

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, March 27, 2001***SENATE***Tuesday, March 27, 2001*

The Senate met at 1.32 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 for the following Senators: Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand for the period March 21, 2001 to May 5, 2001 and to Sen. Martin Daly from today's sitting.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following communication from His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, T.C.,
O.C.C., S.C., President and Commander-in-Chief
of 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 duties 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 effect from 26th March, 2001 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 23rd day of March, 2001.”

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES
(Appointment of)**

Mr. President: I have also received the following letter from the hon. Speaker of the House of Representatives:

“March 26, 2001.

Senator The Hon. Ganace Ramdial
President of the Senate
Parliament
The Red House
Abercromby Street

PORT OF SPAIN

Dear Mr. President,

Appointment of Joint Select Committees

In accordance with Section 66A of the Constitution, at a sitting held on Friday, March 23, 2001, the House agreed to the following resolution:—

BE IT RESOLVED that the House appoint the following five Members to serve with an equal number from the Senate to inquire into and report to the House on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission on their administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any other criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions:

Mr. Subhas Panday

Mr. Carlos John

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar

(Two Opposition Members to be named)

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the House also appoint the following five Members to serve with an equal number from the Senate to inquire into and report to the House on Government Ministries with responsibility areas listed in Part I of the Appendix and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises which fall within the purview of such Ministries, or which received funding from the State of more than two-thirds of its total income in any one year, on their administration, manner of exercise of their powers,

methods of functioning and on any other criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions:

Mr. Subhas Panday

Mr. Ganga Singh

Mr. Trevor Sudama

(Two Opposition Members to be named)

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the House also appoint the following five Members to serve with an equal number from the Senate to inquire into and report to the House on Government Ministries with responsibility areas listed in Part II of the Appendix and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises which fall within the purview of such Ministries, or which received funding from the State of more than two-thirds of its income in any one year, on their administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any other criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions:

Mr. Mervyn Assam

Mr. Ralph Maraj

Dr. Hamza Rafeeq

(Two Opposition Members to be named)

The Resolution is accordingly forwarded for the attention of the Senate at the earliest convenience.

It is important for me to advise you that during the debate in the House of Representatives, the Opposition declared its intention, through the Opposition Chief Whip, not to nominate Members to serve on these Joint Select Committees.

Yours sincerely

Hon. Dr. Rupert Griffith, MP
Speaker"

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette): Mr. President, at the appropriate stage, I propose to move a Motion in relation to the correspondence from the House of Representatives which you have just read.

Oath of Allegiance

Tuesday, March 27, 2001

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

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

SHIPPING (MARINE POLLUTION) BILL

Bill to provide for powers and jurisdiction in relation to pollution of the seas from ships, intervention on the high seas in cases of oil pollution, dumping of wastes at sea, prevention of pollution from ships, preparedness and response for oil pollution emergencies, liability and compensation for pollution damage and matters incidental thereto [*The Minister of Transport*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. [*Hon. L. Gillette*]

AIR NAVIGATION BILL

Bill to make provision for the regulation of the establishment and operation of airports, for the maintenance and operation of air navigation facilities, for the carrying out of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, for the promotion and regulation safety in air navigation and for purposes related thereto [*The Minister of Transport*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. [*Hon. L. Gillette*]

Question put and agreed to.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES
(Appointment of)**

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette): Mr. President, I beg to move the following Procedural Motion in relation to the letter from the House of Representatives:

Whereas the Senate and the House of Representatives on Tuesday, March 20, 2001 and on Friday, March 23, 2001, respectively approved resolutions in respect of the appointments of Members to joint select committees in accordance with section 66A of the Constitution;

Be it Resolved that the persons appointed for the time being to serve on the joint select committees shall constitute the respective joint select committees, notwithstanding any failure by the Senate or the House of Representatives to appoint the full number of Senators or Members of the House of Representatives referred to in the said resolution;

And be it further resolved that the Senate reserve to the Leader of the Opposition, without further vote, the right to name two Members of the House of Representatives and one Senator to be added to each of these committees who shall thereupon become members of the committees.

I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

**SUSTAINABLE GROWTH
(Government's Policy)**

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [February 13, 2001]:

Be It Resolved that Government make a full statement to this House on its plans to meet the objectives of sustainable growth with particular regard to involving citizens in planning the development of the country, minimizing negative effects of physical development, enforcement of planning decisions and meeting its obligations to international treaties for protection of the environment.
[Sen. Prof. J. Kenny]

Question again proposed.

1.45 p.m.

Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh: Mr. President, I rise to speak on the question raised by Sen. Prof. Kenny on sustainable growth and development, and to also discuss the response in Sen. Kangaloo's contribution.

Sen. Prof. Kenny emphasized that we, as a Government, must ensure that future generations are not prevented from achieving their own needs by, amongst others, elimination of poverty, higher standards of living, reduction of consumption levels and so forth. We would like to sincerely thank Sen. Prof. Kenny for bringing this valuable issue to the forefront of Parliament so that we could discuss it in a non-combative way, because the vision of Trinidad and Tobago must be set for the next 20 to 30 years. This is what our Government has been doing and will continue to do within the next month or two.

This Government became quite aware in November, 1995 that sustainable development rests on strong political will, and that painful choices would have to be made to effect benefits to the society and a better more sustainable quality of life to all citizens. In 1995 we promised to give you a better chance, and you will undoubtedly agree with me that we are far better off today than we were five years ago. You can see it.

After five years, we accounted to the electorate with a clear sense of pride in our accomplishments. There was governance with a passion, planning to improve the quality of all our lives, managing of our economic and financial affairs and the creation of 60,000 jobs. There was development and opportunities for our youths through enhanced education and training, empowering and improving the well-being of the needy, elderly and communities. We encouraged enterprise and small business growth and we improved the quality of lives of all our workers.

We are set on crime prevention, security, peace of mind, legal reform and justice and we embarked on an education revolution and people's development process. We set a platform of infrastructure to sustain this development. There was growth in tourism, improvement of our health services and establishment of a First World energy sector. We were supporting agriculture, preserving our natural resources for future generations. We ensured that culture and sports became integral tenets of our development and we continued to enhance the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. We secured our place in the international position and began fulfilling our contract with the people.

Mr. President, the United National Congress achievements are to be viewed in the context of the 1995 election results of the UNC, the PNM and the NAR winning 17/17/2 seats, respectively. A tenuous situation, without doubt, for any country, but through our strong leadership, courage and strength, we developed a basis for governance and stability.

When we took office in December 1995, we said that Trinidad and Tobago was a nation in crisis; crime was endemic. The villains were going undetected and the nation was under a state of siege by the criminals. Over 30 per cent of our citizens were living with little hope and in despair as they were either unemployed or underemployed. The education system was woefully inadequate and restrictive with dilapidated, overcrowded and unsatisfactory schools, with drugs and violence taking hold on growing minds. We were not preparing a new generation for the future, which is a technological, competitive world.

In the midst of the last five years we had to cope with the effects of the collapse of the Asian economies followed by Russia and Brazil with their unique problems. In 1998 one of the fundamental tenets of our economy, the oil price, plunged to US \$9 per barrel against the budgeted price of US \$14. In addition and in a diverse society like ours, governance had to be exercised under consistent attacks from certain quarters of the media; and this we had to withstand.

In spite of these hurdles, our Government, under the leadership of hon. Basdeo Panday, achieved more than any previous government administration in its first term of office. Our commitment to performance and delivery to satisfy the country and to build a better Trinidad and Tobago had been and still continues to be our resolute purpose.

Trade liberalization, economic trading blocs, new technology and the death of distance have redefined the way we live and do business. This is an era when the vision and courage of leadership are critical to the success of nations; the courage to stand firm on jobs for everyone. We created 60,000 jobs; the protection and support for women; the provision of a modern First World airport for our citizens; water for all; Trinidad and Tobago relationships; doubling pension for the elderly; education for every child through pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary school; standardization of school books; reduction of crime and the state of siege in the country; the death penalty; the prosecution of drug lords; equal opportunities and tremendous advancement in the infrastructure of roads, bridges, flyovers, markets, police stations, health centres and so forth.

To manage the country with the slimmest of majorities, for the entire elected term of Government and to achieve such a considerable amount, are the qualities which define our leadership. In contrast, the leadership of the previous government, despite an absolute majority in Parliament, was unable to exercise the judgment and leadership to perform and complete its term in office. They abdicated their responsibilities in less than their five-year term. It is very strange that they wanted to go back.

Competitiveness demands the very highest standards of corporate governance both in the private and public sector. Mr. President, we governed with a passion. There was leadership with a passion and a commitment for performance as has been done with education, pensions, mortgage, single-parent and maternity benefits, and where race, class, religion and political affiliation were of no consequence. Each citizen continues to have access to all the basic requirements of life, including health care, shelter, utilities and security, on the basis of purely objective criteria and need, and not of secular interest. We planned to improve the quality of all our lives.

Our Government, in its first term in office, recognized and accepted the need for stable continuity, but, at the same time, the need for change and a new direction to pursue the future. This Government has been successful in both. This success was achieved through a participatory planning process we advocated and employed for the country, as a whole, and for all ministries and arms of Government.

We defined the shared vision, and through this I would like to share with all Members of this Senate our vision for Trinidad and Tobago: unity, equality and opportunity. I will pass this on during the course of the proceedings so that every Member of this Senate could have a copy of the vision that the UNC Government has for Trinidad and Tobago.

Our shared vision brought together the key institutional leaders in the country, from the political directorate, the public service, the Inter-religious Organization, the labour movement, the chambers of commerce, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, Tobago and academia. Collectively we developed a vision for Trinidad and Tobago and a strategy to pursue this vision. This was done in November 1996 in Tobago, when all the key stakeholders came together in bringing about this vision. The UNC Government adopted and pursued this national vision and strategy, hence the reason for our strong governance and strong accomplishments during our five-year term of office.

The UNC Government has prepared and worked with its socio-economic and sector plans as a guide and road map to achieve all that it has achieved during the five years. The effectiveness of these plans can be aptly seen and spoken about in the accomplishments of the last five years of the Government. We fully understand the pathway to our goals.

We adopted national physical planning, financial and fiscal planning and we changed the fiscal year to facilitate the timely implementation of major public works projects in particular. The fiscal year was changed from the calendar year to the 12-month period from October 1—September 30. While this change was talked about for many years, the UNC Government made the change. We are always visioning and planning for a better future.

Mr. President, let us talk about managing of our economic and financial affairs. The economy since 1995 has grown stronger every year with an average growth rate of 5.5 per cent per annum. This is four times higher than the previous administration and there has never been negative growth. Foreign reserves are now more than foreign debt. Five years ago our foreign debt was almost three times our foreign reserves. This Government has more than doubled our foreign reserves from US \$652 million to US \$1,740 million; US \$1.74 billion.

We have maintained a very stable exchange rate against the US dollar and confidence in our currency. We have never devalued our currency during our term of office. The previous administration devalued on three occasions between 1991 and 1994. The nation's debt is now rated as investment grade, while during the

previous administration it was rated as speculative. External debt reduced from \$1.9 billion in 1995 to US \$1.5 billion at the end of 1999; \$4 billion less. External debt service declined from 15 per cent of earnings from exports in 1995 to 7.6 per cent at the end of 1999. We reduced external debt by nearly 8 per cent.

Mr. President, between 1991 and 1995, the previous administration increased the public debt by \$11.1 billion, whilst the present Government increased public debt by only \$6.8 billion. Government has put \$415 million into the Revenue Stabilization Fund to protect and invest in future programmes, Sen. Prof. Kenny, so that we could continue to sustain the growth and development that you have been speaking about.

Inflation averaged 3.7 per cent per annum over the last five years, compared to 6.6 per cent per annum during the previous administration; so we reduced inflation. Inflation in 2000 was about 3 per cent, the lowest in two decades.

Foreign investment doubled and it continues to boom. It will continue to boom if Senators on the other side decide that they must work with us for the development of Trinidad and Tobago, and not put us through this one year of all sorts of court procedures and so on. It is time to stop this and we must move on with the development of the country so that all the people of Trinidad and Tobago will benefit. Foreign investment will continue to move to us. It averaged US \$682 million per annum from 1996 to now. In 1995, during the previous administration, foreign investment was US \$296 million. We are receiving \$682 million per year in foreign investment since 1995.

2.00 p.m.

Trinidad and Tobago has now achieved middle income status. We have provided sound, positive management of our financial affairs. Between 1995 and 2000, over 60,000 jobs have been created, twice as many from 1991—1995. The 60,000 jobs were created over a range of sectors demonstrating our success in diversifying the economy as follows: construction sector, 9,000 jobs; wholesale/retail restaurants and hotels, 10,000; finance, insurance real estate and businesses, 11,000; transport, storage and communication, 12,000; social and personal services including teachers, police and self-employed, 19,000. So that shows our capacity and capability in helping to diversify our economy. There were 60,000 new jobs created in a diversified economy.

The unemployment rate has fallen every year from 17.2 per cent in 1995 to 12.5 per cent today even while the labour force is expanding. There has been continued and sustained strengthening of the economy coupled with training so

that the nation's families and businesses can thrive, succeed and add jobs whilst reducing the tax burden on our families.

We continue to develop opportunities for our youths through enhanced education training. Our youths comprise nearly 20 per cent of our population. From school to work in order to broker a partnership between the private sector and our young people, we have introduced an apprenticeship allowance of 200 per cent of all remuneration paid which is designed to encourage more companies to hire secondary and post-secondary students between the ages of 16—24 for short-term apprenticeship programmes. This is taking effect this year and is intended to provide these apprentices with relevant experience and exposure to the world of work. This is what we want to do for our youths, Mr. President.

Skills training: We have developed new tertiary skills training: the National Energy Skills Centre; distance learning centres and College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) amongst other initiatives, to ensure that our youths develop the skills for productive work and the spirit of entrepreneurship and enterprise.

Sports: We have recognized our sporting personalities, past and present, and have maintained and developed our sporting facilities and infrastructure to build pride in our youths and provide them with the resources to productively expend their energies, not to go to drugs. We are building new major football stadia in preparation for the World Youth Football Tournament. We have improved over 250 recreational grounds and associated facilities; brought swimming pools, basketball courts, netball courts, et cetera to all areas of the country.

We continue to empower and improve the well-being of the needy and the elderly in the communities and there is protection and development of our women: 50 per cent of the population. The Maternity Protection Act was introduced. This guarantees pay for maternity leave to female employees and protects women from losing their jobs because of pregnancy. No legislation was put in place by the previous administration to protect pregnant women from discrimination in the workplace. There was comprehensive legislation to protect women, including the Domestic Violence Act of 1999. In addition, we have established 19 drop-in centres for immediate assistance and information and every new police station is better equipped to provide assistance to victims. Further, police officers are being trained to provide more effective intervention in such situations.

We conducted training sessions and workshops on domestic violence issues. The United National Congress Government passed a Cohabital Relationships

Act. The main beneficiaries are women, who have historically been deprived of property and assets while in common law unions. Many single women find themselves raising families and are in need of training geared towards finding work. The Women Second Chances Project launched by Dr. The Hon. Daphne Phillips in that term of office began in 1999 and provides training for employment in three components: agriculture, elderly care and establishment of homework centres.

Single mothers have been recipients of assistance through family grants. We have made grants and training available through the Micro-Enterprise Training and Development Programme to persons in real need who receive public assistance, and victims of domestic violence. We have established a fund to provide financial assistance to young children orphaned by acts of domestic violence.

The most needy: We have increased public assistance benefits from October 1st, 2000. An individual will now receive \$222 a month. Benefits to a two-person household will now amount to \$428 a month; a three-person household will receive \$625 a month; a four-person household will receive \$720 per month; a single mother and child will now receive \$428 per month. A training allowance targeted at single mothers receiving public assistance is being provided. Single mothers will also receive a grant of \$100 for every month they are in training up to a maximum period of six months.

Mr. President, and Senators, community-based organizations and NGOs deliver food hampers every month to about 7,500 families throughout this country. We have relief centres serving 24,000 meals per month to the most needy. A minimum wage of \$7.00 an hour was introduced. No wage rate was ever introduced by the previous administration to protect workers. Government has removed VAT on many basic food items. In fact, the previous administration placed duties on imported meat and powdered milk et cetera. In 1993, under the previous administration, food prices increased by 17.5 per cent. The Government zero rated food items for VAT purposes and removed import duties on those items which attracted duty—and we know the list of them—basic items in the household for the poor person, and this is real alleviation of poverty.

What did we do about the physical challenge? Customs duty and VAT were removed from a number of items of health care equipment in an effort to alleviate the hardship faced by our physically challenged citizens. In 1997, we introduced the disability assistance grant which provides much needed financial assistance to

approximately 2,000 persons with permanent disabilities who are over 40 years of age.

Mr. President, this is what governance is about; this is what leadership is about; this is what shared vision is about; and this is what strength and capacity to deliver effectively and efficiently during a five-year term is about. There are so many more things that we have done and I want to continue for a while longer on some of these things to remind Senators that we are in the quest to ensure that sustainable growth and development will continue and we must have a vision for not only the next five or 10 years, but we must share this vision for the next 30 years and move Trinidad and Tobago from a Third World State to a First World economy during this decade.

Taking care of the elderly: The elderly is nearly 35 per cent of the population. The elderly consists of persons 65 years and over and comprises one-third of the population. The Government has increased the old age pension benefit by over 100 per cent from \$356 to \$720. In the entire period of the previous administration, the pension benefit was increased by only \$41.00. For senior citizens 60 years and over, we have increased their personal allowance from \$20,000 to \$30,000 from the year of income 2001. We made thousands more senior citizens eligible for pension benefits by raising the qualifying income to \$8,640. Over 70,000 of our senior citizens will benefit from this increase. The previous administration largely ignored our senior citizens.

We also initiated a Hardship Relief Programme to cut annual water rates by up to 25 per cent for thousands of pensioners who had given their life to this country. In 1999, the UNC Government took up the plight of retired public servants. Before that, their pension levels had not been increased for 14 years. In 1999, we increased the basic monthly pension by \$75.00 at the higher income level and by \$250.00 at the lower income level. For those retired public servants who received pension of less than \$2,500 per month, we have further increased their pension from October 1, 2000 by \$150 per month, that is \$400 within two years. This measure would benefit more than 15,000 retired public servants.

For the first time in Trinidad and Tobago daily-paid workers in the public service can look forward to receiving a pension on retirement. Some 30,000 workers will receive a minimum of \$1000 per month when they retire. This is after 30 years of negotiation between the government at that time, and the National Union of Government and Federated Workers (NUGFW). It took our Government to change that within a five-year period.

We developed community outreach programmes to alleviate poverty using our community centres which are well-equipped and we refurbished 53 community centres and constructed new ones throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Through the Adopt a Community Programme, private sector companies are assisting some 20 communities across Trinidad and Tobago: new hope is alive in these communities. The corporate sponsors of these communities provide funding for a wide variety of projects.

We regularized thousands of squatters; we introduced a tiered interest rate structure for lending to low income owners where the first \$10,000 lent would be interest free. We increased the ceiling on loans under the approved mortgage lending programme from \$300,000 to \$350,000 with effect from January 1, 2001. Tax on interest income had been reduced from its current level of 10 per cent to 5 per cent with effect from the year of income 2001.

Mr. President, Members of this Senate, we attacked poverty and took Trinidad and Tobago amongst the top five in the developing world poverty relief in debts. This success was achieved through a comprehensive approach to improving the quality of life of all our people. This Government has shown that it cares for the needy, the elderly, the pensioners, the retired public servants, the taxpayers and the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We even care for the Opposition, Mr. President.

What have we done about enterprise and small business growth? Our district youth Micro-enterprise Project helps to develop skills and obtain the resources which young people need to become successful entrepreneurs. Of the 4,310 registered small businesses, the Small Business Development Company (SBDC) is guaranteeing loans for more than 2,500. The SBDC is now able to provide loan guarantees up to a limit of \$250,000.

Through the National Commission for Self Help, \$23 million was used to finance more than 1,500 projects, 80 more projects amounting to over \$8 million were funded through NGOs. In total, these efforts benefit approximately 7,000 persons across the country. Then we have the Community Development Fund which is playing a vital part in our strategy to alleviate poverty through the funds provided for community-based projects and the creation of employment opportunities.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. President, we have increased and improved the ability to fight crime by implementation of the E999 rapid response system and the Law Enforcement

Sustainable Growth
[SEN. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Tuesday, March 27, 2001

Action Plan (LEAP) programme in order to summon police assistance 24 hours a day. We introduced the national violence hotline and officers have received extensive training in dealing with domestic violence situations. Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran knows that the previous administration ignored domestic violence reports. Officers refused to take complaints of domestic violence. The population now has more confidence in the police to report crimes such as rape, incest and domestic violence. That is through our efforts.

Introduction of a new technology to improve police, crime fighting and efficiency: We have refurbished 16 police stations and construction of 14 new police stations will begin, to improve the working conditions of the police officers. For too long they have worked in cramped situations, with leaking roofs and poor accommodation. We increased community policing to prevent crime; we brought police officers into communities, specifically trained to deal with community problems. In order to take criminals off the streets, we increased the police presence on the streets with 741 new police officers on foot, mobile and Highway Patrol. We modernized much of the legal infrastructure for fighting crime and added laws for the seizure of criminal assets. You remember the seizure of the Dole Chadee estate. During the previous administration, the police were marching around the Red House, and crime fighting by the PNM administration focused only on peripheral issues, like banning music in maxi-taxis. I have just enunciated our work in the crime sector.

The police and defence force have conducted more than 10,000 raids on drug blocks, resulting in over 7,000 arrests during our five-year term of office, between 1995—2000. We strengthened the Coast Guard and deployed anti-drug-aircraft ships to protect our shores. We also signed the Shiprider Agreement with the USA to further strengthen our capabilities to fight the drug lords.

Administrative structures, planning, technology and physical facilities of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs were transformed and this contributed to the ministry being more focused and significantly able to improve its performance. Over 270 pieces of legislation came through this Parliament between 1995—2000. They were therefore able to contribute to the fight against crime, to initiate legal reform, to improve the justice system and to provide security and peace of mind to all our people.

Trinidad and Tobago is well on its way to being the second country in the world, the other being Finland, to have fully complied with the submission of human rights reports to the United Nations.

The UNC Government increased the number of High Court judges from 16 to 20, that is, by 25 per cent—and the media says that we are against the Judiciary. We have increased the number of Court of Appeal judges from six to nine; that is, by 50 per cent; we provided 12 more magistrates. We increased the administrative and support staff of the Judiciary and the magistracy; and we created a court administrative department to assist the Chief Justice. I would like to repeat that, we created a court administrative department to assist the Chief Justice.

Since 1996, the legislative landscape of Trinidad and Tobago has been remodelled to meet the needs of a modern developing nation, entering the 21st Century. Laws have been passed to promote oneness, transparency and accountability in the state sector. The law was passed so that Members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate can scrutinize any ministry or any state agency. It is bewildering and very disappointing to see that there is no participation from the Opposition. We will welcome them in the future. I hope that they would have a change of heart and see the need for coming together for the benefit of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. This is not partisan politics, it is the people of Trinidad and Tobago who will benefit from their coming together and working together as a team. So the UNC Government has put the criminal justice system and the protective services to work for the people.

Mr. President, I now come to the contribution of Sen. Kangaloo. She tried to show that this Government did nothing for the education system during our five years in office. I want to remind this honourable Senate that between 1991—1995, all the then Government did during its four years was to create a Green Paper on Education. It took them three years, and one year to create a White Paper on Education. Of course, the educators who came together to formulate that White Paper were extremely competent, so we as the Government, non-partisan, decided to accept the recommendations of that White Paper and went forward very quickly to implement most of its recommendations. We even went beyond the recommendations and created a revolution in the education process, which is continuing.

Our children up to age 15 constitute 26 per cent of the population. We have been able to establish universal education for all, something that the Opposition had not been able to do for 30 years. No longer would some of our 11-year-old children have to drop out of school. You would have seen the United Nations Development Report in the newspaper today. It is the Opposition that has caused this massive dropout of school children for 30 years. Almost 300,000 citizens of Trinidad and Tobago below the age of 35 have not received a secondary

education. They are unemployable and unemployed. Five thousand to 10,000 children every year, for 30 years, were unable to get a place in a secondary school. We said, enough is enough, and we put an end to that. The Prime Minister gave the Education Minister that portfolio and we did it. That is determination to succeed. We know that there are difficult choices to make. We make difficult choices and the children are benefiting. We will continue to improve upon this by providing tertiary skills training for those over 15 years, and thereafter, a mechanism for a job in an apprenticeship programme.

Our Government's focus on education starts with the youngest child. We all know that the brain of the child is most vulnerable and if we do not educate that child at an early age, that child finds difficulty in catching up. So we are continuing to focus on the development of the child at a young age. Scientific studies confirm that pre-school education improves our children's long-term school performance and curbs antisocial behaviour and delinquency. This, we recognize, is an investment with large returns. We are so grateful that Sen. Prof. Kenny brought this Motion to the Parliament so that we can share with Members on the Independent and Opposition Benches the strong desire to transform this country, where every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago must be educated. It is a sad day when 300,000 to 400,000 people in Trinidad and Tobago are left out of the national, economic development process. Why has this got to happen in a population of 1.3 million people? It is very sad.

Primary schooling: We have built 18 new childhood care and education centres in communities across the country. When we came into office there were only about six early childhood education centres, so poor children in rural areas could not access early childhood education. How long the people in the rural areas had to suffer. I came from Fyzabad and Sen. Prof. Ramchand came from Cedros. If our parents were not strong enough to push us into an education process, neither of us would have been educated. For 30 years, the Government at that time never saw the benefit of early childhood education.

2.25 p.m.

We have upgraded another 22 centres and plan to build 10 more this year and this kind of investment in infrastructure will continue until all our youngest children have a place in the pre-school. We are reducing primary school classes from 30 students per teacher to 24, making the classes easier to manage. A teacher now has to concentrate on 24 children rather than 30 children. This way, each

student receives more attention and each teacher spends more time teaching. Therefore, we must hire and train more teachers and build more classrooms.

In the last five years we have built 27 new primary schools, seven more are under construction. We have repaired more than 100 primary schools out of the 500. We ended the abominable Common Entrance Examination system and replaced it with the Secondary Examination Assessment, and March 29 marks that examination, and it marks the anniversary of the former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. The Hon. Eric Williams. So the SEA date of March 29 is a hallmark day in the life of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a day when we remember the distinguished service of the hon. Prime Minister at that time, Eric Williams, and it is a day when we will mark the Secondary Examination Assessment, replacing the abominable Common Entrance Examination. [*Desk thumping*] That was the dream of the hon. Prime Minister at that time, that every child must have a secondary education, and this is what we fulfilled. [*Interruption*].

Mr. President: Senators, please.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It is all right, Mr. President, I could be heckled, but the facts are the facts and nobody will disturb the facts. The facts are there to see—

Mr. President: If a Member is asked to cease making comments, you should not be permitted to continue to make comments on the other side. Just proceed with your contribution.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. President.

We have also standardized the textbooks in primary schools in order to reduce the cost to parents. Over the last 20 to 30 years, there was a school textbook fiasco amounting to almost \$200 million per year, and when the hon. Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday, appointed a textbook committee with Clive Pantin chairing it, I was the person with Clive on the committee. For three to four months we interviewed principals, teachers, booksellers, printers, and there was massive corruption that took place every year. Children were asked to buy five books per subject, and you have five subjects. They had to carry 15 and 20 schoolbooks in their bags, and you remember how the children could not go to school with these books on their backs.

We made one strong determination, that there must be only one book per subject, and we standardized the books, so that the children can now take five

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books in their schoolbags; one book per subject. So where the parent used to spend almost \$1,500 per year on school books, they are now spending a maximum of \$300. Could you understand and imagine how poor parents benefited from that? Those books will now be used for three years in succession, so that if that parent has another child who needs to go on to that school, that other child would be able to use that book. This is what strength of purpose is; this is what governance is; this is what people who have moral conviction to change things are capable of doing.

What about feeding of our school children? We expanded the school-feeding programme to 80,000 students. We are providing lunches five days a week in the primary schools and three days a week in the secondary schools, and we have established a pilot programme, serving school breakfast to 1,000 students. You know that if children go to school hungry, there is decreased oxygenation to their brain and the children cannot concentrate in the class. So when a child goes to school hungry, that child will never be able to learn.

We know that other governments had helped in the school-feeding programme, but we know it is a good thing and we are improving on it tremendously. Give Jack his jacket; they did some work, but we are improving on it.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. L. Gillette*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

What have we done for secondary schools? We have built 10 new secondary schools and every child has the opportunity to receive secondary education. Not a single secondary school was built by the last administration. This led to over 10,000 children not being placed in a secondary school every year, as I mentioned before. Later this year, construction of another 10 secondary schools will commence: In Charleville, Diego Martin, Guayaguayare, La Brea, La Romaine, Palo Seco, Preysal, Rio Claro, Charlotteville and St. Patrick in Tobago. This is what this United National Congress Government is doing, building schools in the rural areas, so that children do not have to take two hours to go to school, and cannot even reach to the schools in the cities. The schools will be right there on their doorsteps and teachers will be there, because we have increased the salaries

for teachers; we have increased the salaries for principals. I cannot remember the full amount, but it is close to a 60 to 70 per cent increase in teachers' salaries that we have given.

We expanded the school transportation system by providing 12,671 seats per day on routes to 50 schools; by providing dedicated school buses. I am sure that the hon. Minister Jearlean John will tell you how many more school buses will be introduced in Trinidad and Tobago very shortly. The UNC Government has put security guards in 55 high risk schools.

What about tertiary training? The UNC Government has continued to support the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine as the premier tertiary level institute in the country and the region. It continues to provide nearly \$300 million to support a student population of approximately 6,800. It has paid off indebtedness to UWI incurred by the previous administration, of \$300 million. We have paid it off, and we have paid off the interest as well.

Through its national science technology and innovative policy, the Government will continue to enhance the university's capacity and capability, not only in training, but in research innovation and development in high level graduate training in science and technology. We are launching the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology as another training provider for technology and skills-base training to support industry. We established the COSTAATT to provide an integrated and expanded community college system for Trinidad and Tobago.

We are expanding distance learning. The Government has built nine distance learning centres to teach computer literacy and to provide international higher educational opportunities. We are operating 10 National Energy Skills Centres in partnership with firms in the energy sector to serve communities across this country: Point Fortin, Tunapuna, Debe. One at Arima is scheduled for 2001.

This Government proposes to expand the Student Revolving Loan and the Student Loan Guarantee Facility to include all local post-secondary education institutions accredited by the relevant ministry. We have made more than 220,000 textbooks available to over 53,000 needy students through the school-based book loan scheme. We took our children off the streets and sent them to school. More than 1,600 new teachers were hired. We trained hundreds of teachers on the on-the-job training, so that new teachers begin with real classroom experience. That is improving the quality of the education system.

We trained teachers in computer studies to take advantage of the 1,000 new computers we have distributed to secondary schools. We have improved teacher-

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training and curriculum upgrades; we have changed the primary school curriculum; we have made significant improvement to teachers' salaries in their recent negotiations for a three-year and nine-month agreement. So pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools, technical institutes, community college and university, all in partnership and allowing one seamless flow. Can you better this mission?

The UNC Government is committed to building a better competitive Trinidad and Tobago through education and training of its citizens. No previous administration has done more for enhancing the capacity of our citizens than this Government. Could you imagine what we will do in the next five years?

I have information on the platform of infrastructure to sustained development: Seaports, airports, postal services; a platform on telecommunications which we were discussing in the Senate; quality standardization and certification; water. Over 356,000 persons enjoy pipe-borne water 24 hours a day. Under the previous administration, only 8 percent or 85,000 of our population could have counted on getting water 24 hours a day—85,000 to 356,000, seven days per week and half the country received water a mere two days a week?

2.35 p.m.

Mr. President, more than 80 per cent of our families have received pipe-borne water. It is expected that under the UNC, 100 per cent of our families would receive this pipe-borne water within the next year. A mere 11 per cent of the population had 24-hour water supply and over 700 communities received water once every two weeks under the previous administration. We laid 400 kilometers of new and replacement mains that brought water to areas of our country that have never seen a dripping tap. We increased total water production by more than 100 million litres per day by over 50 per cent. We helped people with their water bills, more than 22,000 of whom benefited from discounted water bills through a hardship relief programme.

Mr. President, the list is long and endless, accomplishment upon accomplishment by this UNC Government. It is too much to mention in a short period of time. You could give me three hours and I would still be on my feet to tell you about the accomplishments. Compare that with over the last 30 years. Look at the accomplishments over five years and compare it to the 30 years. People come into the country every day and say “What a change this country is in now. We are really seeing tangible evidence of change”. People are seeing that things are becoming better and I am very grateful that Sen. Prof. Kenny brought

up this issue so that we can continue to talk about the sustainable growth and development that this country needs to continue.

There was growth in tourism. I have not even touched on the improvement in the health services. What we did in three and a half years, under this regime, had not been done in 30 years. In fact, in the health sector everything was allowed to decay. I would not go through that because I can tell you we have done 500 infrastructural projects, we have spent \$150 million on equipment and so forth. The only thing that beats us in the health sector in Trinidad and Tobago now is that we have two parallel employers which is creating difficulties. Do you know who brought that legislation? It is the Opposition who brought that legislation in 1994 with the Regional Health Authorities Act. They said that you could be seconded, transferred or whatnot, but nobody was seconded or transferred so there are 11,000 employees in the health sector: only 2,000 working with the RHAs and 9,000 working with the government sector. The RHAs have to account to the State for the work in the hospitals, but they have no responsibility over the public service employees. So, they can do anything and the RHAs have to account. That is the bad legislation that was brought about by the then administration in 1994.

Mr. President, I can talk about the first world energy sector and Trinidad and Tobago is now a global leader in the area of ammonia, methanol and energy production, especially in the use of natural gas global technologies. We know that we increased the reserves of gas from 8 trillion cubic feet to 22.5 trillion cubic feet in 1999. We doubled the natural gas production from 600 million cubic feet per day in 1995 to 1.4 billion cubic feet per day in the year 2000. This Government projected to receive an average of TT \$1.5 billion per annum over the next 20 years by bringing on the Atlantic LNG Train 1 project.

We have been able to attract and execute major capital investment projects, for example, Farmland MissChem ammonia plant, US \$300 million; PCS Nitrogen ammonia plant US \$300 million; Ispat DR3 Mega module, US \$240 million; Cliff and Associates HBI plant, US \$159 million; Pheonix Park Gas Processors, US \$150 million; TT Methanol Company Plant 4, US \$300 million. A range of additional projects are under development, for example, an ethylene complex, gas to liquids plant and Atlas methanol plant.

Mr. President, there is so much more to talk about on agriculture, natural resources for the future generations and preserving our natural resources for future generations. Sen. Prof. Kenny would know about the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amdt.) Act, the new Standards Act, the Plant Protection Act, the Livestock and Livestock Products Board Act, No. 40 of 1997, the Petroleum

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(Pollution Compensation) Regulations, the Theatres and Dance Halls (Amdt.) Act so that we would reduce the pollution of noise; National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago (Amdt.) Act, the Environmental Management Act and so forth. There are several pieces of proposed legislation which would enhance environmental management—this is especially for your ear, Sen. Prof. Kenny—which include the Minerals Bill, the Shipping (Marine Pollution) Bill, Planning and Land Development Bill, Beverage Containers Bill and the Judicial Review Bill—that one is not for you.

Mr. President, the Government's overarching aim, therefore, continues in the vein of trying to transform Trinidad and Tobago from a Third World State to first world standards and status in this decade. This is the vision of the hon. Prime Minister. This is what he has been espousing, this is what he wants his Government to share, this is what he wants the country to share and we are going to move on that crusade.

The achievement of this objective requires the mobilization of the entire nation and the active participation of the persons and organizations recognized as the broad leadership of this country. We already have the *National Strategic Development Planning Framework, 2000—2006*. Mr. President, this is a copy of the *National Strategic Development Planning Framework, 2000—2006*. This is planning, Mr. President. This is so voluminous that we would not even bother to discuss it at this time.

We are now in the process of a national vision and strategy. Just last night I was talking to a distinguished gentleman who, with four other businessmen, started the whole revolution in dismantling the apartheid process in South Africa. Four businessmen got together and decided to go to the then president of South Africa and showed where a national vision, if created, can ensure that the entire population of South Africa will benefit and the whole process of apartheid must fall. This is the team that did it. This is the team that is willing to continue to give us assistance in this process. There are so many people around the world, Harvard professors, people who have helped in the change in Hong Kong and South Africa. We are willing to bring them aboard so that we can have this continued visioning process.

On Monday we were supposed to have a visioning exercise, and on Thursday we were supposed to be undergoing a three-day strategic retreat on a strategic visioning exercise. We welcome all participants and we welcome the Independent and Opposition Benches. If we do not get all the brains of Trinidad and Tobago—I am not sure whether the Opposition would contribute significantly to it but we

welcome them on it as well, Mr. President. We want to establish a pathway towards visions and goals and national objectives and long-term goals must emanate. We want to encourage multiple institutions to work together and coordinate their efforts and it would be a context for sectoral policies, programmes and projects.

Mr. President, we are aware that there are major forces impacting on the national environment, global competition, innovation and knowledge, rapid changes in technology, changing arrangement with traditional trading partners and, most important, citizens demand for a better quality of life.

There are also institutional changes necessary, namely, transformation of the public service to quality services including support for private sector development, creation of a human resource base which will support the national development initiatives, the dollar for dollar plan and the National Skills Bill. So much is in store for this country: social challenges, quality income and sustained employment creation, financing social development, for example, housing, health, education, pension and so forth, and developing the appropriate strategies to address the increasing social problems including drugs, HIV/Aids, crime and delinquency among the youths.

This is why we, as a government, brought on the nine key national objectives.

Mr. President: Senator, you have one minute to wind up.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I want to wind up by saying it has been a distinct honour and pleasure for us on this side to have been given the opportunity to tell this honourable Senate of the tremendous achievements we had made over the last five years and that in our strategic visioning exercise for the next five years it would move this country not only for the five years to come, but in this decade, and for two more decades we would transform the socioeconomic and physical infrastructure of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

2.45 p.m.

Mr. President: Before calling on Sen. Prof. Deosaran, I want to make two observations for the guidance of the so described neophytes in particular. Members are permitted to take copious notes and make reference to them, but they should not be reading copiously. I permitted the Member to read because of the statistical information he was giving, but that is not a precedent for the

Members. I think in the debates, Members should make an effort to speak off the cuff, but where there is statistical information you would be allowed to read.

The other point I want to make is that when a Bill is before the Senate, Members are free to criticize it in any form or manner. Once that Bill becomes law and is an Act of Parliament you cannot describe that Act as bad legislation. What you are in effect doing is criticizing Parliament, which, whether you were a Member at the time, or you are a Member now, you are not permitted to do. You cannot criticize the Parliament for Acts passed by the Parliament because in effect, not only will you be criticizing your fellow Senators, but you will also be criticizing Members of the House of Representatives who are not here to defend themselves. Please be guided by that.

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Mr. President, I think I feel deeply obliged to congratulate my good Friend, Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh for what could really be seen as a very persuasive presentation. In fact, if I do not keep my head on, I think if there is an election tomorrow, all sides of the House might vote for the United National Congress (UNC). So persuasive and eloquent was his presentation that I would like to congratulate him. I have known him for many years. He is very hardworking and I believe from his presentation today, he is a very diligent member of the United National Congress, and a gentleman who obviously, believes totally in his political party. With those preliminary remarks, I would like to remind us of the particular Motion at hand. [*Desk thumping*] I certainly did not mean it in that particular way. I have some notes. He has given me the opportunity to respond and perhaps, elaborate on some relevant matters that he had raised.

I am always intrigued at this time of remembering the late Dr. Williams, how on one hand we tend to celebrate him so very highly—and yet keep referring to the last 30 years, from 1970, when he was, perhaps, in his heyday in terms of policy action and reform—and criticize so much of what he has done in terms of education, constitutional reform and public policy in general. We have to make up our minds. I am not saying it is hypocritical, but I believe there is something amiss about which we have to make up our minds when we are remembering the late Dr. Williams. It is either we be a little more objective in assessing what he has done, or we go a little cooler in terms of being so high flying in celebrating his performances. I have heard it said rightly, we cannot have it both ways all the time. It does not sound right and it is not a first instance this evening this has been happening. History has a way of dulling our senses and obscuring reality. I believe that is the stage in which we are. Be that as it may.

The other point I wish to rest my presentation on, is the Senator's appeal for mobilization and the support of the national community, for creating the vision his Government has in mind. The intention of that statement is extremely commendable. As I would indicate later on, it is time we disaggregate all these macroperspectives, so as to see whether in practical terms they are really working. For example, if you want to mobilize a national community in ways that are sustainable—we are not speaking about growth as a process in itself, neither are we speaking about development as an outcome of growth in itself. To me, more strategically, in the context of the Motion we are speaking about sustainability which is an added value exponent, not so much of growth as it is of development. Growth accrues mainly from fiscal and monetary policy. Development uses fiscal and monetary policy as necessary contributors. It has to rest on the platform of wider socioeconomic concerns. It is, to use the jargon, people oriented.

Having said that, it always surprises me when we make proposals for the devolution of power having the intended effect to mobilize the national community and various non-governmental organizations, there is resistance to restructuring the power structure as it were, and giving the people a greater sense of participation, and the non-governmental organizations a greater feeling of belonging, in how the country is run. That resistance always surprises me.

You hear the rationalization that the Minister must be accountable and must control. The Minister, as a part of the executive, will inevitably control through the budget or some other financial means. At the same time, in terms of the process of governance, I believe we have reached the stage to understand the critical distinction between government and governance. Governance is the modern way; government is necessary but not sufficient. I think in the new mode of governance, especially if you want the total mobilization of the people to sustain developmental programmes, you have to be a bit more charitable, not merely in decentralizing power, but, in devolving power. If you cannot attain that objective you are merely using rhetoric and, I believe, empty promises.

The hon. Senator did make mention of some very important issues such as the multi-partheid commission in which we both shared membership. I think he is right. That was a good example of how the country can come together. I must also confess it had a very short life. I do not seek to undermine the point, but when I say to disaggregate all these essential instruments, this is an example. I was quite worried about why it did not live a fuller life, because it did hold promise for the reason which he has so clearly outlined. He did touch on crime and poverty. I would say a few words on those things later on.

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We are in limbo in this country because it is true that there is a gross domestic product of between 4 and 5 per cent; an unemployment rate about 12 per cent and a reasonably good standard of living. To me, it is what has been called a joyless economy. We have not as yet made the distinction between economic growth and the development of a nation. I hope this Motion would give us the opportunity as he indicated, to air our voices in terms of consolidating the vision that he spoke about. It seems to me that there is so much subversion of national purpose—in the sense of the divisiveness and recurring conflicts every day—that the growth that Sen. Prof. Kenny's Motion spoke about will not really be achieved, if the social fabric of the country is so disordered and fragmented.

2.55 p.m.

It is as if there are three nations notwithstanding the theory of constitutional government—a nation of Tobago, an East Indian nation and an African nation. It comes across as that. And, when you read the newspapers, it feels that way, as if you have this triumvirate of nations within the twin islands of Trinidad and Tobago. We need to heal those breaches, and there is need to reformulate our approaches to ethnic harmony if, much of what is said in terms of expenditure, and the time taken to improve this and that area of our national life has to materialize in the way that we all wish it to be.

Still, there is always this problem with growth and development because it is true, as the Minister of Finance said earlier on—and I have heard it repeated—that the macrofundamentals are in place, but you cannot put the full stop there. What do you mean? Your macropolicy—The NAR had its medium-term and its long-term policies, and I used to hear about the macrofundamentals in place, yet there is a poverty rate in terms of proportion of households rising from 21—35 per cent of the nation's households. Then you have people protesting on a daily basis in the last few years for water, transport and those basic amenities. So the macrofundamentals may be in place, but there is a lot of microsuffering across the country and you will not get sustainable development even if you have economic growth in such circumstances.

In current circumstances, permit me to point to the issue of Government, which has to restrain itself in terms of what it does, in terms of the effects of policy because of the slim majority which the ruling party enjoys. That is a factor in determining how far you would go, how far to the population you would go because the mandate is not that very strong—and this is not out of disrespect to the present Government. It is a fact of governance in that you cannot railroad

things as you would if you had enjoyed a larger majority than now exists. We know the realities of the political system. That is how it has turned out, but that being the case, I believe there is greater need for the Government to take heed of what the hon. Senator was saying—the requirement to mobilize, to remove disenchantments; do not move too hard, devolve some of the power that you seem to cherish so much as governments—not this particular Government, because the hon. Senator is quite correct, for 30 years a lot of wrong things happened in this country. A lot of good things happened. It just depends from where you stand and also from which party you speak.

I believe it was, in the present circumstances, a very persuasive speech by the hon. Senator. He had his facts and his figures organized, yet the noble things of which he speaks have to be manifested in greater detail across the national community. Take the example of crime—if you have added over 700 police officers and all these training programmes and jeeps, the question is: How sustainable are those things in terms of what they are required to do? Has the crime rate gone down? This is no disrespect to the Senator. I am trying to carve out some parameters to deal with growth and especially development in their sustainable forms.

Mr. President, I have not heard from the Senator. I am sorry I was not here at the previous sitting to hear what the other Senators have said. But, I have not heard anything about getting value for those expenditures—in other words, the question of not only sustainability but also accountability even within the Judiciary. If you have increased the number of judges—and it costs a lot to create a new judicial post for a judge—hon. Senators would know that. I know judges like expensive houses, they like comfort and all these embellishments which the Government is obliged to provide for them. More magistrates! Are the outcomes positive? And if the outcomes from such government actions are positive, are these outcomes sustainable? In other words, to put it bluntly, what impact have those expenses of the Judiciary had on the public good? Case backlog.

I know of a case—I have an interest in it because I am interested in the issue of freedom of the press. A newspaper editor of the *TnT Mirror* was imprisoned for contempt of court—I am not adjudicating on the merits of the case but it is years now and that case is still to be resolved at the Appeal Court level. I thought what the Government has done would have expedited such decisions at that level. In any case I am merely using that instance as a reference point.

The hon. Senator spoke about expenditures on domestic violence. I am quite aware of that. When the hon. Senator Dr. Daphne Phillips was responsible for that

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Ministry there were tremendous expenditures and new policies. But I still have to ask: How well have these things worked? What is the measure, not only of performance, which one of my distinguished colleagues raised much earlier on in terms of how you are assessing the performances, to know whether the expenditure is working or not? What are your outcome measures to know how you can sustain this activity over some length of time? The country has to know these things. We do not want to know only how much you had spent on this or that project. In fact, that is the problem. I think in terms of outcome, we are overspending money because crime is still up as a national disaster in this country—until the *Express* editorial had to ask the police to use more force. Certainly, I do not think that was a thoughtful headline, or editorial, for that matter. We need the police to use force as a necessary requirement, but certainly, that will not solve the problem of the escalation of crime and domestic violence. It is necessary but insufficient. I would have hoped for a broader perspective on dealing with crime which, perhaps, if I get into that I will speak for more than three hours as the Senator made reference in his contribution. So, we are not getting value for our money especially when it comes to sustainable development.

Mr. President, it is good enough to speak, and I think the hon. Senator is quite right. His Government, from my observations, has done a number of good things—the educational system, the transport system, the roads. We should not talk about road paving. It is almost like a miracle. Jesus performed his miracle with the bread and the fish but that particular Minister was almost as miraculous in the paving of roads overnight, and I think the public welcomed it, whatever the minor inconveniences. They have helped the poor; pension as the hon. Senator rightly said, quite commendable. But it is not only on the income side that people get. You have to look at the cost of living and how much is being drawn from those salaries or increased grants that certain groups in the country have received from the Government. The cost of living has been going up. Transportation has been going up if you look at the cost of living index; cable has gone up in the most arbitrary and almost punitive fashion, if I might repeat myself. TSTT rates are imminent in their increase so you have to look at the downsides to such matters.

3.05 p.m.

He did speak about helping the poor, but helping the poor is not a sustainable activity. It is a charitable activity of some nobility, some graciousness, but it is not necessarily a sustainable activity. We have to alleviate poverty in sustainable forms. I shall provide some details of that aspect in a while.

If, one morning, we give \$30,000 to a man who is making \$300 a month, for that morning he is very rich, relatively speaking. However, it depends on what he does with that \$30,000 capital. He might choose to indulge in a number of leisure activities that he has been dreaming about for many years: he might take a vacation. He might save it and be afraid to touch it, because some people are of that type—they like to leave their money to accumulate interest. He might want to buy a few goats and two hens, put them in his backyard and gain from it to increase his capital, his resource capacity and alleviate himself from poverty in a sustainable way.

That is the missing dimension in this country. There is too much giving of grants and donations and providing people with money and putting a full stop after that exercise. We will not have sustainable growth, far less, in my view, sustainable development.

I remember Sir Arthur Lewis, a Nobel Laureate from St. Lucia, one of the world's greatest experts in the theory of economic development. In 1950, he wrote a book entitled *The Industrialization of the British West Indies*. He said:

“Some key is needed to open the door behind which the dynamic energies of the West Indian people are at present confined...The British West Indians can solve their problems if they set to them with a will.”

This is different from fiscal policy—how much money is spent on people. As economist as he is—well versed in fiscal policy, counting money, measuring income and expenditure—listen to his language:

“The British West Indians can solve their problems if they set to them with a will. But first they must find the secret that will put hope, initiative, direction and unconquerable will into the management of their affairs. And this is the hardest task of all.”

This is a task we still face today, never mind the gross domestic product is 5 per cent and we have growth, and that the macrofundamentals are in place.

With that will is linked the lack of social cohesion. It is well known by now, by almost everybody here, that what countries like ours need, perhaps more than financial capital, is to build ourselves up internally. We should believe in the saying, “Man shall not live by bread alone.” If that saying is true, it is of even greater truth to this country. While the need for foreign investment and so forth is important, we have to be careful that our natural resources and labour capacities do not embellish or sustain other people's countries at the incremental depletion of our own natural and labour resources.

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Now, this is a macrofundamental, too, and it ought to be looked at very carefully. In the last 30 years, mistakes were made in many of these respects and we are still paying the price for such mistakes. Over these years, the mistakes have been noted. The experience in socio-economic planning, especially for developing and Third World countries and even some European countries, have been well noted so as to inspire the concept of social capital.

I make reference to that because of what I perceive to be the increasing social divisiveness in this country and the emergence of what, in practice, is a three-nation state. If we do not get our act together and heal these breaches, I do not think this vision will materialize. The Government, in the circumstances therefore, has a sacred duty to heal those breaches and to try to maintain the public good.

The democratic features of society are also linked to sustainable development, especially if one wants to mobilize people and to get them to spontaneously react and support one's policies, rather than always looking for a loophole to criticize, which is what happens. I am prepared to say that the UNC Government has done much good, but they are making mistakes. They are making mistakes because their assumptions about government are in some measure still old fashioned. To my knowledge, there are quite a few bright people. I am not trying to be invidious or gratuitous, but I am wondering why the outcome is still so archaic; not being able to recognize, in the modern sense of running a country, the difference between government and governance. They cannot properly call now because the evidence is not strong enough on their side to indicate that they are of the disposition and they are prepared to set up structures to mobilize the entire country.

In the last 30 years, if I might have my share of that period, there were so many youth groups and village councils. Some on the Government side have been active officers of those organizations, but in the 1970s, and especially in the 1980s, so many of those community organizations and youth groups collapsed, the major reason—I was an officer, too, in some groups of that kind—being the excessive abuse of political power and patronage. It became a desert. While in the 1960s, just before independence and around there, there was a flourish of enthusiasm, hope and expectation about what the era of independence would bring the country at the community council level, political patronage, incrementally stifled and frustrated the growth of those organizations, until they are almost starting from scratch. They had to call the National Youth Council to a fresh meeting. If you want a Trinidad and Tobago Association of Village

Councils, you have to start afresh with a new meeting every year. There is no, and there has not been any, sustainable development in those particular respects because the link between your democracy and these community structures was not tidy and faithful to the cause as they were supposed to be.

That is why the Nobel Laureate who visited us here recently, Amartya Sen, wrote a book on economics and ethics. He, too, like Sir Arthur Lewis, realized that, “Man shall not live by bread alone.” All the expenditure in the world may be necessary, but not sufficient, especially for a country like ours, if sustainable development is the objective. The logic is clear.

Sen is saying that it is not only about making a living, but also how man should live. This means that he must have an enhancing environment. He must have the will and motivation to achieve and serve well his fellowmen. This is an economist speaking because he himself is tired of orthodox economic thinking and planning. The dark and dismal science in itself has done Third World countries no good, especially since economic planning is always linked to international agencies and their loan agreements where they want your pound of flesh just as willingly as they would give you the loan. However, it is not for free. This country should also understand that there is nothing for free in this world and those international agencies are a case by themselves. One of these days we will have to deal with them in terms of whether they really help or exploit us, notwithstanding their capacity to grant us loans and so on.

3.15 p.m.

Sen is right again. He is quite right. Countries like ours need more than the developed countries—their resourcefulness, the will, hope and devotion that Sir Arthur Lewis spoke about, if only because they are so limited in their international power base and in terms of their natural resources. So you are left with only yourself and your individual resource, motivation, and your sense of nationhood. That is why the division in this country is so—as you put it, has negative consequences. We cannot pull ourselves together and we will suffer for it, not just socially in terms of social conflict, but we will suffer for it incrementally, notwithstanding the vast expenditures as well in terms of our development.

I remember, you know, it was I think even Dr. Williams in 1960, as he was moving to Marlborough House, he too, like Sir Arthur Lewis, spoke about this spirit of independence.

“And so fellow countrymen, politically resolute and spiritually purified, we march Onward to Freedom!...Let us each and every one of us, dedicate

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ourselves, in body and in mind, in heart and in spirit, to the service of self government and Independence.”

Now, these are not merely rhetorical devices from Eric Williams. It was his recognition, like Sir Arthur Lewis, of the human spirit in sustainable development for countries like ours. It is not just a matter of expenditure and money.

It is a very relevant point because I believe from my knowledge—and I know quite a few of the Senators in this Senate and in the other place as Members of Parliament—people have made it not because their parents or their family lines live luxurious or very wealthy lives, with some exceptions, but generally I have seen quite too often, Mr. President, so many poor children, young people, emerge from their poverty, the reason being that spiritual transcendence and their will to succeed. Every time I hear people say poverty causes crime, I think it is an insult to poor people because there are so many people who came from poor homes but who were able to sustain themselves after transcending their impoverished conditions. The evidence is there. Let us look for the key that Sir Arthur Lewis spoke about because it exists and that should be part, I hope, of Government’s planning.

You ask, you know, you find out, because poverty is linked to sustainable development. If your poverty base is so large or it fragments your national community so much that it disturbs what you call the middle class area, it disturbs people walking about at nights because you have people squatting, vending on the streets, you have people who are poor, who have been poor and who seemingly would remain poor, you distinguish in your policy those who need the most help. That is one group. Then you find out who among the poor can be helped the most, and then you ask among the poor, who can help themselves the most. Those are three related but distinctive policy questions because they require different solutions, and that will get us into creating the basis for sustainable development.

In fact, the classic example—to return to Dr. Williams again—all those historical descriptions about what he said in *Capitalism and Slavery* and *From Columbus to Castro*, are good intellectual fodder. However, I think the greatest lesson that Dr. Williams has left us, especially for the young people, is his own life and his own capacity, more specifically, to transcend the vicissitudes that faced him, from Oxford University where he was discriminated against and denied fellowships and scholarships, to the Caribbean Commission where he felt he was discriminated against by the Anglo-Saxon forces of the day, to the Puerto Rican hotel where he was discriminated against in terms of getting a proper

room—at every step of the way, even at the hands of the Albert Gomes government—he was always able not to suffer with self pity. He always had the capacity and the spiritual transcendence to rise above those calamities. If there is one lesson that we can use from Dr. Williams to teach the young people, it is that capacity, that spiritual power to transcend, overcome and sustain oneself.

Mr. President, I do not want to take advantage of my time but I think the feature of people who have emerged from poverty is important to consider for sustainable development because people have done it. So if you are figuring out a policy, it is not just enough to say you want to allocate so many millions of dollars here and so many millions of dollars there, which is what happens. It is always the short cut. As you know, this is a short cut society. The shortest way is to allocate money for a project without examining historically or conceptually, “How well has it worked?” or, “How well will it work?” “Is it deserving of more funds?”

The URP project is a classic example. I mean, what is sustainable about the URP project? You know, the governments come in, and you know governments in this country, they have a way, as soon as they come in it is as if the world now began. Nothing else before was good. It is a bad habit of governance. It is good campaigning, but people, I believe, are fed up with all those histrionics of government and they want the country to settle down to the more important matters of governance which, I think, puts the obligation more so on the Government to loosen up, devolve, and you will make the country very happy.

I myself have been an example of somebody who came from poverty. You do not have to boast about it but it is good to articulate it because it is possible, and many of the people I have known, they too have drunk “orange peel tea” and “fever grass tea”. I took my fair dose of that too, but it has not done me much harm so far I think. Many people I know in the audience have endured through such vicissitudes, be they at the hand of a single mother or single parent. So the possibilities are there and Sir Arthur Lewis’ advice should be taken, or let us discover that will, but it should be a common will.

Even when he wrote his classic on *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith did not speak about distribution of money alone, you know, and free market economy which is a mistake all the economists make about ignoring the other important things that he said, one example being, a society must have a fair measure of moral sentiments because he expected that guiding hand, moral sentiment, would have equity and a fair distribution of wealth, but that is ignored and it is Amartya Sen who is now trying to remind us of those possibilities. So we should move

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from what Naipaul alluded to when he said that in this society everybody is a guerrilla because everybody is fighting his or her own little war.

That is the country we have now. Everybody has a little war to fight. The PSA has its war to fight, the Employers' Consultative Association has its war to fight, the Judiciary has its war to fight, the Executive has its war to fight, the PNM has its wars to fight, Tobago has its war to fight. There is some healing there. I wish them well, but it has been a torrid experience over the last couple of years—Tobago, with the tension. The Indians have their wars to fight—I am not speaking about the Indians in carnival, I am speaking about the real East Indians in the country—and the Africans have their war to fight. So you have all these days of celebrating Indian and days of celebrating African. I like it. It is good for cultural resilience and a forging of your identity, which could be used as a shield, but let us not overdo it and use our culture as a sword against other people.

My final remark is to remind—lest it be said that these are only the gentleman's personal opinion. We did some surveys over the years, recent years, and we—it is published in this book which is called *Psychonomics and Poverty, Towards Governance and a Civil Society* by the University Press in the year 2000. We summarize from our nationwide surveys how the population feels about governance, about government and their civil society and we call it the 13 cardinal sins against civic life in this society. From those nationwide surveys we found that 54 per cent of the population in their different districts felt that the government has not treated their district fairly over the years and that cuts across governments. It is not a UNC failure or a PNM failure; it is both in a sense. Forty-five per cent said that the crime rate in the district has increased over the last 10 years.

So here you are spending as a government; you should ask for accountability. We have proposed in the last three weeks to the Minister of National Security—in fact, I hope there is a more substantive minister soon enough. I will be very happy because the gentleman whose name has arisen several times—I can have some confidence that he will see us through these troubled days, especially since ministers are prone to fall ill so quickly. It is not because of their inherent energies but it is the stress that is so much, and that is one reason I believe ministers should try to devolve power. It is good for their health, not only their political health but for their physical health, and I believe this response from the population suggests that the expenditures you engage the government in should have some accountability at the end.

Ask the police how, and also conduct an independent audit as to the crime rate. You cannot leave the police in charge of collecting, reporting and analyzing your crime data. It would not work. It has not worked in any other country. England has now revised its method of collecting crime statistics. The United States is doing so through the Federal Bureau of Investigation. You need an independent agency, which is what we had suggested to the Ministry of National Security some weeks ago.

Fifty per cent said things have not improved in their district over the last 10 years. Sixty per cent said that contact is more important than ability in getting a government job. Sixty per cent said, Mr. Senator, through you Sir, that they are not satisfied with the criminal justice system in the country. Fifty-five per cent said they are not satisfied with the way the police and authorities are dealing with white-collar crime such as business fraud, stock market manipulation and pollution.

This is the voice of the people. What would a proper government do in such circumstances? You can conduct your own survey, of course, but I am telling you from a reliable source this is the macropicture, and in this sense the macrofundamentals here are not in correct order. It goes on. The last one is, 40 per cent said, citizens like them can have no influence in government decisions. That is not a premise on which to build mobilization. That is not a platform on which to create a civil society. If you wish to do so, I think you should enhance your capacity towards governance and then we will more likely than not have a measure and be on the road to sustainable development. Thank you very much, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

3.30 p.m.

Sen. Joel London: Mr. President, for me it is a most humbling experience to stand in these Chambers, these walls where so many learned sons and daughters of our soil have made immeasurable contributions to the development of our society as we know it today. Today is no exception, Mr. President, for today these walls contain the collective voices and resources of distinguished ladies and gentlemen and are presided over by one who, though firm, is quick to be of assistance and to impart knowledge.

As a youth growing up, Mr. President, which would have been sometime in December of last year, [*Laughter*] I looked forward to the day, five to 10 years from now, when I, too, could get involved at a higher level and serve my country and make a difference, but alas, God had other plans, and I believe that He has

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placed me here in this place and at this appointed time for a purpose and a plan only He in his divine and infinite wisdom, can understand. May his will be done as his humble servant answereth the call to service.

As I begin my contribution, Mr. President, please allow me to first congratulate Sen. The Hon. Gillian Lucky on her appointment as acting Attorney General. [*Desk thumping*] Even though he is not here, we also want to welcome back and congratulate the hon. Minister of Integrated Planning and Development on his acting appointment as Prime Minister. We wish him the best of health and hope to see that he returns to 100 per cent fitness in the not too distant future—although at his age, we are not too certain that is altogether possible.

[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

To the hon. Prime Minister, Mr. Vice-President, we wish him Godspeed as he journeys to Kensington for rest, relaxation, examination and treatment. [*Desk thumping*] We know that he is in good hands and he is in a position to receive the best possible treatment. I might even add, the best possible treatment that money could buy or money can afford. His departure for treatment, however, sends a message that we all need to take note of, for it seems to highlight the inadequacies of our nation's health care. Fortunately for him, he can afford to wing out to London for treatment, but what about those in our nation who cannot afford to leave our shores to go abroad for treatment? [*Desk thumping*] What must their fate be?

There is an article in today's *Daily Express* written by Mr. Trevor Millett entitled "Our mediscare system" and we have to ask ourselves the question right now, how many more? Must this be the fate of everyone as far as our health care system is concerned? How many more Melisa Lalchans must we see, how many more Miguel Johns must we see, before the health system in Trinidad and Tobago is reformed?

Mr. Vice-President, my heart aches every time I think of a cancer patient who is unable to receive treatment. Whenever I think of someone who is awaiting dialysis and cannot afford to get the kind of treatment he or she deserves, when we talk about sustainable growth, these are some of the issues we need to talk about, for these are the prerequisites for sustainable growth. There are other prerequisites, and just to touch on a few, they include democracy, human rights, local community involvement, and participation of all sectors in the decision-making.

When we consider the state of our nation's health institutions, can we say that we are meeting the health needs of our population? Kudos go out to Dr. The Hon. Hamza Rafeeq for showing confidence in our health care system and staying in

Trinidad and Tobago to receive the treatment he received. I do not know if it is that he is actually showing confidence or he is not the \$12 million Minister and he cannot afford to go abroad for treatment.

I listened to the contributions of both Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh and the Minister of Integrated Planning and Development the last time this matter came up for debate, and we really have to ask ourselves the question now, as Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh asked: Are we really better off today than we were 30 years ago? The Minister of Integrated Planning and Development spoke about Port of Spain being a linear city, and that we have stretched Port of Spain from where it is now to all the way up the East-West Corridor, so I guess that makes him the “Minister for Port of Spain Far East”.

He also spoke about the PNM Government also taking persons out of Port of Spain and drawing on the resources of Port of Spain and carrying them everywhere else. I remember a group of citizens, not too long ago, who did not want to leave Port of Spain. A group of persons who, when their homes burned down, were assured that accommodation would be provided for them and, indeed, housing accommodation was built eventually. While it was originally the intention to give it to these persons, what eventually happened was that this accommodation was priced above their heads and they could no longer afford it. The very Minister of Integrated Planning and Development is speaking about making people who do not want to leave, leave Port of Spain, yet we provide housing for them, put it above their heads where they cannot afford it and they still have to leave anyway.

The Government speaks about 100,000 houses in five years. We have to ask ourselves the question: How many of these 100,000 have we seen built in the last five years? All of us have heard of the beautiful plan to beautify the city of Port of Spain at the expense, Mr. Vice-President, of the ecology and the mangrove, as we know it. I would like the Government to state its housing plan for the nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

Where are the low income houses that the Government speaks about? [*Desk thumping*] When will the less fortunate and the have-nots of our society get a chance to own the homes that they dream of? Must their only hope be to simply squat on a piece of land for seven years and then hope that after being there for all those years, they would be regularized? Must that be my only hope of owning a piece of land in Trinidad and Tobago?

The hon. Senator spoke at length on various issues. At one point in time, I kept looking around to see if the former Minister of Finance was going to walk

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through the door, because his budget speech was being read all over again. He spoke about crime. We have to ask ourselves the question: Is crime really on the decrease? He spoke about an airport that was supposed to be opened since October of last year, an airport that cost this country three times what it was supposed to cost originally. He spoke about water for all. I remember the drive, and we heard about “Water for all by the end of 2000”. Yet, as we stand here right now, only just about 45 per cent of our population enjoys a constant supply of water 24 hours a day.

The hon. Senator spoke about the economy growing and the economy doing well. Mr. Vice-President, that can only be—I should not say that—but we welcome the revelation that the economy is growing well. That is happening because the economy is simply running on autopilot. When I say running on autopilot, this Government has had nothing to do, as far as the economy is concerned, but simply allow themselves to ride on the measures implemented by previous administrations.

It was the PNM government, when they came into power, which decided to repay the international debts of this country early. So we repaid the debts to the IMF and the World Bank and, therefore, we freed up the economy and we had money to invest elsewhere. All this Government had to do was come in and enjoy these economic benefits. [*Desk thumping*] That is all they had to do. So we see a situation where the economy is simply riding on autopilot, cruise control, Mr. Vice-President.

The Senator spoke about human rights—this, after they withdrew from every single international human rights body that this country belonged to and ignored the pleas of other bodies like Amnesty International. This is half of the problem. When we speak about sustainable growth, the problem is that this Government only views sustainable growth internally and in a vacuum, and does not consider sustainable growth in terms of the region, in terms of our own commitment to international treaties, international charters and other conventions to which we belong. Sustainable growth cannot be viewed simply in a vacuum. When we listen to the presentations, that is what we are hearing. Sustainable growth cannot simply be viewed in a vacuum.

The hon. Minister of Integrated Planning and Development also spoke about the good old colonial days when the ocean lashed against the cathedral wall. That was long before my time. Sorry, I do not remember it, but this is the same Minister who brought before us this elaborate plan to push back the sea even further and develop the sea front—stretching from the lighthouse, as we know it,

all the way down into Woodbrook—with no regard whatsoever for the mangrove, no regard for the ecology, and we speak about the good old colonial days when the ocean lashed against the cathedral wall.

I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Vice-President, to thank Sen. Prof. Kenny for this Motion on sustainable development, because I believe it is a subject of great importance which, for some reason, has not been receiving the kind of prominence that it ought to receive. It has apparently been pushed on the back burner and emphasis has been placed elsewhere, but the ideals of sustainable growth and development and its importance to civilization cannot be overemphasized.

When we speak about sustainable growth, and I want to go back to the Motion, because I want to spend a short while on just about two areas of the Motion as introduced by Sen. Prof. Kenny; namely that the Government make a full statement to this House on how it plans to meet its objectives of sustainable growth, with particular regard to involving citizens in planning and development, I also want to focus on enforcement of planning decisions and meeting its obligations to international treaties for the protection of the environment.

When we speak about sustainable growth and development, it must be in the context of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The question we on this side are asking is, “Where do we stand as a country on the road to sustainable development, not just from a local standpoint, but from a global holistic point of view?” I ask this question in light of the many global changes which are taking place all around us. Not only global changes, Mr. Vice-President, but also global cooperation and efforts aimed at achieving global sustainable development.

In the year 1992, some 10,000 government representatives from 178 countries assembled in Rio de Janeiro to pledge their commitment to a global agenda for environmental sustainable development. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Earth Summit, produced unprecedented vision for guiding the world community towards a more secure sustainable future. We had representation at that conference.

3.45 p.m.

In the years to follow, Earth Summit's initiatives had little success, and by Earth Summit 5, held in 1997, it was noted that many of the failures of the initiatives were due, largely in part, to the fact that greater cooperation was needed at the international level to deal with global issues such as the

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development of social and political capacity to operationalize sustainable development, the establishment of partnerships between society and government to contribute meaningfully to decision making. Earth Summit 5 has called for the establishment of an international environmental watchdog that can hold governments to their word; in other words, that can monitor decisions, agreements and treaties that were signed at Earth Summit 1.

The question we want to ask, Mr. Vice-President, is: What is Trinidad and Tobago's position as far as some of these decisions and agreements and implementation of these treaties are concerned? In particular, there are four agreements, conventions, treaties—if you want to call them that—that are of particular importance to us here in Trinidad and Tobago.

I do not claim to have the monopoly on knowledge as far as biodiversity, climate change, Earth Charter and so on are concerned, I realize that, but there are four international treaties, in particular, that are of importance to us here in Trinidad and Tobago. The first is the Convention on Biodiversity which came out of Earth Summit 1. Research has indicated that we may be conforming, to some extent, to the initiatives as outlined in the convention. We have active committees that are engaged in ensuring that we keep our commitment.

The second agreement is the Convention on Climate Change; this was ratified in 1994. Trinidad and Tobago became a signatory to this convention in 1992. I would like the hon. Minister—I am sorry he is not here—to tell this honourable Senate where we stand and how we fare as far as this convention is concerned.

The other two charters, agreements, that are of particular concern to us and to which we should really pay much attention and which really concern us right now, are the Earth Charter and Agenda 21. Trinidad and Tobago has found itself in a very precarious position where these two charters or agreements are concerned, heading into Rio+10. I would go into Rio+10 as I go further down in my contribution.

Firstly, let me refer, with your permission, Mr. Vice-President, to the preamble of the Earth Charter agreement. In the preamble under the heading "The Way Forward" it reads:

“In order to build a sustainable global community, the nations of the world must renew their commitment to the United Nations, fulfill their obligations under existing international agreements, and support the implementation of Earth Charter principles with an international legally binding instrument on environment and development.”

Are we fulfilling our obligations to international agreements?

In the Earth Charter Statement of Principle, it states that by Rio+10 the charter is to be formally adopted by all nations. Here in Trinidad and Tobago there exists an Earth Charter National Committee which has been trying, without success, to get Government to adopt the charter. I would like the Minister of the Environment to shed some light for us on the adoption of the Earth Charter.

One of the biggest issues or major documents coming out of Earth Summit is Agenda 21. Agenda 21 reflects a global consensus and political commitment towards development and environmental cooperation. The question we have to ask this afternoon is: Does Trinidad and Tobago subscribe to the decisions and commitments of Agenda 21? If so, what is the extent of our implementation? How many of the requisite strategies and strategic imperatives have we implemented as a nation?

As a matter of fact, one of the special sessions in Earth Summit 5 was a review and appraisal of the implementation success stories by several countries, including those based in Latin America and the Caribbean. At this summit, Argentina gave their success stories, so too did the Bahamas, St. Lucia, Suriname and Guyana, but there appears no record of any implementation initiatives from Trinidad and Tobago. Is it that Trinidad and Tobago's strategies exist in a vacuum? Is it that in Trinidad and Tobago we place no importance on regional sustainable development cooperation? Is it that we place no importance on implementing Agenda 21 or its initiatives? Or is it that we show no commitment to regional and international treaties?

Agenda 21 can be considered to be the blueprint for action as far as sustainable growth and development are concerned. Agenda 21 is the framework within which other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) are reviewed. We have failed miserably to implement Agenda 21 initiatives, and it appears as though development is taking place in this country with no thought to sustainable growth. If the hon. Minister of Integrated Planning and Development could stand and say that only 20 per cent of development is approved, and that explanation is sufficient, then something is drastically wrong. [*Desk thumping*]

Agenda 21 has built into it mechanisms to ensure that countries implement the initiatives. One such mechanism is the establishment of a national council on sustainable development. This is in the policy document. I would like the hon. Minister of Integrated Planning and Development to let us know if such a council

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exists. When was such a council established and what are the parameters under which this council is operating right now?

I made mention of Rio+10 earlier on. I want to refer, again, with your permission, Mr. Vice-President, to a document entitled "Guidelines for Rio+10 Assessment" as published by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. Rio+10 takes place in June 2002. At Rio+10 we would see a comprehensive review of progress and implementation strategies of all United Nations Conference on Environment and Development initiatives; this will be carried out at Rio+10.

I want to quote from the introduction, as outlined here in the document on page 1 which says:

"The UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)...its eighth session, underscored the political importance of this forthcoming ten-year review of progress made in the implementation of the outcome of UNCED. Presentations and interventions emphasized that the 2002 review process could have the potential of increasing the level of commitment to sustainable development by Governments and civil society partners. The commission recommended that the 2002 review should result in action-oriented decisions and renewed political commitment and support for sustainable development."

The entire document speaks of the format for the submission of national reports, sub-regional reports and regional reports. In other words, in 2002 we will be reviewed as far as our implementation of Agenda 21 initiatives is concerned.

In the body of the document on page 5 it speaks about the national assessment process, and, again, I quote:

"As the first step in the Rio+10 process, countries are being invited to report on their progress and obstacles in the implementation of sustainable development, especially Agenda 21. This national Rio+10 assessment should be a participatory process that engages the private sector, academia and civil society, in addition to governmental organizations. In particular, participation of major social groups should be encouraged, including Women, Indigenous Peoples, Youth, NGOs, Local Authorities, Workers, Business and Industry, Farmers, and the Scientific and Technological Community.

In this context, most countries in the region have established National Councils for Sustainable Development or equivalent bodies..."

Does an equivalent body exist in Trinidad and Tobago? Have we established a national council for sustainable development and growth? It goes on to say:

“...which promote this broad participation. It is strongly recommended that these NCSDs or equivalent bodies play a leading role in carrying out the necessary national multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder consultations, including local level consultations, in order to prepare the national report focusing on the ten-year review of the Rio Summit Agreements and Agenda 21 implementation.”

Apart from all of that, what is even more alarming is that the document provides for us a timetable for the assessment process. I refer to page 7 of the document under section F, which reads:

“What is the timetable for the Rio+10 assessment process?”

The first activity is:

“Organization and realization of national workshops and consultations”

This activity is to be completed between January—March 2001.

4.00 p.m.

It goes on to say that we ought to complete a formulation of the national report for submission by the end of March 2001 and there ought to be organization and realization of subregional workshops by the end of May 2001 and further, formulation of subregional reports by June 2001. It also speaks about the delivery of relevant parts of the regional report by December 2001.

There is a sense in which, Mr. Vice-President, real sustainable development action is absent in Trinidad and Tobago. There is a sense in which real sustainable development is not in the political directorate’s agenda, because at the head of sustainable development is consultation. One cannot have sustainable growth and sustainable development without consultation and that is what the report speaks about. It speaks about consultation of women, men, youth and NGOs. In order to have sustainable growth there must be consultation, and the guidelines in the assessment speak of it. The agenda itself, Agenda 21, speaks of consultation and all the major agreements of which we are a part speak of consultation, but it does not appear to be on the agenda of the Government, and development seems to be taking place within Trinidad and Tobago without consultation.

Just ask the Fishermen and Friends of the Sea who have been fighting to save Invaders Bay which seems very likely to become a casualty of the Port of Spain

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Waterfront Project, and I refer to an article published in the *Daily Express* on July 23, 2000 and it states:

“Invaders Bay, a small mangrove swamp South of the Mucurapo Foreshore Highway...is being filled in as part of a grand 15-year plan to expand Port of Spain.

The development will stretch from Cocorite to the Barataria roundabout. Environmental groups are deeply critical of the project, though, arguing that it is contrary to legal and environmental procedures and even Government policy.

The work has been started without Town and Country approval...”

I guess this is part of what the hon. Minister was talking about.

“...and the 1998 report on mangrove restoration has been ignored.

The plan was produced by a 1999 Government-appointed West Coast Committee, and has not had a specific Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) done.”

This is how development is taking place in our country, and I would like the Minister to shed some light on the article. Development seems to be taking place without consultation, just ask the people of Toco, and I am certain that the hon. Senator from Toco will agree with me.

Mr. Vice-President, the Government made it seem as though the people of Toco were against development, but that is not the case. It is not that they were against development, but they are against the project because there was no consultation.

There was an article on the Internet called Focus on Tobago’s Environment and it is from the web site www.scsoft.de which speaks about “The Fight for Public Participation in Development”. It reads:

“Congratulations to the Toco community for their success in advocating a clear vision for their community. They have sent a very strong message back to the Government of this vision by rejecting port development in Toco.

The intense expressions they voiced in response to Government’s proposals have restored many people’s faith in the democratic system and the relevance of public participation in managing development for our nation.

The Toco community here clearly demonstrated that they have the right and the duty to communicate their values and choices.”

The article goes on to say:

“It is unfortunate that Works Minister Sadiq Baksh referred to the Toco community’s response as hysteria. Was it hysterical because it was passionate and determined? Was it hysterical because it opposed the Government’s plans? Was it hysterical because it opposed the big developers and spoke for the small man?”

Development seems to be taking place, Mr. Vice-President, without consultation. Just ask members of Save our Savannah. No consultation, Mr. Vice-President, no thought about the effects of the paving, no consultation on the construction and operation of the desalination plant. Maybe, one of the reasons we have no report to submit to the Commission on Sustainable Development is that our track record does not suggest that the Government is on a sustainable growth and development head.

Mr. Vice-President, it would be remiss of me if I were to stand here and speak on sustainable development and not take the opportunity to advocate the importance of sustainable growth and development to children and the youth in our society. To advocate the importance of children and youth to the success of any sustainable development initiative, it is important for us to understand that decisions made today affect their lives today, but also have implications for their lives tomorrow and this was another serious issue coming out of Earth Summit and Agenda 21.

Agenda 21 sets out in chapter 25 some strategic imperatives as far as youth development is concerned. With your permission, I refer to Agenda 21. It encourages the active participation of young people and youth communities in the decision-making process. It was felt that apart from the fact that it affects their present, and impacts on their future, it was also believed that youths have a special, intellectual contribution and a unique perspective that needed to be taken into consideration. I read from chapter 25(4) of Agenda 21 which reads as follows:

“Each country should, in consultation with its youth communities, establish a process to promote dialogue between the youth community and Government at all levels and to establish mechanisms that permit youth access to information and provide them with the opportunity to present their perspectives on government decisions, including the implementation of Agenda 21.”

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Again, I ask the question, Mr. Vice-President, as far as Agenda 21 is concerned, where are we in terms of implementation? Are we meeting our short-term objectives and, if not, why? The People's National Movement is most concerned about the reputation of Trinidad and Tobago as it relates to the efforts of neighbouring countries and the implementation of Agenda 21 initiatives.

Need I also say, that the Government of the day has indicated that it is most concerned about our nation's young people and about sustainable youth development. Mr. Vice-President, there is a document published by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs entitled *Draft National Youth Policy* and, with your permission, I would like to refer to this document.

The document states in the EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

“The policy provides a broad framework within which Government's youth policy initiatives will be executed. It is not a series of programmes but a flexible and dynamic process of interaction between government and civil society from which programmes, activities and projects would emerge.”

Nowhere in the document does it suggest that the policy has been framed on a basis of consultation. It is silent on chapter 25 of Agenda 21 imperatives, nowhere does it say that they have considered the opinions of the various NGOs which played a very significant role and continues to play an important role in the implementation of various treaties to forge global co-operation. Nor does it suggest that the document was prepared in an atmosphere of regional cooperation guided by Agenda 21 or Rio+5 in an attempt to do our part to attain global sustainable development.

Once again we have found ourselves in a vacuum operating on a principle of for us, by us, and this is not what the UNCED was all about and pretty soon those watchdogs mentioned in Rio+5 may very well have to come here to see what is going on. The conceptual framework goes on to say.

“It is a social developmental process which advocates a culturally relevant participatory approach which places youth at the forefront of policy development and implementation. It emphasises youth empowerment...”

Again, we have failed to act on the strategic imperatives of Agenda 21.

Some of the imperatives of chapter 25 call for youth representation at the highest level and the very conceptual framework, as put together by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs proposes youth involvement. On page 8 of that document, item 7 says:

“Empowerment of youth to participate in national development. Thus the creation of mandatory youth representation in Parliament, the Tobago House of Assembly, Regional Corporations and on significant committees especially if they are dealing with issues concerning children and youth.”

Yet, Mr. Vice-President, the very first opportunity this Government has to demonstrate that it is actually committed to the concepts of the policy, what it in fact does, is demonstrate contempt for the views and contributions of young people. It speaks of empowerment and mandatory youth representation, yet, when I look across the pit of the parliamentary Chamber I see no empowered young people on that side. [*Desk thumping*]

4.15 p.m.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. J. London: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President.

They speak of empowerment and mandatory youth representation, yet I look across the Chamber and I see no empowered young people, no mandatory youth representation at the highest level. With all due respect to the hon. Acting Attorney General and the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Labour, I think they fall out of the age group as defined by their document, the National Youth Policy, which states that the age of youths, which I still fall under, is 13—30.

Hon. Senator: Eighteen-year-olds cannot sit in the Parliament.

Sen. J. London: But over 25 can. The Government had a golden opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to the concepts of the policy. They had nine opportunities to begin with and they allowed those nine opportunities to go by; then they had a further seven opportunities, and they allowed those seven opportunities to go by as well. Right now there is no youth representation, as far as they are concerned, although their policy document states: "...mandatory youth representation in Parliament". They have squandered the opportunity and they have not shown their commitment to the ideals, as far as Agenda 21 is concerned.

Mr. Vice-President, with your indulgence and with the indulgence of hon. Senators, even though they say it is not proper to toot one's own horn, I stand here as a living testimony of empowerment PNM-style. The young people of our

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beloved archipelagic State are looking on and they are concerned. I have had the privilege of meeting with a few youth groups in the last couple of weeks and I can assure you that the nation's young people are well informed and possess extremely creative ideas and unique perspectives. They have real issues that require real help and real solutions. They are no longer content to leave the decision making in the hands of a few but want to have a say in decisions that directly affect them. As we aspire towards sustainable development, we have to concentrate on areas of real concern for our young people, and their concerns are numerous.

Forty-three thousand young people between the ages of 15 and 29 are still unemployed; and an average of 2,600 children are being born every year to teenage mothers. The rising incidence of HIV/AIDS among our young people is alarming. I would like this Government to say exactly how it intends to address these issues in a real way. Our young people need to be properly equipped for the task ahead; but as we attempt to equip them, we must be mindful that we attempt to meet the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

While education is an important factor in the attainment of sustainable development, it has to be properly planned. Trinidad and Tobago experiences a very high secondary school dropout rate, as articulated by the hon. Senator. I do not believe that forcing more children into the system is the answer. Chances are what we will, in fact, experience is an even higher dropout rate. We have not taken into consideration the different levels at which these children exist. The answer simply cannot be *Huckleberry Finn* as opposed to *Chicken Licken*.

Not only that, we struggle to find teachers for our existing schools. There are schools that for months are without mathematics and English teachers, yet in the wake of these shortages, we create a situation where the present crop of first-form students enter second form, and a second batch comes in and we have an additional burden of finding even more teachers. Again, they have demonstrated a lack of concern for consultation. These issues were coming out long before that. The renaming of the Common Entrance Examination is also a case for serious concern. Where are we going to find the teachers? I would like the hon. Minister to inform us where these teachers are coming from.

The People's National Movement has never been averse to secondary education for all. We have always advocated secondary education for all but we understand that not all children learn in the same way and not all children are at

the same level. That is why we advocated different levels of schooling for students. As a matter of fact, yes, we have a situation where in the last Common Entrance Examination, all the students were placed into secondary schools. I would like the hon. Minister to shed some light on the fact that a report is circulating that 7,000 students this year would not enter secondary school. Those 7,000 students, who would have originally taken the 14+ Examination, are being left out of the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA). So when we speak about putting all those students into secondary schools, yes, we may find places for them because already we are starting with a deficit of 7,000. I would also like the Minister to shed some light, as far as these 7,000 students are concerned; as well as the 800 students in Tobago who have not been placed.

As I close, I look forward to working at the highest level with other NGOs and youth organizations to achieve sustainable development. I look forward to youth participation, to youth involvement and to youth empowerment at the highest level. I look forward to the initiatives advanced by the Government to attain sustainable development.

All over the world young people are working towards development and environment sustainability issues. They have demonstrated that they play an important role in building sustainable societies. The potential lies in young people to generate change. The responsibility for the path we take lies in the hands of today's youths. This is the way we have to go for our children's sake. True, I have no children at this time, but I would like to do my part to ensure that my children inherit a country that they, not only can be proud of, but a country that would be able to sustain them. Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

4.25 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President: Let me take this opportunity to warmly congratulate Sen. Joel London on his maiden contribution in the Senate. [*Desk thumping*]

Based on agreement among the leaders in the Senate, it is agreed that we should forgo tea and have one final contribution that will take us nearer to 5.00 p.m. I think the last speaker is Sen. Gerald Yetming. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Yetming): Mr. Vice-President, you are limiting me to half an hour, Sir?

I will not get into who was to take credit for what has transpired in Government for the past five years and who was on autopilot and who was on cruise control. The fact of the matter is that the economy grew from 3.8 per cent—and I am going to repeat the numbers, although Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh spent

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much time giving many statistics—but the GDP grew from 1995, of 3.8 per cent to the year 1999 where I think it came in at about 7 per cent, and was estimated at 7.9 per cent for 2000. Inflation moved from 5.3 per cent in 1995 to 3.4 per cent in the year 1999 and was estimated to be at around 3.4 per cent in the year 2000. Unemployment moved from 17.2 per cent in 1995 to 12.2 per cent in the year 2000 and is expected to go down to about 10.5 per cent over the next two years. I think Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh also quoted the gross international reserves, starting in 1995 at about US \$652 million, to \$1.7 billion estimated for the year 2000.

I am not going to comment on whether the PNM administration of 1991—1995 was also on autopilot and cruise control—hardly likely. The only claim to fame of that administration was what they did to the Brian Lara Promenade, and absolutely nothing else. [*Desk thumping*] The fact of the matter is, Agenda 21 or no Agenda 21, there will be absolutely no sustainable growth if the Opposition continues in its current path of encouraging fear, racial division and creating mischief in the country. [*Desk thumping*] There will be absolutely no sustainable growth, because when we have a Senator reporting about hacking into a bank, we have to understand that the banking system is a very fragile thing. A banking system is based on confidence. A statement such as hacking into a bank, particularly when unfounded and maliciously intended only to create a perception of Ministers who are having unearned wealth—only for that purpose—and trying to discredit the credibility of Ministers without due regard to the financial system, because the public hearing about hacking and their information being made public could have created a run on the banks.

There is a true story of a guy driving down the road, passing his bank, and seeing a long line outside the bank did not understand why there was a long line, and immediately by cellphone started to call his friends to say there was a run on that bank. It is as simple as that for the banking system to be destabilized. If there was any truth in the statement that hacking took place, one would have expected of someone sitting in the highest office of the land to have taken his children, or his son, to the bank—

Sen. Dumas: On a point of order. Is it proper for the Minister to be imputing motives to a Senator in the session?

Mr. Vice-President: I do not think that the Minister is imputing improper motives; I think the Minister is making reference to a statement that was published.

Sen. Dumas stands.

Could you have your seat? I am saying, for instance, on that point, I think the Minister can continue.

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: I would have expected of someone sitting in the highest office of this land to have gone very quietly to the bank and whispered that “something is wrong with your system and if you do not correct it, you can have a disaster.” If there is any untoward development on the financial system in Trinidad and Tobago, it would take us 50 years to recover from that, and there will be no sustainable growth.

There will be no sustainable growth if we continue to preach about voter padding. The fact of the matter is that the UNC administration gained 67,000 more votes, 1995—2000, and the PNM got 20,000 more votes, 1995—2000. The UNC got 2,000 more votes on an average per constituency, in 34 constituencies. If you are talking about padding, padding from where to where? The PNM has failed to come to grips with the fact that they are now no longer relevant as a truly national party in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] They have failed to accept the fact that the UNC is the only national party in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

There will be absolutely no sustainable growth if we continue on a path of attempting to discredit and to destroy an independent institution such as the Elections and Boundaries Commission; commissioners appointed by the President; that we would want to ascribe a certain degree of collusion with a party in managing an election. Why do you not face the fact that you have lost and let the country move on?

There will be no sustainable growth if we create this racial division in the society. I think Sen. Prof. Deosaran made the point and I thought that he was going to spend some more time on it. The fact is, there will be no sustainable growth if we continue to racially divide this country, and when you get reports of who is changing what list for which army, and the army coming out and denying the thing in no uncertain way—a statement totally put out to create a certain degree of racial division in this country.

There will be no sustainable growth if we continue to destroy our young people. I sat here and listened to how much the PNM supported the young people. We have the youngest Attorney General, even though she may be acting; we have some of the youngest Ministers of Government ever in this country, and yet we keep hearing about who are losers and who are not losers. Should we continue to try and kill the self-esteem of our young people—absolutely very qualified; and all we keep hearing week after week is who are losers, who are losers and who are

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losers, destroying the self-esteem of our young people, people who have come willingly to serve.

The fact of the matter is that if decent people do not get into politics—and I admire everyone, on the other side, included—it is rogues and vagabonds who will do it. When we have young people who have given up their careers and what have you, to make the sacrifice to enter into politics and to hear them being treated as losers day in and day out, we will not have sustainable growth if we continue on that path.

Mr. Vice-President, I am going to try and come to some facts now, some issues that this Government faces, and issues that I face as Minister of Finance, which I think I should just talk to the House about, because they are relevant to the question of sustainable growth. The fact of the matter is—and I was ascribing to the point when I spoke about the hacking issue—that sustainable growth will only happen with a strong financial sector.

4.35 p.m.

We have well-capitalized and well-managed banks and we have banks that carry very low percentages of non-performing loans and well-provisioned loans. Generally, we have a good banking sector which is very, very critical to sustainable growth. At the moment we have, for the information of the Senate, consultants on board looking at the question of consolidating banking supervision because we have to be concerned about our banks as we ought to be concerned about the insurance sector, pension plans and the credit unions; and I would say that the insurance companies and the credit unions are going to come under very, very intense scrutiny by this Minister over the next 12 months. Until we can be absolutely satisfied that the entire financial sector is sound, there will be no sustainable growth. We are expecting from the consultants on board, who are going to advise on consolidating our supervision capability of the financial sector, that within the next 12 months we would be able to report on where that can go.

Mr. Vice-President, there will be no sustainable growth unless we can deal with our infrastructure. Over the past two years we have spent a fair amount of money and effort on our airport—whatever the criticisms might be, we have a major international airport. We have spent a fair amount of money on roads, bridges and drainage. We have spent a fair amount of money on water, and while there will be criticisms in odd areas here and there, the fact of the matter is that within the next 12 months, in particular, with respect to the commissioning of the desalination plant, there will be sufficient water for all.

We have sufficient capacity in our electricity. We have spent some time on improving the postal system through TTPost and telecommunications. The fact is that we have spent a fair amount of money on improving the infrastructure in a host of areas and those areas are fundamental to sustainable growth.

I want to talk a bit about the country's debt stock because while we were spending on improving the infrastructure our debt stock has grown. It is no secret—the Central Bank has been reporting it—but the fact of the matter is that our debt stock in 1995 was about 60 per cent of GDP. Today, it is 59 per cent of GDP so that the debt stock, in absolute numbers, has grown in terms of the percentage of GDP—we are 59 per cent, which is one per cent less than in 1995. The point, however, is that the international benchmark for debt to GDP is 50 per cent and this Government's objective, over the immediate term, is to bring our debt stock from 59 per cent down to—In fact, our plan is that by the year 2005 our debt stock should be at about 40 to 45 per cent of GDP which would be below the international benchmark. Where the debt service is concerned, as a percentage of revenue, right now we are at 42 per cent. We were at a high of 44 per cent in 1999 and I expect that we are going to be down to 30 per cent by the year 2002.

This Government is committed to very, very stringent management of our debt. Over the next 12 months we are going to be exercising some control. In fact, there would be a moratorium on further borrowings with the exception of one or two areas, but there will be a moratorium on further borrowings until such time as we can manage our debt stock to the levels that we consider to be acceptable. Like I said, the international benchmark is 50 per cent and our intention is to go below that by the year 2005.

There would be sustainable growth if we could resolve the problems of Caroni (1975) Limited. I do not think that anybody would question the fact that we need to find a permanent solution to Caroni (1975) Limited. Senators would be aware that Caroni (1975) Limited's drain, if you wish, or Government's contribution to Caroni (1975) Limited averages about \$300 million to \$350 million per year. I can tell you that Caroni (1975) Limited's debt and obligations are to the tune of about \$1.7 billion as we speak. Until such time as we find a permanent resolution to Caroni (1975) Limited we will not have sustainable growth so we would find it extremely difficult to maintain sustainable growth.

I am absolutely convinced that we can find a permanent resolution to Caroni (1975) Limited where all the participants—all the stakeholders, workers and so forth—would come out of Caroni (1975) Limited well. I am absolutely confident about it. We have had a preliminary report from a joint team of the management

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of Caroni (1975) Limited and the divestment secretariat of the Ministry of Finance. This joint team was given two more weeks to further refine the proposal, at which point I am reasonably confident that we are going to be in a position to have a resolution that would meet Cabinet's approval which we would be able to sell to the entire population.

I think that Senators would also be interested to know about a certain company called Taurus. You would be aware that Taurus is the company that was established to take over the cleaning up loans or bad debts of First Citizens Bank when the three banks merged. I can tell you that Taurus is currently carrying a debt of about \$1.72 billion with very little of that being recoverable. If we could find a resolution to Taurus then we could be well on the way to good sustainable growth. If we can deal with Caroni (1975) Limited and Taurus—I only picked those two areas—I think that we can be on the road to sustainable growth and development. I respect Sen. Prof. Deosaran's view that it is not just dollars and cents and that there are hosts of other issues, but I would deal with the dollars and cents part of it.

We could be on good grounds for sustainable growth and development with the current slate of investments—I am sure Sen. Gillette would speak more about it. The fact is there are a host of new investment opportunities before us at the moment. We are talking about aluminum smelter, new plants in methanol, new plants in ammonia, gas to liquids and a Train 4 which is further to the Trains 2 and 3 of LNG. We are talking about the fact that there is now the viability for an ethylene petrochemical complex by virtue of Trains 2 and 3 and it being more viable with Train 4. There are a host of players in all of those areas that are in discussions with the Government at the moment. In fact, there is a massive team from BP Amoco here at the moment and they are so very optimistic and upbeat about the future of gas in Trinidad and Tobago. I am sure Sen. Gillette would also make mention of the fact that he is commissioning a study that would deal with a master plan for natural gas. We have to make a determination as to whether we are going to accelerate industry in natural gas to make short, quick profits or we are going to try to do it in a long-term way that would create greater employment for our people.

4.45 p.m.

There would be sustainable growth if we can facilitate industry. This Government is absolutely committed to the private sector. I am committed to the reduction of interest rates. For a while now, Central Bank has been speaking about getting into open market operations and moving away from the high reserve

requirements of commercial banks. I am determined, in conjunction with the Governor of the Central Bank, that in the short term the reserve requirements of the banks would be reduced with the resultant reduction in interest rates. For every six percentage points we reduce the reserve requirements by, we are talking about the lending rates dropping by about 1.5 per cent on an average.

In addition, I would be looking at the reserve requirements as applied to banks and non-banks, the differential being reduced, if not eliminated completely. Maybe, there ought to be reserve requirements on US dollar deposits for those who have that kind of financial interest. I am also concerned that sustainable growth would happen if we encourage greater savings. Encouraging savings does not mean that a tax on interest should be applicable. There has been gradual reduction on tax on interest on savings over the past two years, I believe. I can only say that a very serious look would be given to remove tax completely on interest on deposits. That would encourage savings and sustainable growth.

This Government is also committed to strengthening the non-oil, non-energy sector and facilitating Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association. We have already had meetings with them and they are in the process of sending me their wish list of things that we need to do to help them further develop. As you know, one of the major concerns we have always had is the removal of the dependence on the exports from the oil and energy sectors, and further develop those sectors, which over recent years have been developing very well.

Sen. King, we are committed to the microenterprise and small business sectors. We will continue to do whatever we can to encourage and help them to develop. You would have heard of the Fair Share Bill which is being prepared and drafted at the moment. This will provide a portion or percentage of Government's procurement to selected or designated small businesses. I expect that the Fair Share Bill would come to the House during the course of this year.

I am committed to the Board of Inland Revenue Department from the point of view of compliance and not from the point of view of increasing taxes. I am also committed to the Customs and Excise Department. I think that if we can have greater compliance, there would probably be no need for increasing taxes. If we can continue along those lines to improve the compliance element, there would come a point in time, hopefully, when we may be able to reduce corporation and personal taxes. These things would encourage sustainable growth.

The point of an intelligent nation, of having the human resource capability to handle the jobs in the sectors that we are developing for permanent employment, was made by Sen. Prof. Deosaran. It is not a question of handing a guy a job. In

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fact, I am not too sure how many Members are aware that the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) is no longer the URP. It is now the Employment Training Programme (ETP). I know it changes with every administration. For anybody to get a job in what used to be the URP, that person has to work in the morning and submit himself or herself for training in the afternoon. That is to create the skills in people for sustainable employment. Our objective, ultimately, is the elimination of poverty. We would eliminate poverty by creating jobs and the development of our human resource to fill those jobs.

In my first presentation, I think I made mention about a project that is being looked at; that is the elimination of destitution. The fact of the matter is that elimination of poverty will take a little time with education, training and the creation of jobs. I made the point before, that there is absolutely no reason why in Trinidad and Tobago, a country of relative wealth, there should be destitute people. A number of discussions have been taking place with a host of people, both at the level of the non-governmental organizations and the private sector, all of whom are totally and absolutely committed to such an undertaking. I have assured them that whatever moneys are required to make such a project happen and on a sustainable basis, I will do everything that I can.

This Government is committed to the democratic process and the rule of law, and there is no creeping dictatorship.

Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette): Mr. Vice-President, before moving the Adjournment, I wish to inform Members that at the next sitting of the Senate, we will try to finish the Motion on the Land Acquisition and then we would go straight into the debate of the Telecommunications Bill. We would go on to the following Tuesday, and I will adjourn the Senate to a date to be announced. We would go until April 10th.

On the following Tuesday, put it in your diaries, we can plan to be here at around 10.30 a.m. It would probably be a late day on April 10th.

Inow beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, April 3, 2001 at 1.30 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President: Could we have some order.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.55 p.m.