. It is not mine, it is not yours, it is not theirs. It belongs to the people. I find that statements like that are reckless to "up and say" we will just pay them \$1.6 billion. I would like to know if the Minister of Finance knew about that before it was said. I would like to know how he intends to finance it.

I would like to know what the Minister is going to do to increase savings in the country. I would like to hear about the exchange rate. According to the Central Bank, for 10 months of last year, from January to October, the Central Bank had to subsidize the stock of foreign exchange in the system to the tune of US \$226 million in order to hold the price at TT \$6.299. His predecessor said that it was not his job and he was going to continue borrowing on the local market because he did not want to take the exchange rate risk. Those were his words.

Mr. President, that is a shocking statement for a Minister of Finance to make. To say that he is not going to take the exchange rate risk. What does that say for the rest of us? What risk should we take? We have no choice. He says he will not take the exchange rate risk and there is a very simple reason. When one borrows from the international institutions, the rate of interest is a whole lot lower. Instead of borrowing at 11 and 12 per cent, they borrow at 6 per cent. I know that because I could find any money the Minister wants at 6 and 7 per cent.

I could do it as a gift to the country at no charge, but with those international laws comes the scrutiny of the financiers. They will scrutinize the project and scrutinize the contracts that are awarded downstream from the use of the funds. What cannot stand scrutiny are those contracts, Mr. President. I want to know. When one looks at the public debt and the level of the local debt which is

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escalating, it is about \$11 billion or \$12 billion. I beg your pardon. It is more than that, especially if one includes the contingent liabilities. I think it is closer to \$20 billion. When one looks at the interest rate differential, the cost of that is in excess of \$1 billion per year. Just the interest rate differential!

I would like to know, Mr. President, what does the Minister have in store for us? What does he have in store for us? I think it is important that he tell us now. He has the opportunity to talk a little about it and I have asked him. I would ask for his answers.

The cost of interest has escalated astonishingly over the past few years. In 1995 the interest cost was \$2.7 billion per year. This was just on direct Government borrowings. In the year 2000, it was \$4.9 billion just in interest. The previous Minister of Finance was saying he does not want to take the exchange risk when he is the ultimate person who can control the foreign exchange risk. He can put in the measures to dampen the demand for foreign exchange. If he is not going to eliminate the foreign exchange risk, who is? Is he going to leave it entirely to the Governor of Central Bank, for whom I have the greatest respect? I think he is a very capable man, Mr. President, and while he can have a tremendous influence on the rate of the foreign exchange, he is not the sole arbiter of the exchange rate. I would certainly like to hear what this Minister has to say.

Mr. President, I could go on. I do not know for how long I have been talking, but I saw an interesting article in the newspaper this morning. This is a clipping from the *Trinidad Guardian* of January 25, 2001:

“Tobago hoteliers sing the blues.

They said their occupancy rates are down by almost half, and they are putting the blame largely on the Government.”

Karyn Williams, the manager of the Tobago Chapter of the Trinidad and Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association (TTHTA) was linking the decline in the visitors to the slashing of the budget given to Tidco. She said that the budget in 1997 stood at \$27 million but was trimmed to just under \$7 million in 2000 and now stands at \$6.7 million in 2001.

Mr. President, you will recall that if that is so, if in fact the decline in the visits are because Tidco is being underfunded, I would ask the Minister to solve the problem, because I remember that back in August or September of last year we were discussing a number of matters here and my colleague at the time, who was the Leader of Opposition Business in the Senate had letters from the Ministry of



Finance going around to the Maintenance Training and Security Company (MTS), UDeCott and Tidco asking them to raise money to pave roads. Tidco was being asked to raise, if my recollection is right, some \$56 million to pave roads.

Mr. President, is that the \$54 million they are now spending over there? I do not think so. Given the frenzy that took place back here in September and October, I think that money has come and gone. Is that what we are facing here in terms of the development of the economy, that they would rather raise \$54 million to pave roads than to spend money for the development of the economy of our sister isle? That is a real shame. I would like to hear what the Minister has to say about that.

Mr. President, I think I have said enough this afternoon. I look forward to receiving the Minister in the future, and I look forward to what he would have to say.

Thank you.

**2.30 p.m.**

**Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny:** Mr. President, first of all I extend congratulations to you on your re-election to the presidency of the Senate. [*Desk thumping*] You have served us extremely well in the past five years, and I am sure in the next five years you will continue in this fine tradition. [*Desk thumping*] I also extend congratulations to the Leader of Government Business in the Senate, Sen. Lindsay Gillette.

I know that we are in a period of time in which we seem to be testing conventions. I would like to mention that last year, or a year or two ago, there was some question of the majority of the Government in the Senate. At the time, Sen. Daly did make it quite clear that we were not here to oppose the Government; we are, in fact, here to be part of the legislative process. The fact that there are nine Government Senators does not necessarily mean that the Senate can do no work.

I think that anyone who has looked through or followed the proceedings of the last Parliament would see that, on most occasions, the Government was supported in its legislation. Occasionally, there was some resistance, but this was merely a matter of the collective view of, perhaps, a large part of the Senate, that, perhaps, the legislation was not exactly sound. I was reminded, when I saw Sen. Laila Valere take the oath of office, that she was going to discharge her responsibility.

I think that, collectively, all of us have responsibilities to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and I see no reason why we cannot function as a group of

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mature, intelligent citizens. [*Desk thumping*] There is much that we can do while the conventions are being tested, sorted out and resolved. Indeed, Mr. President, should the Government have problems with finding work for us to do, I can suggest that we have had some fairly important legislation which came to the Senate and was passed in the Senate after considerable work—free work, unremunerated work—but lapsed because the legislation never found its way on the Order Paper in the other place.

I refer, particularly, to this enormous piece of legislation of about 220 sections, the Shipping (Marine Pollution) Bill, on which we spent a lot of time, and this has lapsed. There is no reason why this should not come back. There is also the Minerals Bill. This came to the Senate first and was passed with amendments coming from the Independent Bench—very graciously accepted by the then Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. Thus, we, in fact, have a fair body of legislation which is in a form that it can come back to the Senate. I would suggest that, perhaps, the Government could consider this.

Mr. President, there is also Private Members' Day. This is the last Tuesday in the month and although I know there are certain other protocols, there is a Private Members' Motion which I have submitted, which you have accepted. It does not qualify until early February, but I would be quite prepared, if it were permitted, to introduce my Private Members' Motion at the regular sitting of the Senate next Tuesday. I am sure there are other pieces of legislation.

I would point out that there is some legislation that would be of vital importance to the country, for example, the Planning and Development of Land Bill. We are operating on the 1968 legislation. We have had something before the previous Senate which was here for three sessions, and this legislation eventually went to committee and it lapsed. There is a tremendous body of work already done which I think we can bring back to the Senate. I see no reason why with all this work having been done, the legislation should not pass smoothly through the Senate.

While we are, as I said, testing the various envelopes of convention in Parliament, and while I congratulate the Leader of Government Business, I wonder whether, perhaps, we might release the leash on the Government Bench. I know there are only nine, but in the Senate there is no reason why every Member of the Senate should not become very much involved in the debate on legislation which is the responsibility of the Government to bring. In other words, I am suggesting that, perhaps, the leash or the collar was, perhaps, a little too tight in

the last session. It would be nice to hear all Members of the Government Bench.  
[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, that is by way of introduction and by way of suggesting that we, as a Senate, have a responsibility, and there is no reason why we should not have a full programme. I would like to make an appeal to the Government to please let us start fresh and let us have some indication of the parliamentary agenda for this session. We have made this appeal over and over, and we have had lots of upsets.

We met twice a week several times. I find it rather sad that so much work goes into it, we meet twice a week, and legislation lapses. Please Minister, let us know what the agenda is, well in advance, for the year. We can accommodate—I think you will have to deal with Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie. She is very, very easy to deal with. Once we have worked out this thing, there is a certain amount of flexibility, but I do not think that it is acceptable in the Parliament of this country that we come here not knowing what is going on.

Thank you for allowing me to give free advice to the Government. I know it is a Finance Bill and what is permitted.

Mr. President, I would like to raise two matters. Sen. Montano referred to the paving of the roads. Now, we have learned from the newspapers that there is a new arrangement. We are dealing in this Finance Bill with transfers between ministries; some of them have been truncated, some have been expanded. I do not think that it is fair to Members of Parliament to have a new arrangement of ministries without having some formal document which lets us know what these particular ministries are. It is very easy for some people who are close to the Government, the public service or to the activities of the various ministries to know what is going on, but I do not think that it is reasonable for a Member of Parliament, particularly, a Member of the Independent Bench, to try to figure out what these new ministries are. We have seen something in one of the newspapers.

I mention this, particularly, because we now have a Ministry of Infrastructure, and this is to me an admirable move; it is moving ahead of its time. I congratulate the Government on this particular thing, and others, of course. Having a Ministry of Infrastructure offers the country and the Government an opportunity to bring some coordination into what is actually happening with our infrastructure.

Sen. Montano mentioned the few millions going into roads, and then there is the Road Improvement Fund. We have seen paving of an unprecedented nature in the past few months. Everything is being paved, and while there are jokes made

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about paving around cars, this is, in fact, so. In St. James when the pavers went, there was a car parked, and they just simply paved around it. We may make jokes about this, but when our street was being paved I went out to address the people, to suggest to them—you see, Mr. President, there was a leak there, and the leak was bubbling. I said, “It is not going to work.” He said, “Boss it doh matter you know; dey tell us to pave so we paving,” and they paved over the leak. You can see it all down Maraval Road, virtually everywhere you drive.

Here we have now an opportunity for a Ministry of Infrastructure to bring some coordination into an exercise that is costing untold millions. Sen. Montano mentioned Maraval. No sooner was the strip along Rookery Nook paved, that I think the Telecommunication Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT) put down their twin white lines and they are now going to trench it. This is gross inefficiency; this is the people's money you are talking about, and it is not necessarily making the roads any safer. In fact, the roads become far more dangerous, not only because of the concealed potholes, but because the verges—*[Interruption]*

There are places where the paving is up to the curb level, so you have no protection if you are driving at night and bright lights hit you; you veer off and the next thing you are in the Maraval River or some other river. *[Laughter]* There is need for this ministry to start functioning. We need to coordinate. Before a road is paved we ought to know that the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) is going to clean up its act and TSTT will clean up its act.

Related to this peculiar phenomenon of Trinidad and Tobago road improvement, which is road paving, it is, really, largely cosmetic. Roads have been built for 2,000 years. The A1 that runs from London up to Edinburgh was built by the Romans; the foundation is still there. We seem to think that building a road is just simply putting black top in successive layers, and there are places where the black top is now a metre and a quarter thick. I mention this because any textbook of road paving would tell you what to do. You do not simply add to the black top, you use a machine called the “road planes”, you remove the top layer and put it into a batching machine which heats it up and feeds it into the paving machine. This is not modern technology; this is available. I am told that there is a road paver in Trinidad, but, possibly, people do not know how to use it. Go to Barbados and you will see this very, very simple old-fashioned technology.

Why I mention this is that, we think that we spend, say, \$200 million or \$400 million paving roads. We do not realize that the real cost of this is not only paving a surface, it is where you win the materials. You go and you quarry, you crack rock, and you use wasting resources, bitumen and rock, or asphalt and rock.

Here you have a problem: you are spending several millions of dollars and you are using something which is comparatively cheap to us. It appears, apparently, to be cheap—\$400 a tonne—but that is not the only cost. The real cost is the cost of the other raw materials, when, by spending a little more, we can recycle our roads.

I mention this, hopefully, that Government can get back to the Minister of Infrastructure, who started his experience in paving in a certain place in contravention of the law of the country, but anyway that is in passing.

**2.45 p.m.**

I turn next to the Variation of Appropriation Bill. I know that it is, in a sense, a minor adjustment, but I am rather saddened that the project which we launched last October—the Nelson Island project—by the then Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs, that we seem to be able to develop these projects strictly according to public service rules and this means then that everything has to go back to Cabinet. If there is a slight difference in the cost of something, we have to get the note back to Cabinet. I mention this because at the run-up to the election, one Minister was proudly noting that in the last five years Cabinet took 2,000 Cabinet decisions.

Mr. President, you divide this by five and you will get 450 Cabinet decisions, you divide that by 50 Cabinet meetings and Cabinet is effectively making 100 decisions a day. I would have thought—I am not blaming the Cabinet, I think the Government is just simply following what previous governments did. Elsewhere in the world, the Cabinet government means determining policy and then giving to the ministries authority, but my experience in trying to develop the Nelson Island project is that we have a slight shortfall, or we are advised rather than doing this on technical grounds, the coast guard tells us that rather than doing this, we should do that. To have that changed, we have to go back to Cabinet. Surely, with this new model which has been introduced by the Government, we ought to be thinking in terms of cutting down on the micro-management at the Cabinet level and developing more ministerial discretion. Mind you, I think that when you do this you have to make sure that when your Ministers do not behave, you have a means of removing or changing them.

Finally, Mr. President, again, the same business of the difficulties of developing projects have taken us about 11 years to establish a National Trust and while the National Trust has been established, there is no provision for it, so it meets in a vacuum. It has responsibilities given to it by the Parliament and there are no funds. We have to meet, where do we meet? Here we have a trust set up by

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Parliament with responsibilities for our built heritage which is being desecrated, degraded and destroyed at an alarming rate and here we have an opportunity during a Variation of Appropriation Bill and yet, the ministry is unable to find the means whereby the trust can be given the basic wherewithal to start performing.

So I am appealing to the Government, and particularly, the Ministry of Finance. There is no envy in me, but I saw this beautiful big \$12 million-dollar cheque for what is one carnival season, and here we have something that is supposed to look after the built heritage of the country and we have a trust of about 11 persons and we are sitting there. The trust meets regularly and begs the Ministry of Culture for something and when you ask for so much, they cut you down to about a quarter of what you really need just basically to start.

Please, Leader of Government Business, Minister of Finance, see if we can find in this period when we are trying to sort out our directions, some means of giving effect to the National Trust of this country which has been established by an Act of Parliament.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**Sen. Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh:** Mr. President, I too, would like to associate with my colleague, Sen. Prof. Kenny, in extending most gracious congratulations to you. I wish you well as you lead us in the new term. I join with all hon. Senators also in extending most gracious welcome and sincere congratulations to the new Senators. I wish for them a rewarding experience at this level of national service. I congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance on his first assignment, the presentation of the Variation of Appropriation Bill, 2001.

Mr. President, of the items increased in his Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill, I wish to raise a question and make certain observations pertaining to Head 8 with its provisions to increase by \$2.4 million the subvention to the Elections and Boundaries Commission. The explanatory note indicates that this is to enable the Commission to implement exercises with respect to the recently held parliamentary general election and the local government by-election held in the municipal electoral district of Rio Claro North.

Mr. President, I imagine the greater portion of this allocation would have gone towards the expenses for the December 2000 general election. The Schedule accompanying today's Finance Bill shows an allocation of \$2.4 million of 1999/2000 Appropriation to the Elections and Boundaries Commission. I would like to draw your attention, or the hon. Minister's attention to another document and that is the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the financial year

October 01, 2000 to September 30, 2001 showing an allocation to the Commission of \$38.2 million. To this we are approving a further \$2.4 million. I am using this document, the Draft Estimates which we received at the last budget debate. Add to that \$38.2 million, for which the hon. Minister is requesting approval, a further \$2.4 million, moving the total allocation then to \$40.6 million. The question which I would like to ask the hon. Minister is how much of this was used to conduct the December 2000 general election? It could not be \$2.4 million; if it is, let us know.

Can we say, Mr. President, that the increase he is asking us to approve will close the electoral accounts for the said general election? Or will Government return later for further subventions to the Commission? You see, two previous speakers made reference to the people's money, we are talking about the use of the people's money. One of the significant consequences of the election is the cost factor to this nation. We are talking about the paving of the roads and the cost factor; we are talking about conducting national election and the cost factor. I am concerned about this. We are approving money for the election. My contention is, and my concern is, will this close that bill?

Now, the cost factor of the election includes this point which I would like to add. Who will foot the bill for the series of constitutional motions and petitions before the courts? You cannot separate that from election cost. It is \$2.4 million we need in addition to the allocation. Not a bit of it. Who will foot the bill for the series of constitutional motions and petitions before the courts, matters that form major ripple effects? In fact, I want to add, not only ripple effects, but tidal waves originating from the general election. They will remain as a part of our election expenses if that is the item we are considering today; whether directly from the Minister of Finance, or maybe it might come from the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Where does the Consolidated Fund come from, anyhow? Or it may come from individuals, citizens, maybe political parties. The cost of the election will be astronomical. This small figure before us is joke. This will be the most expensive general election in the history of this nation exceeding the cost of the infamous 1961 Shoup voting machines which we purchased from the United States of America.

Mr. President, we are talking about digging up some roads and spending the people's money wisely. Did I hear someone say call fresh election? Go ahead, go back to the Treasury, spend more, while the social needs of the poor and the underprivileged in this country plead for attention. Go ahead! Make mistakes and to correct—another \$40 million. Go ahead and do it!

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Mr. President, we just cannot afford electoral or political blunders because they are extremely costly to a small nation like ours with limited resources. In addition to this financial factor, I honestly believe and you will agree with me that there are other inseparable, interrelated consequences of the 2000 general election which cannot be overlooked. We are talking about financial consequences and I want to add, political, moral, spiritual and social consequences, all interrelated, they are part of the same story. The political consequences are manifested today in prolonged, agonizing uncertainties, anxiety and tension at the highest levels of leadership in this country which will test the strength and character of our maturity as a young nation.

Mr. President, I contend that solutions—and there are many more in this country who will believe—are not beyond us. In addition to the efforts of the courts of law to resolve our difficulties, men and women in leadership within the nation cannot behave and function as though they are enemies.

**3.00 p.m.**

If ever we needed dialogue, compromise and healing among our leaders, it is today. We must bring to an end the political stand-off and the arrogance in leadership so that peace will flourish in our land. Leaders must learn to sit and talk again, dominated not by the individual “I” and “my” but the national “we” and “us”. The cost factor is not the only factor of the 2000 General Election and the political spin-off, let us not forget the moral and spiritual consequences of that election. It has glaringly manifested itself in a deadly struggle for power and preservation of the right to govern and this is a misunderstanding of our mission and call to leadership.

When will all of us as leaders remember that we have been merely entrusted by our people with power and authority that belong to them, the people of this country, and not to any one of us; no leader at all, be it government or opposition or anyone else; we are only custodians. This is so very important at this time in the history of this nation; we are only custodians of that power which rightly belongs to them, the people we serve. What we need is a leadership that is infused and inspired by a sense of servanthood rather than rulership.

I touched on the social consequences of the election, when I mentioned the cost of the election vis-a-vis the social needs of our people in the wider community, but I want to add to that and close.

We are accustomed in Trinidad and Tobago to a short electoral season, a month or two, once in five years; we like that. A short period of *picong*, a short



period in the electoral trenches, but the December 2000 election has taken this society into a dangerously long session of rivalry, when war drums were sounded and greater uneasiness continues to haunt our society; and this must stop. It is not good for the social cohesion and unity which we have thus far nurtured despite our diversity. God will hold responsible, all of us, for the preservation and the promotion of the harmony and cohesion of this community which He has so lovingly and carefully fashioned over several decades.

**Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh:** Mr. President, thank you for the opportunity to present my maiden contribution in this honourable Senate, amongst such distinguished Members. I consider it a distinct honour and a great pleasure to be here to lend some value to the debate today and in the future, hopefully, and to be able to discuss this afternoon some of the issues that have been raised with particular reference to the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill 1999/2000. We are asking for a variation from Head to Head of approximately \$63 million. A significant amount relates to health and education and it is in this context that I would like to direct some statements with particular reference to these social sectors which are working towards the upliftment of the lives of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, the question was asked from the Independent side: What is the philosophy of the Government? The philosophy of the Government was clearly enunciated in our movement towards re-establishing our governance for this term. Our philosophy is really to do better what we have been doing well for the country. This Government has energized the economy; we have brought prosperity to this land; we have brought relief to the poor; comfort for the aged; and hope for the children. Our perspective for this second term is to do better what we have been doing well.

When we analyze what has been done as far as the social sector is concerned both in education and health, I just want to bring reference to this House that since independence in 1962 there have been almost 16 task forces on education with major recommendations that have been made from time to time, with little implementation of any of these recommendations. Admittedly, it was between 1991 and 1995, when we decided to bring together some of the best educators in our society, almost 20 of them, to put together a White Paper on education—and that was the sixteenth task force on education—but unfortunately, it took about three years by that administration to put together the Green Paper and it took another year, almost, to bring the White Paper on education. Of course, these educators ensured all the recommendations were meaningful towards changing

the education system in Trinidad and Tobago once and for all, and a number of wide-ranging recommendations were made.

Mr. President, it is my distinct honour to say that this Government, between 1995 and 2000, has moved way beyond implementing the recommendations on that White Paper to move this country, in terms of an educational perspective that would take this country into the 21st Century with a new vision of human development. This is why our Government has decided that we are going to create a Ministry of Human Development so that it can encompass education, training; tertiary education—not only primary and secondary education—information technology; e-commerce and the upliftment of the lives of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago by a better education process.

**3.10 p.m.**

It is alarming to know that in developed countries more than 35 to 50 per cent of the world's population have received tertiary education, but here in Trinidad and Tobago we can say that only 7 per cent of the population received tertiary education. Our education system had failed us, from since independence, you know, and every one of us knows that every year between five to ten thousand children were unable to get a place in a secondary school. If we multiply that, we could have approximately 300,000 who have not received a secondary education and who had been left out of the mainstream of national and economic development over this period of time.

We have individuals below 35 years of age who cannot get a job, who are unemployed, who are unemployable. But it is the purpose of our Government to create that system. This is why the Ministry of Human Development has been created, so that we can take these 300,000 people who have been left out of the education system and who had been left out of the mainstream of national and economic development, and bring them back into the mainstream.

This is why we have created the National Training Agency; this is why we have created the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) and the community colleges and this is why we are paying a lot of emphasis on our education system, from pre-school, to primary school, to secondary school, to tertiary level.

At one time it was stated that this Government did not pay the University of the West Indies \$300 million which we were owing, but that \$300 million was paid by this Government. In addition to that, the interest was paid by this Government. So when the question is asked what we do with the money that we

receive as a government, the money is focused and spent in a direction that will move this country forward with a vision that all of us must share; the vision of empowering our people with a sound educational background so that they would be able to earn a livelihood wherever they are. If you cannot earn your livelihood in Trinidad and Tobago because the jobs are not available, you can use that resource, that God-given education that you have received, internationally. There are training services worldwide, and people can leave, as there are people who have left Trinidad and Tobago, and gone to Barbados to work in the electronic sector.

If we look at the way we have spent money over the years, in 1995, about \$900 million was spent on education. In the year 2001, \$1.741 billion will be spent on education. This is the emphasis of this Government, to spend almost \$800 million more on education. We have done much work on pre-schools. We have built almost 15 new pre-schools and have changed over another 20. We have renovated over 100 new primary schools; we have built 25 new primary schools; 14 new secondary schools. We have created almost 10,000 new school places and we are creating another 10,000 new school places with the commencement of construction of another ten schools.

Our emphasis, as a government, is to make sure that the lives of our citizens and our young children are taken care of, and our vision is to move the country forward by empowering our people through the education process.

If we look at health: In 1995 we were spending about \$695 million on health, and in the year 2000/2001, we are spending now \$1.1 billion on health. There is no Member in this House here today who can tell us that there has not been significant improvement in both the education system in Trinidad and Tobago, and in the health sector as well. I can tell you that, because I worked as Chairman of the Northwest Regional Health Authority for three and a half years. What we have done in three and a half years has not been done for 25 years. We have made improvements by leaps and bounds. Look at the emergency health system.

Let me refocus on education before returning to the health sector. The question is why in government secondary schools more than 70 per cent of the students fail to get a full pass? What has happened over the period of time? Why in schools that are assisted, denominational schools, there is a 70 per cent pass rate and a 30 per cent fail rate, but in government schools you get a 70 per cent fail rate and a 30 per cent pass rate?

The Common Entrance Examination, which we are very proud that we have abolished, only about 4,000 or 5,000 children were able to pass their examination, while 20,000 failed, but they went to secondary schools.

We are making sure that we are developing the early childhood education centres, the pre-schools, so that these students are nurtured with a proper and sound education, so that when they reach primary school they would have benefited from that education and they would be doing very well in the primary schools. So when they go into secondary school, we expect to get a higher percentage of passes.

Now, when they leave secondary school there are only 2,000 or whatever places at university, per year. What do these students do after gaining a secondary education? They do not have the opportunity to go to a university, because the university can only take in a certain number, maybe a few thousands per year. But you have almost 15,000 children writing the advanced level examinations, possibly a little less. So what do we do with these children?

Now, we have decided to create the community college. Imagine a number of private sector people had introduced these educational facilities. For example, on the East/West Corridor there are a number of these institutions. So we said, as a Government, that we must introduce a community college. The COSTAATT was built, so that we can now expand tertiary level education. We are not saying that we have reached; this is just the beginning and there is much more work to be done in that education sector.

So that we want to ensure, as all Caricom and Caribbean countries, that by the year 2005, we should be able to move our tertiary education level from 7 per cent to about 15 per cent. The United Kingdom did it in 1969. Only about 13 per cent of their population had tertiary education, and by the year 2000, they have nearly 40 per cent of their population with tertiary education. Why can we not do it? This is the focus of our Government, to make sure that our young ones are taken care of so that they would be able to earn a livelihood by a better education system. The Information Technology Institute is going to be constructed shortly.

That brings me to the question of training. As I alluded to before, there are over 300,000 citizens in Trinidad and Tobago who are without a secondary education. It is not satisfying for me, as an individual, to see quoted on international newspapers and magazines that we have a 95 per cent literacy rate. We must not fool ourselves because one out of every three citizens in Trinidad and Tobago cannot make or read a sentence. This is why the newspapers have to create headlines and sensationalism, because the average man-in-the-street could only read the headlines. When you have one out of every three who cannot make a sentence properly nor read one, it is a very sad state. This is what the education

system did to us in this country over 30 years, and the time has come for us to change it, and this Government is changing it; and changing it very fast.

We are making sure now that we have brought on the National Training Agency, which is looking after the rationalization and accreditation of all technical/vocational training institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. We have the National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST), the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, the San Fernando Technical Institute; we have the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), and so many of these training institutions; a multiplicity of institutions coming up with different types of training systems. Why can we not bring those students who have been left out of the mainstream, who are now adults, to train in technical/vocational education? Why can we not do it like the Singaporean model, where every four years the entire population is retrained and re-skilled? Why can we not have a massive, modern apprenticeship programme with about 40,000 to 50,000 youths in Trinidad and Tobago being trained?

We have the National Energy Skills Centre (NESC), the Metal Industries Company (MIC), the National Social Development Council (NSDC); we have the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP), the cottage industries, micro-entrepreneurship programme, small business development. We must bring these youths back into technical and vocational training and utilize the private sector for training our young ones.

### **3.20 p.m.**

Why can we not bring software engineering manufacturing companies into Trinidad to train our people and develop a software manufacturing industry as has been booming in India? Why can we not bring some of these best brains from India to show us how to start some of these things? This is the emphasis of this Government, to ensure that we put the people first and make sure we continue to spend the money where it has to be spent.

Mr. President, people are talking about the infrastructural development taking place with respect to the road-paving programme. I live in Maraval and there is some merit in the statements as far as that piece of the road now being re-dug. I want to state emphatically that it was deliberate, on the part of the people who are paving the road in Maraval, to leave out that significant portion of the road to facilitate the digging for whatever is being put in. It is not that a digging process is taking place on all the paved roads in Maraval. That is not very accurate. What has to be dug up has been left unpaved.

When we talk about waste on infrastructure we have to assess whether we can say that we do not want that flyover at the intersection of the Churchill-Roosevelt and Uriah Butler Highways. Over 100,000 people pass through there every day and so many man-hours of work are lost because there is an absence of that main bridge. Can we say we do not need that? Can we say that we did not need the bridges, roads, schools, hospitals and clinics? We must spend money on infrastructure, because if we do not, our lives would be uncomfortable as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, let me come to the question of health. For almost 30 years this health sector was neglected, and it hurts my heart to know that, after so many years of neglect, we are still criticized for work we are trying to do—and we are trying to do it very quickly. Hospitals were left to total decay. Equipment in these institutions were 15 and 20 years old. The Port of Spain General Hospital was literally stinking when I took over as Chairman of the North West Regional Health Authority. You could not even walk in there after 30 years of neglect. All 107 health centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago were neglected. There was an absence of any motivation of the workforce in Trinidad and Tobago. Government had stopped the training of nurses. There was no equipment. The operating theatres had no lights and tables. The laboratories had no new equipment—they were 15 and 20 years old. There were three X-ray machines that were 15 to 20 years old at the Port of Spain General Hospital. The St. Ann's Hospital was overflowing with patients. The St. James Medical Complex had a 25- to 30-year-old outdated cobalt machine. The lifts at the Port of Spain General Hospital were 37 years—as old as the building.

Mr. President, we have spent over \$150 million buying equipment for all these institutions so that if I am to become ill today I can have emergency surgery. We built a 10-bed intensive care unit that is second to none in this part of the world where a patient in Trinidad and Tobago can receive treatment which would cost an average of \$5,000 per day in the private sector. A stay of 16 days would cost that person an average of \$80,000. Now, the poor person can get that care to save his life. We have saved thousands of lives.

Mr. President, besides spending \$150 million in providing equipment, we are now in the process of renovating almost 30 health centres—re-equipping them and getting staff. We have now started the training of almost 400 nurses. What about the emergency health system? One can now call an ambulance from any part of Trinidad and Tobago, and the maximum response time is 20 minutes. People who, unfortunately, get into accidents on the highways can get an

ambulance, sometimes in five minutes and these ambulances are now equipped to deal with them.

There has been a problem at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex—almost \$1 billion in the 1980s were spent on that vast expanse of a hospital—where if you have to walk from one section to another you get wet when it is raining. It is ill-defined, ill-designed and one cannot assess what it would cost for recurrent expenditure. This is what we inherited and we are now trying to open up the system at Mount Hope.

Mr. President, I can speak here for one or two hours on the health sector, but I will not want to elaborate too much more on the gains. I am not saying that this Government has really done everything we ought to do in the education, health and social sectors. We have just begun our job and have completed about 20 to 30 per cent, and have much more to do, and this is what we would aim to do over the next five years.

Admittedly, Mr. President, there are times when we may make 10 decisions out of which three would be wrong ones, but seven very correct ones and we would benefit from those seven decisions. A government is like that; everybody is not perfect. However, what if we did not make any decisions? What about if we moved from term to term without the ability to implement programmes and infrastructural changes? What if we did not create jobs to fight joblessness? What if we did not strengthen the economy; protect our families and educate our children? What if we did not provide better health care for our families? What if we did not build a solid infrastructure and have improvements in our public administration? All these things this Government did.

Mr. President, when we come here now to discuss the question of variation of finance it must be taken into the overall context of how we are spending the money. There is no one who can say, basically, that this Government has not spent money wisely to take care of the social sector. My contribution, particularly, has been on the health and education sectors and Senators would speak on other areas—the economy, infrastructure, joblessness and so on, but my role this afternoon is just to raise the awareness of this Senate so that when we speak about money and expenditure, we must see them in the context of national and economical developments.

We are a progressive country now. We are moving Trinidad and Tobago into the new millennium with a new vision. We are not a visionless Government. The vision of this Government is to take care of the people, to educate our young

children and move the education process so we can have a better empowered and educated society where the aim, ultimately, would be to make sure that our level of tertiary education is risen way beyond 15 or 20 per cent—closer to 50 per cent. It is better to have an organization where everyone has a university degree and let people compete to raise the level of activity rather than to have an organization where everyone has failed to get an O'level. Let us try to reach that level.

Mr. President, it is, indeed, a great honour and pleasure for me to just say a few words this afternoon in relation to the Bill and to express the fact that we, as a Government, are confident and would be moving forward purposefully to ensure that this country moves forward in a positive direction with a definite vision, particularly for the empowerment and education of our people.

Thank you.

### **3.30 p.m.**

**Mr. President:** Congratulations to the Senator on his maiden contribution.

**Sen. Rennie Dumas:** Mr. President, it is my nervous position to make a contribution to the discussion on this Bill. I was warned that this House is a sober one and that I have a sober requirement to study carefully the documentation and to seek your guidance and that of those here before us.

It is in that light that I take the responsibility to follow advice to take this as a book-keeping exercise of the Government and, therefore, to seek to make sure that we try our best to have a full accounting.

Seeing that I have a few questions, I want to take the line that when I have questions I would seek guidance. I have difficulty in accepting this as a complete statement of the variances for the period 1999—2000. Is there more to come? There must be. We hear the discussion, especially from the last contribution, that the Government seeks to do things for the whole country.

I know, as the country knows, from what is being said in public and what is being said even today in Tobago, that Tobago is part of the country. We have had continued forceful contributions and requests in terms of funding for Tobago. We see and have heard of the intention to provide for the acknowledged underfunding of Tobago during the period 1999—2000. If, therefore, this is a reflection, there should be some position here that says there is a debt to Tobago and a funding to Tobago. That is not identified. One would like to ask: Where is that identified in this supplementary provision?



In particular, one would ask, if it is correct that we are seeking the sustainable human development we just heard about, where is it? Where is the full cost of implementation that should have occurred there; that we are acknowledging is outstanding and which must be taken into account during this period? Was the intention to fund the agreements that came out of the Dispute Resolution Commission accepted or was it a hoax on the people of Tobago? In that first situation, where it is accepted and acknowledged, would it be brought to book as an outstanding debt of the period? How are we going to deal with it and should we see an inclusion here that says it is a debt?

That would have a big impact on whether we find the Bill believable; whether we see the possibility that the Government will exist for 5 years in a way that would be useful to the people of Tobago. Where does it say that there is a specific way to fund the development of Tobago?

If what was said is true, then there has to be a marked policy shift by the State in the form of what the Government does. What is the policy shift that is going to go on in education? It has to be grievous to sit and hear that we have done such great things in education and in health when in Tobago the hospital has not started. The schools have not started. The construction of the roads has not started. The variation in terms of provision is not included. We would have difficulty.

We want to know whether we can expect anything to happen in terms of education—the outstanding Mason Hall school; the outstanding provisions of funding for equipment at the Signal Hill School; the outstanding provisions for the health centres that are to be put down in Tobago; the outstanding provisions for the Tobago Regional Health Authority; the outstanding provisions for our inclusion in the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT); the outstanding provisions for our inclusion in these beautiful gender and culture programmes that we have.

We would have real trouble in terms of both access, in terms of quality, in terms of the management and perspective that they are supposed to give to the Tobago House of Assembly to allow it to manage its affairs, bringing to bear the rules that have been put down in the rules and laws that have been put in place in 1986. We would have real problems with anything that suggests that the Government put people in Tobago first. We feel that there are some things that may come first, but it is also correct that we need to look at some other things.

Sport and Youth Affairs. We see some variations there under Head 46. What is the position if we have provisions for vacant posts that are not filled and these

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are moved and re-distributed without acknowledging that these posts were filled? We have a situation in the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Commerce where we in Tobago have been saying a number of things should happen in support of the activities of the Tobago House of Assembly. The Ministry of Trade has not done them. We see the variations again. In personnel, we have people to support us. If then the provisions for personnel are gone, we will have problems.

In tourism I see provisions for accommodation and these are shifted. Why were they shifted? I am not clear. Again, in the Ministry of Education we see some things that say personnel matters are shifted out. We see, in the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs that people have been boasting about, that there is nothing there. I suggest that will have some trouble.

The speaker said we must look at it as a management issue, but if we are doing that and we have some new names coming at us; we have a reorganization and re-engineering of the Government, we are told, what is a structure? We do not know but we have doubts. We can very well understand why there is need to reorganize everything. We have some real problems when we come to use management standards for measurement evaluation here.

Let us take Head 30.05: Ministry of Labour and Cooperatives. There is a provision for \$40,000 that leaps to \$467,000—a 1000 per cent increase. Somebody who laid down the first figure is either not aware of what they are planning or, if the second figure is correct, some manager there is not doing his job.

Then we see changes in travelling of 40 per cent in the same area. That is another indicator—I am not holding anybody to task—but maybe we need to understand what is being said to us. For example, in the Ministry of Health, we have a redistribution of responsibilities within the Ministry of Health to the Regional Health Authorities. What is that redistribution for? Are they saying that personnel matters given up by the Ministry of Health now totally belong to the regional authorities? Is that legal, correct or proper? Will it stand the test of proper management procedure? We will have problems.

With these few words, I will sit, but I would like them to remember the Tobago issues, please.

**Mr. President:** Congratulations also to the Senator on his maiden contribution.

**3.40 p.m.**

**Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran:** [*Desk thumping*] Mr. President, I really did not intend to speak, because of the circumstances, on the Bill before us, it having

been debated rather extensively on a previous occasion; but, given the natural turn of events, I believe I would wish to speak for two reasons: one is to seize the opportunity to do something for which I never had the opportunity before, formally that is, and that is to extend, like my other colleagues, my warmest congratulations on your election as President of this august Senate. [*Desk thumping*] Of course, having known you as I do over the many years, I can attest to the kind of gentleness that the atmosphere at hand certainly requires, and I look forward to cooperating fully with you in matters brought before this Senate.

The second reason, Mr. President, is something that struck me very forcefully a few days ago in terms of the criminal activities in the country and the implications for national development, with particular reference to the changes suggested in the Bill before us. I believe the matter is worthy of concern in a rather quantitative way, if only because it will draw our attention, in terms of measuring Government's performance, in the context of the security of citizens and confidence by investors, especially so in the case of Tobago, Tobago having been mentioned several times this afternoon. As one example, on page 10, there is some reference to a transfer in the Ministry of National Security with specific mention of the Strategic Intelligence Agency, and the sum allocated in this instance, as it explains, is for salaries, contract gratuities and miscellaneous intelligence activities.

Now, I do not know if this country is getting its money's worth for these miscellaneous intelligence activities purportedly undertaken by the Strategic Intelligence Agency because, Mr. President, it would occur to me that matters of, let us say, insurrection, caches of arms being brought into the country and other matters of such national insecurity, should be specific subjects for proper investigation by an agency such as the Strategic Intelligence Agency. If such information or matters of such kind come before the national community, in whatever way, especially from official sources, it should come with such specificity and, I should say, certainty, that the need for rumour and its implications, with the consequent unsettling of the national community, would therefore be absent. So I raise the question as to whether the moneys used by Government, as of this particular example, are really meeting the objectives.

I can go page by page in similar fashion, but I think the point was also well made by a previous speaker, Sen. Dumas, when he made mention of the need for management approaches to expenditure. [*Desk thumping*] My other distinguished colleague, Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh, also spoke about the high cost for mistakes made in a small country as ours and, in a large sense, Mr. President, such

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comments are not spiteful neither are they uncharitable. They are merely reminders to pull up our socks, because nobody else in this fiercely competitive international environment cares anything about Trinidad and Tobago if Trinidad and Tobago does not care and shows that it cares for itself. [*Desk thumping*]

It brings up the question of governance and, in the particular context as I mentioned previously, Tobago—and this is the second reason for my modest contribution here this afternoon. When I examined the crime statistics from the year of independence—1962 to the present year—it struck me that, for every single year, there was a significant increase in the rate of serious crimes for this country, as if the year of independence seemed to have opened the doors to increased criminal conduct in this country. Having said that in a general fashion, Tobago, in this year, has a crime rate of 200 per 10,000 citizens. Well, what does that mean?

It means that in the last decade the rate of serious crime in this country, in Tobago, has increased by over 80 per cent. Now, if for every decade, as it seems to be the case—because of the trend in Tobago particularly—year after year, the crime rate increase being even greater than that for the national average, it means Tobago is heading into some rather dark days when it comes to serious crimes such as dwelling house larceny, robbery, rape and the other crimes against tourists. You will begin to appreciate, therefore, Mr. President, why I think this is a very important issue.

Tobago, as a sister island, is a very vulnerable section of the national community, given its reliance on the tourist economy. With such a crime rate as high as it is, and to me a matter of serious concern as it is, you cannot blame the media when they do publish stories of serious crimes, particularly those occurring in Tobago. Given the dynamics of media reporting as I know them to be, and the competition in the marketplace for new stories, especially those dealing with crime and violence, I do not think the Government or, for that matter, the Tobago House of Assembly, could depend on the media to ease it up. No such thing will happen.

When one looks at the manifestos of the various parties contesting the Tobago election today for the THA seats, and in the context of all these expenditures, and also in the context of their plans, some of which have very elaborate high-sounding intentions like community empowerment, gender equity—in the particular case of the NAR manifesto it speaks about human development, youth empowerment and so on—I will tell you with respect, Mr. President, that these plans will not see the full light of day if the environment surrounding these plans are filled with fear of crime by citizens, a lack of confidence by investors, as is the

case today by the research we have so far conducted. In fact, I will tell you the fear of crime in Tobago is also increasing. However, it is true that the Tobago House of Assembly does not have direct jurisdiction over matters of National Security, neither does it have jurisdiction over the operations of the police.

It therefore brings us to the present state of affairs, and I am stung by the deafening silence, Mr. President, about matters dealing with crime prevention, improving the criminal justice system in Tobago and so on in the current election campaign, where I think such matters must be brought to people for a determination as to which way to vote. That, indeed, is the system under which we operate. So with that deafening silence, I wonder what are the possibilities for completing these projects, justifying the expenditures in the near future in Tobago if the island is being filled increasingly so with a crime rate as serious as I mentioned just now.

It means, for example, that the central government should undertake a mission of collaboration with the THA and explain as well to the Tobago community how it intends to deal with this serious crime rate, how it intends to improve the resources for the police, expand the services within the criminal justice system in Tobago, look at the other attendant services, such as probation services and the other social services which are linked to the entire court system, so as to make Tobago a safer place, especially, as I said earlier, in the context of it being so directly a tourist-driven community. Other people are doing it. Antigua and especially Barbados are taking a serious look at such infrastructural implications, not only to attract tourists but also to protect their tourist trade and to create a greater sense of security.

If, as on page 17, Mr. President, there is a Ministry of Tourism, all efforts by this Ministry would not be as fully realized as they could if this matter of crime, personal security and fear of crime could be tackled headlong, both by the central government and by the Tobago House of Assembly. You see, Mr. President, in this new era of what we call governance—which is a good word—it is necessary to keep repeating it because, where there is not proper governance, incivility is bred. [*Desk thumping*] There is a reciprocal relationship between malgovernance and incivility in your population. [*Desk thumping*]

It is a phenomenon that exists all over the world, from the Philippines to North Korea to Jamaica, and I believe it is rearing its head, both in our sister island and regrettably so in the other island of Trinidad. So the responsibility for governance is not merely a matter of managing the money, it is a matter of

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convincing the public that the money is well spent where it needs to be spent and as well to keep public confidence in the system in which they live.

When the public loses confidence in its institutions, for example, its election system, it not only gets demoralized but it gets resentful to the point where it is tempted even more so to break the law, protest and, as you would say, misbehave. So there is a direct link between malgovernance and a country's level of indiscipline. The very expensive plans and projects that are promulgated here today, Mr. President, especially those for Tobago—road expansion, infrastructural development, tourism and so on—those things that we emphasize will not bear as much fruit as they could unless the respective agencies, particularly the central government, pay serious attention to this matter of the increasing crime rate in Tobago.

The figures for Tobago in raw numbers would appear relatively small. For example, 10 years ago it was just over 400 serious crimes per 10,000 people. Today it is at the thousand mark, but it is not the raw numbers that matter in such assessments, or for crime management as you would say. What matters is the crime rate, the number of crimes per capita that is, and so Tobago today sits almost third among all nine police divisions in the country in terms of the serious crimes. So I have been very disturbed by this result, this analysis, and I thought, given the Minister's new enthusiasm, and, I believe, his intention to see that the national community not only progresses in terms of its socio-economic development but in terms of its spiritual development, and also in terms of its feelings of safety and security; that, too, is a measure of a civilized society. So I thank you very much, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

**3.55 p.m.**

**Mr. President:** I will not extend the courtesy of congratulations on a maiden contribution since the Senator has been a Senator in a past era.

**Sen. Christopher R. Thomas:** Mr. President, I will forego what the Standing Orders say that I could, in fact, read a maiden speech, and deal directly with some issues in the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (1999/2000) Bill very briefly. Before I do so, however, I would first like to congratulate you and to extend to you my full support during your tenure as President, also to extend my full collaboration with Members of the Senate as I embark upon what is for me a new experience. Even when I forego my prerogative, I would also like to claim the privilege of the guidance of the President and Members of the Senate as we proceed.

I have no major difficulty with the transfers proposed in the variation in terms of the procedure. The Minister of Finance, in my view, has complied with the procedures in relation to transfers within Heads, and the question of transfers between Heads, in my view, has also been complied with. In relation to the procedure, I have no difficulties. I do have, however, some questions in relation to the manner in which the explanations have been given and to the explanations themselves.

Let me first say that my understanding of a budget exercise involves a number of essential parameters, a few of which would be, in my view, the question of personnel expenditure, the question of operational requirements, goods and services and miscellaneous expenses. What I find in the variation exercise is that where these parameters have been met and should, indeed, be met, we have a situation where the programmes themselves have been varied and the explanations, in my view, are not sufficient.

A budget today is a budget that is programme driven. Programmes are necessarily, therefore, attended by cost. If the programmes are not fulfilled, then it means that the budget exercise, the budget execution, suffers. Where programmes, therefore, have been changed, it means that the entire budget structure and what was envisaged as the programme have, themselves, been somewhat changed. My question, therefore, is although there is a priority involved and there is a management tool, and in spite of programmes there is the need for transfers as a basic management tool—

*[Cellular telephone rings]*

**Mr. President:** Please, let every person in this Chamber be aware that cellular telephones should not be on while we are sitting. That will not be tolerated and I am asking every person to make sure that his cellular is switched off.

**Sen. C. R. Thomas:** Mr. President, I was saying that while transfers are useful tools of management, they must be accompanied by a certain management control. So, my comments and my difficulties with the present variation is that the transfers as tools of management do not seem to have been accompanied by an overall management control. I would like to give a few examples of this as I walk through some of the aspects of the transfers in the paper before us. Let me say that where a management tool is missing, the question of accountability is necessary.

At Head 4, we have savings resulted due to the delay in the appointment of five judges to the Industrial Court. These explanations, in my view, are explanations of facts that took place. What they do not say is the consequences of

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these facts in terms of a programme budget that has been structured. My question then will be, when he says delay in appointments, have these appointments not taken place? If they have not taken place, is it going to mean that your next budget will have to be structured to accommodate these things? This has not been said.

In terms of Head 5, we are told that the planned Red House restoration project did not materialize as anticipated. No one says why. Is it going to be restored within the next budget? At Head 6, savings became available as a result of a decision by the Service Commission Department to defer the filling of 46 vacant posts. These are a lot of vacant posts in a country where we have an unemployment situation. My question is, what are the consequences of this in relation to the overall service commission? Has it affected the work of the commission? What are the consequences and the impacts? So, the explanations given are only explanations, statements of fact, but they do not address the consequences of these changes. We have the same under Head 6.

When we go to Head 23, as an example, we are told that:

“(b) funds provided under Salaries and COLA, Government's contribution to NIS and vacant posts were not fully utilized as a number of posts remained unfilled, during the fiscal year.”

Were they unfilled deliberately? Were they unfilled because the programme had to be adjusted or because there was need to use money in another area?

I believe that somewhere in the context of these explanations we should have a further explanation that will indicate clearly the impact and the consequences of the changes that have been made. Right through this Bill, Mr. President, we have examples. I do not want to continue to labour the point. I simply wanted to say that if there is no management control, as has been said by a number of speakers before, then the transfer of resources as a management tool lessens the accountability of the system. If it lessens the accountability of the system, then the impact on the execution of the budget becomes important and we need to bear that in mind.

I would therefore ask the Minister of Finance if, as he proposes, hopefully, to answer some of the questions that were raised here, he could inform us on two things. One is whether the changes or the transfers that have been made have been fully utilized in the other areas, and secondly, in terms of the control mechanism, whether in accordance with the Cabinet decisions, the Minister of Finance can make these changes on the advice of different ministries in consultation with his



budget area, and whether there is a control mechanism or it is simply a question of ministries requesting changes in their whole programmes and the Minister of Finance accommodating these changes. Obviously, if this were the case of management control, then there could be a serious lack of accountability in the entire system.

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

**Mr. President:** Congratulations also to the Member on his maiden contribution.

**Sen. Gillian Lucky:** I am much obliged, Mr. President. Permit me to begin by indicating the personal privilege and honour that I feel to be able to make my maiden contribution within these very sacred walls of Parliament and in a place that is presided over by a man as outstanding as you are, and one whose reputation is certainly extremely commendable.

The contributions made by all those who have spoken before me have certainly set what really makes one very proud to know that there is a high level of contribution, and that one, as myself, hopefully this evening, will continue with that very high standard that has been set here this evening.

Mr. President, in the contribution of the Independent Senator, Prof. Deosaran, the concern seemed to be that with what is apparently increasing crime, the Government may be facing a situation in which it would be unable to deal with this escalation, or this apparent escalation. What I can say with respect to the concern is that there may certainly be a valid observation that there is criminal activity and there is the need to deal with it. I hasten to add that for the last eight years—more specifically from January 1993, when I joined the department of the Director of Public Prosecutions, to the end of September 2000 when I left—I had seen within the last four years of my tenure in that office, not just significant improvements in terms of the fight against crime and the Government's role in fighting crime, but what I could only describe as leaps and bounds in the fight against criminal activity. Thus the Government of the day did honour, what I consider to be one of its most important roles, providing security and safety to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, when one makes a statement in another place to which I am accustomed, one is not just allowed to give one's opinion without evidence to support that opinion. So merely standing within these honourable and sacred walls and saying that there were significant and tremendous leaps and bounds without going further would be failing in satisfying that duty that is incumbent upon me to justify that position.

**4.10 p.m.**

Mr. President, when one is dealing with something as important as fighting crime, perhaps the most difficult problem is determining where one starts. The fact that Trinidad and Tobago has what may be relatively high criminal activity is something that I have known ever since I was growing up. I am yet to enjoy a situation where I live in a house that is not barred around by wrought iron and where the reason for having dogs is merely for pleasure and not primarily for protection.

What I can say is that upon joining the Director of Public Prosecution's department, one of the most significant things I discovered in light of the criminal activity and how one fights crime, was that I found myself interacting with the various branches of the law and personnel who are very important in terms of dealing with this whole issue of criminal activity. What I would say, unreservedly, is that when the present Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, and our former Attorney General, assumed office in 1996, the mandate given to all State departments, especially and including, the office of the DPP, was: how are we going to fight crime? How are we going to reduce criminal activity? How are we going to ensure that citizens in Trinidad and Tobago can feel safe and know that if, unfortunately, they are the victims of crime, something is going to be done? It had to be very a powerful message.

I think the Government started on the right footing by saying that this had to be a consolidated plan involving all personnel. What I experienced when the Attorney General, Hon. R. L. Maharaj, assumed office was that there were many instances in which we saw a commendable level of creativity being used to try and implement measures where persons in our society could feel safe. One immediately comes to mind: there was always the problem in the State departments with respect to the lack of personnel, situations in which there were just not enough prosecutors.

There is a body responsible for the hiring of State counsel, the Judicial and Legal Service Commission (JLSC), but somehow the hiring was not being done as fast as it ought to. What we saw immediately when the various heads of department were asked, "Well, you need more staff, what could we do?" was the implementation of a system that continues today, and that is the hiring of contract officers. Therefore, while the Judicial and Legal Service Commission would still go about its own business, in terms of hiring State counsel, there would be no deficiency in terms of personnel. There would be contract officers filling vacancies and performing the role of State prosecutors in the interim.

It was not a system of, “Well, you would have to wait until we get more personnel,” it became a system of, “We know that you need more personnel, but in the interim, we are making provision”. That signalled to me and many people in the departments and the wider population, that the Government and the Attorney General were committed to ensuring that our citizens felt safe, even if it meant implementing novel measures; measures that let people know we were serious about fighting crime.

It was not just hiring staff, it was also about boosting morale, because when we talk about fighting crime and criminal activity and reducing crime, there are specific persons who are given that responsibility: the police, State prosecutors, judges, magistrates. These are people who play very crucial roles, and, therefore, the terms and conditions of these persons and the buildings in which they worked, all these concerns were addressed.

As a State counsel, I was the beneficiary, as my colleagues were, of increased and better terms and conditions. I hasten to add that we all wanted more. I am sure my colleagues still want more, but the fact is something was done and done rapidly, and once again a creative measure was used whereby, with the approval of Cabinet, we were able to get an interim allowance.

Mr. President, if one were to really sit and try to identify what is the most important institution to be addressed in the fight against crime, one would never get one answer, because there are so many institutions that play a fundamental role in the fight against crime. What we were able to see was that as terms and conditions were being improved for personnel, we were also seeing, simultaneously, a very active legislative agenda that was geared towards equipping those who would have to go into courtrooms, and equipping those who were fighting crimes with laws that would make the system work.

When we talk about laws that would make the system work, I am not talking about laws that were passed merely to ensure that it appeared that criminals were going to be dealt with; I am talking about laws that were specifically drafted and passed to make the system of criminal justice work better, work faster, become stronger and repose confidence in the people of Trinidad and Tobago, that in our courtrooms when a person went before any judicial officer a person got justice.

Again, the piece of legislation that immediately comes to mind is the amendment to the Administration of Justice Act in which, for the first time, the State was given, in restricted circumstances, the right of appeal. Thus, if at any time, or whereas before there might have been a criminal matter, and the judicial

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officer, for some reason, upheld a no case submission and the State felt, “Well, we felt there was enough evidence,” there was nothing we could do, and we would hear that the person got out on a technicality. For the first time, the State has a right—and I hasten to add, a restricted right, but a right nevertheless—to appeal. It was an Act in which, for the very first time, provision was made for alternate jurors.

The legislation is clear and the Jury Act is clear that in certain matters there must be nine jurors and in capital matters there must be 12, but there were certain problems where sometimes, in the midst of a criminal matter, there might be a situation that a juror or jurors, for a number of reasons, might not have been able to sit or to continue sitting. Once in that matter the number of jurors went below the statutory minimum, the matter had to be aborted and brought to an end. Many resources that had been spent in that prosecution were just wasted. With the legislation and the amendment to the Administration of Justice Act, what we had then was the provision of alternate jurors. Such legislation, therefore, ensured that our institutions mandated with the role to ensure effective and efficient criminal prosecution, indicated a very strong message to everyone in our society that criminal activity would not be tolerated.

Mr. President, it was certainly a relief to see, to feel and experience improvements to the physical structures, to police stations, that once were derelict buildings, actually now being buildings where, when you walked up the stairs or you entered you felt, “Yes, this is a place of sanctuary; this is a place where I can get some assistance.” They say looks are not everything, but I can tell you that some of the police stations that I had to walk into when I began my legal career in the office of the Director of Public Prosecution, were places that I would have wanted to run away from rather than run to.

I certainly feel a great sense of satisfaction for my colleagues who continue to prosecute in the office of the DPP; that they can walk into police stations and know that when witnesses—who play a fundamental role in the prosecution of matters—go into police stations, they are being treated in a particular way, a good way, by police officers in places where these witnesses can feel that their needs are being attended to. There was improvement to the physical amenities.

I have said it over and over again that I was one of the persons who had a run from San Fernando to Port of Spain on a daily basis. I know what it is to leave Port of Spain 9 o’clock at night to go to San Fernando, and be concerned and have persons concerned, as to safety on the roads. The Government of the day, then and now, has ensured, and I felt safe, when police vehicles that were not called by

me, certainly, were on the roads, giving me that sense of satisfaction that should anything happen along the highway, I knew that there was some police car that would stop to assist me. That is the level of confidence that somebody on a road can now feel.

We have seen improvements to police stations; we have seen more personnel; we have seen terms and conditions increase. The point was made by my colleague, Sen. Dr. Goopeesingh, that a lot has been done, and we admit, there is more to do. In assessing what is being done, one has to be fair. You cannot give somebody a dungeon, give him or her a Herculean task to perform and expect that he or she would be able to do it in record time and solve every single imaginable problem. What had to be done and what continues to be done is a system of prioritization; a system in which one can say, if you are fighting criminal activity, address legislation, address personnel, address physical amenities, and when that is done, that is the kind of coherent and comprehensive system that will fight crime.

I always say, and I am a firm believer, that many times we forget that we are Trinidad and Tobago, but I always say that I never forget Tobago. I think it is a very beautiful island. I always feel nice to know that we are not just Trinidad, but Trinidad and Tobago, and the concerns of Tobago are also our concerns. Again, I can say with great confidence that I prosecuted in many matters in Tobago, in 1993, 1994 and 1995, and when I say that the Attorney General, as he was then and is now, was dealing with prosecutions, he did not just deal with improvements to prosecutions in Trinidad, but also addressed the issues of Tobago.

Whereas before when, for example, a prosecutor went to Tobago, you never knew who would collect you. It was always an expense on your pocket; it was really a trauma, because you did not know where you were staying and there really was little or no provision. Now I understand, and I experienced, that when prosecutors go to Tobago they are treated as people; so that when they walk into a courtroom they are relaxed and prepared, and they can do the job at hand.

I agree that there is more work to do, but our Government—and we cannot be blamed or chastised, because they have not done all that is necessary. They have done and we have done what we could do. There is more to do and we must be given the opportunity. I can tell you, as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, not speaking as a former prosecutor, that with the legislative agenda, the laws that were passed, those that I am privy to that we worked on with respect to the improvements to the police and the officers who are mandated to take care of us,

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to protect and serve, with the treatment of the whole personnel involved in the administration of justice, I am not worried at all that criminal activity will continue in any significant regard.

In fact, I feel relieved, because I feel and I am confident that we will be able to reduce crime, to continue reducing crime and to ensure that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago truly feel protected and served by our Government.

I thank you.

**4.25 p.m.**

**Mr. President:** Congratulations to the Senator on her maiden contribution. I will take Sen. Daly's contribution before suspending for tea.

**Sen. Martin Daly:** Mr. President, I make a brief contribution because what we are really doing is debating variations to a bill that was assented to on October 28, 1999. So, as is the tradition, we really take the opportunity—when we see things like the Elections and Boundaries Commission's \$2.4 million—to address contemporary issues with your indulgence, when we are really discussing money that was provided for some years ago. So I think we must be all aware that that is the basis on which we are debating such a wide range of things today.

I make this comment, because it is a very good example of a salutary practice or tradition that is not supported by any law, rules of which are not written down anywhere with which you, good Sir, and all of us in the Senate understand and observe perfectly well, and it works perfectly well. We do not have to look for a section in the Constitution, or a section in the law to justify what we are doing this afternoon. We are doing this by tradition, where we should be, strictly speaking, discussing the expenditure of this money in 1999, but we are now discussing it in January 2001, and within reason, it is a time-honoured tradition that we are able to make comments about the things that are here and speaker after speaker, both those who are old and new were able to justify their "ramajay" by referring to page 11 of this, or page 17 of that, or page 18 of the other, but we do that by tradition.

I say that, Mr. President, because apparently we are heading for a situation in this country where we can only do things if they are written in a law book. We cannot do things, or refrain from doing things, either because good breeding requires it, our religious upbringing requires it, or just plain tradition and common understanding requires it, and I say that by way of introduction.

So I recommend the practice of doing things by tradition and common understanding rather than the clash of law books and the clash of lawyers and the

spending of guineas. Sensible people know what they are supposed to do and what they are not supposed to do, and the Senate has distinguished itself this afternoon in such an exercise. Indeed, it is said that it is a sign of wisdom to keep your head when everyone else is losing theirs and I think the Senate on all sides this afternoon has kept its collective head, and I hope the general sobriety, relevance and commitment that was displayed this afternoon will infect some of those who appear to be lacking in sobriety and commitment.

May I, first of all, again following tradition, congratulate you on your re-election as President of this Chamber. I do not think we were sitting for more than seven or eight minutes when you displayed your sagacity and your independence by dealing with a matter that has been turned into a bacchanal elsewhere. What better example of someone, who, even though belonging to a particular side, is able to deal with the matter crisply and with sagacity.

Another good example that has come out of this afternoon's proceedings, but I suppose, Mr. President, a loser is not only someone who loses a contest. A loser is someone who really does not have the character, ability, or inherent competence to deal with the situation as crisply as you dealt with one this afternoon that turned the whole country into a circus over a relatively simple matter, about which you have forbidden us to speak, but it is a good example of the contrast with what is a loser. A loser is not somebody who loses a contest, a loser is somebody who does not have it, just does not have it and, therefore, is unable to control the proceedings over which he presides. So there might be much to be said—although I do not wish to join the wider debate—for not promoting losers in the sense in which I have defined it. You, of course Sir, being a perfect example of the opposite of a loser, someone with character and sagacity who can control a situation. In other words, keep your head as a Presiding Officer with respect when everyone else is losing theirs.

May I, Mr. President, congratulate my good friend Sen. Yetming, and I do not want to trespass on your ruling, Sir, but he is my good friend and I have had cause to recognize him in garb which even he would not—on the occasion of the national festival—suggest was appropriate for anything other than the streets in which we revel. May I also congratulate Sen. Dr. Goopeesingh, Sen. Dumas, Sen. Thomas and Sen. Lucky on their maiden speeches. May I welcome the distinguished Sen. Prof. Deosaran back to the Parliament and hope that his words about civility and how bad examples in the “big-ups”—he would not use such inelegant words—inspire incivility in others.

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Mr. President, I would also like to associate myself with the sentiments of Sen. Prof. Kenny. There is no crisis as far as the Senate is concerned. We have work to do and we can do it and I hope that we would keep our heads when everyone else is losing theirs and get on with the work that can be done. There is no crisis in the Senate whatever, there may be some difficulties that may have to be negotiated, but there is no crisis affecting the Senate, and that is obvious when one looks at the conduct of the debate this afternoon.

I would like to associate myself with the sentiments of Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh and I think I have done so, by inference at any rate, by referring to the need for keeping one's head. I think every word that Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh has uttered in the Parliament this afternoon—we should put out a special edition of *Hansard* on the Internet within the next hour or two for our leaders to read about the importance of compromise and negotiation. He used a wonderful word, “servanthood”, that really struck a chord within me because many of us sometimes forget that we are here to serve.

It is a tradition, Mr. President, not to interrupt any parliamentarian on their maiden speech, so I would however, like, by way of cooling some of the ardour of one of the new Government Senators, to say that I believe I heard some reference to the Attorney General giving the Department of Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) a mandate. I must have heard wrong, because as far as I know the DPP has certain independent functions under the Constitution, so I think we need to be a little careful when we are talking about the relationship with the Attorney General to direct the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I think it is also important that we should know that the provision that has been made for the State to have a right of appeal in criminal cases is now under challenge. It may be unsuccessful, as being unconstitutional, so it may be a little early to pat ourselves on the back with regard to that provision. I do not want to be ungracious on this occasion, Mr. President, we do not have a vote on it, but I would have no difficulty in saying that the papers that have been presented to us with regard to this appropriation appears to be in order. I think if it were at all possible to leave the Elections and Boundaries Commission out of this Bill, it might have been a wise thing. I certainly do not think they are the flavour of the month in the country right now, and I think that every word as I say, that Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh has uttered—

I would close with this since no one else has commented on this, Mr. President. There is a somewhat amusing item on page 8 in connection with



official overseas travel for His Excellency, the President. I dare say for the next few months at any rate, the Minister of Finance is not likely to be troubled with any such expense, and so it must come as a great relief to him to know that that Head 01 would not feature in the next Variation of Appropriation Bill unless, of course, some of us are misreading the situation.

I note with interest that the Maintenance Training and Security division is providing security and janitorial services to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and I assume that in his foreign exchange calculation that he will be doing for the next variation, the Minister of Finance is on top of the exchange rate between the Trinidad and Tobago dollar and guinea. He is very capable and he comes from the banking sector, so I dare say he has that at his fingertips, though it may be worrying his fingertips a little.

So it is a very great pleasure to be here this afternoon, Mr. President, and to support this Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill. Verbally, we do not have a vote on the matter, and to say I look forward very much to being here at 1.30 p.m. next Tuesday when I assume we will begin work on the bills that lapsed in the last Parliament, and thereafter continue our work on the Private Member's Motion which Sen. Prof. Kenny has brought, and mine, which would shortly be coming, on the question of the Salaries Review Commission.

Thank you.

**Mr. President:** We will proceed to tea at this stage. The sitting is now suspended until 5.10 p.m.

**4.37 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.10 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette):** Mr. President, let me first of all congratulate Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh and Sen. Gillian Lucky, on our side, also Sen. Prof. Deosaran and Sen. Dumas on their maiden contributions.

We do not necessarily think that we are a minority because we, like yourselves, are here to do the people's business and in the past the Independent Senators have given us tremendous support and assisted also in Government's legislative agenda. I know also that we are all here to do exactly the same thing and in that context I feel that we can work together to ensure that we have better legislation in the future.

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With respect to the agenda for the year, as much as possible I would try to communicate with the leaders of the Independent Bench and the Opposition. It is really difficult at this time to give an agenda for the whole year, so I would try to communicate as much as possible and to give sufficient time for everyone to prepare. I think we have attempted to do that over the last year.

Much has been said with respect to the debt of the country and I just want to say one or two things about it. We have to be very careful when we look at debt in absolute terms. One should look at debt relative to the GDP of a country. As a matter of fact, when one compares some of the debt in a first world country, like the United States; in the 1920s, the 1960s as well as the 1980s, they had a huge amount of debt. At that point their economy grew tremendously and inflation was actually in the reverse. That is exactly what we are seeing in Trinidad and Tobago today. When you look at our debt in absolute terms, you would realize that our external debt as a percentage of the GDP is 22 per cent; our internal debt as a percentage of the GDP is 21.5 per cent, taking the 2000 figures. Our contingent liability as a percentage of GDP is 13.2 per cent. As a matter of fact, we must exercise fiscal discipline and look at benchmarks.

When the EEC countries merged, one of the criteria for merging, the economic criteria was that a percentage of external debt should not exceed 50 per cent. We are less than 25 per cent. So rather than looking at it as a true balance sheet, what we have to do, which we have been doing, is looking at debt as a percentage of that prudent criteria as well as the ability to pay, which is really a debt of the operating cash flow of a country.

Take it another way; when you look at someone coming out of university; as they leave university and they come into a country, they eventually borrow money to buy a house. They may borrow \$300,000, so they may have a mortgage payment of \$3,000; eight or nine years later they may move to another residence; they may borrow more money, they may borrow \$1 million and their mortgage might actually be increased. Their debt has increased but their ability to pay has also increased by virtue of their education and by virtue of promotion in what they are doing. If they were at some point to collapse all that debt and sell their houses, what they would actually do is to reverse that cycle and put themselves into a consolidated position. So what we have to do, and what we have been doing as a Government, is exercising fiscal discipline in terms of the way we are growing as an economy and the way we are borrowing; looking at our internal debt and our external debt as well as our contingent liabilities.

I think the Government has been very prudent in the way we managed the economy over the past five years, and of course, under our new Minister of Finance, I know that we can look forward to good things to come in the near future.

As a matter of fact when one looks at some of the benchmarks over the last five years, our growth has averaged 4 per cent; inflation has averaged 3.4 per cent for the year 1999 and 2000; and unemployment has gone from 17.5 per cent in 1995 to 13.5 per cent in 1999, despite the growth in our debt. As I say, it is all relative. So we have to be careful when we look at debt in absolute terms but look at it with the ability of a nation to pay, and look at it also relative to the growth of the GDP or what we expect the GDP to increase to over the next three or four years.

We spoke about where that money was going. If you look at some of the objectives of the manifesto of the UNC, you would see within the first five items, “sustainable growth”. Much has been said about an intelligent nation; you have heard about better jobs; you have seen a faster pace of development and you see a better quality of life for all citizens. The vision of this Government is to have an intelligent nation. What is an intelligent nation? The only way we can really bridge the gap between a first world country and us is by educating our people. There is no other way we can do it.

If you look at putting your money into huge projects, what may be only \$100 million or \$200 million for a country like the United States is a lot of money for us, and very few entrepreneurs or very few businesses can actually contribute towards that equity. So the only way we can develop our country and develop entrepreneurship is to develop our education base. That is one of the reasons in our manifesto we spoke about the one to one, whereby if it is costing \$100,000 to educate a student, the Government would put \$50,000, because we feel that is the only way we can achieve our objectives as a learning nation over the next five to six years.

As a matter of fact, when you compare Singapore with a country like ours, in 1960 the GDP of Singapore was about the same as the GDP of Trinidad and Tobago. However, Singapore today is roughly about \$30,000 per capita and we are roughly about \$6,000. What you see different is really the tertiary education and the amount of money they have put into education. As a matter of fact, their tertiary level education is roughly around 35 per cent today, this is what Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh was speaking about; whereas our tertiary education is at 7 per cent. What we hope to achieve as a Government with the one to one, is that our tertiary education would eventually be around 20 per cent over the next five years.

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So I think in terms of the Government's objectives and in terms of what we hope to achieve by our minerals windfall, hopefully, in gas and oil, as well as much of the surplus revenue that we should achieve over the next five years, is really to put into educating our people and to again develop the spirit of entrepreneurship in the country.

One of the ways we can achieve this—and again the Government is very committed towards that, of course—is expanding our whole telecommunications infrastructure, opening it up and allowing industries to come into this country, such as software developers, web design, and a whole host of these new industries which actually assisted America into what it is today, since the 1980s. If you look at the 1980s, when you look at some of the indexes of Wall Street at that point in time, you will see that it was companies like America On Line and Microsoft that really blew the Dow out of this world. Of course, they all came from a learning nation; they all came from a knowledge-based industry. It was all intellectual wealth; it was all intellectual capital.

I think what we hope to achieve over the next five years, again, is to put a lot of our money back into educating our people and creating that spirit of entrepreneurship and creating that spirit of job-creation, as well as development in this country.

Sometimes it is difficult in terms—even, myself, when you look at budgeting and you say, “All right, I have got to put X dollars into this and that”, and there is so much to put into a country's infrastructure; there is tourism, health, education, many, many things. I think it is a balancing act for the Ministry of Finance to determine exactly how it allocates those resources. Of course, based on Government's objectives and criteria, it will allocate those resources accordingly.

One thing is certain. I know we must and we have to improve and maintain our infrastructure. Over the past 10 or 15 years you would see a lot of decay in the infrastructure, not only in the roads, but also in the Water and Sewerage Authority, in electricity, everything. So we have to allocate money now and put it back into those capital infrastructure projects, and we have got to do it if we are to attract that level of investment into this country.

Of course, it is a fine act of balancing, because I know that everybody wants money; money to go into tourism; into industry; into the health sector to improve the health of this country. So it is a fine act to grow an economy as well as to develop the entire infrastructure of a country. So we have to be very mindful of that.

In response to Sen. Prof. Kenny's statement that we should encourage all our Senators on this side to speak, I think as Bills present themselves, we would endeavour to encourage our Senators to speak. But as my previous colleague, Minister Carlos John, said, maybe we should all speak, but maybe we should all speak for 30 minutes, because sometimes we can ramble on and on, as you know, and use the full privilege of the House.

I would like to say one more thing with respect to crime. I know we speak a lot about crime in terms of where we are as a country, but I would like to look at it in a slightly different way. It is that crime, really, is the responsibility of each and every one of us. It is the responsibility of parenting and good parenting. I think that a lot that we see today is really what happened many, many years ago, without casting blame or anything. We have to go back, maybe, to basics and educate our children and make them understand and appreciate the values of life and the values of bonding, of ownership, the value of the dollar; those kinds of things. It is just not going to be solved, necessarily, by putting hard and fast rules. It starts with us; it starts with good parenting.

What I have seen, as a matter of fact, over the past few years in this country—and I have been part of that movement also—is that many persons are putting efforts back into, for example, the engagement encounter, marriage encounter, into good parenting; all of these movements that are occurring, putting values back into society. Because when you put those values back into society, only then can you reap those results in 10, 15, 20 years to come. So I think it starts with all of us; with the schools, parents, also with what we preach in churches and how we conduct ourselves in public.

Without much ado, again, congratulations to the Senators who made their maiden contributions this afternoon. Like Sen. Daly, I really enjoyed today's proceedings, as we tended to keep along a particular path without the thuggery that we have experienced in the past.

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

**The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Yetming):** Mr. President, the debate this afternoon took, maybe, about four hours. When this Bill went to the other House, I think we took about two days. I have to say that I much prefer being in this Senate. [*Laughter*] Apart from the contributions, there is greater civility. I was rather distressed when I was in the other place, to see the fire, the venom and the acidity that came out from some speakers.

**Mr. President:** Senator, please, whatever transpires in the other place is none of our business, so kindly refrain from making reference to what happened there.

**Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming:** Accepted, Mr. President. I was only drawing a comparison.

Sen. Daly made the point, very correctly, when he drew the Senate's attention to the fact that this is really about something that transpired, maybe, a year or two ago and, in fact, what we are dealing with here today is really history. I am not too sure that whatever we may say or do about the numbers that are covered in the variation, you could do anything about it. The money is already gone; transferred from one place to the other and spent.

The fact of the matter is that a budget is a very dynamic thing. I am not too sure that for all of us who have been engaged in preparing budgets, that budgets can be so finely tuned and can be so precise that there cannot be variations. There will always be variations. Quite frankly, when I saw the variations that I had to present, I was rather surprised at the small numbers of them and the explanations.

I know Sen. Thomas was a bit concerned that, maybe, we should have more explanations and, maybe, we should get behind the numbers some more to understand what are the implications of certain things not being done. The fact of the matter is that when I looked at some of the explanations provided, I wondered about Sen. Thomas' request. We delegate authority and we have some independent bodies from which we allocate funds; we have some ministries to which we allocate funds, and we would expect, by and large, that the heads of those units would have the authority to act and to respond to changing circumstances.

I would like to illustrate, and I would just start at the very beginning of the explanations we provided. Under Head 1—and I think Sen. Daly made the point about the President—the transfer was to supplement overseas travel from savings realized by the office not acquiring a vehicle. If we take the point from Sen. Thomas, I am not too sure how wise it would be to request the President to explain why—or the implications of this vehicle not being acquired, for there to be more detailing in the explanations that we should provide in the variations when we come before the Senate on an annual, or how many times a year, basis.

The same thing could be said of Head 4, where we spoke of the payment of medical expenses for the former President of the Industrial Court. Moneys were spent. They had to find the money and they thought that the way they should do

it—in fact, in the case before us, probably for some administrative reason they did not appoint five judges and there they found the money to spend for that.

**5.30 p.m.**

Whether we should have gone and asked: Why were the five judges not appointed and what are the implications? I want to be guided to better facilitate the next presentation, so I am just responding to Sen. Thomas.

Mr. President, the point is that units are run by very senior people who, in my view, have delegated authority. The problem, of course, is when there is delegated authority and people do not do what they are supposed to. I think someone made the point earlier about the case of the Industrial Court, or some other place, where they under-budgeted for telephones. How do we make the accounting officer of that unit accountable for severely under-budgeting for something such as telephones? The point is that they have delegated authority to act and when they do not act, or do what they are supposed to do properly, we are going to have a problem in having them account; so we would have some sort of a balancing act to do there.

I think the most stirring contribution came from Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh who queried the cost of elections. I really cannot answer as to how much a general election costs the country, but I will soon find out. The fact of the matter is that the Elections and Boundaries Commission would seek moneys to run their business and they would be provided with all the funds. The fact is that we are now providing about \$2.5 million more than they had asked for because they need to do the work, therefore, nobody could say that the Elections and Boundaries Commission was not provided with the funds needed, as an independent body, to conduct elections. I am not too sure that the request for precise details of the explanation for the \$2.5 million was really required, but if they would really be required I would be happy to provide them, but we would simply be providing what we got from the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

The point Sen. Teelucksingh made about the poor and underprivileged, and the need to address the social needs of the country, is the one that really touched me. I have said, since coming into office, that this country is too rich for us to have destitute people here. In fact, two weeks ago I called Clive Pantin and related to him the same point, that this place is too rich for us to have destitute people. Let us forget poor people. Let us start with the destitute, because it always worries me that we wait until there is a report in a newspaper about a really sad case after which a number of people rush to try to help. I have always wondered

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about the other 2,000 very poor destitute cases that do not reach the news. Why is it that as a people, not only as a government, we cannot identify these destitute people and have them reached before they totally and absolutely collapse?

The issue of eradicating poverty through education is great and that, in fact, is one of the major thrusts of the Government. That is why every child coming out of primary school must get a secondary school place and nobody must be considered a dropout. That is why there is the plan to increase the number of secondary school students going to university and to ensure, particularly, that a bright child with poor parents is not deprived of the opportunity to go to university. That is what this plan is all about. When that plan is implemented it will ensure that poverty would be eradicated in a very permanent way, but that plan will take some time. It is not going to address poverty tomorrow morning, but our challenge in this term is to address poverty tomorrow morning. We are going to start with the destitute and move towards having funds in place to consolidate more efforts by various bodies that provide this kind of support, apart from the Ministry of Human Development, Youth and Culture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and others.

As Minister of Finance, in the years that I spend in office—assuming that I last for the full five—if it is one thing I would wish to accomplish would be the eradication of destitution in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, some questions were asked on specific things to which I would like to respond. Sen. Montano made reference to the National Enterprises Limited. I did make an announcement that the Initial Public Offering (IPO) for National Enterprises Limited was going to be launched on February 5, 2001 and we hope to raise \$200 million. I remind Sen. Montano that in the 1999/2000 year—I am not talking about this year—the overall outturn on the revenue side showed a shortfall of \$715 million, partly accounted for the fact that sale of assets fell short by \$869 million. In fact, if we had received all the revenue from the sale of assets of \$909 million, we would not have had a shortfall of revenue. The reason for the shortfall in the sale of assets was that in the 1999/2000 year it was budgeted for revenues from National Enterprises Limited of \$720 million to have been realized. In fact, for the year 2000/2001 that \$720 million is now back on the revenue side to ensure that we balance our budget this year. If we do not sell



shares of National Enterprises Limited to realize that \$720 million we are going to have a shortfall this year, 2001.

In terms of what we are using that money for, it is already in the budget as revenue for the year. With respect to the Oil Stabilization Fund where \$415 million was put, legislation would be brought before the Senate very shortly to put mechanisms in place by which moneys could be taken from that fund. The fact of the matter is that in any year where the income from oil is in excess of what was budgeted, as we have had for the last several months, the surplus above the budgeted amount would be put. This fund would be managed by independent people appointed by the President and would be used in a very prescribed manner so that whatever administration—this administration or any successive ones—would blow that money for no good reason.

**5.40 p.m.**

Sen. Gillette spent some time on debt. He was able to spend much time on it. He acted as Minister of Finance a few days ago for two days. I am sure he benefitted from it. He made reference to the debt in the context of gross domestic product (GDP).

I draw the Senate's attention to the fact that if we look at external debt as a percentage of GDP, in 1991, the percentage of external debt to GDP was 45.9 per cent. Progressively from 1991 to the year 1999—and I will stay at the year 1999 rather than go to an estimated 2000—the percentage of external debt to GDP is now 23 per cent.

In the case of internal debt to GDP, we were 21.6 per cent in 1991 and 21.5 per cent in 1999. That reinforces the point that Sen. Gillette was making that we have to look at debt in the context of GDP rather than in absolute terms.

Mr. President, I am satisfied about the current state of the economy. The rate of GDP growth within the past five or six years has been at a good rate, averaging 6 per cent. Inflation has been low, single digit, and should continue to be low, single digit, if we look at the year 2000 into the year 2001, notwithstanding the fact that we speak of the concerns of the exchange rate and how much money the Central Bank has had to put into the system. The fact is that our external assets are at a very, very comfortable number at the moment.

The warning came out that we need to be cautious about the extent of the growing debt. While we may have argued that we have to look at debt in the context of GDP and not in absolute terms, we have heard the concerns expressed.

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We are aware of them and I will be reviewing those numbers very, very carefully to ensure that the gains that we have made over the past five years are not thrown away.

Mr. President, I beg to move.

**Mr. President:** Now that the Minister has concluded his reply, I take the opportunity to congratulate him on his maiden contribution.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be now read a third time and passed.*

*Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.*

*Motion made and question proposed, That the Senate do now adjourn to a date to be fixed. [Sen. The Hon. L. Gillette]*

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Senate adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 5.47 p.m.*