

Oral Answer to Question

Tuesday, September 25, 2001

SENATE

Tuesday, September 25, 2001

The Senate met at 10.30 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

**Interim National Physical Planning Commission
(Membership/Logistical Support)**

13. *The following question stood on the Order Paper:*

- (1) Could the hon. Minister of Integrated Planning and Development advise the Senate of the membership of the Interim National Physical Planning Commission and the qualifications and professional activities of the individual members?
- (2) Could the hon. Minister state the terms of reference of the Commission?
- (3) Could the hon. Minister state the extent of logistical support given to the Commission, in particular the personnel and support staff delegated to the work of the Commission and the approximate cost of this support? [*Sen. Prof. J. Kenny*]

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette): Mr. President, I have had consultations with Sen. Prof. Kenny and the others and, because we are now in the process of debating the budget, we would like to defer the question for a further two weeks.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 24, 2001]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Sen. Michael Als: Mr. President, like others before me on this side of the honourable Senate, I thank you for allowing me to speak on this very critical and important matter before us, which, in grass-roots terms, is the 2002 budget.

I am glad to speak because at the present time in our country, to say the least, we live in interesting times. To say more, we live in exciting times and, certainly, we recognize that in our country today, there are many national and international factors that would affect our economy and our lives in general.

In preparing to make my contribution, for which I will use all my time—and I wish I could get some more when the time comes—I have decided to do some retrospection and then move on to introspection. As Black Stalin, one of our famous and well-known calypsonians has said, “You cannot know where you are going, unless you know where you have come from.”

I want, in a sense, to step a little outside the framework of the debate in the context of the *Review of the Economy*, the Public Sector Investment Programme and, of course, the Appropriation Bill, 2001—2002 before us. I want, in one way, to deal with the many—I can only call them interesting—In many respects, some very curious incidents have taken place in the last two weeks that need to be addressed and I think it is my bounden duty to attempt, not only to address them, but to redress them.

I also want to look at some activities of this administration and, in a sense, to bring us to a record, so to speak, of some of the things that appear in this budget that could not have appeared in the budget statement of our very able Minister of Finance, if certain other things had not been done by the present administration, which will continue to sit after the next general election. This administration made a contribution to setting down a base.

I want to comment, in the first area, on some of the major accomplishments, particularly in the public sector. People have spoken in numerous places and indeed, it has been reflected on a number of occasions and repeatedly in the media, that the Trinidad and Tobago Government, under the Panday administration, did nothing for public servants in its period of tenure. It is important for me to catalogue some of the things that this administration has done because this budget hinges on the number of things that were done before.

As an example, there is the payment to civil servants, prison officers and employees of certain statutory authorities, of arrears arising from the suspension of the special tribunal awards to public officers and the cost of living allowance, by way of tax-free bonds, prior to 1996. It is important for Senators and the public

as a whole to recognize this. Only those public officers whose representative associations had agreed to the buyout of increments, owed over the period 1987—1994 were provided with bonds in settlement of arrears owed to them.

In 1996, this administration agreed to the issuance of bonds to the officers represented by those associations that had not accepted the buyout of increments, that is, civil servants, prison officers, employees of certain statutory authorities; and to the quantification of the arrears of increments owed to these officers. The quantification exercise is well advanced, having been completed in certain ministries, departments and authorities. Some 40,000 officers benefited from the decision of this administration at a cost of approximately \$950 million.

There was also payment of the value of an increment to public officers and daily-rated employees in 1996 and the re-introduction of payment of increments to public officers and daily-rated employees with effect from January 1, 1997.

There was settlement of salaries and revised terms of conditions of employment of public officers for the periods January 01, 1990 to December 31, 1992, which ran to 1993. That was not settled.

In 1988, the Special Tribunal made an award in respect of the revised remuneration arrangements for public officers for the period January 01, 1984 to December 31, 1989. While this award was eventually implemented in 1992, no steps were taken by the then administration to address the revised salaries and terms and conditions of employment with effect from January 01, 1990.

The Panday administration gave priority to these issues and in 1997, revised terms and conditions of employment were settled in respect of three periods: January 01, 1990 to December 30, 1992; January 01, 1993 to December 30, 1995; January 01, 1996 to December 31, 1998; at a cost of \$865 million. This administration did this.

There is the settlement of new salaries and pay structures for the teaching service and the defence force in respect of the period commencing January 1, 1999. This is why I say there is need for some retrospection.

Following in-depth review of the pay structure of the defence force, which had been linked to that of the police service, a new, distinct pay structure was developed, taking into account the peculiar duties and responsibilities of members of that force. This has resulted in increased rates of pay for officers and other ranks in the Regiment.

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Mr. President, following the completion of a job evaluation exercise, which commenced in 1993, the Chief Personnel Officer and the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association agreed to a new pay structure for members of the Teaching Service. In one sense, raising the review of salaries here in the Parliament, I am really certain that when some of our censors hear what teachers are now receiving in our republic, they may raise an alarm.

This exercise sought to establish in an objective and scientific way appropriate internal relativities and external equity with comparable jobs in the economy and has resulted in the introduction of salaries reflective of the importance of the job of teachers.

A Teacher I, that is, a primary school teacher, who was receiving \$3,870 is now receiving \$5,581. A Teacher II, who is a secondary school teacher, is receiving \$4,680 and by October of this year will be receiving \$6,683.

A Principal I in primary school, who was being paid \$5,029 is now receiving \$9,421. An Assistant Teacher in a primary school who has been receiving a salary of \$2,560 is now receiving \$4,480.

A Principal II in a secondary school, who received a salary of \$5,790, is now receiving \$10,501. At the end of the period of the agreement, in 2002, the salaries bill would have moved from \$824.5 million to \$1.16 billion. It will end in the year 2002.

What is very clear is that this administration has been paying particular attention to the question of public servants. For example, negotiations with public service associations and unions for the period January 01, 1999 to December 31, 2001 have been settled.

More importantly is the sensitivity of the Government. There is the introduction of a pension plan and daily-rated employees of central government, regional corporations and workers in the Tobago House of Assembly were able to benefit. This plan has been in the making for a period in excess of 30 years. The present administration took the necessary steps to finalize it. The plan will provide a minimum of \$1,000 per month for the life of the recipient for a period not less than five years and a death benefit.

There was the introduction of a group health insurance plan for daily-rated employees. This plan, with 26,000 persons, offers a basic medical component, a major medical component, dental and optical benefits, a death benefit and accidental dismemberment.

What does this really mean? It means that a large section of the working class, ordinary people, have radically benefited from the implementation of wage agreements under the Panday administration. When people go about in various places saying that nothing was done, it is not only unfair, it is not only untrue, but it is ridiculous that the perpetration of this nonsense continues, even in the media, by responsible and senior journalists, who continue to remark on something that clearly is not true.

10.45 a.m.

In addition, of course, there are large areas where, as an example, in a most sensitive way, there was a waiver of a certain requirement for entry into the clerical class to permit temporary Clerks 1 to be considered for permanent employment as in the public service. Appointment to the position of Clerk 1 is based on passing a qualifying examination by the age of 25 years. Over 1,000 ordinary citizens who did not have the fullest requirement were able to work, and continue to work today in the public service. Not everybody who goes to school is able to qualify in the way that you would like them to qualify, but the fact is that over 1,000 such public servants are now in the public service. They have been notified that they have to do their examinations and that they have to move forward and advance themselves in the society.

In addition, this Government has had absorption of Special Reserve Police Officers (SRPs). In fact, hundreds of them have been included on a full-time basis and are performing duties on a similar basis as members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. They are now, in fact, in terms of the nature of their employment, eligible for established terms and conditions of employment, such as leave allowances and terminal benefits.

It is this administration, I may say, Mr. President, that took time to engage in the legislative framework, one of which is the Law Reform (Pensions) Act of 1997. We came to this place and the other place, to get it passed and it was passed in 1977. This legislation provides improved superannuation benefits for public officers, employees of certain statutory authorities and members of the defence force. Some of these benefits are the preservation of the service of persons who resign from the public service before the age of 50 and the provision of deferred pension at age 55. Prior to this provision, officers in these circumstances would not have received any benefits at all. This is a radical departure in the public sector, in terms of the question of providing for public servants; workers in this country who some people call flunkies—and they are not supposed to be so called. Mr. President, the fact is that, for these workers, there is also the linking of

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their service accrued under the various Public Service Pension Acts, where service has been interrupted by a break. This ensures that service prior to this break would no longer be disregarded for the purposes of computing superannuation benefits as well as provision of superannuation benefits at age 55 to temporary officers, and those officers who have not been confirmed. Prior to enactment of the legislation, these officers would have only been granted a lump-sum gratuity on the approval of Cabinet.

This is the sensitivity of this administration. I say again, that there are too many people in high places who go about the place saying that the administration has done nothing for public servants. Again, right here in this honourable Senate, and in the other place, the Prison Service (Amdt.) Act, 2000 was passed. This legislation provides for enhanced superannuation benefits to prison officers. Prior to the legislation, prison officers were eligible for superannuation benefits on the same basis as civil servants. The Prison Service (Amdt.) Act 2000 allows these officers to receive benefits on the same basis as their counterparts in the police and fire services.

Mr. President, people do not speak about these things! These are thousands of ordinary workers who are able to receive the benefits long overdue. These benefits were not paid by the PNM administration, yet it is the leaders of the same PNM administration who go about saying that public servants are not paid what they are supposed to be paid.

In addition, we had the Fire Services (Terms and Conditions of Employment) Regulations, as well as the Code of Conduct Regulations for members of the civil service. We had the Protective Services (Compensation) Act, 1996. All these things took place in a stream of efforts, in an attempt to regularize the lives of public servants in our republic.

Mr. President, why do I raise this retrospection? I raise this because in this existing budget, what does the Minister of Finance do? In spite of his splendid record, Mr. President, what does he do? He takes time—in spite of his earlier warning—and says: “Hello, public servants are supposed to be provided with what they are supposed to be provided with and a significant—more than significant—in fact, an appropriate approach has been taken along budgetary lines to satisfy some of the difficulties in which some of the public servants find themselves. The fact is, Mr. President, that a lot of this work that I have recorded, was done by a Minister who is in this Senate now, the then Minister of Public Administration, Sen. Wade Mark. [*Desk thumping*] I say this, not only to pay

attention to the fact that the Minister was the instrument through which the Minister of Finance acted and the Government and Cabinet supported, but the fact is, 17 negotiations were settled between the six-year period that this administration has been here. So that when you have a budget that is able to identify that line, coming down the road, you recognize that it is your bounden duty—it is my bounden duty, Mr. President—to identify that.

I also want to pay some attention to the unfortunate and almost sad, unfounded and nefarious allegation that was made in various places, about public officials in the administration of the UNC. I say nefarious because when some people in their desperation—I can only say that, perhaps, I know as the fact, Mr. President, history has shown us repeatedly, that when you lead a mutiny, you either succeed or you concede and if you fail to concede, you perish. Whether this is in military, whether this is in politics, whatever term, if you do not succeed, you must concede, and if you fail to concede you will perish. Therefore, when some people contrive to take a photograph—a picture—and bring it in a sacred place as this Parliament, and indicate by inference or by allegations, or by some other contrived means, that a public official in this Government is somehow, and in some way, connected with some nefarious act, this is sad. The cold truth is, two young Trinidadians—two young female Trinidadians, I am reminded—renting a basement flat in London, attending to the business of their lives and a picture is taken of a building and brought here. It is sad because those who brought it know the conditions under which these two young women live. They know that there is no ownership plan, it is simply a rental occupation of a basement flat and then they come with this sickening nonsense to a sacred place like this Parliament to deal with something like that. Now it has rebounded on them and that is why I say when you are in a mutiny you either succeed or perish.

I also want to take time to point out—and I will come to all these little elements which are influenced by declarations in the media—and to closely examine some of the efforts made by this Government and continue to be made by the Government, in the area of corruption.

Before I go there, Mr. President, I want us to go somewhere else. I want to go to three islands in this world: one is Barbados, the other Cuba and the third is Singapore. Why do I want to go there? I want to go there because in each case with the global environment that we have, each of those countries has taken time to exercise a survival module in economics in spite of the environment. In Barbados, as an example, over the last 10 years, it is not the issue of that Minister of Finance bringing a finance statement to the Parliament alone, his contribution

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as the Minister of Finance has to do with a clear policy that they have taken in Barbados in two areas: one had to do with manufacturing and the other had to do with tourism.

What did the Barbadian people and administration consciously do? Mr. President, do you know what they did? They said we had to retool. All our manufacturing concerns had to retool, deliberately and consciously, in order to be able to rise to the occasion when their manufacturing products could be on equal or better terms on the international market. That is one of the factors that has given Barbados the stable economy that it has. The other one is its tourism. It took a deliberate decision that in all cases where there were tourism plants all of them had to be refurbished, all of them had to be brought up to an international standard, all of them had to comply with certain regulations that the Government laid down—all without exception—even down to the guest houses.

That was in the context of the line, recognizing that tourists, who came from Europe, came for two weeks and tourists who came from Canada and the United States, came for one week. Simple as it is, they were able to organize a clear schedule on their arrivals and departures and the kind of product that they had been able to offer the tourism public. Those two things: the retooling of the manufacturing concerns and the refurbishing of all the tourism plants. A public education system in Barbados for all citizens in relation to tourism, has been able to provide that island with a certain kind of stability and a clear economic pattern of growth where people can identify with what is taking place.

The other place is Cuba. With the collapse of European socialism, the Cuban State was placed in a very traumatic situation. What did they do? They decided deliberately and consciously that they had two products: their natural environment and their people. Their products were directly connected to a decision taken to invite foreign investments in a socialized economy of a magnitude unheard of in the Caribbean. They invited private sector investment into the island and developed the tourism product, and around that product, two elements: one helped tourism. Why help tourism, Mr. President? Because that country has a clearly superior health system; where thousands of people from all over Europe, Canada, and some from the United States of America, go to Cuba for health services as part of that tourism product on short-term medical needs. They have also expanded their eco-tourism. So together, Costa Rica and Cuba have cornered 65 per cent, in the Caribbean, of the eco-tourism market and some 42 per cent of that economy is dependant on tourism from outside—clear, demarcated policies, and that is why I will come to the brilliance of our Minister of Finance.

11.00 a.m.

In Singapore—the “Singapore experiment” as it is called—they took a very fundamental decision. What was that decision? One, to break away from the Malay Federation. They broke away from the Malay Federation. Why did they break away from the Malay Federation? They found it too bureaucratic, too colonial and too imperial. Its legislation was 150 years old and nothing could be done in Singapore without federal approval and bureaucratic persuasion. What did they do? They took five years, Mr. President, to rid themselves on their books, come into their parliament on a regular and consistent basis over five years and revoke nearly all those pieces of legislation to free up the place, to give the community, the people, and indeed international investors as well as national investors, the opportunity to invest in that country. Again, just like Cuba and Barbados, Singapore went on a massive education programme when citizens of that state were allowed to know exactly what was required.

What did our Minister of Finance do here in Trinidad? This is why I take some time—I will be dealing with the corruption, Mr. President, but we had statements where—important people in the scheme of things in this Senate made statements saying that there was no analytical tool applied to the budget. I was astounded, as one is supposed to be astounded, because if anyone took time to look at the *Review of the Economy 2001*—and not just look at it, because one had to study it. A serious Senator as Sen. Christopher Thomas, it was clear that he took considerable time. Others did too. However, a Senator came here and said there were no analytical tools applied to this budget and it was clear to me that he did not pay attention and did not read the *Review of the Economy 2001*. That was clear and I do not think one should come here and do those things.

You may want to make a criticism, you may want to say something against the budget, but do not say that the budget did not apply analytical tools, because that is absolutely untrue. Those tools that the Minister has applied to this budget are clearly defined in a very analytical way, Mr. President, areas that will, in fact, deal with output and employment—inflation, the exchange rates, interest rates, world commodity prices, world trade payments or debt, the gross domestic product, petroleum and petrochemicals, iron and steel, cement, agriculture, sugar, tourism, prices, wages, population, labour force and employment—all categorized and all articulated in a very erudite manner, the patient analysis that our Minister of Finance has been able to provide in this budget.

However, much more importantly, although some people have dismissed the budget in their haste to cast doubt and in their haste to try to debase the numerous

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efforts of this Government to try to provide a clear formulation and a policy for our future—just like in Barbados, in Cuba and in Singapore, we are doing this through the instrument of this budget in a clear way. I think we should be able to commend more than casually the Minister of Finance for his articulation as well as the provision for information and research on the economy and on lives—as it affects ordinary people in Trinidad and Tobago. When the Minister, therefore, says it is not to leave anybody behind, one has to look at the measures that are going to be applied. Indeed, in some areas they need more attention, one cannot argue that, but the fact is that, once we are able to understand that our economy is driven by petroleum and other carbon deposits, nature—God has provided us with it.

The Minister of Finance came yesterday and made reference to incidents in New York, and there is cause for concern. The truth is, if an incident, hopefully not—God willing, and God prevents—takes place in a shipping port in the United States of America, if it moves from the air and goes to the sea—already all over the world airline traffic has been considerably reduced. People are hesitant to fly. They prefer to walk, some of them, as I saw in a TV clip. Some prefer to ride a bicycle now. Some will “take train” with caution. Some “doh” want to go on ship. The fact is, the largest part—the bulk traffic of international commerce—goes on ships. That is the truth. One incident in one port in the United States of America is going to trigger enormous problems, not only for Trinidad and Tobago but also for the rest of the world.

The majority of those sailors are from what you classify as Third World countries—many of them from Islamic countries. If you cannot verify your sailors on board and if they are not, perhaps, all European Americans, there are going to be considerable difficulties, and this is not casting aspersions. One sees the hysteria in America, and one incident at that level can cause great tribulation and concern here for us. For one thing, we may need to have to seriously go back to agriculture in a profound way. Maybe it may alter some of our attitudes, but I am just raising one possibility, and that one possibility can convert our plans. In fact, that is why I think one Senator says we have to pay attention to, I think, the “in growth” economy? I cannot remember the term—[*Interruption*—the inshore economy, and that is not a joke.

In fact, if you look at the budget, the Minister of Finance perhaps had a vision of incidents of the kind, because considerable resources are placed in encouraging and strengthening local industry and local commitment to that industry. That is the road we will have to walk in any case and that is why, at this point in time,

Mr. President, when some of these people who are attacking the administration and raising, as I said, these nefarious and unfortunate comments in this honourable place, they forget—or, if they do not forget they do not wish to remember—that it is this Government that has put down the Freedom of Information Act in our republic. In fact, there are only two other such Acts in the entire English-speaking Commonwealth.

The Integrity in Public Life Act, the Constitution (Amdt.) Act, 2000, and the Equal Opportunity Act give—a regime of legislation—unprecedented powers to the police, to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), to the courts, to the media, to Members of Parliament and the general public to investigate, prosecute and punish persons found guilty of economic crimes and betrayal of public office and country. Some critics have insisted that that is not enough for us to do. Some people believe that you must ride roughshod over the rights of people and that is why, in this context, there is going to be brought to our Parliament a Bill to amend the Prevention of Corruption Act and to establish the anticorruption commission.

The very Bill itself to amend the Prevention of Corruption Act was introduced in 2000 but the election interrupted it and that is why we are going to bring it back again. A key feature of the amended Prevention of Corruption Act will be a provision for the protection of the identity of members of the public who give information regarding the instances of actual or alleged corruption. This will introduce what is called whistle-blowing protection—the whistle-blower protection—into the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. What are the objectives?

One is to encourage persons to come forward and give information about criminal activities, and this is in keeping with Article III of the Inter American Convention against Corruption because this Government is internationally linked to prevent same. This Article advises states to strengthen and maintain systems for protecting public servants and private citizens who, in good faith, report acts of corruption and protection of their identities. The concept of the whistle-blower protection has been widened under the Justice Protection Act. That Act gives effect to a regional agreement—an established justice protection programme. This programme was brought about by the increasing interference of organized crime with a justice system in the form of either intimidation or elimination of witnesses and judicial law enforcement personnel, and these are things that are taking place in our republic. The amended Protection against Corruption Act would significantly enhance the powers of the police and the DPP in investigating or persecuting acts of corruption.

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Mr. President, outside of these silly photos and so on, it is the Government of Trinidad and Tobago that began exposing these activities and taking action on same. In fact, it is unfortunate to note in this place that, because of the seriousness of this Government, there is a public official who resides in another place now, and it is this Government that refused to hide and, in fact, exposed this situation. Every other administration in this country did something else. [*Desk thumping*] One went to Panama, one went to Canada, one went here, one went there— [*Interruption*] I am informed one did nothing. People do not pay attention to the fact that it is the hon. Prime Minister who gave the Minister of Finance a particular authority upon which he acted and continues to act. [*Desk thumping*]

There are some people among the mutineers [*Laughter*] who do not want to give the Minister of Finance that authority, but he has it and he acts upon it and that is the type of person he is and that is the type of Minister we have and he provides a stable response to a critical problem that has created great unease in this country. It is due process—that is what it is—but some people want to hijack some people one time, attempt to string them up, “bring photograph” and say guilty! Of what? Of having your children in a decent, little apartment in London and being penalized for that? That is disgusting. May I drink some water, Mr. President?

Then some people have come here on the issue of a cheque issued to the hon. Prime Minister. I want to tell you something. It is only babies in politics and, maybe, babies in the media who do not know that political parties worldwide and their leaders receive contributions known and unknown, publicized and unpublicized, that are placed in the party coffers. That is where it is placed and is placed, and it was not displaced, [*Laughter*] and the point that I am making is that all people know that. If people suggest—if the Opposition suggests— [*Interruption*] You are a young man. Listen to the elucidation of my comment.

Sen. Dumas: On a point of order, Mr. President.

Sen. M. Als: Do I give way, Mr. President?

Hon. Senators: Point of Order.

Sen. Dumas: Mr. President, I would want to suggest maybe that an allusion to this Senate—any allusion that it was introduced in this Senate by this side, any suggestion of a picture or a cheque, I am suggesting that we are being misled here.

Mr. President: Maybe I should have interjected earlier. Senators must be aware that matters that took place in the other House cannot be introduced for

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debate in this Senate. There are many avenues by which those matters can be introduced to the Senate, but certainly not derived directly from that House and introduced into this House.

Sen. M. Als: Mr. President, I always take your corrections. I apologize for directly introducing it. I was influenced by the media, like everybody else, [*Desk thumping*] and reports appearing in the media suggesting these things by certain people—these reports.

The time, perhaps, has come where, as in some other places—Germany as an example—all political parties that are contesting the election—all political parties contesting the election are provided, once they pass 5 per cent of the electorate—every single vote they get, they are provided with money. Every single vote they receive—as in Germany—the parties are provided with an allowance from the state. They are facilitated with their party offices. Their staff is paid. This is not done with contributions from outside; the state does this. Perhaps the time has arrived in our maturity where we may pass legislation where the State provides, to political parties, resources to conduct their affairs. Perhaps if this happens here we may not need to have other kinds of interventions, but the fact is, presently this is what takes place.

One cannot move away from the fact that political campaigns are expensive. One cannot move away from the fact that the Elections and Boundaries Commission has indicated that, in order to contest an election, you must have a \$5,000 deposit and you cannot go over \$50,000, because elections are expensive business and, if you have 36 seats to contest and if you have 307,000 votes to get, sometimes you need resources to do that. So there is no embarrassment about a cheque appearing in the media. Let them bring the other cheques that they have because each one of those things can be explained, and we are not afraid to face it and to deal with it and it is unfortunate this carnival band hysteria in the media. Some of the media editors perhaps are now leading—[*Interruption*]

11.20 a.m.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. M. Als: As I was saying, we are not afraid. Afraid of whom and afraid of what? We are not intimidated. Why should we be intimidated? Because the fact

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is, the legislation is there and if anyone at any level is involved, the due process would catch them and deal with them. The due process! That is why this Government laid down the legislation in the first place. If it was retroactive, a whole number of people in another party would be in another place, and the point is that we are not afraid.

I say so, Mr. President, because the context and the content of our legislative programme in respect to the Protection against Corruption Act and the proposed establishment of the Anticorruption Commission, a person who commits an offence under the relevant sections of the amended Prevention of Corruption Act will, on summary conviction, be liable to a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for 10 years. Indeed, it would take an extremely brave person to face that and say, “Me ain't 'fraid that.” I know that every single person on our side is afraid of that and will not be engaged in those activities. On indictment that person will be liable to a fine of \$1,500,000 and imprisonment for 20 years. Those are the realities and we introduced it. We placed it.

I am saying more than that. There can be no doubt, absolutely no doubt, that the concerns that the community has, the country has, are concerns that are legitimate. Nobody can say otherwise. That is why this budget is so relevant and so important, because once those legislative frameworks are in place to protect people and to protect the process, the business of this country will be conducted in a much better, calmer and dignified atmosphere.

Mr. President, when people on the other side, and then some people in the media—I classify them as long-time economists—

Sen. Dr. Moonilal: Plantation.

Sen. M. Als: No. Part of the plantation economy, indeed, is still with us in a way, but I am not referring to any contribution made by any Member in this Senate. I am saying fake economists in the media making all kinds of bogus predictions. Not recognizing the tremendous amount of work that is going on in this country. The stability of the economy. They think that perhaps there are a few murmurs in the ship, the SS UNC, but the commander of the rig is in charge.

Sen. Dr. Moonilal: He is in charge.

Sen. M. Als: He is in charge, and the commander is ably assisted by other Ministers who understand the policy framework, who understand what the United National Congress Government is doing in this country and why it is doing it. Everywhere we go we meet dissatisfied people, some individuals who are not

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happy in a present period when this economy is moving, as well as the same time when there are so many international repercussions to be concerned about whether they get trips here or there. [*Laughter*] I do not know. I say some people.

The point I am making is that we need to be more alert to the old time economists who are no longer relevant. They cannot even go in the university and teach any longer. They cannot even get a consultancy anywhere. They have to go to the United States and fool people. They cannot come here to do that and suddenly become experts.

Sen. Morean: Who is that?

Sen. Dr. Moonilal: Mottley!

Sen. M. Als: Miscreants, I call them! Who do not understand what is taking place in this country and are trying to rock the Rock of Gibraltar. [*Laughter*] How can one rock the Rock of Gibraltar? I do not understand how one can go about doing that. One cannot rock the Rock of Gibraltar. I am saying, therefore, Mr. President, I am a student of politics. In time I will be something else, but right now I am a student of politics. I know if what is going on in Trinidad was going on in England, the government would fall. If it was going on in France, the government would fall. If it was going on in Italy, the government would fall. If it was Germany, the government would fall. Yet this Government stands like the Rock of Gibraltar! [*Desk thumping*]

If it was going on in Jamaica, it would fall. It could not happen in Barbados, it would fall. In Guyana, it would collapse and, it is to the credit of two critical elements in this country. The sheer intelligence of this population. The absolute sheer intelligence of this population who do not wish to surrender their rights, their privileges and their opportunities, because they see that we are in some difficulty yes, and that is why they are holding on so close to protect the process, because they want no other government in power. They understand that this one is the best one that they have had. [*Desk thumping*]

I tell you across the board, the PNM supporters do not want to surrender the UNC Government to the PNM, and they will not do it either. Those are daydreams and nightmares that PNM people are having. I will tell you something. The PNM leadership is like a dry cigarette and there are some people who want to put out that old, dry—like a wet cigarette, sorry. [*Interruption*] I withdraw. Like a wet cigarette. There are some people who want to take that wet cigarette and put it out in the sun to dry. No old cigarette, beat up and broken, would find its place leading the Government of Trinidad and Tobago again in this century and beyond.

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There is another element. The sheer intelligence of the people. I say without any equivocation whatsoever, the leadership provided by the hon. Prime Minister, Mr. Basdeo Panday. [*Desk thumping*] Because nobody could be under so much pressure as he is, admittedly, and perform so well. Some people complain that the Prime Minister is too volatile and too sagacious. Some people complain. If he is sagacious and volatile, that is the nature and character of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago who gives a focus in a particular way that displeases some people from time to time. He is not a piece of board or a kind of dried up something that some people talk as if they are half dead on the other side. He speaks with—

Sen. Jones-Kernahan: Passion.

Sen. M. Als: Passion! Thank you for the word. It is that passion that moves people. It is the development process that is taking place in this country that will continue to be defended. We have worries. The country has worries, but the fact is that you can see a clear demarcation, in spite of the difficulties, where we are going and why we will get there.

This budget provides us with a great and glorious opportunity to continue the work that was started six years ago and, in some cases, some years before that, if in closing I may say, it is unfortunate that that other side has lost their way. It is unfortunate because, having lost their way, they lost their way after 1966. Their most brilliant period was between 1956 and 1966. After that, they lost their way and they have never recovered! They having an opportunity to lead the Government and the people have done precious little, but we have taken example from the brilliant work that was done in the earlier period and, we are carrying on that historical responsibility in this period, and that is why we have so much support from so many people from the People's National Movement. That is why if and when another election is called, sooner or later and, perhaps, more sooner than later, we are going to be returned again with a greater majority! [*Desk thumping*]

It is because of the budget. Some people declare it is an election budget. It was incidental or accidental that the budget came when certain things converged, but there were no plans. It was a normal people's budget in which we are leaving nobody behind.

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

Sen. Martin Daly: Mr. President, I am just recovering from the illogic of the last contribution [*Desk thumping*] with which I will deal if time permits. When

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this budget was prepared, it was an ambitious manifesto intended to show that the Government had thought of everything and everyone. Had the circumstances of its preparation remained the same, then we would have had the usual traditional annual debate about whether it was a good budget or a bad budget, whether it was good for the economy, bad for the economy, and we would have debated specific measures, such as the new agricultural institution which is remarkably similar to those that have failed before.

But, Mr. President, the circumstances changed dramatically. The budget has been fundamentally affected by not one, but two events of September 2001. Those events, Mr. President, were in danger and still are in danger of reducing this budget to complete irrelevance and, every practising politician in this country should be humble enough to follow the example of the Minister of Finance, when he presented in the Senate, to start backtracking from this budget, because the things that affect this budget are completely and utterly beyond our control.

Mr. President, the first event which affected this budget and reduced it to near irrelevance was, of course, the bombing incidents in the United States on September 11. Those incidents affect every single item in this budget and every area of our national economy. Why? I will put my suggestions about why they affect them very low and very undramatically.

First of all, it is already clear that the events of September 11 will deepen and lengthen the existing recession that was in progress on or about September 11. It is indisputable, Mr. President, that on or around September 11, there was an existing global recession. We have limited time in a budget debate, and I like practical examples. I do not like big words and I do not like jargon words like "empowerment". All I heard about agriculture is empowerment. "I ain't hear where we getting food to eat."

Let us take Lufthansa as an example. Our "peewat" leaders here are bleating about BWIA? Let us take Lufthansa as an example. I refer to *Business Week* of September 17, 2001, page 20:

"Lufthansa goes off course".

What it tells you is that Lufthansa, before the recession, had pushed its operating profits up by 44 per cent to \$948 million on sales of \$13.8 billion. I read:

"But these days, Lufthansa is a frightening indicator of how this economic slowdown can blacken even the bluest of Europe's blue chips."

Can darken. I prefer the word "darken".

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“Export traffic is shrinking as demand for high-tech equipment in Germany slumps, and idle Asian plants no longer need the special equipment Germany sells. In the first half of this year, Lufthansa’s cargo business brought in less than \$2 million in profits, compared with \$75 million in the same period last year. The smaller cargo shipments, combined with higher fuel costs and the impact of a pilots’ strike, resulted in a six-month net loss of \$39 million at Lufthansa, which reported results on August 22—a nasty blow for the airline that has led the European industry in profits for the past four years.”

Now, we could take a zillion examples. In this same edition of *Business Week*, Mr. President, a successful Italian jewelry design company, called Bulgari—and I am surprised that in all the allegations that have been flung left, right and centre, we have not heard about Bulgari. We have heard about pretty much everything else that people seem able to afford, and Bulgari has had an equally phenomenal rise as a fashion item worldwide.

Bulgari is now being criticized because its chief executive officer wants to go into the hotel business and start a hotel chain in five of the major capitals of the world where they sell Prada shoes, and so forth. Do you know, with the mere announcement, according to *Business Week*, by Bulgari that it was going into the hotel business, its stock price fell. And surprise, surprise! Do you know, Mr. President, who Bulgari is going into the hotel business with? Marriott, who is supposedly coming on the Port of Spain waterfront to build a hotel.

So, Bulgari’s announcement about a Marriott Hotel threw down its stock price, but one of the drivers of our economy is going to be a waterfront complex with a Marriott Hotel. This Government is completely detached from reality. Completely detached from reality. Unfortunately, so is the Opposition. So there are now about 200,000 of us in this country who see a plague on both their houses. What to do? It is about 200,000 of us now. It started in 1981 with 90,000 people who went to a third party and they lost everything. By that, 90,000 became 120,000 when an offshoot of the same third party lost and, by my estimation now, the 200,000 people in this country do not know what to do. Plague on both their houses!

Then, Mr. President, everything that is going to be done in the United States of America is going to be saturated with fear and suspicion. That is going to affect how America does business. They are going to watch very carefully who comes into their airports and their seaports, and comes into their country. That is going to

dominate decisions in the United States of America. It is going to dominate decisions.

11.40 a.m.

We do not have a great track record when it comes to our international relationships and I will explain—and I have not dealt with the situations that will arise if the announced plans of the United States of America to go to war materialize. We would not be building waterfront hotels and cineplexes, we will be looking for food, because international shipping would be affected.

So we had a pronouncement yesterday about empowerment and every single thing in agriculture is down, the dry season, the Mealy bug, the this, the that, the other. So when the ships cannot bring the American food, what would we be eating? And if this Government and this Opposition had any sense they would stop flinging down at each other and get together and figure out what if we go into a crisis? [*Desk thumping*]

Look at the initial market reaction to the United States crisis. Initial! It is going to change, going up and down every day because there are smart people out there who are going to try to make a profit out of this, but look at the initial market reaction.

In one week the stock exchange went down more than it ever had since the great depression of 1929 when people also fell out of buildings, but this time they jumped without fire in their rear. You had an initial job loss in the airline industry including airline manufacturers of 120,000. Those are people who “ain’t” buying cars, “ain’t” going to vacation in Tobago or anywhere else.

Now we have had a drop in the oil price to U.S \$21 that has the experts confused. One expert says it is lack of demand brought about as a result of the events of September 11, and it pains me to criticize the Minister at all, because at least in the most guarded terms, by the time he presented in the Senate, he acknowledged that the fundamentals of the budget had changed and were shaky. He acknowledged that. I “doh” know at a time when everybody “doh” like to say “dey” ever do anything wrong why we “cyar” praise men when they acknowledge something. So he acknowledged that the fundamentals are shaky, and I give him credit for that. But, of course, he cannot panic us. I do not intend to panic us, he cannot panic us, so he has to use words like “slight” and so on.

Let me take issue with him on one thing and it is this statement—first of all, you see the problem he has to dismiss tourism as a relatively small contributor to the domestic economy having said in the budget it was a subsidiary driver. He

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makes the prediction about natural gas prices with which I do not agree, and then he says when he talks about the budget, fundamentals appear to be slightly in jeopardy and then he says, well anyway our national gas arrangements are secured by contracts. I can say this. He cannot say that because he is the Minister of Finance and he at least understands that when he holds public office, he must conduct himself in a certain way, and I give him credit for that too. Because as I should be demonstrating, other people who hold high public office need to look up the word “jamet”, the word has no gender, it applies equally to all genders and I will deal with that.

So he cannot behave like a “jamet”, he has to use guarded language because he is not speaking as “Yetming” or “Gerry”, he is speaking as the Minister of Finance. He “cyar” go and tell the whole world that New York “lick up we budget”, but I say it “lick up we budget”.

He says that the outlook for the domestic energy sector is not seriously affected by recent events; most of the output of the energy sector is sold under contractual arrangements. Well, contractual arrangements are not going to help us you know. If anybody says they do not want our commodities coming into their country for whatever reason, or they say that we “cyar” buy gas at the price that we agreed, *force majeure*, all of this means nothing, they are coming to you to renegotiate.

Now, I do not wish to panic the country, we have been through far worse than this when the oil price was below \$10. We could handle it, but we have to face it and prepare ourselves to handle it. That is the point. We have to acknowledge it, prepare ourselves to face it and have a fallback plan. To hear speaker after speaker getting up in the Senate—where we are supposed to debate matters at a cooler level—and start talking about the advances in our programme, and what the other side did and did not do, and we might not have any food to eat. That is the first thing that has changed.

What is worse and what is completely under our control is that this budget has been affected by the events of September 22, an equally significant day and I will refer to the events of September 22, I have chosen that date because that is the date on which the “mutiny”—and I was looking for a word and Sen. Als provided it—in the Government coalesced and crystallized and could no longer be explained away and this budget is equally affected by the events of September 22. I am not afraid to say it you know. We have a hopelessly divided Government and happily, Sen. Als has used the word “mutiny” so he saved me the problem of

looking for a word.

Now, Mr. President, if foreign investors and other people who trade with us are going to be made timid by the events in New York on September 11, what do you think they must be thinking when they look at what passes for the present political exchanges? What are they going to think? Trinidad and Tobago has always had a reputation for political stability, we now have an acknowledged “mutiny” in the Government where within the Government “dey cussing up” each other. What is the outside world going to think?

Mr. President, I think it very important to consider what are the effects of the events of September 22 on this budget. Leave it to the experts, I am getting a headache thinking about September 11 anyway. Let us focus on the events of September 22—the “mutiny”—as Sen. Als has so kindly called it. He likes a high profile boy, he sure is—I do not suppose “hell” is a parliamentary word. He sure got a high profile today because he saved us a lot of trouble. The “mutiny” and the “mutineers”.

We are already in an unstable investment and if the business climate and the outside world are going to invest at all, and have to make a decision about Trinidad and Tobago, and if one of them had put on the television at 10.00 p.m. last night, this is what they would have seen. What did my colleague say about our intelligence? Of course we are an intelligent people, that is our problem, we are ten times more intelligent than all our politicians put together. That is not why the Government has not fallen, it has not fallen because it has a razor thin majority and the “mutineers” and the Leader need each other and they have not figured out a way to shaft each other without the Government falling. It has nothing to do with intelligence of the population. He expects to fool people with that? They need each other. They are locked in an embrace like two scorpions dancing.

So you put on your television at 10.00 p.m. last night and you see the Prime Minister, not Mr. Panday, or when we were in profession together “Bas” or “Basdeo”, the Prime Minister, not “Gerry”, not “Yetming” the Minister of Finance. You see the Prime Minister saying in the presence of the acting United States Ambassador, that the financial system is threatened in Trinidad and Tobago by self-righteous fanatics. What report is the acting US Ambassador going to write on his week’s activities in Port of Spain? What is he going to write? *[Interruption]* You have had your turn, Mr. Als and you misled us about Cuba, and I will deal with Cuba because I have been there.

Then you have Mr. Trevor Sudama who calls a press conference. You

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understand what is happening here? Two towers, six buildings collapse, four aeroplane crash, people missing, rescue workers writing their social security number on their arm when they are going to fish people out the wreckage. A press conference, Sir, a press conference. I nearly called you “partner”, Mr. President, I apologize. As we would say in the street, a press conference partner, to tell us what? How are we going to get food? How are we going to empower people in agriculture? “I ain’t get seven trips, and Carlos going Australia and Duprey going too.” A press conference for that? We have reached a new level of pettiness in this place and the question is: Is there any leadership that is available to us going to have a fallback position to guide this country in the events that have taken place?

Then we have Mr. Ramsaran who accused the Attorney General who is the official—not “Ramesh” or “Lawrence” or “Maharaj”, the Attorney General, his office, of treachery. He said the Attorney General was betraying Cabinet secrets. He said so. Not even a Junior Minister, an Attorney General, guardian of the Constitution, is accused of treachery in the course of this “mutiny”.

Then we have the “U P”, the “saga of U P”. That is Days of our Lives, that is a soap opera. I am sorry he suffered all the embarrassment and thing. One side say “U P” has drugs in his house, and “U P” says, he “ain’t” get “de” cheque and people want to bring up this cheque and sully the Senate by talking about these things?

I want to give a piece of advice, Mr. President, for the sake of this budget, let us consider carefully how the events of September 22 are unfolding, and I say to all high office holders—including the Leader of the Opposition because I am coming to him next—stop “jametizing” yourself and stop “jametizing” the country. I feel bad when “yuh jametize” the country in front of foreign officials. Stop it! Let us have a truce. We have been talking about it for a long time. Everywhere in the world people are seeking prayers and reconciliation and man here complaining about trips. “Yuh” want to go to Australia? Give him a pirogue “leh” him go. Because that is about all we will be able to afford if the world goes to war. It is ridiculous!

Then, Mr. President, we have a dramatic announcement in the media about a house. First of all, let me say that in C-A-M-P-D-E-N, Camden in Britain, the “P” is silent. It is Camden Hill, not “Camp den” Hill. Let us start with that. I am appalled that an allegation should be made about ownership and the response comes about tenancy of part of a building. I am appalled by that.

Do you know how many times I want to talk about the Minister who is living

on Petrotrin's compound. Whether he is paying for the house or not is not relevant. I never actually see him turning the key in the door, "meh" partners tell me he living there. I could certainly talk about the houses in Bon Accord on Petrotrin's camp that are expensively renovated by each successive chairman of Petrotrin; I could certainly talk that. I am disturbed to know whether it requires any further explanation or not. If you "buss" a mark, you must "buss" it good. Part of it must not be true and the bigger part of it false, that is "jаметizing" too and if you "jаметizing" a man's children, I could feel sorry for him. So let us get down to the real business of minding the affairs of the country because otherwise, the cliff on which we already are by developments in the world, including war, we are going over the cliff. We have gone crazy in this place.

I am not saying you must not have cut and thrust of politics and if you have a mark to "buss" you must not "buss" it. You must "buss" it good because you only have one chance to "buss" it. So I hope this matter of the house be resolved and the "jаметization" stopped.

Maybe, Mr. President, we could ask the caterers to send a bottle of "cooling bush for all ah dem". They are going to destroy this country and I said so in a previous debate—the logical conclusion of all these harsh words is war; not empowerment, whatever that is. And I have not spoken about the effect on public confidence because it will only make things worse.

Mr. President, we have to debate not only the effects of September 11 in New York on this budget, we have to debate the effects of September 22 including the "mutiny", I quote. If we destroy public confidence, if we continue to traumatize the population and "jаметize weself" and "jаметize" the country, no foreign investor will be coming here because our reputation for political stability will be lost.

Now Mr. President, this budget invites a huge debate about how we prevent the misuse of public property before it leaves the hands of the custodians of that property. We keep hearing over and over again how we are going to "ketch" and punish the guilty when they "tief" it already. If there is a discrepancy, fine. The integrity legislation and so on, great, great, wonderful, wonderful. Let us move on. If there is a discrepancy between the return filed with the integrity commission and a man's lifestyle, it happen already, he "done take de money a'ready". By the time you see his lifestyle get big, he "done take de money a'ready". If you put in a request under the Freedom of Information Act to investigate a matter, "de money gone a'ready". If you strengthen the corruption laws and you "ketch a man" "de money gone a'ready". And with all its facilities,

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the United States of America is now trying to see if they can find some of the wealth that supports terrorism and they know it is not going to be easy.

So all this business about confiscating assets when a man disappears his money in some offshore financial centre and dissipate it in a pyramid of companies, we will find it? So all of that is, “ol” talk. What is it that Dr. Moonilal said about performance and “ol” talk? All of that is “ol” talk, the money gone “a’ready”. By the time you hold them and prosecute them, “de money gone a’ready”. We have to ensure that we have proper tendering procedures required by law and those tendering procedures are followed.

The Minister is suggesting that he is going to have some “maco” in the Ministry of Finance and if it is over \$5 million he will have to get permission. This is not going to work and I will explain why later. I will go back to the PNM days when you had all these high officials who controlled the wealth of the economy—well now it is with the touch of a finger, the touch of a computer.

12.00 noon

We will go back to the PNM days when we had a Director of Exchange Control, before whom you had to genuflect; when you had—and I will change the initial—a Mrs. Z in the Salvatori Building in the Ministry of Industry and Trade and she was giving out the licences and you had to genuflect before her too. I have lived here long and I have suffered long. I tried to get school fees for children in foreign countries; I tried to get money for sick people when we had exchange control. I do not want any super “maco” in the Ministry of Finance controlling which contracts are approved; what I want is tendering procedures.

Mr. President: Senator, could you find another word? “Maco” has a derogatory connotation.

Sen. M. Daly: Will you accept “overseer” Mr. President? So we can dress him appropriately, an overseer. In fact, he would fit into Sen. King's plantation economy. I do not want one overseer with some other public servants approving contracts that I may have won fairly. That is an over-concentration of power. All I want is tenders' rules that apply right across the board, and if there is a problem with the Central Tenders Board and you want every enterprise and industry to do its own tendering, fine as long as they have rules. And the overseer does not come in to approve the contract, but to make random visits to make sure that the tenders' procedures are observed. Tenders' procedures are not just a procedural thing, they are checks and balances and the executive of the country whoever they are—and we now have a new doctrine in this country—if we build an airport,

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whether we pay too much for it, whether people are unjustly rich, it does not matter. It build. Well, we cannot run our affairs like that, even in days of plenty.

If a guava season is coming, all that money that is wasted and leaked out of the system because of not implementing proper controls, is money we will regret, bitterly, losing.

Now, it is always helpful when someone puts into words something that is troubling you. The most important thing about preventing all these leakage of public funds before they happen is attitude. We can not have a society that is run on the basis of “lock up people” alone. Yes, you have to lock up people, but you have to attack white-collar crime at its source; and it is a question of attitude.

If we now have a widespread worry in the society about the improper use of public funds, it is a failure of our politics, not a failure of our legislation. No government in this country, since independence, has ever tried to say to its wealthy followers and investors, “support me, but it does not mean that you are getting, personally, anything in return.” I have been wrestling with how to put this across because I have seen it. I have experience as a company director, as a lawyer, as a senator, and I see it all the time, what is insider trading and what is a nod and a wink and a fix-up.

I never said that our public servants are flunkies. That was suggested today. A flunkey is this: A flunkey is like a man who is the custodian of Petrotrin assets, and a politician tells him “gimme a car, gimme me a house, gimme me an office in the Hilton” and he does not say, “that is wrong, that does not come with your office”, and if he yields to that, that is a flunkey. The Minister knows because I brought it to his attention, about non-executive chairmen who demand cars; three and four cellphones; offices in the Hilton, and they are given these things. That is wrong. If people go into politics with that attitude, then we would always have a problem.

In mature societies, in intelligent societies, people go into public life, at least, at first, to serve the public. They do it on the old-fashioned notion that I got something out of the place, I must give something back. That is how people serve. And I hear at least one very pleasant, agreeable voice there. That is not old-fashioned, that is how civilized societies are run. So this huge debate that we are having about—and you notice, Mr. President, I am not using the word “corruption” because I am concerned about the preservation of public assets.

If a foreign investor comes and you take a bribe from him, that is a different problem. I am not dealing with that today. I am dealing with what we do wrong. What we do we own self, how we thief from we own self. That is what I am

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dealing with. And O'Holloran has nothing to do with that. If he took money from somebody who came in here, it is wrong but it is a different problem. Let us first focus on how we thief from "we self and we attitude".

So your party gets into government and "braddam"! You are in the back of the car, going to your house, with two cellphones in your ears. That is what causes the destruction of public funds. I see I have another convert smiling over there. He probably lives out of Port of Spain and passes these pesky people in the back of their cars, driven by their chauffeurs, while they are reading. For what? To serve the public? I do not understand that.

I do not think there is one Member on the Independent Bench to whom it is worth coming here for a morning for \$4,000 a month. Sen. Prof. Kenny and Sen. Prof. Spence when he was here, on one historic occasion came here seven days a week, when they were dealing with the first planning Bill. They are not coming here for the money; they are not coming here for the salute; they are not coming here for the duty-free car, because in any case we get fewer concessions than the Government. They are not coming for any of those things. They are coming because they want to serve the country. That is public service. Public service is not about "bigging up" yourself. That is the fundamental reason we have a problem with public funds in this country. Because none of our leaders have ever told their political supporters that is not what public service is about. That "if you are joining this party to buy me, buy the next man". That should be the attitude.

Happily, I need not spend much longer on this, in my inadequate words, because providentially, Mr. Keith Smith wrote about it this morning. On page 11 of the *Express* is an article headlined "Reality Cheque". This is in the media that is bashed by every other speaker on the Government's side.

They let go pictures, they let go thing on people; they call the media and give and when the media publish it, they say, "It is all a figment of your imagination." If the media had called anybody in politics a terrorist, they would have sued them. They would have brought an English QC to sue them; but if they call another man a terrorist and the media writes it, they want to lick-up the media. They say it is the media that is causing the bacchanal. I do not understand that.

If two "jamets" have a fight in the road, the media would pick it up. They did not make the "jamets" fight. Leave the media alone! What is your problem? If the media say something about you that you do not like, give them your side of the story and try to persuade them of the righteousness of your cause. What you want to lick them up and have censorship for?

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Of course, if you want to follow the Cuban and Singapore model, then of course, you want censorship of the media.

12.10 p.m.

So here is what Mr. Smith wrote. I do not know if this is considered as “scandalist” or terrorist. This is what he wrote. It is what we were taught in the school was a pregnant speech, and I use “pregnant” in the scientific, not the scandalous sense. I quote:

“I don’t know either that in times past either Mr. Maharaj, Mr. Sudama or the thousands of the party faithful would have cared much who gave money to whom, the point about the current rift being that it has put the man rats at each other’s throat and with the various cliques chattering for advantage the politics is not only open, but naked.”

That is what Keith Smith said, in “Reality Cheque”. Do you want to lock him up for that? You want to say that is scandal? I continue to quote:

“As so it should be; people both in and out of the UNC having to take note and choose and I can’t see how at the end of this storm political Trinidad will not be a better place with citizens coming to realise that you just can’t put a man dey and abandon responsibility for party and country because even the best of men have feet of clay and always circling are the predators ready to lay down the lagley needed to stick up the leaders the better to plunder the public purse.”

I have not counted the number of words. But “always circling are the predators ready to lay down the lagley needed to stick up the leaders the better to plunder the public purse”. Do you recognize now, Mr. President, I ask rhetorically, the man with the chauffeur, the three cellphones and the house he does not need? Do you recognize him now, Mr. President?

That is the problem in this country. The reason mature societies have stayed relatively honest for so long—though it is getting much worse now—is that people agreed that a common objective of their civilization was honesty in financial matters. They agreed with that as an objective and they looked for the predators circling, ready, to get people to yield to temptation. They do not talk this rubbish about “fix up yuhself.” When you accept the report of the Salaries Review Commission and pay the salaries that this independent body has recognized—it is puerile to watch the politicians dancing to blame each other for giving the parliamentarians better salaries.

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The man with the feet of clay, you want to give him a few thousand dollars to run a ministry spending billions and he cannot pay his bills; he is afraid to face the grocery and he is going to the cocktail parties to get free food to eat, and you expect us not to have a problem with public funds? And you sending people to state enterprises. Petrotrin—I am glad the Minister is coming back. They cannot find a chairman for Petrotrin. One reason might be the integrity legislation has gone too far, but that is another matter. They are running around with Petrotrin and hawking it around to get a chairman. First of all, they have no chairman because they “ain’t” like how the sitting chairman vote or did not vote. That is “flunkeyism”. A man should not have to lose “he wuk” or vote in a certain way, according to his conscience in order to keep his “wuk”. That is “flunkeyism”. If a man runs the risk of losing this chairmanship but he votes according to how he feels, then he is a big man; he is not a flunkey. The flunkey is the man who votes with the chairmanship of Petrotrin in mind.

That is the kind of independence of mind we need to foster in this country. That is how you keep at bay the predators circling, ready to lay down the “lagley”. And, “man it have lagley.” Because if you get a big contract, do you know how much “lagley” that is? That is plenty “lagley”; that is “lagley” to “ketch” every bird in Trinidad. If you get one of “dem” big contracts in the energy sector, you could “ketch” every bird and every politician in Trinidad.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. M. Daly: Thank you, Mr. President. They “leggo” two chairmen of Petrotrin in one year, with big “kufuffle”. Where “meh” report?

Hon. Senator: Right here.

Sen. M. Daly: I say—I say—this ISS Report was a piece of gossip; it was a political act, deliberately leaked to the press to nasty certain people. I say so, because I am not stupid. So “yuh leggo” two Petrotrin chairmen in one year with big “kufuffle”; ISS Report, big time journalist thing.

By the way, “yuh tink dem” photograph and “dem” ISS Report and all “dem odder ting” get in the papers only because our journalists are diligent? No, Sir. If I want to damage Gerry, I will go and get something on “he” and give them, and

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then when he wants to do me back, he “go” get something on me and give them on me too. So these things do not happen by accident.

What is all this thing about due process? Anybody in this report got due process? This was treated like the Scott Drug Report. So in the PNM time you have a Scott Drug Report and in UNC time you have an ISS Report and men got “lick up”. Some people wrote editorials saying they were glad men “get lick up”, because they know they are vagabonds.

I really hope—I have one thing that I would like after eleven and a half years in the Senate. I “ain’t” want no more UNC get up today and talk “bout” PNM corruption—alleged—for two reasons. Those of us who are old enough remember the genuflections to the Director of Exchange Control, Mr.—I nearly used the wrong initials—Z in the Ministry of Trade and Commerce who was giving out the licences. It “ain’t” have a public servant here who “ain’t” know what I am talking about—not one of them; giving out licence. Man, you think you have power now? In the negative list days when—I am only using Z—Mr. Z had the exclusive on light bulbs, and five minutes after you screw in the light bulb it broke; and you could not get a razor to shave your face or anywhere else, without bumps, and only one man could have blades. “Yuh forget dem days?” We “ain’t” forget “dem” days. We do not need to be reminded about those days. What we hope is that some government would do better.

So none “ah allyuh” get up again and say, “well, PNM was corrupt too”. And what it is they say, it is the most corrupt government in the world? But there is another reason you must not talk about it, because for the first time, as a result of the mutiny, we now have inside information. An inside informant damaging; inside informant does make God laugh, to paraphrase something. It is a paraphrase.

12.20 p.m.

So, for the first time, you have people inside the Government coming out and saying this one do this and this one do that. So, do not worry to talk about what PNM did because one thing about the PNM, whatever you may think about them, remember the “Doc” had liked discipline in party affairs. If you keep on talking about the PNM did this and that, bring the evidence! You have to bring evidence again? You have Trevie and the boys singing like canaries. They are singing on each other.

Mr. President—I cite this only hypothetically as I go back in times—you would enjoy this. Do you remember when Loomat sang on Boysie, Sir? They had

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a calypso, Boysie said what Loomat said is not true and they met on Frederick Street. The calypso was ,“Loomat say he see Boysie, ‘doh’ mind the judge and the jury”. Now, we have Trevie and the boys saying, “But I see dem take it”. Public opinion would have to judge who is telling the truth. This is not one side telling the other side again, this is coming from inside.

Actually, Loomat singing was not good enough, Boysie got off the first time but, when he killed Thelma Haynes in 1956, he went through. Parmassar sang on Malick; Chadee sang on Malick; Clint Huggins sang on Dole; and you want to go foreign—you know nothing in Trinidad good unless it is foreign—Sammy “The Bull” Gravano sang on John Gotti, the Teflon. He broke the Teflon.

So, partners over there, understand something in this debate; there is Sammy “the Bull” butting the Teflon and it would break. You face an unprecedented situation—I am making fun of it—when in a so-called, what is it? First class, top class quality whatever it was. With the PNM, it was “world class” and “dem fellas” were total quality. Well, that is total quality, fatigue and singing. So, realize that this spectacle cannot continue and that Sammy “the Bull” butting the Teflon and it would crack. So, do not worry about what PNM did. None of us will forget it.

Sen. Augustus and I, particularly, have welts on our backs from the days when you could not get anything from the PNM when they were in trench. That is why fellows like him oppose the PNM because when he went out of a PNM area—I know Roy long time—and say, “Give me this”, and he could not get it because he would not spread it in a certain way and they refused him. Why do you think he is an apostate of the PNM? Why do you think so? Roy is a straightforward man who could not get something on merit. You have a problem now. You have the spectacle of Members of this Government, office holders of this Government, singing and telling us what is going on.

Mr. President, I like my literary reference but, what is going on is the equivalent of slapping a man in the face with the glove and challenging him to a duel. They are slapping our Prime Minister in the face with the glove and he would have to duel. He would either have to do it inside the Cabinet or in the polls, because he cannot run this country the way he is running it now. So, in the illogical contribution of Sen. Als, he said it was as a result of the intelligence of the people that the Government has not fallen. It is no such thing; it is the inability of the man who got the gone clear to duel back without careful thought.

Mr. President, you know, all this thing going on in the Government and the PNM's answer is a picture of a house in London. How am I going to choose? Am I going to choose the people with the contracts in the report or what? I do not understand what to do. I strayed from Petrotrin. They let go two chairmen in one year but, they were profitable for the first time in a long time.

Sen. Gillette: And they are still profitable.

Sen. M. Daly: Well, do not appoint a chairman. For the first time in a long while they paid the Government a fat, healthy dividend. They probably have competent management because they had no chairman. Do you need all these "big up fellas"? A board is a non-executive entity that hires and supervises competent management. This is tradition that we have where the PNM comes into power and they bring all their people inside the boardroom and tell them what to do. Then, NAR comes into power and they bring all their people into the boardroom and tell them what to do and interfere with the money. Look at Petrotrin; their chairmen were embattled in politics for a whole year and they give the Minister of Finance a fat dividend cheque. Leave them alone. Tell them if a fellow wants to see you on the Petrotrin board, let them meet four times a year, preferably not down there, and have a little wine and so forth; no cars, no house and discuss the good performance of the company. We do not need them and we certainly do not need them if they are going to use the company and the chairmanship as a way to "big up" themselves.

I hope we are not going to hear anything more about Singapore or Cuba, because I heard Senator after Senator saying, "Do not run roughshod over people's rights, let us have due process." It have that in Cuba and Singapore? I do not think so. I think their views on human rights are no different from ours. So, it is completely illogical to complain about riding roughshod over people's rights and then sing the praises of Cuba or Singapore. Well, their views of human rights, to put it diplomatically, are a little more restrictive than ours. Let us forget trying to copy other people. Let us think for ourselves.

Mr. President, before I summarize what I am saying, time permitting, I have a better question: If we want to look at Singapore, Cuba, Miami and grind, we always want what other people have. We do not seem able to think for ourselves anymore. One of the original things we have is the steel pan and we threw it away. Sen. Augustus is always promising to debate that with me. Imagine, we have World Steelband Festival here and two people fighting about who is supposed to pay the prize. All the people know is that they came to Trinidad and they got robbed. They could not even get together and say, "Give them the cheque

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and we go fight it out after.” It completely damaged our international reputation to make us out to be a bad pay place.

Mr. President, why do we not ask ourselves this: What does Burkina Faso and Mali have that we do not have? They qualify. They have heart and another place I cannot show you in Parliament. That is what they have. Let us stop looking around for people to follow the fashionable. Let us stop following a few glossy beads and think for ourselves.

Mr. President, as much as I would have liked to deal with some of the absurdities in here, this budget has come at a time when international events have put us in jeopardy. The failure of our politics has put us in jeopardy and no debate on a budget can take place without debating those issues. They are particularly relevant because if a guava season comes we cannot afford to throw away money on people who have no regard for a proper concept of public service. The measures announced by the Minister, in his budget presentation, to take better control of public funds would not work. Let us start working on people’s attitudes. Let us tell them what public service is, and it is not being saluted or bowed to. That is not what public service is. It is not about free cars, cellular phones or houses that you do not need.

Then, we must ask ourselves: When are we going to stop these copycat programmes? Marriott on the waterfront. I forgot to mention this, 54 conventions in Las Vegas were cancelled in the first week after the bombing of the United States. Do you think they are coming here? So, I am sorry if I have not followed the conventional path. The proposals for agriculture are dismal and I would like to debate them, the proposals for the waterfront complex are dismal, and I would like to debate them, but, much more importantly, the budget has invited debate on the proper custody of public funds and I have joined that debate. I am suggesting that we need to work on and enforce our procurement laws. We do not need a central tsar or overseer. We need to explain to our political followers that they are coming to serve the country, not to fatten and ‘big up’ themselves. It is not even money that some of them want. They just want to ‘big up’ themselves. I heard of a rich man who was lying in bed and cried when he heard he was being dropped as a state enterprise chairman. They know about it too. “Dem” two at the end there know who the fellow is. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, regrettably, I cannot give a better summary. Do you think if tomorrow they tell me I cannot be a Senator I would cry? It is more time in Mayaro and more rum with Sen. Prof. Kenny. I “aint go cry”. I did “meh ting”

and if they “eh” like it and “dey” take it away, I go live. I “doh” need a car and a free house to be a big man. How much people in this country need a car and a free house to be a big man and to do public service without damaging the economy? “Leh” we go and check out. Send Trevie to Burkina Faso and Mali, see what they have that they can qualify, so Trinidad and Tobago could.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President: We will break at this stage. The sitting is now suspended until 1.30 p.m.

12.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette): Mr. President, I rise to support the Finance Bill laid by the Minister of Finance. Let me first of all say my contribution is really going to be in three parts. Firstly, in terms of what is happening in the energy sector over the past year; secondly, I am going to talk a little about the remote services and the Science and Technology Park as it relates to the vision of this country; and thirdly I will attempt to answer some of the questions raised, especially by Sen. Thomas, Sen. King and probably Sen. Daly.

Let me congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Finance on his delivery and the quality of presentation and the quality of the document that was laid in the other place on September 14. I think it is one of the best budget presentations I have seen for a very long while. It includes everything that we would like to see in a budget presentation, and for that I commend him highly.

I am proud I was able to sit here on that day, coming from the private sector and he coming from the private sector to pilot what I think was such an innovative budget for the year. Let me also congratulate his staff who worked very hard at the Ministry of Finance because I can imagine they would have worked very long hours. I myself when I first came into Government said that I have never worked as hard as I have worked since coming into Government. I know that the Minister of Finance gets into work at about 6.30 a.m. and he leaves at about 6.30 p.m. every evening and the level of consultation that occurred over the last seven or eight months, one can just imagine what had happened during his preparation.

I was a bit upset and I have to say it, Mr. President, that during the course of the debate there was so much criticism about the budget itself and what I call destructive criticisms and not constructive criticisms. I have sat here and I am

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young at this also in terms of time, and so is the Minister of Finance as so are many of us. I have sat here for the last two years and I have heard people present their positions on past budgets. I have heard some constructive criticisms in terms of what one must do in order to alleviate the poverty in this country and what one must do in order to sustain growth in this country, and I have heard none of that this time. All I heard really was banging! banging! At the end I sat and thought about it. I said maybe it is because nobody has anything constructive to say. That was the only conclusion I could draw after hearing it. I know that there are one or two instances where people have tried to do it.

Yes, September 11 is going to have an impact on the world; yes, September 11 is going to change the way things occur, the way we do things and the way we live from now but it is not the Minister of Finance's fault and we should not cast gloom and doom. We seem to be prophesying our own depression and our own recession in the world economy. We seem to be pontificating about the world economy and I have a very different view in terms of the world economy and I would talk about that later on. It is in that context that I am saying that I hope we can do things positively. I sometimes relate how I live my life to what I do here. As a father of seven—and I have young kids growing up who would be building Lego. I am not going to tell him, “You know something, I think you built it wrong and this is the way you should do it.” I would say: “This is the way we should do it,” and constructively go forward in a positive manner.

As I sat yesterday and listened to Sen. Prof. Kenny—and he spoke of that moment in time in the United States where everyone got together in this big stadium and held their hands together on their hearts and said we should live as one and we should exhibit solidarity. We should start here, but we are not doing that. We are only criticizing, criticizing. If we cannot even begin here, how do we expect people outside to do it? That is my one criticism of what has happened so far.

Mr. President, I will now like to focus on the local energy sector which, by its own standards, has been fairly stable over the past year, yet history has so often demonstrated that we should take no comfort in this perceived security as volatility has been, and will continue to be a major characteristic of this dynamic sector which for Trinidad and Tobago holds the key to its economic fortunes. As a result, we are constrained to be proactive in our management of this sector and this, no doubt, will be reflected in my report on our plans for projections for the future.

This Government has made it clear in its vision for the energy sector, that one of its key goals is to achieve a broad widespread and positive economic impact on

our growth and development from the operations and revenues derived from the country's important energy sector. The Government wishes to make the energy sector the catalyst—and it has said so on many occasions—for the development of the other sectors of the country's economy, thus effectively spreading the wealth across the entire economy.

This Government, in its 2000 manifesto clearly stated that it would use the energy sector revenues to restructure the national economy. In the nine months of my tenure to date, significant progress has been made along the road to the achievement of this goal. As a matter of fact, as the Minister with direct responsibility for the energy sector, achieving the stated vision has been a personal aspiration of mine. I feel, therefore, that I have delivered much in the time frame under review and, of course, I pledge to continue relentlessly with my efforts until this goal has been satisfactorily achieved.

Mr. President, it is no secret that the energy sector contributes significantly to our gross domestic product, foreign exchange earnings and Government revenue. With developing technologies, employment to capital ratios in the sector continue the decrease and the cost to create a job gets progressively higher. These are the facts. As a matter of fact, to create a job in the energy sector it costs, US \$1.5 million whereas, to create a job in the services sector—and when I say services sector I say remote services, which I will describe later on in my contribution—costs US \$22,000.

I will now focus a bit on the international trends. Much has been said and I will begin to tell you what I think are the international trends and what the gurus are saying. However, it is unfortunate that it comes at this time after the events of September 11, but nevertheless within the next two weeks or maybe two months, eventually emotions will have dispersed and we will move on to what I call normal living.

Mr. President, I would now like to move to some of the international trends in the energy sector. Our monitoring of these events has become an important part of the functions of the Ministry, and that is what we do on a daily basis, we keep track of things like ammonia prices, methanol prices, we try to trend it. We keep track of LNG prices, we try to trend it to see what is happening and, of course, oil and gas. This is especially important given the fact that because of our small petroleum economy we are open to the vagaries of the international market place. Of course, events such as those which have taken place in the United States can have wide-ranging effects on a global economy from which Trinidad and Tobago is not immune

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A recent report entitled: *Global Trends 2015, A Dialogue about the Future with Non-government Experts* stated that sustained economic growth along with population increases, will drive a nearly 50 per cent increase in the demand for energy over the next 15 years. As a matter of fact, the United States, prior to September 11, was short almost 8.5 million barrels of oil on a daily basis. Total oil demand is expected to increase from roughly 75 million barrels per day in 2000 to more than 100 million barrels per day in the year 2015, almost equal to what OPEC is presently producing.

Over the next 15 years natural gas usage will increase more rapidly than any other energy source by more than 100 per cent. Recent global estimates indicate that 80 per cent of available oil has not yet been extracted as well as 95 per cent of natural gas reserves, so we have a lot to go.

According to the *International Energy Outlook 2001*, natural gas is expected to be the fastest growing component of world energy consumption. The largest growth in gas, of course, is used in Central and South America and the developing Asia, and for LNG, Japan and Korea. Gas use is projected to grow by 2.4 per cent per year in industrialized countries compared with 1.1 per cent for oil and would account for 49 per cent of the projected increase in total energy use. Natural gas is projected to provide 25 per cent of all the energy used for electricity generation in the industrialized countries in 2020 up from 40 per cent in 1999.

Mr. President, in spite of the projected increase in the use of natural gas as an energy source, the fact remains that oil products will continue to dominate the global energy consumption mix for the foreseeable future. Companies and countries around the world will continue to rely on oil as a provider of revenue and as a source of energy, and no effort is being spared in continued exploration efforts worldwide, as well as in Trinidad and Tobago, as you would see later on. In this regard, investment opportunities for international petroleum companies to explore, develop and produce crude oil and natural gas in many areas of the world are increasing rapidly.

Mr. President, I will now zero in on initiatives that have been undertaken in our oil and gas sectors over the past year. Oil and gas markets continue to experience a renaissance. This was mainly due to market controls based on stringent measures by OPEC to maintain a tight market with appropriate supply restrictions. The growth in demand for fuel by overall global economic growth also helped to firm up prices. Government's decision therefore to initiate the oil stabilization fund may prove to be a very wise one if any instability manifests itself over the next year, and as you can see from the effect of September 11, the

oil stabilization fund which started about a year ago will help us in the foreseeable future. However, as you will appreciate, our policy initiatives go much further. They are intended not only to cushion the effects on the economy of this important dynamics sector, but to implement appropriate policy measures that would lead to sustained economic growth.

Presently, through you, Mr. President, our natural gas is now at 1.6 billion cubic feet of gas per day and with the coming on stream of LNG Train 2, which is expected in the year 2002, we would move to 2 billion cubic feet per day, and in 2003 when LNG Train 3 comes on stream we would get to approximately 2.5 billion cubic feet of gas per day. Clearly, with such significant growth and development there is a need for us to take stock if we are to maintain competitive advantage and ensure sustainability in our growth and development. In this context I shall now provide some details of the major projects on which the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries has embarked, and which I am happy to report are well on schedule.

Mr. President, a project which is of great significance to the planning process involving the sector is the recently completed natural gas reserves audit. As you know, last year there was a tremendous amount of debate about whether we should do LNG Trains 2 and 3, and because of that, one of the things that was done when I came into office in January was to go out for tender to determine our exact gas reserves by an independent auditor. Because of that, on February 21, 2001, the request for proposal went out. Ryder Scott, out of a cadre of six consultants, bid for the contract and Ryder Scott was the company awarded that contract.

Work was initiated on the study in April 2001 and I am happy to say at this time they have completed their work, and as of now, our gas reserves stand at 19.7 trillion cubic feet of gas; our probable reserves stand at 7.3 trillion cubic feet of gas and our possible reserves stand at 5.6, a total of 32.6 trillion cubic feet of gas. When you compare it to last year and the whole debate—I think that last year the upstream guys were saying that they had roughly around 33.3 trillion cubic feet of gas, so the difference is roughly about less than 3 per cent. So our estimates were very accurate and it proved once and for all and put those critics to rest that, in fact, the decision in terms of going forward with Trains 2 and 3 was a very good decision on the part of this Government.

In addition to that, I asked Ryder Scott to also give me an analysis based on geological statistics of what were the approximate reserves in other areas close to some of the blocks and also in unidentified resources—because they have a way

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of scientifically finding out these reserves—what reserves they estimated and because of that, our lead points to approximately 30.7 trillion cubic feet in the identified leads and in the unidentified resources we estimated it at around 28 trillion cubic feet. So as a total we are looking at roughly about 92 trillion cubic feet of gas as a potential for this country.

Just to give you an idea of what a trillion cubic feet (tcf) of gas will do: all our local industry would only use 2 tcf of gas over a 20-year period. If we are factoring Trains 1, 2 and 3 we would use .57 tcf of gas every year from now to the next 20 years.

1.45 p.m.

We also compared some of these numbers with the world. Trinidad and Tobago was compared to Venezuela, Brazil, Iran and Saudi Arabia, which has very big gas provinces. In terms of per capita, we have 25.1 million standard cubic feet of gas per capita as compared to Venezuela, which has 6.2 million; Brazil, .05; Iran, 12.4; Saudi Arabia, 9.4.

Of course, we saw the initiatives being taken by the Ministry of Finance. We are going to see that wealth coming into this country over the next 5 to 10 years. More than that, we have to take that wealth, which is what the Ministry of Finance is saying, and move it into industries where we can diversify our economy. One such service is the remote services.

Sen. Montano: I understand that revenue is earned by the Government at a series of different points. Will you explain to us exactly what the taxation regimes are?

Sen. The Hon. L. Gillette: Mr. President, if I try to explain that—and I do not mean that facetiously—it will take me about 10 or 15 minutes and I would rather concentrate on my efforts right now. I am prepared to do it at a later date if the Senator wishes me to do so, I would oblige.

However, in answering one of the questions he raised yesterday in his contribution when he talked about increasing revenues from production-sharing contracts from \$210 million to \$319 million, I would like to explain something to him. We in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, together with the Ministry of Finance, negotiate what we call production-sharing contracts. We do not give up any tax concessions to the production-sharing contracts.

From the time one trillion cubic feet of gas comes out the ground, Government gets its share. Because of that, we have projected that revenues will grow from \$210 million to \$319 million based on the following:

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- (1) Increased profit splits to almost 55 per cent accruing to the Government and contractual obligations for increasing sales volume to 275 million standard cubic feet of gas per day by the year 2003.
- (2) We have an escalation of our gas contracts. It will escalate at 4 per cent per annum to the year 2002. Because of that, in our production-sharing contracts, that will increase in terms of the Government take over the next three to six years.

I do not know whether I have answered your question.

Also, the International Monetary Fund has recommended certain things in terms of the tax regime because it felt that we could improve our taxes on natural gas. As of two or three weeks ago—I cannot remember exactly when—we agreed in Cabinet, with a team, to look at this very seriously with people from the Ministry of Finance, people from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and also the International Monetary Fund. I would like you to understand that because as we move to a mature industry, we will continue to look at our tax regime and the take the Government will get over a period of time.

Mr. President, the natural gas reserves audit is an important precursor to the natural gas master plan, which is another major project recently commissioned by the Government. In this regard, we have had extensive briefings with key energy sector stakeholders. What the master plan will do and what we are trying to achieve with that master plan is to develop a model to facilitate long-term analysis of the key factors that affect development in the natural gas sector. We want to:

- (1) Review the state of the current use of natural gas in Trinidad and Tobago, the contractual commitments and the current products and taxes and compare ourselves also with other countries where we compete for downstream industries.
- (2) We also want the preparation of a model to optimize the portfolio mix of the downstream industries, meaning, that when you look back at our country 10 years from now, we would like to say that we have so many methanol plants; so many ammonia plants; so many liquefied natural gas plants; we have so many gas to liquids plants; we have so many ethylene plants; so that we, in ourselves, can diversify our portfolio mix within the energy sector.

These are some of the ideas.

In addition to that, we want to ensure that the people who come to us to apply for incentives or to invest in our country to construct these petrochemical plants,

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that the playing field is level. Right now, we are the number one exporter of ammonia and methanol to the world market, but we have to understand that it comes from Trinidad and Tobago and we have to understand that we have to level the playing field in terms of taxes, in terms of the price of gas, to ensure that when the products are exported, we can control the market in a reasonable way. That is the maturity of the industry that we have reached right now.

The consultants began work on the master plan on August 06, 2001 and the consultants who were awarded that contract were Gaffney Cline and Associates. They are at present working very, very fast with the hope of completing this project within the next month.

We are also going to have quantification forecasts of markets for our products, of course. A look at those forecasts over the next 5 to 15 years—because of the specific nature of the business of ammonia methanol, we have to project it.

At this particular time, I am putting you all on alert as well as the country, that on October 04, 2001 and, in Tobago, on October 05, 2001, the Government will have public consultation into this gas master plan. We want as many people as possible to contribute: the upstream guys, the midstream guys; the petrochemical guys—the downstream guys that is—to consult with us and tell us what they would like to see in terms of this gas and what we expect to happen.

Mr. President, with respect to local content, Cabinet approved policy guidelines for the utilization of local goods and services for Government and Government-related projects to accelerate the development of manufacturing, fabrication and procurement capabilities in the country. We envision this country as becoming a base for the construction of jackets, decks, platforms and other oil and gas infrastructure.

We hear many times over that our engineers who have been trained in our gas or oil industry over the last 30 years, have gone overseas in places like the North Sea as well as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and they are probably some of the top geologists and top engineers in the world. We would like to bring those guys back here. We are trying to encourage them, so that we can have development of further downstream industries, not only with oil and gas, but industries in terms of fabrication, engineering services, geological services, to come back into this country and to create a real and vibrant energy sector once again.

There is even the likelihood of Trinidad and Tobago becoming a cost-competitive exporter of these services to Latin America and the region. Right now, I know that British Petroleum and some of the upstream guys, export some

of these services to countries outside of Trinidad and Tobago. They will actually use some of their labour and some of their scientists in this part of the world to consult with places in Brazil and in places in the Far East. So, it is happening.

With respect to the upstream development, Mr. President, we are all aware of the extreme importance of our upstream exploration drive to the long-term survival of our petroleum industry. Promoting and facilitating developments in this area is, therefore, a very important function of the Ministry. It would be remiss of me if I do not highlight some of these major developments.

As you know, Mr. President, there was a bid round launched in April 2001, in which there were seven blocks offered for auction. The bid round attracted interest from major oil and gas companies such as British Gas, Conoco, EOG Talisman and Total Fina Elf. The bids closed—I believe it was around September 3 and we have had interest in five of the companies from Tota Fina Elf, Conoco, BHP Billiton, Talisman and EOG Resources. Presently, we are evaluating those bids, with a view, in the production-sharing contracts, of taking our taxes upfront. We are doing this as we speak.

I shall now turn to two developments, which I think are very impressive, with respect to developments in the energy sector. One in particular is what I call the North Coast Marine Area Development. This is really being developed to provide gas both to Trains 2 and 3 in 2002 and 2003.

The North Coast Marine Area Development project involves the four-phase development of dry gas reserves located in three fields, namely the Hibiscus, the Poinsettia and the Chaconia, 40 kilometres from the north coast of Trinidad. The total proved and possible reserves in this field is calculated to be around 2.4 trillion cubic feet or with a name plate capacity of 330 million cubic feet per day.

Phase one involves the installation of a platform in the Hibiscus Field and the drilling of a total of six wells in the Hibiscus and Chaconia Fields. Work has already begun in that. I think we will start to get products from those fields some time in June or July of next year.

We also have the Kapok Bombax Development, which is being led by British Petroleum (Trinidad and Tobago) as part of its commitment to the Atlantic LNG expansion project. It comprises the following three integrated sub-projects:

- (1) the new drilling platform, named the Kapok, to develop the significant new reserves discovered in the Sparrow and Renegade exploration well;

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- (2) a new central processing unit capable of processing 1.6 billion cubic feet of gas per day or 50,000 barrels per day of crude condensate and 25,000 barrels per day of water;
- (3) we are also putting down a new 48-inch marine pipeline from Beachfield on the south-east shore of Trinidad to the new CPU.

With all of this, I am trying to just give you a view of what is happening in the energy sector right now.

With respect to petroleum products, I know that Sen. Prof. Kenny wanted to see that we get rid of leaded gasoline. That is my view also. I think that we should get rid of leaded gasoline. I think it destroys the environment, but the way gas is right now, it is subsidized by Government. As a matter of fact, the higher the oil prices, the more the Ministry of Finance has to fork out to subsidize this gas. It is almost like a bond. We have to find a mechanism in which we just use unleaded gasoline at a price a little bit more than leaded gasoline, but we also have to be cognizant of the fact that people may then decide to go to alternate fuel like diesel, which is \$1.28 per litre and that will just reverse what we are trying to achieve. So, it is a fine balance and right now we are having consultations with the Ministry of Energy, people like National Petroleum and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), in terms of what we can do in balancing this whole thing whereby people would move into a situation only using unleaded fuel. It is a fine line and hopefully we will resolve this situation within the next year. We are committed to unleaded gasoline. We are committed to deregulation and we are committed to demonopolization of the retail business.

I also feel that one of the only things that the people of this country can share in is what they own and that is gas and oil. By subsidizing it, it helps share that wealth among many people in the country. I believe that they should participate in it. It is a fine line how we move into unleaded gasoline, what price we sell it for and how we stop people from moving into diesel fuel. That is what we are investigating right now and hopefully, within the next year, we can have some of those things resolved.

With regard to the mineral subsector, right now we are putting in place all the regulations to ensure that there is compliance with the Minerals Act that was passed sometime last year, in June or July. Hopefully, we will have this concluded in the first week of October and we are also having consultations with some of the quarry operators and the people whom it is going to affect.

We are doing that right now as we speak and it is going to take some time, but we feel that we have good regulations, which we are going to try to implement as soon as possible.

Mr. President, as you know, the Ministry is now responsible for the electricity sub-sector. Prior to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission fell under the Ministry of Public Utilities, so we have been trying to grapple with what is happening at the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission. We have found out that the legal and regulatory framework has hampered the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission in the daily conduct of its financial operations. Because of that, Cabinet recently decided to implement what we call recommendations to provide for improved financial viability of the Commission and to provide for increased private sector participation in the sector.

Just to give you an idea of the growth of T&TEC: from 2000—2001, the customer base of the Commission increased by some 7,000 customers and reached a total of 330,000 customers. This has translated into an increase in demand of 35 megawatts from a total of 834 megawatts of power to 869 MW.

We are also, at this time, doing an accelerated pole replacement programme. Many of the poles are rotted and not only are they used to transmit power, but TSTT also uses those poles because it makes no sense putting down double poles. This programme is presently ongoing and we also have a rural electrification programme and during that phase some 4,600 customers are expected to benefit initially at an estimated total cost of around \$30 million.

We hope that by the end of this year—I think electricity right now is provided for about 97 to 98 per cent of the population—to get it to around 99 per cent of the population.

I am right now in the process of restructuring the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. As you know, over the past 30 years the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries has experienced massive growth in the way we do business; in some of the things that we have changed, like the production-sharing contracts. Gas has become a major portfolio of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and for that we have to make sure that we have the manpower, from a technical point of view as well as from an administrative point of view, to handle the situation.

We are expected by the private sector to operate as a private sector, when they come to us and they have a rig and they need a decision. This sometimes cost

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them millions of dollars in terms of days of decision-making processes. We have to respond very quickly. With that in mind we are in the process right now of restructuring the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries in terms of the services we deliver to the upstream, midstream and downstream guys, in terms of attracting investments into this country and of course, constantly monitoring the intake that we get in terms of taxes through the production-sharing contracts and what we are doing with respect to leaded gas. So we are in the process of restructuring the Ministry of Energy and that is an ongoing process that I think will take probably two to three years to complete. There is a lot to be done and many people to hire there.

The Government has a clear vision for our workforce and in this context, I will talk a little about the National Energy Skills Centre, which was launched at a time when skill shortages were beginning to impact the industry. However, its role has now evolved from dealing with a short-term crisis to being a lead organization in ensuring that we have a large pool of technologically advanced workers. Building this workforce is not going to be easy, but we are committed to expanding every effort in this direction.

I know that Sen. Prof. Ramchand will be impressed with some of these numbers, but we offer four degrees which are called Bachelor of Applied Technology Degree in the National Energy Skills Centre; Petroleum Engineering Degree in Technology; Mechanical Engineering Degree in Technology; Electrical Engineering Degree in Technology and Information Technology. Unlike a Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical Engineering; a Bachelor of Engineering Degree in Mechanical Engineering, a technology degree incorporates a lot of hands-on experience.

At present, the current enrolment has increased to 650 students. That is the number of persons going there right now. There have been 450 graduates of six-month NESC programmes with competencies in areas such as carbon steel welding and industrial electrical installation. Over 300 persons graduated from the NESC Building Technology Programme, with more than 80 per cent of these graduates employed in construction firms. We also try to locate them in some of the downstream as well as upstream industries.

What I consider as sharing wealth or educating our workforce in terms of computer training, we have trained in the NESC over the last two and a half years, from 1998, 55,000 persons in computer literacy courses. We continue to do that training.

I want you to understand that there is a hidden gem there that I myself was surprised to see when I got in there and I continue to expand on those initiatives and on the direction of the NESC because I think it is good.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. President, the downstream industry with respect to natural gas—the Government continues to pursue diversification as its strategic objective in order to utilize the country's hydrocarbon resources for the benefit of our citizens. It is intended to spur economic activity by generating greater value added products, and creating linkages between and within different sectors of the national economy.

During the past year, worldwide developments have impacted positively on Trinidad and Tobago. As you know, earlier last year, the price of gas was around \$10 per Btu, now it is around \$2.50 per Btu. When that happened, a lot of the methanol plants as well as ammonia plants closed down in the United States and that gave us a little extra down here. However, despite the September 11 crisis—as you know last week you would have seen it in the newspapers—we signed a supply agreement with a company called Methanex, which is one of the largest methanol exporters from Canada, and BP Trinidad and Tobago. In terms of capacity, that plant is one of the largest in the world—it certainly is the largest in Trinidad and Tobago—with a capacity of 5,000 tonnes per day. I know also, you would have seen in the newspapers, the oxygen to drive such a plant. There was a joint venture between BP Trinidad and Tobago and the Neal & Massy Group of Companies for a US \$70 million plant. Again, we are trying to encourage, as much as possible, local participation and local sector initiatives.

With respect to ammonia, Mr. President, again, Trinidad and Tobago is presently the world's largest exporter of ammonia, mainly again as a result of its attractive gas-pricing policy and close location, relative to major US and Europe markets. Last year, because of high gas prices in the United States, which resulted in many of the US plant closures and, of course, increased our investor interest in this country—there are many people coming to this country to invest in ammonia plants. Again, I cannot predict what will happen from here, but I do know that the people who were interested in investing in those ammonia plants, continue to have dialogue with us, and continue to express a great interest in putting down such a plant because we have the stability of country, the economics, infrastructure, everything. I have not seen anything to hurt us there.

I am going to speak a bit about LNG just to give you an idea of what is happening at the Atlantic LNG plant. Our current daily utilization is around 420

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million standard cubic feet of gas per day for LNG, and between 2000 and 2004 LNG exports are projected to grow from .5 to 1.5 billion cubic feet per day or 31.6 per cent per annum, as a result of the expansion of this country's LNG export capacity, which is Trains 2 and 3. Mr. President, 3.5 trillion cubic feet of gas has been earmarked to support Train 1 production over a 20-year period. As you know, all these productions are really over a 20-year period.

The Train 2 expansion would utilize some 7.7 trillion cubic feet of gas over a similar 20-year period. When I say Train 2, I mean Trains 2 and 3. The estimated capital expenditure for the expansion is US \$1.1 billion and, of course, Atlantic LNG remains committed to spending a minimum of \$150 million in local goods and services. We monitor that very frequently to ensure that they do, in fact, spend \$150 million when the contract ends, and will try to improve on that. Right now I think we may be able to get about \$175 million, but it is something that we constantly monitor in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. Train 2 is scheduled for start up by the fourth quarter of 2002 and Train 3 is ahead of schedule and will come on stream by the second quarter of 2003.

As you know, Mr. President, in his budget presentation, the Minister of Finance spoke of aluminum and some of the downstream industries. Presently, we are, of course, in discussions with some of the largest producers of aluminum in the world. An aluminum plant, however, requires low cost electricity, and by that I mean also, low cost gas. I do agree with one thing with respect to what Sen. Prof. Kenny said, we are not just going to give away this gas. We want to ensure that we negotiate very hard. I know aluminum has a lot of downstream industries, but they are coming here, we are close to the United States, and I feel that within the next three to four months we would be in a better position to know exactly where we are going with it. We also need a deepwater port location to cater for the imports of alumina. We would require a coastal location and, of course, a strong project sponsor, which is what we have right now, so I think we are coming very close to an investment.

Mr. President, the ethylene-based complex. With respect to our world scale ethylene plant, which requires around 700,000 tonnes to be delivered, this translates, roughly, into 3.6 billion cubic feet of gas per day. As we speak right now, we are in conversation with some of the world producers of ethylene with a view to coming to Trinidad and Tobago. What one must also understand at this time is that, as much as we negotiate with these people, we want them as much as they want us, so it is a good situation. We are not like other countries that have

discovered huge amounts of gas and cannot even begin to negotiate. So, again, we would be announcing this very shortly.

Mr. President, there is a little story, as a matter of fact, the Minister of Energy in Bolivia came to me and said: “I want to understand how you all developed the energy sector.” Mr. President, even when I went to the Korean show, the LNG Conference, Trinidad and Tobago stood out as a shining star. I was very proud! This little country in the Caribbean was the cheapest cost producer of LNG to the world, and was an example to the world of how the whole gas-based industry should be developed. He said: “You know why, because there is a constant debate going on at present in Bolivia”. The debate goes like this. We have 30 trillion cubic feet of gas—unlimited resources of gas. Do you know what is happening? We say we would like to attract an investor like BP Amoco, and then what is going to happen is that BP Amoco is going to say: “Well I want zero per cent tax holiday for 10 years and I want this in terms of additional allowances. The country says no, you cannot get it.” The Minister of Energy said what would you do? I said: “I would give it, because it is going to be your first major project coming to your country. You need to kick-start the process” What is happening in Bolivia for the last three or four years is that the public is saying one thing, the Government is skeptical of implementing and guess what? The gas is in the ground and nobody is developing the gas at all. The country is not benefiting. The gas is not being utilized.

We are fortunate to be in the position we are in right now, where when people come to negotiate some of the contracts for downstream petrochemical industries, we do not even give them zero per cent tax holiday again. We are in the position now, where we can demand 15 and 20 per cent. We, as a matter of fact, have become very mature as an industry, in terms of some of the incentives that we either give right now or we keep. This really pertains to—when Sen. King was speaking, I know that she was concerned about remote services and why would people come here. I will speak more about that later on.

Nevertheless, I want to read something from a professor from Harvard Business School, Debra Spar who says:

“People underestimate the power of a single investor to create a herd of follow-on investments. It certainly is worthwhile to get one very top-notch investor, not a fly-by-night investor. You should essentially give this investor what it wants as long as no special favours are given that would result in an unlevelled regulatory environment for future investors.”

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These are the facts of life, Mr. President; they do not want to come here, we have to attract them! I will talk a bit about that when I go into the remote services. That is what we did years ago with the energy sector and we are now beginning to see the results of some of those initiatives. People are now willing to pay taxes and to enter into production-sharing contracts with us; where we take money up-front without giving them additional incentives. So, I think we are in a very fortunate position in this country.

Mr. President, gas to liquids is a technology now that is being employed by many of the big upstream guys. Every one of them has expressed an interest to come to Trinidad and Tobago. They are saying: "If you give me the gas tomorrow morning, I am going to build a gas to liquids (GTL) plant—gas to liquids. You are close to the United States, your economy is solid, you also have a very big infrastructure in terms of the grid network". They want to come, Mr. President, and because of that it encourages people like Shell, and Conoco to explore and get involved in production-sharing contracts, to find their own gas, to fuel the GTL plants. So you see what is happening? It is an added effect, because of where we are situated, with respect to the other countries of the world. We are one of the most stable gas-producing countries in the world.

I hope I have covered everything in terms of what is happening in the energy sector. I think it is a very bright future and, despite what happened on September 11, I think we have a lot to achieve in the energy sector. Although oil may go up or down for a period of time, we would be able to recover because of our diversification in the energy sector itself.

With respect to some of the remote services, Mr. President, the Government's proposed investment in a science and technology park, such a facility, of course, should not be confused with an elaborate real estate project. Instead, we should be thinking about this investment as the Point Lisas of the information age. I am going to repeat that. We should be thinking of this project as the Point Lisas of the information age.

Sen. Daly said something this morning that struck me. He said that America is going to change, it is going to change the way that it does business, it is going to change the way that you enter the United States—ships, planes and cargo. Mr. President, what better business to get into right now—remote services. I do not have to move from "A" to "B", I am just using my telecommunication infrastructure, my fiber optics and my satellite to move services from one area to another area. Perfect! So the vision of the Minister of Finance, in terms of going

into technology is ideal. Technology is the way of the future! That is where we have to go! As a matter of fact, when you look at some of the worldwide remote services, it is currently at \$15 billion; it is going to grow 30 per cent over the next seven years. It presently employs around 750,000 people, and by the year 2008, it will employ 6.5 million people.

That is why I was a bit offended or should I say, it was very unfortunate to have heard the words “plantation economics” used; it pulls us back into the dark ages, I call it a colonial term—that is my personal view about it—especially by Sen. King, as a person involved in and understanding the software industry. For example, I know there were two very strong views that came out of the University of the West Indies, from the Realtime Systems Group. In support of the services industry they had contracts with NORTEL, and Motorola and they continue to display and invent technologies and people are impressed with them.

2.15 p.m.

Those are some of the remote services that I speak about. As a matter of fact, British Gas just sponsored the development of Energy Alive. You know that Energy Alive programme you see on television? Right. We just developed it on the Internet where, in fact, somebody can sit in Curepe and play with somebody in Valsayn, across the networks. That is something that is now beginning to happen in the United States and our engineers have developed this in our country, and that is also labelled a remote service development. I am going to explain to you what a remote service is.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. L. Gillette: What is a remote service? You look at customer interaction services which include inbound—people calling in—and outbound traffic using your telecommunications infrastructure. You talk about email services, web-based help services and telemarketing. That is low down the rank, but then, as you move up the value chain—you have to move up the value chain sometime—you go into finance and accounting services, you go into human resource services, engineering and design services such as CAD services and the conversion of drawings to 3D.

For example, what BP is doing right now—I do not know if you have ever seen it—they have what they call a hive. It is a big room with a Sun Micro

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system—a very powerful computer—and what they were able to do is look at the geology of a country and recommend how to drill, and, if they should get into difficulty, they could replicate it in another part of the world, while their geologists look at it in another part of the world and say, “This is what we should do.” That is a service. What they are thinking of doing now is bringing geologists or geological maps from other parts of the world to be implemented in digital design through computers in Trinidad and Tobago. That is a remote service.

So when somebody says, “I do not know what we are going to give in remote services”, and “The Science and Technology Park is doomed to failure”. This is true if you do not know what you are doing. However, I can tell you categorically that the Government knows what it is doing in remote services, okay? We are talking about web site services, we are talking about search engines, integration and management service and remote education.

India is an example and that is a good example to look at because we can compare ourselves to India. As a matter of fact, our telecom cost to North America is cheaper than that of India. So in relative terms, all we have to do is go behind the market and we have to attract a big supply or a big company to come into this country. Do you know something? We have some of those companies here already. They are people like BP. India went, as a matter of fact, from 1995 to the year 2000, from 500 to 45,000 persons employed in the services sector, and this is expected to go to 800,000 people in the year 2008. As I told you before, the remote services sector, which is about US \$15 billion as we sit here right now—all we want is 1 per cent—employs 750,000 people presently, and by putting up that Science and Technology Park in Wallerfield, that is a lot of foresight in terms of getting into the technological age.

We are not, however, going to remain as data entry operators or transcription service operators. We are going to move right up the value chain and we are going to get into geology, we are going to get into computer-aided design and drafting and we are going to get into more sophisticated-based services. Do you know something, however? We need the people and the academics like us and like yourselves across there to recognize that, buy into the programme and deliver those services. That is why it was upsetting to have heard Sen. King speak about it in that manner, because it is something about which I feel passionately and that I have seen develop in other parts of the world.

I want to speak a bit, Mr. President—as a matter of fact, I do think that, over the next five years or 10 years, the services sector would probably generate greater revenue than that of the energy sector if we do it properly and if we focus

on it. We have already deregulated the telecommunications industry so we have additional fibre coming into Trinidad and Tobago and they could compete for services. So in five or 10 years from now, if we look at it that way and we support it—the important thing is to support it—I could see us in five to 10 years attracting very, very large companies to this country and employing a lot of people down here and going right up the value chain from low labour rates into higher labour rates.

As a matter of fact, some of the companies doing these services right now are GE Capital; it employs 1,000 people. Citibank employs 1,000 people and Citibank is here and we could use leverage in this country to have Citibank do something here with us also. Bechtel, which is the builder and the construction operator of Atlantic LNG, employs 400 people in India in computer-aided design. British Airways employs 750 people. Convergys employs 30,000 people, to name a few. So it is a big employer of services, and, with institutions like the University of the West Indies and the National Energy Skills Centre, they will be able to train those people in some of what I call the downstream services sector. So let us not look at it as data entry operators. We have to move up the value chain and we have to understand what this is all about if we are to get the maximum out of the sector.

Following along the lines with Sen. Daly right now, yes, America is going to change. The world is going to change, and what better business to get into than the services sector right now? I would like to answer one or two questions, because it is something about which I feel very strongly. I know Sen. Montano spoke yesterday about the capital allowance on goods moving from 50 to 60 per cent. He asked, “What is that? That is just a movement of what I said—a movement of taxes of now until later on. The understanding of discounted cash flows and present analysis is based on time and, if you are able to save or accelerate your depreciation early on in the game and do a discounted cash flow in three years versus six or seven years from now, it is going to be a value back to you.

So no, I disagree with you and that is why a lot of the energy companies come here. A lot of people also want accelerated depreciation because that is present value analysis back in time, it is worth something. What do you want to do, just give away the shop? The drop in tax rate as an example, 1 per cent—when I was in private sector and the banks said, you know, “We just announced that we are going to drop our prime rate from 15.5 to 15 per cent”, we were absolutely ecstatic. We enjoyed that. The whole business community said that was a great direction. The direction is what we are looking at and what the Minister of Finance has attempted to do is to move in the right direction to promote investment in the economy. It is a very, very simple formula.

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What do we give away? I know Sen. King spoke about that. Again, your remote services. When you look at some of the—even some of the comparison of wages compared to India or the United States, for instance, we do not have to give away much, you know. All we have to have is cheap telecom costs, you know, and people like Oxygen or people like some of the big carrier-based services would be happy to have a landing point in Trinidad and Tobago from which to connect to the worldwide web. It is very, very simple. We do not really have to give away much because they are already saving it on the labour cost. We do not have to give away much. What we have to do is to use our influence and leverage the already existing big companies in this country and say, “You know something, to come into this country do not give computers but I want you to set up a centre where you can do computer aided design and drafting for your own people.”; and do you know something? It is a benefit to them. The process has to be carefully thought out and we are thinking about it and it is going to happen.

Mr. President, I want to speak very briefly about Petrotrin as an example. I know Sen. Daly raised the issue of Petrotrin and the chairman. The chairman of Petrotrin resigned. There is nothing I can do about it. I am trying to get a new chairman for Petrotrin at this point in time but, because of the rigidity of filing with the integrity legislation, I cannot get one. It is no fault of the State. So we have to look at that situation right now, but Petrotrin continues to be extremely profitable, as a matter of fact. It was so last year and it continues to be so this year, and I do agree with him in the sense that we should not allow our board to interfere with our management.

However, I remember speaking to one of the partners at PricewaterhouseCoopers, who is at present doing the analysis in Petrotrin and NP and he said, “You know, I agree with you, Lindsay, because what is happening is that the board takes a stand-back approach to the whole thing and management is allowed to run the operations of the company. However, when they see something wrong they have to say ‘Stop it’ and they have got to kind of go into it,” so it is a fine line between how you interfere and how you do not interfere. However, I am in agreement, yes, the board is there to ensure that policy is adhered to and that the company continues to run in a profitable manner. They should not interfere. Sometimes that “doh” happen.

I was a bit surprised and I just want to—again, business is something that I read a lot about. Then Sen. Daly spoke of Bulgari—was it Bulgari—and Marriott? Even when Chrysler merged with Mercedes Benz the stock went down. Even when Compac merged with Hewlett Packard, the stock went down. Some of the

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greatest mergers in this world—AT&T—British Gas decided the other day to split their company, one to go into outbound traffic in telecommunications and the other to go in the upstream industry with respect to exploration for gas. Guess what happened? The stock went down; but where is the stock now? All Bulgari did, because they are a big conglomerate, was say, “We are going to get into the hotel business”, so the stock went down. Do not put it in the same light as “Who we going to have investing down at the port here”, because Marriott is a big name in hotels. It is as big as Sheraton and it is as big as Four Seasons.

If you look at the whole stock market—as a matter of fact, you would probably see right now that stocks are down, and what better partner to have at this point in time who is going to spend \$1.2 billion but a Marriott, a premium company? So do not diminish it just like that. I have a real problem with that because, following along with what Sen. Prof. Kenny says, we have to buy into these programmes and we have to encourage investors to come here. This is where we live, you know? We must support these investments. [*Desk thumping*]

We also speak of the world economy. I could tell you, you know, there are so many different views—I do not believe necessarily the world may go into a recession. I know we have seen the depression of the 1930s and, as Sen. Daly said, we saw the largest drop in the DOW since 1929, yes, but yesterday it moved to 308, the fourth highest point rise I think in about 20 or 30 years—same thing. Tell me why? I do not know. The whole world is connected right now. The whole global environment is connected. The central banks are stepping in, in the free world. The world is just not going to disappear like that. Yes, we have to be appreciative of what can happen. We have to save more, but we should not also be prophets of doom.

We should try to encourage investment and support in a positive way in terms of what the Government is doing—and support the budget in terms of its policies. I have no brief for the Minister of Finance, but I thought it was one of the best budgets I have seen in a very long while. [*Desk thumping*] It was upsetting to see the amount of—I have to deal with this very carefully, Mr. President, what happened in the other place that day. It is unfortunate, especially with his first budget presentation. I can say as a son to a father, or a father to a son, I feel for him, okay. [*Laughter*]

So all in all, Mr. President, I think that I have—[*Interruption*] [*Laughter*] All I am saying, Mr. President, is—once again, let me say that it was one of the best budget presentations that I have seen in a long while. I have been here for the last two years. I think it was a quality presentation. It tried to encompass as much as

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possible in the sector and it was a budget to promote sustainable growth. You could take that budget and give it to Sen. Prof. Kenny. I know he asked a question in the Senate some weeks ago in terms of the sustainable growth and it is all inside there in terms of how we must move forward and in terms of how we are going to diversify the economy.

So in summing up I just want to say that the energy sector is well and fine and we are constantly attracting our investments into this country, and they are coming, and we are taking advantage of how we tax them as well as in terms of the vision for the country, because I have heard people speaking of vision of the country. Clearly, even now we should accelerate the science and technology park in terms of trying to attract the remote services sector at this point in time and we can do it at this point in time. I thank you, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Joel London: [*Desk thumping*] Mr. President, it is sad to see Sen. Als leaving as soon as I stand. [*Laughter*] I want to refer off the cuff to something that he said. [*Sen. Als returns to Chamber*] [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] “Doh worry”, I will be brief on it. I just want to refer to something he said when he, in winding up his contribution, spoke about political infancy and I rise at this point in time, Mr. President, as a political babe. The remark he made was that persons in their political infancy or only persons in political infancy would not understand what was happening. I concede, Sen. Als. I am a political infant, and maybe, because I am a political infant, I cannot understand or I do not understand some of the things that are happening, some of the things that are going on, some of the things that you referred to, even.

However, Mr. President, I stand here right now with mixed emotions. There is a sense in which I stand with a certain amount of joy at the privilege of contributing to my first budget debate, but there is also a sense in which I stand here with a certain amount of sadness, a certain amount of anger and a certain amount of shame. Anger, first of all, that this Government has brought the profession of politics into the kind of disrepute that it has. [*Desk thumping*] I stand with a certain amount of embarrassment as well. I have friends calling me from Barbados and Jamaica asking, “What is going on in the country?” “Turmoil in the Government!”, they termed it. This is how it is being reported to them in the countries. “Infighting in the Government”. Judases and “Corbeaux” and all sorts of stuff they are calling and asking me about, Mr. President. I am ashamed to say that this is my Government.

You know, I listened to the contribution of Sen. Ahmed, and when she spoke she repeated it several times—“the Government of the United National Congress”—and that stuck in my mind, because it was not the UNC Government but it was the Government of the United National Congress. Not the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, you know, the Government of the United National Congress, and that says a lot. I am ashamed as a young man to say that this is my Government. I am ashamed to say that they are my leaders.

Sen. Dr. Moonilal spoke for a long time and he spoke about the Opposition walking out of Parliament, and all sorts of stuff. Well, I want to ask the goodly Senator if the example that that side is setting is the example that the young people of this nation are supposed to follow? [*Desk thumping*] Is that what we are supposed to emulate, Mr. President? He went on to speak about performance beating “ol’ talk”. The question is: performance at what cost? What good is performance if it costs more than the taxpayer ought to be paying for it? Yes, “yuh” build an airport, yes “yuh” build schools, but at what cost? It is not fair for the taxpaying public to pay \$1.4 billion for an airport that should have cost \$400 million. The only thing he could have found to talk about after that as he was winding up was a man who whipped him soundly in San Fernando East. [*Desk thumping*]

You know, Mr. President, I saw the Minister of Enterprise Development and Foreign Affairs on television sometime talking about the highest law being the moral law, and we know how he can say it. He said, “The moral law is the highest law”—morality and integrity this Government knows absolutely nothing about. Trinidad and Tobago is the only country where people can be—or should I say wrongdoing, misappropriation and abuse of power can be levelled, proven and reported and the offender take the Hulsie approach and “dey not moving”, and then they want to talk about morality and integrity.

I heard Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh on a morning television programme speaking on the crisis in the NWRHA and, when asked why he did not fire the NWRHA gang of four, he responded by saying that they were carrying out an essential service, and, if they were not there, people would die. In a report in the *Wire* dated Friday, September 21, 2001 on page 8, again the goodly doctor is speaking. There is a report on the article that says:

“Dr. Gopeesingh has continuously maintained he has done nothing wrong, admitting that he may have had to break some ‘bureaucratic hurdles’ in order to get the job done. He said even if it had to be done in order to save lives then he stands guilty.”

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They were carrying out an essential service, he said, Mr. President, and that is why he did not fire them, but they were sent on leave with full pay and then they were systematically fired, and how many people died [*Desk thumping*] as a result?

A report was laid in this Parliament, a commissioned report—not allegations, a commissioned report—and I want to read an excerpt from the report now. I want to refer in particular to a report by Personnel Management Services Limited on the Investigations into matters arising from the Auditor General’s Report into the NWRHA dated September 10, 2001 beginning at section 9.1 referring specifically to the chairman. It says:

“Specific issues of Corporate Governance relating to the Chairman are extensively addressed in the PricewaterhouseCoopers Limited report... We set out verbatim the Chairman’s response to the question why he did not inform the Board of what had happened. The explanation speaks for itself. It is as follows...”

This is Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh speaking:

“I summoned Dr. Ranjit Sookdar and Mr. Reynold Makhan to my office on January 4, 2001. I expressed to them that it was morally wrong for them to have done this and that I had not up to then seen their resignations. I instructed them to pay back immediately. Mr. Ramesh Sharma was out of the country at the time. I requested them to withdraw their resignations. They did withdraw and repaid the money back on January 4th, 2001.”

2.35 p.m.

“I requested the Director of Finance to verify that the money was deposited into the NWRHA’s Account. He furnished copies of deposits of January 4th from Sookdar and Makhan. On January 5th, 2001 I summoned the CEO, Ramesh Sharma. I had a similar discussion with him and he re-deposited the money on January 5th. I took executive action to ensure that the money was refunded. This was done within (48) hours of my knowledge of the incident. I considered the matter closed.”

Then the report goes on to say in 9.4

“We—“

Meaning PMSL.

“—are not satisfied with the above explanations. A public authority is not a one-man company. Whatever may have been the pressures and imperatives

which drove the need for action to fill critical positions at the Executive Manager level, the actions taken by the Chairman constitute an abuse of power and an uninformed application of benefits in excess of the norms. Acting without reference to the Board when he discovered the resignation of the executives and the issue of the cheque for their respective benefit is also an act of abuse of power and this was a flagrant abuse in the nature of a cover up.”

The report says so. It is a cover up, Mr. President. Anyhow you look at it, it is wrong. Morality and integrity in public life suggests that under these circumstances you walk, Mr. President. Under these circumstances, you walk. That you lead by example, that you get to stepping.

This Government is quick to talk about corruption. As I stand here, Mr. President, the PNM is not perfect. The PNM never claimed to be perfect, but they make Johnny O’Halloran look like a common pickpocket. They are not pickpockets, Mr. President. They are raping the country. This is what the country is facing right now. I stand here to say that any suggestion that the PNM aligned itself, that the PNM worked together with this Government, is absolutely out of the question.

It is not for the Opposition to solve the national problems while in opposition. It is our duty to present a critical analysis of Government's policies and to present another point of view. We on this side accept national responsibility. Crime, Mr. President, has become a crisis of enormous proportions and the Government has proven time and time again that clearly it has no solution.

It was the PNM, Mr. President, that took the initiative after the whole Ramdhanie issue to approach the Government with a solution and, now, legislation has been drafted. We on this side will always act responsibly and, Sen. Daly, I want to let you know that you are very much incorrect to assume that we must join the Government on all issues, including agriculture and other issues that you have suggested. The very nature of the Westminster system suggests adversarial Parliament. Otherwise, Mr. President, we defeat the purpose of even saying that we follow the Westminster system.

The approach that we take is the Westminster system and, as a result, this party to which I belong will never side, will never sit and work together under those kinds of circumstances to support those kinds of things being done by the Government of the day.

Mr. President having said that, it is indeed my honour to rise to contribute to my first budget debate. It is with a certain amount of pride that I sat here in these

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hallowed Chambers on September 14, not having to watch it on television or listen to it on the radio, but to get it firsthand. To get a firsthand account of how the Government intended to take care of the needs of its people for fiscal 2001—2002, but I had a particular interest, and so I sat and I sat, and I listened and I listened. I shifted uncomfortably in my seat, because it took some time and, then it was all over and I felt that I had missed something. I felt that somewhere in the Minister's long three-hour presentation I must have fallen asleep, as did many people in the Chamber. I had to have fallen asleep, but I comforted myself in the knowledge that, "Oh well, the document would be sent to me and I would read it then" and so said, so done. Again, with great anticipation, Mr. President, I started to read the document, only to realize after some time that I was close to the back cover and still had not seen it.

When the back page finally came, I remarked to myself, "Joel, you had to have missed it again". Read it again. [*Laughter*] So, frantically I started through the document again looking, searching, but to my great horror, Mr. President, and to my great disbelief, it was not there. Impossible, I thought. Not this Government. Not this concerned, caring, listening Government. This Government could not and would never read a financial appropriation and make no real appropriation for the young people of our nation. Impossible!

I wondered if Sanell Dempster had probably helped the Minister to prepare his budget speech, singing to the tune "Nothing. They are getting nothing". Mr. President, since I entered these Chambers, I have sat and listened to all that has been said about this Government being concerned about young people yet, I have had to endure a financial package that does not specifically cater to the needs of young people. A financial package that does not specifically cater to their needs, neither does it reflect a taking into consideration of their concerns.

I have had the privilege, Mr. President, of meeting with a few youth interest groups leading up to today's contribution. I want to add to Sen. Dumas's list of persons who feel left behind. I want to add to that list, the young people of our nation, because they feel left behind, Mr. President, and this is not a feeling that is being advanced by Sen. London. These are the words of the young people themselves. It is a sad day when the youth of our nation feel that their future and their concerns are not being taken into consideration.

You know, Mr. President, we talk about sustainable growth. We talk about survivability and the ability for future generations to take care of themselves and their needs, but we make little contingency for those needs and those concerns. The Government boasts of consultation—wide consultation with major

stakeholders, but they are yet to convince me that the youth of our nation had any serious input into the measures or lack thereof contained in the budget for them. I wish to reiterate that. I wish to reiterate that that is a sign of disrespect. It is disrespectful that you put something in place that you think is in my best interest without consulting me! What you are, in fact, saying is that I have no opinion or what I have to say does not matter.

Mr. President, Agenda 21—and we hear that term coming up again. I am sorry Sen. Prof. Kenny is not here. Agenda 21 to which this country is a signatory and which the Government has so easily abandoned. I have to say “abandoned” because the imperatives of the programme are just not being implemented. Incidentally, the 13th meeting of Ministers of the Environment is carded for September or October of this year and, as a nation, I think we should be ashamed to even send anyone to that meeting, because we have not yet implemented one single Agenda 21 imperative.

I doubt whether the Minister of the Environment would even dare show his face at that conference, because we have absolutely nothing to report. The national report was due in March of this year, and I hope that somebody on the Government side can tell me whether or not as a nation, as a country we actually submitted anything, as far as Agenda 21 is concerned, in time for the Rio +10 assessment. The report was due in March of this year and the Government, when it was brought up in the Parliament, looked as though they had heard about Agenda 21 for the first time—in March of this year.

In any event, Agenda 21 is very clear. In chapter 25, in particular—and I go to Agenda 21 now—the very introduction of Agenda 21 in chapter 25.4 which deals specifically with “Children and Youth in Sustainable Development”. Under “Objectives” it reads that:

“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.”

That is what Agenda 21 says. Of course, it bears no relevance because the Government has failed to even implement a single imperative, as far as Agenda 21 is concerned.

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Then they spoke about dialogue. I want to let you know, Mr. President, that yes, dialogue is the key. Dialogue is the key! Not, you give me what you think I need; and Sen. Dumas eluded to that yesterday. The attitude that I must take whatever you offer or, the take it or leave it kind of attitude, that is not sufficient for the youth of today. The youth of today are creative, they are bright, they are thinking individuals. I listened, Mr. President, to the contribution of Sen. Dr. Moonilal yesterday, speaking about the achievements of Trinidad and Tobago students placing first in the world, and he had the impudence to suggest that that was a result of—

Mr. President: I did not quite hear that last word.

Sen. J. London: He had the impudence.

Mr. President: Please, speak in more measured terms.

Sen. J. London: He had the effrontery to suggest that that was a result of the UNC Government and that was a product of the UNC. I think, Mr. President, through you, if it is not unparliamentary for me to say, that he is very much out of place. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President: There is a way of chastising people if you wish to do so, Senator. But it has to be done with some dignity and I think you are stepping out of line with the quality of your language. Please may I remind you that this is a very dignified House and, if you are to criticize, criticize, but in a dignified manner.

Sen. J. London: I take your correction, Mr. President, and I thank you for it. UNC education programmes had absolutely nothing to do with those students' achievements. Because you change the name of Common Entrance and you build some new schools does not give you the right to take credit for things in which you had absolutely no part to play, but that has been the style of the UNC Government: take credit. Take credit for everything. Take credit cheque; all kinds of credit.

What I am saying, Mr. President, is that the young people have a voice, and their voice must be heard. I listened in one of my sessions when I was preparing for my budget contribution—speaking to the various youth interest groups that I spoke with—to a little girl, barely a teenager, 12 or 13 years old, who came to me and said that she had a message for the budget man. That is how she put it. She had a message for the budget man. That message, through you, Mr. President, was, to tell him that, “Saltfish is not we main meal; and some of us too young for

tampons and adult diapers. We have no children, so we do not need baby diapers.” And so, I asked her what about the blue soap, and she responded, “What is that?”

Mr. President, the appropriations contained in the budget could not be a result of youth consultation, because I know where the results of youth consultations are. They are in landfills at the Beetham and Claxton Bay, and in the garbage bins of the people who attended and participated in the forums. Just for today, Mr. President, I went into my own garbage bin just to show the Senate, to show the media and to show the public gallery, youth consultation UNC style.

I refer to the now defunct, seemingly defunct, discarded Draft National Youth Policy of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. Drafted in mid-2000. Big fanfare, big advertisement, national consultation on youth, youth affairs and youth concerns. Now it is like one of those “one-hit wonders” that we keep seeing on VH-1 when the presenter asks, “Where are they now?”

We have to ask this same question, where is the Draft National Youth Policy? Where is it now? Because here the Government had a golden opportunity, Mr. President, to firstly redraft and implement the policy document or, at least address some of the concerns in the document in the last two budgets. And they did not do that. Before I expand on some of the concerns expressed by young people in the policy document, let me just briefly outline for you what the Government hoped to achieve through this policy document.

Like I said, I am referring to the Draft National Youth Policy drafted by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, 2000. In the executive summary, first off, the policy provides a broad framework within which Government's youth policy—what youth policy?—initiatives will be executed. Secondly, it is a social development process which advocates a culturally relevant participatory approach which places youth at the forefront of policy development and implementation. Third, it emphasizes youth empowerment. This is what the Government hoped to achieve by this now defunct document.

It goes on to say that the goals of the policies—and I will just outline some of the goals—are: creation of mechanisms to facilitate the development of appropriate social, interactive and communication skills in youth; creation of facilitative mechanisms to promote leadership capacity building; enhancement of social and economic caregiving capacity of the society; development of mechanisms to provide a sense of historical heritage; and it goes on and on. At the very back of the document in the conclusion, the conclusion states:

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- “1. Towards an action plan for youth development.
2. Creation of Youth Employment Incentives for enterprises....
3. Creation of an integrated Youth Project Development, Implementation and Employment Generation Fund.”

And it goes on and on down to 15.

- “11. The creation of mechanisms to reduce the incidence of social, political and economic exclusion.”

All these things are contained in the document. The one that interests me the most and I alluded to it already in Parliament.

- “7. 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.”

These are the things that the Government hopes to achieve through this now seemingly defunct Draft National Youth Policy. Where is the Draft National Youth Policy now? Where is the Draft National Youth Policy that shows Government’s commitment to young people; which shows Government is willing to speak to the young people, to have dialogue with them, and thus have them included in the whole decision-making process? Where is it now?

Then you wonder, Mr. President, why do the young people feel that they have been left out. There are measures contained in the budget that touched barely on education and training. This Government continues to make a mess of the education system while purporting to carry us forward.

Universal Secondary Education—before I even go there, Mr. President, let me touch on the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA), Common Entrance Examination revisited, or Common Entrance Part II, whatever you choose to call it. [*Interruption*] You cannot call it that.

The Government is yet to properly institute the SEA, because it is yet to follow or provide the necessary tools and framework for the implementation of the Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP). I would like the Minister in the Ministry of Education, Sen. The Hon. Augustus to shed some light on this. I remember I spoke about a memorandum sometime ago. I would like him to shed

some light on a Memorandum Ex: 15/2/2 from the Supervisor of Examinations, Ministry of Education to Principals of ALL Primary and Private Schools. Under Section 2 “ELIGIBILITY” and this is for this year, it says:

“Students who are entered to write the Secondary Entrance Assessment Examination in the year 2002 must satisfy the following requirements:

- (a) They must be bona-fide students of your school.
- (b) Their names must be on the Register of a Standard V Class in your school.
- (c) Their Dates of Birth must fall on or after January 01, 1988.”

This is the memorandum that was sent this year, Mr. President.

I would like the Minister in the Ministry of Education to shed some light on the memorandum that was sent last year that stated that their dates of birth must fall on or after January 01, 1987. If that were the case, Mr. President, it would mean that only persons up to the age of 13 would have been eligible to write the examination. We need to take into consideration the Government’s need to ensure that the perception they have left the public with, that all students coming out of the primary school system are being absorbed into the secondary school system had to be maintained.

For years we have been having 27,000-odd students writing the examination, all of a sudden in 2001, 22,000 students write the examination granted that some repeaters were taken up because most students went up into first form. What happened to the 6,000 or so over the age of 13 who were not able to write the examination? Where are they now? We speak about falling through the cracks and all sorts of things. Where are they now? I cannot understand how we can go from having 27,000 students to 22,000 writing the examination and that is because the age limit was limited to 13 years, and as a result, students were left out of the SEA. I would like the hon. Minister of Education to shed some light on that.

Let me touch briefly on the Universal Secondary Education. The Government in its haste to fulfil election promises implemented the SEA without the benefit of the CAP. Why has CAP not been implemented? Is it because the Government has not provided the tools to aid in implementation? It is apparent that the Government wants primary and private school teachers to be all-rounders and I will elaborate on that.

When you refer to the basic screening supports in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education Continuous Assessment Programme Implementation of the Pilot Phase Basic Screening Supports, it seems as though the Government wants teachers to be more than just teachers, they must be all-

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rounders because they are to do general screening, interviews, and physical examinations apparently. The document says that they are to scrutinize, they are to do hearing tests; they are to be recording the results; conditions of testing; recording visual acuity and all these things they want the teachers to be doing. This is the reason the Continuous Assessment Programme has not been implemented because a number of things that are supposed to be in place are not in place.

How can one expect teachers to do hearing tests, record results, screening, physical examinations, voice at conversation levels and all these things? So we cannot implement this unless, of course, you have competent, medical personnel on the compound to do it. How can we then go ahead and implement SEA without the supporting prerequisite of the CAP? It is beyond me. I do not understand. Maybe it is just my political infancy. I do not know.

The Government continues to encourage the fostering of a very volatile environment in the nation's schools and the children are the ones who are feeling the pinch. The Minister in the Ministry of Education himself an educator, a former principal, I am sure can tell you of the lifelong damages that can be done to a child if placed in an environment to which the child cannot relate. The Government is doing two things, Mr. President. First of all, it is taking students who score less than 30 per cent in the examination and putting them in an environment for which they are not ready.

Principals will tell you of students in Form I who are still going "buh-a-t" "bat" in secondary schools. That is how they are sounding, Mr. President, and I am sure Sen. Dr. Moonilal could relate to it. The children cannot keep up with the work and they are rebelling.

Mr. President: I will not warn you again Senator. Senator, I am speaking to you. Try and be measured in what you say. If you are being disturbed by another Senator, bring it to the attention of the Chair.

Sen. J. London: Thank you, Mr. President. Next time I will call for your protection, take example from Sen. King and call for your protection.

The children cannot keep up with the work, Mr. President, and they are rebelling and that is the "Chicken Licken" generation that we are producing

The second thing that it is doing is breeding deviance, rebellion and a sense of hopelessness in the nation's children. How can we tell a child that he or she has

passed the Common Entrance Examination, put him/her in a supposed Form I in a school and after a year, make them graduate to a regular Form I. What must be going on in that child's mind? What you are in fact doing is psychological damage and when the child cannot keep up with the work he/she rebels and drops out.

I would like the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Education to tell us if he has any idea of what has been the drop-out rate in schools since the implementation of the Universal Secondary Education Programme. Not only that, but I heard Sen. Dr. Moonilal refer to it yesterday and again, I have to be measured in what I say—less I incur your wrath, Mr. President—that there is a direct relationship between education or lack thereof, employment and crime and when we create an environment that is conducive to drop-outs we also foster crime and youth deviance.

I see that the Minister has allocated two paragraphs to the issue of youth deviance in his budget presentation. Two paragraphs that deal with deviance and delinquency in schools and all it talks about is a project to be set up. No one knows when it would be set up and chances are that we will return next year to debate next year's budget to hear funds being allocated to fund the project because this budget certainly does not say that funds have been allocated. This is not a budget, this is a promissory note. [*Desk thumping*] All over the document—funds will be allocated, a project will be established, we have agreed to lend support. How much, is what we want to know. How much and when.

Much has been said on the dollar for dollar plan already. Yet another election promise introduced at this time while the country seems to be on an election alert. The fact that it had to be funded by the Revenue Stabilization Fund—you know, Mr. President, the Finance Minister is saying that he cannot understand what all the fuss is about. It is only the UNC that has established such a fund. What is all the fuss about? That is not the point. The point is that the fund was established for a particular purpose and I refer to the *Hansard* of January 25, 2001 where the hon. Finance Minister is speaking in the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill and in response to a question put to him he says:

“With respect to the Oil Stabilization Fund where \$415 million was put, legislation would be brought before the Senate very shortly to put mechanisms in place by which moneys could be taken from that fund. The fact of the matter is that in any year where the income from oil is in excess of what was budgeted, as we have had for the last several months, the surplus...”

Not 20, not 40, not 60.

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“—above the budgeted amount would be put. This fund would be managed by independent people appointed by the President and would be used in a very prescribed manner...”

That is the Finance Minister talking. Yet still we go running to the Oil Stabilization Fund to fund the dollar for dollar plan. Yes, we hear talk that it would come from the current expenditure next year and all that sort of thing. Granted, but the legislation has still not yet come before Parliament and we are already finding ourselves dipping into the Oil Stabilization Fund to fund something that has absolutely nothing to do with it.

Maybe it is just me. I do not know, I keep having to say it. Maybe it is just me. I am not a banker, but I have to ask the question, \$415 million sitting in the Central Bank collecting no interest, nothing of the sort. In any banking institution today, \$415 million at a rate—what is the rate of interest today in the bank? Three per cent, four per cent? Even if you think about putting it into a fund where you can accumulate that kind of 10 per cent interest per annum. Do you know what is 10 per cent per annum on \$415 million?

Had the Minister done that, there would have been absolutely no need to go into the Oil Stabilization Fund. All the money he needed to fund the dollar for dollar plan would have come from the interest alone. Had he done that, he would have had to start with 10 per cent, \$41 million to start the programme. Maybe it is just me. It seems clear to me that would have been the sensible thing to do. [Interruption] Thank you for your guidance, Sen. Dr. Phillips, maybe it is just me who is thinking. Maybe it is just me.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. J. London: Mr. President, these are our concerns, concerns which, in my estimation are just given passing mention in the budget. Only a few of what the youths are really concerned with has been touched in this budget. I cannot understand—they spent so much money carrying out surveys and research and then just dumped the document. If they did not dump it, why are we waiting to bring the document into fruition? On what are we waiting?

Mr. President, the document contains just what the young people are really concerned about. You spent the money, you did the research and found out

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exactly what the young people were concerned about and did nothing. Let me refer to the document again. I might be referring to it in vain because they have already discarded it.

The document states under “The Current Youth Situation in Trinidad and Tobago” the following:

“The Youth Policy planners and implementers must therefore respond in a creative way... to the following issues put directly by young people to the Task Force:”

These issues include:

“Spread of diseases

HIV/AIDS

Drugs

Domestic violence/Abuse

Lack of Discipline among young people

Family Breakdown/Inadequate parenting

Delinquency

Negative peer pressure

Promiscuity and Teenage pregnancy

Violence and crime

Poor communication between youth and the rest of society”

3.15 p.m.

The one I like the best, Mr. President, “absence of role models”. It goes on:

“Lack of motivation among young people

Insufficient sporting/recreational facilities

Low self-esteem

Hopelessness and alienation.”

This is what the young people feel. How many of these issues were actually addressed in the budget? So we built four stadia that do not even belong to us. We build four stadia that we are going to rent and lease and probably, eventually they would belong to us. We have no idea how those stadia would be maintained;

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we have no idea who would receive the gate receipts and so on. Who is that money going to? Nothing is said about it but we have four stadia nevertheless. But these are the issues that the young people are concerned about.

As I wind up, I would encourage the Government as a young person myself, and by a stretch I include Sen Dr. Moonilal in that. I heard him yesterday begging for a wife and children—but I implore the Government to really come down—there was a song a couple years ago, I cannot remember who sang it—but it was “come down and meet the people”. Come down and really talk to the people; and not just talk to them, but when you talk to them, understand very clearly that the people include the young people. The young people have a voice. The young people have opinions that must be taken into consideration when planning is done. It is imperative. You cannot plan for young people without the input of young people.

If that is the way it was done back in the days, I do not know. Sen. Augustus would have to tell me. That is how it may have been done back in the days, I was not around then, but today’s youth would not stand for that. Today’s youth would insist that they have a say.

Sen. Daly and Sen. Dr. Moonilal spoke about empowerment and we need to understand that we need to empower our young people. Our young people are competent enough to take care of their affairs and it is imperative that they be included in decisions that concern them.

It has been said in this Parliament before that people take a greater interest in something that they feel a part of creating. If you thrust something on me, I am going to rebel; but if you make me a part of the whole decision-making process, I feel as though it belongs to me so I would play a greater part in it.

Mr. President, there are other issues but I would stop there. There are other issues concerning housing and so on. Again, as a young man, I am concerned about housing and what is said in the document about housing. I am waiting to see these houses that the Finance Minister spoke about. I am waiting to see if they are going to be priced over the heads of people. We speak about “low-income housing”. We on this side know the Government’s idea of “low-income housing”; John John Towers style—

Hon. Senator: PNM built those.

Sen. J. London: I am talking about pricing. I wonder what type of preference, if any, would be given to people from Sea Lots, for example, who would be

displaced by the waterfront project. The fire victims of John John still do not have homes. Thank you.

Sen. Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh: Mr. President, first of all, I congratulate and thank the hon. Minister of Finance for specifying and highlighting in the budget our responsibility to the underprivileged and the destitute in the society. Furthermore, the society needs to be always aware of the social safety net that must be given prominence not only at budget times, but every day. The poor is always with us, with their varied needs. That is commendable.

It is a good gesture that he has removed the tax on maintenance allowance and separation allowance and alimony payments. It is good to make provisions for street children and orphans; to spend money on low-income housing and to provide some apartments for battered women; to increase the school feeding programme; to increase the disability grant for the physically challenged; to provide for more bus service and increased pension for senior citizens; and zero-rating on the VAT schedule for certain basic items. Indeed, I would be the first to say that these categories must be in every national budget, with generous increases. And they need to continue, in all the ministries, this service of love and caring.

Mr. President, I will now refer to certain items mentioned in the budget statement in addition to this particular cluster, of which I have had very special interest.

First of all, on page 1 the hon. Minister made reference to the December 11, 2000, general election and furthermore, he referred to the results of the election. It is instructive that this came up so early in the budget statement. It had to be and this is too significant for me to ignore. It is a part of the package.

Mr. President, within the past months there have been many warnings of the need to prepare for another election, inclusive of further expenditure, of possibly another \$20 million we have to find. In fact, the hon. Minister of Finance included in the 2001 budget, allocation to the Elections and Boundaries Commission of \$38.5 million.

The post-election controversy in Trinidad and Tobago has dragged on for almost a year and we do not know when it would end. It has spread to the courts and the street corners; and it has created new enemies, not only between the two major parties, but also among others in the society. Post-election controversy has caused social uneasiness and we do not deserve this after we spend all this money and energy on this exercise of a five-year election. We do not deserve an entire year of post-election controversial matters leading to all kinds of trauma in the society.

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We do not know yet the cost of litigation for the various protests and so on; all the constitutional motions. It might be just phenomenal and you add that to the budgeted figure to the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

If ever an election was plagued with controversy it was that historic comedy of errors on December 11, 2000. Our two political parties to whom we have entrusted power as a result of those elections, they are leading in this controversy, all based on a power play at the expense of the people of this nation. I am very concerned about that.

3.25 p.m.

The latest—as we are warned and advised, maybe threatened, about another election—involved the Elections and Boundaries Commission. Let us get serious. If we must have an election, then both major political parties must save this nation from further trauma. The PNM, which has its mandate from almost half of the population in terms of seats in Parliament, has called for the resignation of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. All of us are advised to prepare for election.

If there is no confidence in the EBC, then all parties contesting an election—and we know there are two major parties; I do not see another big one coming, an alternative party as big as these two; I do not see it in the near future—if they do not get together and express this confidence in the electoral system, then election controversy will continue in this country.

Let me tell you this. I am talking to the two parties, if they will ever hear. I do not think that this nation—this morning we spoke about what a wonderful people we are—I do not think our people deserve this. How do both of them—you know who I am talking to—get down to the business of restoring confidence in the electoral system? The two major parties must get together. You have to do it. You do not have to spring one morning—you know any time people get up these days they want to hear what is the date for the election. That is not the big thing, you know. It is not to come like we are accustomed to do, like a thief in the night. No election is to come like a thief in the night.

These two groups that are responsible for elections in this country—and also responsible for the trauma of the post-election controversy of the past—have to get together and resolve their difficulties concerning the EBC, the electoral list, all their voter-padding concerns, in order to restore confidence in all the procedures of the electoral system.

I will tell you something. Somebody will be the loser. Whenever an election is called, if now, or in the next four years, I think the time has come when we have

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to learn to be losers and we have to accept defeat. We need to do that. It is a sign of political immaturity. I mean, we must protest and so on, but I think we are very, very fortunate. When there was a petrol bombing of some place in Port of Spain some weeks ago, and then mysterious fires in business places in Chaguanas, let me tell you what message that sent right across this country. It had to do with political uncertainty in this land. It was filtering down. And we thank God. Many people were very glad that it stopped in Chaguanas and did not go elsewhere. It started in Port of Spain and went to Chaguanas.

I want the political parties to remember that and to bear in mind what has happened in Guyana. Post-election controversy almost destroyed the city of Georgetown. If you say an election is imminent, then in the interest of confidence and restoration in our electoral system, I really believe that the Elections and Boundaries Commission ought to resign as the first step in assuring a sizeable proportion of the electorate in Trinidad and Tobago may be at least given some kind of assurance of free and fair elections.

This is not to cast aspersions on any particular member of the commission. I really believe that this change is vital and this is necessary if there is going to be an election. The entire commission should resign and forget the formalities of any tribunal. Let us not fool ourselves and let us deal with problems in a very practical way. I hope they all hear me.

That was a matter in the budget. It is the first item that stalled me in the budget. I will now share some thoughts on another very important chapter in the budget statement, and that is on page 15, on the question of corruption and transparency. There have been all kinds of defences and wonderful words used within the last few months, about all these allegations of corruption in Trinidad and Tobago. Words like “perception”, “allegations”, “hearsay” and “malicious rumours”.

A concerned citizen lent me a version of the ISS Report. I say “version”, because I understand there is a longer version and a shorter version. But long before I saw it, the people of Trinidad and Tobago saw it in the press—the ISS Report on Petrotrin. The one I saw was dated December 03, 2000. The press has it; it is public knowledge, because it was there. The public read parts of it in the media, with such shocking details that resembled corruption. I am not saying it is corruption. The details looked very much like corruption. I read it. We all read it, all who could read those newspapers. If every word in those 51 pages is “perception” and “allegation”, somebody tell me what is the truth.

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If the cost of the airport—and the business of the airport did come up—was almost double or triple the original estimated cost, with deafening sounds of suspicion of irregularities, with massive cost-overruns, tell me if that is malicious, and tell me if that is only hearsay. How long will it remain as hearsay? Almost all the new high schools that were built in Trinidad and Tobago which opened recently, were opened only after over-excessive cost-overruns. That, too, is perception—yes, plenty perception. That is rumour! All contractors dealt fairly with the Government. That is allegation and perception.

The multi-million-dollar road expansion and development paving programme, where some contractors hurriedly—it was an easy way to cash in on a government, and take advantage of the Government, too. They hurriedly spread their Barber Green on water-covered roads on a rainy day, which began to crumble the next day, and they collected full payment from the Government. Tell me if that is allegation; tell me if that is rumour; tell me if that is hearsay and how malicious is that.

The most disastrous beauty show, with an ugly debt burden of \$60 million on our country, that too is hearsay. If ever we forget these errors, then most likely we will repeat them. Another illustration: Last year our Government spent \$1,056 million on health services. Could you believe that? I cannot believe that. Yet we read about 10 days ago in the media that for the fiscal year now ended, when we spent \$1,056 million on health and in the hospitals there were no linens, shortage of medication, irregular and inadequate supplies of pins and sterile material for surgery. Two operating theatres out of five were functional; elective surgery was cancelled for poor people whose only hope is the public hospital. Tell me if that is rumour and hearsay. Tell me if there is not corruption there and something is not wrong.

How have we spent \$1,056 million on the health services and yet this sector is so sick? Call this hearsay until you see for yourself. Is this corruption? The Government spent taxpayers' money on linens and basic supplies for health institutions, and these supplies end up somewhere else, or they were never even purchased although payments might have been made. Tell me if that is hearsay; tell me if these are allegations. Is there corruption? Is there really corruption? And to what extent?

Christopher Columbus had two logbooks. One was a real logbook with the true record of things, and the other was a false record. Maybe that false record was for the Auditor General and for the Public Accounts Committee. Tell us, as a country; tell us, as a Parliament: Who has the real true and authentic account of

how Government moneys were spent? Please tell us somebody. Who knows the cost for a load of Barber Green? Who knows the real truth, where somebody who has a truck and who is doing this work for the Government, who can pay for his truck and pay for his workers and make hundreds of per cent profit for himself, tell us the truth. What is the real value of it—to the tune of these millions and millions that we spend? Who has the real logbook?

3.35 p.m

I believe, personally, that all of this is not perception, allegation, hearsay or malicious rumours. I believe that no amount of blue soap would wash away the financial sins of the past. No amount of blue soap would do that.

Mr. President, after the squandermania of the first oil boom, Trinidad and Tobago was enslaved by the International Monetary Fund and other international lending agencies. I am very surprised that they are already advising us. They are already here to advise us and I am very frightened by that.

In those days of plenty, we constructed monuments like mad as mechanisms for siphoning the nation's funds. I do not want to forget the past, as we are going to do it again, because we are seeing prosperity once more. The Mount Hope Complex moved from \$515 million to \$661 million. Somebody who knows more about accounts and economics than I do said that the value of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar in those days could have built the airport today and still have change. It just looks like a small figure but it was really an enormous sum that was spent. The financial complex that towered to \$479 million, for that, too, you have to multiply many times over. The Caroni Racing Complex, we threw away \$149 million on that. Multiply that by about six if you really want to know how much money we lost in those days. In BWIA and Caroni we lost billions; not millions, billions of dollars.

Mr. President, in those days of the oil boom we lent money without security to all and sundry. Why should Trinidad and Tobago ever have to worry, this afternoon, about a possible world recession? It was the sin of bad management, wild dreams and the reckless disposal of the wealth of this nation. Do you know what would have been the position of Trinidad and Tobago today with good management over the last 20 years? We would have been the wealthiest nation in the Western Hemisphere, not afraid of any recession in mighty United States of America. Are we repeating the colossal errors of the past as custodians of the nation's new wealth?

Mr. President, with all this talk about the slow-down in the world's economy today, and the beginning of a recession in the United States of America, we really

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cannot afford to be careless. Minister of Finance, we really cannot be careless if in truth we can find \$16.4 billion to balance this budget. If we really could find this money when this budget becomes effective, we cannot be careless again in spending it as we did in the last fiscal year. The serious question we face is: What are we going to do? This is more than perception, allegation, hearsay and malicious rumours. Something has to be wrong. How do we properly manage Trinidad and Tobago's new wealth? How can we do this?

Mr. President, last year was a good one, and I identify with the concerns of the Leader of Government Business. Last year was a good one and this is going to be a good year too. No matter what happens anywhere around us, this is going to be a blessed year. I share his optimism. The appreciation of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar, it cannot go down suddenly too badly. Do not worry with that. With our foreign reserves of \$2.4 billion I am not going to starve tomorrow. There will be food in the groceries tomorrow and for a little while. If it is true, as I am told, that the economy has expanded at an average of 5.2 per cent per annum, higher than the average in the United States of America—I am referring to the document—Japan and the European union, there is a certain amount of security for this blessed land. If it is true that we are ranked among the big five in the world of liquefied natural gas, we are not going to stumble tomorrow. If we are the world's gold medalist in methanol and ammonia, we are going to hold out for a little while. I believe that. I really believe that.

The point I am making is that this land has been blessed with much wealth and riches and we ought to be extremely careful. That is my point. [*Interruption*] Well, we are talking about physical management. It is not only what happens in church, it is what happens here. In fact, some of these guys who have been involved in all of this, and who would like to say it is perception, allegation, hearsay and malicious rumours, sit in the front seat of all the churches. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Mr. President, they are the most religious ones in the country, do not fool yourself. Do you know what the Bible says about that? They have no conscience; they sell the poor for a pair of shoes and they sell the needy for silver. They sleep on couches of ivory and drink from golden wine bowls. The Bible said that a long time ago. Tell me if it is not happening today. You talk about prosperity and plenty. This is a land of prosperity and plenty and we abuse it. Those overnight millionaires. [*Interruption*] Thank you for all the support, because you know it is true. It is more than perception, allegation, hearsay and malicious rumours. There has to be more. This is a land of plenty, but abused and misused. Those overnight

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millionaires in Trinidad and Tobago who have embarrassed this Government. They have ridden the backs of this Government and the PNM government in the past too. Oh yes.

Mr. President, Trinidad and Tobago, today, could well be the wealthiest nation in the Caribbean. There is no doubt about that. [*Interruption*] I am glad you recognize this. We are the wealthiest in the Caribbean. I am glad you are seeing this.

Let me just add this which is very important. A few days ago there was a very important conference at the University of the West Indies, a conference to mark the centennial of the birth of CLR James.

Hon. Senator: PNM locked him up in “he” house.

Hon. Senator: House arrest.

Sen. Rev. D. Teelucksingh: Notwithstanding that—that is the lock-up part—he is considered, even by those who were living in those days and were responsible for the lock-up. He was recognized as one of the greatest Afro thinkers of the 20th Century and would always be. [*Desk thumping*] CLR James said of the great Eric Williams with respect to his successes as prime minister and leader of this nation, that he was no genius, it was the oil that saved him. [*Laughter*] There is another one named W.E.B. DuBois, an American, who is considered to be one of the greatest thinkers—almost alongside him is CLR James. British writers referred to CLR James as the black Plato. He is not just somebody who did not like Eric Williams. He said he looked at the political success of this country and the leadership of Eric Williams and said that he was no genius, politically. He might have been a good historian, but the oil saved him.

I just want to say that I do not know who is the genius today but, let us not rush and take the credit for the wealth of this nation by the much-touted statement about prudent management.

3.45p.m.

Eric Williams said the same thing about prudent management until the black Plato of his day said it was not prudent management, “The oil saved you”. Maybe it is not prudent management today when we analyze how we spent in the last fiscal year and in the years before. This time natural gas saved us. And it is God who has blessed us with that very special gift. Let us not forget it.

We all need to realize corruption embarrasses a government; corruption weakens a government. It destroys the reputation of leaders caught in its deadly

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web. Corruption destroys character; corruption causes us to make the total community poorer; corruption encourages the evil where the rich become richer at the expense of the poor; corruption draws its strength from human greed. At the heart of corruption is human selfishness which makes us impervious to the cries of the same underprivileged we are focusing on in the budget, at least parts of it. Corruption takes away the humanity in us, and leads us to be nasty and brutish.

I believe that Government needs to set up a national bureau against corruption. We need to do something. We cannot allow this evil to get the better of us. Why not? I was thinking Sir, especially concerning the super contracts awarded to builders, contractors and technocrats; try it one day. Lay those mega financial plans in the Parliament and let the wisdom of Parliament approve some of these expenditures. Why do you spend and then at the end of every year come and tell us you spent so much? Why do we not try something for a change? Something drastic has to be done. Somebody is impoverishing this country. Why should contracts, buyouts and sellouts of our natural resources be secretly done by some minister and his technocrats? I am speaking of nobody in particular. I have no confidence in that system, and if the present system of allocations and spending should continue, come back next year, it is the same kinds of problems with the health system, this system and all the systems. We have got to change it and now is the best time to change it. Change it immediately! It is time that the Parliament spends the nation's money properly and not a minister and his advisors. If that is the Westminster system, it is no good. It has not worked. If that is Westminster, forget it! That has not worked. The Cabinet system of spending the nation's money is bad. It has not worked and we need to change it immediately. Parliament is only a rubber stamp. We are almost wasting time because the budget has been approved in the Lower House. The Governor did it a long time ago.

When the Governor and his boys got together the whole nation could say what they wanted. This is why 1937 came about. Governor Fletcher at the time said it was race. The black people are going to destroy all the others. He could not understand that politics and economics were two sides of the same coin. Governor Fletcher was totally wrong. No wonder that the Colonial Secretary in England said it was time for him to come home; he did not understand what he was doing. This is the same corrupted, colonial system that is here today with a handful of people spending the money. In fact, for the next three days, we will be staying here all hours of the night and day—we are not approving anything! We cannot approve. That was the Governor's law before Dr. Williams' time.

I do not know how in 1956, when there was time to change a constitution, that they made the Constitution into a Colonial Constitution. And no Government since the time of those early constitutions, the Independent Constitution, the Republican Constitution, governments in power made the Constitution and never had the will-power to change it. They wanted to perpetuate and protect themselves as the Governor and his little clique did in the colonial days.

I have been in the Parliament for a few years now, and I know that we have the time. We have the time and we can find the time to discuss the nation's finances at this level, rather than once a year. I believe we can do it more efficiently and meaningfully than this ancient exercise. I have seen—and you know this, Mr. President, with due respect to all of us who prepare the Order Paper—we spend a lot of precious legislative time on trivia. Do you know how much precious time we spend here in the Parliament with everybody dress up, shirt and tie and jacket and tie, and park up big cars as if really something is happening inside here? In the meantime, you take the nation's money and you just allow other people to spend it. Other people spend this money, and get fat from it.

When I was younger I heard about the Swiss Bank. Nobody could ever really break that. What is it, perception, allegation, hearsay, malicious rumours? Some fellows get so rich in this country, I believe that the banks are too small to keep their profits in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, our Public Accounts Committee is a sham. People just leave, they are fed up with it. It has no authority; Public Accounts Committee, Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. Talk about the Central Tenders Board. With all of this bad spending over the years, you tell me: Do we still have a Central Tenders Board with any kind of authority at all? What are they doing? What have they been doing to oversee and monitor the spending of the people's money in this country? Tell me about the Auditor General. Ever so often we get reports from the Auditor General ten years old, five years old. All these things come to the notice of the Parliament, the hon. Minister of Finance and all the others. They come after the financial monsters destroy the Treasury, and they leave no trace at all and the poor Auditor General and the others in the various Committees, they do not have a clue of what is happening. Bring in the Fraud Squad and get whom you want to investigate, like the English company that came to prepare the ISS Report and do their investigations, and they are not going to find a thing.

The teak forest that we nurture at the Forestry Department grew for 10 to 20 years. A teak plant cannot grow into a forest log overnight. If these are to be sold to people, very precious resources are these logs—30 years maybe. These logs

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have been growing there for a very long time, at taxpayers' money too. We have supported the Forestry Department. Why must a handful of people be the brokers to sell the forest of Trinidad and Tobago? Why can Parliament not include the disposal of something like that on an Order Paper one evening? It is not I who want to discuss it, but there are more people. The Opposition wants to know what you are doing with the forest trees. You, in the Government, want to know. Back Benchers who are not in the Cabinet would like to know. We want to know what you do with precious forest plants that took so many years to nurture. Do you just take it and a few fellows say we would sell it to this one and that one?

The Caroni rum stocks. I do not wish to say much about the Caroni rum stocks. I would mostly say that maybe, the rum would be used for medicinal purposes. [*Interruption*] I have to talk about it, because it has to do with a state enterprise in which we have been pouring millions and millions. Why should a handful of persons just decide that the rum stocks or the forest trees must be given to so and so group of people, just to dispose of it as they well like? I have a problem with that. All those deals are brokered and you would hardly know about it. If 62 acres of precious land in this country must be leased to a foreign company, why can Parliament not help make a decision? But a handful of fellows sit there and broker a deal, and they might never have that kind of authority again. They sign some paper and give some foreign company to do something and that is the end of that.

I really believe that the corporate wisdom and the decision of the Parliament is so very important, and it might just go a long way in not stopping, maybe checking the rate of the escalation of this thing that is called corruption that occupies such an important place, not only in the budget, but in the national thought within the last few months. We really need immediately—this is my concern—to radically change our system in monitoring Government spending.

I want to make a bold statement to the hon. Minister of Finance. It is not that I want to hold up progress. But you see all those mega projects listed in the budget and elsewhere, like the Petrotrin projects may not be here, the state enterprise projects are not in the budget, but that has to do with the country. I would like a hold on all these mega projects until we could work out some anti-corruption system. Do not just let it continue like that. It cannot! Bring the details to the Parliament. Give us regular updates. Let us know what you are doing. Who are your contractors? Who are your advisors?

I am worried about the \$55 million that is budgeted for that Science and Technology Park. I wonder if you have your builders and advisors already lined

up. I would not be surprised if we budget \$55 million today, and looking at the track record of Trinidad and Tobago this could hit a \$200 million anytime. It has happened to many projects, almost every Government project. I am concerned about the \$15 million to repair the roof of the Red House.

Mr. President, I have much to say about the Red House, about all the beautiful carpets. Go into one of those rooms, the conference room, very expensive carpets have been getting wet—and soaked this afternoon—and have been soaking for the longest while. We are caretakers of the people's money, taxpayers' money, if even it is \$5 million you are going to use, you are going to repair all these beautiful carpets, furniture, every single thing. We have sat here and allowed this place to deteriorate so much. We do not do that to our own homes. Once you hear the winds lift a sheet of galvanize, you would repair it. But for things pertaining to the Government and to the nation, it does not matter how they are managed and who takes what. And that is so very sad. We are custodians and we are keepers. I want to share a thought with you, Mr. President.

I am just using this as an illustration, the Caroni (1975) Limited and Tanteak issues. Reference was made by the hon. Minister to the Divestment Secretariat of the Ministry. It seems that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing and the public is confused because the hon. Minister can say that the Divestment Secretariat is made up of public officers and he wants to assure the national population that the transactions involving the Rum Division at Caroni (1975) Limited and Tanteak were done in a most transparent manner without political interference.

4.00 p.m.

The same national population is now seeing things differently. The issue is clouded in confusion. Government needs to examine its divestment policy in the light of experiences that we have had, not during the fiscal year, but all through the years. The question is how much must Government sell out to the private sector. It is a question that has bothered me and I am just using these two as illustrations. There ought to be a balance in terms of the control of the nation's resources. Can you imagine a private investor owning all the quarries in Trinidad and he is boss of that? Can you imagine a private investor owning all of our forestry?

I remember one time something was happening in the banking sector and we had said that it must be a dangerous day if there is one bank in Trinidad and Tobago to swallow all the other banks. Then there was legislation to prevent that. That was wise or things would have been different today. One monster would be gobbling up all.

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I am asking: Do you think the day will come when some rich man will step in and say give me the lands in Caroni and I will plant concrete and steel for you? That is very possible. Agricultural lands have been turning into housing developments all across this land. It is faster money than planting food. It is dangerous. We have to watch this.

Government and the private sector have been working; there must be a partnership, but Government cannot sell out. They cannot do it and we are worried about that. There is enough concern expressed about interlocking interests, Mr. President, between politicians and the business sector. There are dangers in that kind of liaison and how far that liaison could go.

I want to go back to colonial days. It is not too far away from today, but we have to learn from the past. In colonial days, just before Independence, the seat of power was the Legislative Council and the people who determined the social, economic and political policy of the colony belonged to the planters and merchant class. They were well represented in the government, that is the Legislative Council.

The island was governed by a strong combination of politicians and also the merchant class. Merchants were politicians. They actually sat here. That alliance, concentrated in the hands of a few—look at the danger. We do not seem to learn. This alliance between politicians and the merchant class, concentrated in the hands of a few people, constituted the wealth of the island. History is repeating itself and we ought to be careful. The merchant class governed, but the merchant class, in those days, also ruled the economy. They governed. Political power was in the hands of the merchant class, but also the economic power was in their hands. We need to watch that very carefully.

They owned the lands; they owned the businesses and they had a powerful voice in the Legislative Council. They controlled the country from the boardrooms and also the Red House. Am I guessing as to what is happening? Are we seeing a repetition of that and how good that is for our country? The boardrooms of the merchant class and the Parliament were next to each other. We cannot return to those days.

Mr. President: The hon. Senator's speaking time has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Rev. D. Teelucksingh: I will just close with a comment on that concern of mine. Capitalism uncontrolled can be ruthlessly self-seeking and exploitative.

Political power in the hands of the capitalist class can concentrate economic power in the hands of a few at the expense of the many.

There are one or two little matters that I would like to raise—very significant, nevertheless. The hon. Leader of Government Business a while ago made reference to the successes of T&TEC. The hon. Minister of Finance made reference to the pension. Within recent times so much has been said about retirees of T&TEC who have waited for the longest while for their commission—for payment of what is due to them from the company's provident and pension fund.

I understand that some beneficiaries have long since died. One report says that about 33 of the 72 retirees died. Do you know the story of PowerGen? We were here. PowerGen made a mint out of the T&TEC legacy. They came from I-do-not-know where and they made a mint out of the legacy of those who worked so hard. I would appeal to the hon. Minister to intervene. Do not leave it up to the courts; that will take too long. It may take many years and many of the pensioners may die. I do not understand why the policies of such companies can be so oppressive to workers who gave some of their best years. I hear all kinds of explanations given about them.

As I close, I congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for bravely acknowledging a matter long officially denied. I quote from the budget statement. He said that certain members' clubs have become full-blown casinos. This Government has been dodging this issue for a long time. I can tell you that. *[Interruption]* Yes, capitalist thing again. This Government has been avoiding this issue for the longest while and this hon. Minister was courageous enough to admit that these members' clubs in Trinidad and Tobago have become full-blown casinos. Thanks to both of you.

I still believe that doubling the taxes on gaming tables does not remove the problem of casinos operating illegally in Trinidad and Tobago. That is not the answer. It could not be the answer. Government needs to investigate and have it regularized. Do something! You know that there are casinos in the country and our legislation does not permit the operating of casinos in Trinidad and Tobago. You have started something. I want you to go on. Those full-blown clubs that operate as casinos are called casinos openly. They have not been recognized by our laws and we need proper discussion as to whether or not we need casinos in Trinidad and Tobago. Meanwhile, we must deal with those illegal casinos as recognized by the hon. Minister of Finance.

I compliment the hon. Minister for addressing the problem of young people, particularly with regard to the use of alcohol and cigarettes; increasing the cost of

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these commodities and ensuring that the age limit is raised from 16 to 18 years. Congratulations and thank you very much, hon. Minister, for doing that.

The sale of alcohol and tobacco products, we really need to control this. I notice that you are taking some of the profits from this taxation to be used to help the Cancer Society. I will tell you something. Is it \$2 million? The Cancer Society needs more than that to help those same people who have adopted smoking as one of their vices. We have to turn around and help them. We need to contribute to the health care for them. There is a provision to suggest that signs be placed in shops and entertainment centres emphasizing the age restriction for the guidance of the young people and also the penalties to those in charge of businesses and the revocation of licences. It is a very good provision in the budget. I hope we have courage to do this.

Mr. President, I cannot remember speaking to you for so long after many years. I usually condense what I have to say in 20 minutes. Please forgive me.

Let me close by saying, hon. Leader of Government Business, that I see it as a celebration of the material resources of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to add prudent management and careful consideration of how you spend this money. God has blessed us with plenty and we just cannot allow it to leave us, as was done in years gone.

I remind the Government that as far as human resource management is concerned, as far as development of any country is concerned, the driving force behind the utilization and maximization of the benefits of material resources is the human factor and we are also very, very rich in that.

I thank you very much.

Sen. Dr. Vincent Lasse: I am delighted to participate in the debate on the budget statement 2001—2002. Before addressing this matter, I think it is important that I comment briefly on what has been said by Sen. London and Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh in order to clear the air.

I always admire the contribution of Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh, especially being a man of God. However, today I was a bit disappointed with certain points he raised. I do not know whether it was because he may have been carried away a bit—I do not think he was—but when he touched on the question of responsibility and the fact that spending on the part of Government should have been brought to Parliament, I think that something was radical in that thought.

A government is selected by the people; a government is responsible to the people and the people have an option to decide whether the government should

return or not return. This Government was brought here by the wishes of 307,000 persons. So, for Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh to say here today that the matter of spending should have been brought to Parliament, I ask the question: Is the Opposition responsible to the people? Are the Senators responsible to the people? I admit that the Opposition and the Senators have a duty to monitor the Government, but to put itself in the place of the Government defeats the whole purpose of an election.

I was taken aback and I wondered if I was hearing him right when Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh said that the Elections and Boundaries Commission should resign.

4 15 p.m.

To my knowledge, and to the knowledge of everyone, the EBC is an independent body. For many years—governments have been in power for 29 years, 34 years—there was never a question of anybody resigning. Why is it that this Government is only in office for two terms, in the first instance—although I believe it would continue for another five terms—and all of a sudden, the EBC members should resign. I think it was very strange and I was really taken aback because as I said, I admire very much the logic and the wisdom of Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh.

I want to speak briefly, also, Mr. President, on the intervention of Sen. London, who is not here now. However, he started his intervention speaking about political infancy. I can remember the wisdom of my grandmother and also the wisdom of most grandmothers, who would caution young people not to make short cuts in life—how you must be humble, polite and courteous. My grandmother used to say to me, do not try to be a “force-ripe man”, and I guess most grandmothers would have said that.

Sen. London accused the Minister of not dwelling, comprehensively or, at least, to his liking, on the question of the youth but the last speaker, Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh, did confirm that the Minister did address the question of the youth, especially with respect to liquor and so on. I believe if Sen. London did read the documents—you see we had about nine documents pertaining to this budget and I found it rather strange that persons are coming here and speaking about everything else except the nine documents that they received. One wonders, Mr. President, what a budget debate is about. Is it about, because you have latitude you speak about anything? I think probably there should be some type of ruling that would, not restrict, but cause Members to deal with the budget statement.

Mr. President, with respect to the question of the youth, we saw that based on the Dollar for Dollar Programme, \$240 million has been allocated. We saw in the

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budget statement the question of street children and orphans. We saw the question of single-parent families. We saw the question of addressing youth deviance. Mr. President, when I come to my contribution on the environment, I will educate Sen. London, because it seems to me that—and he has been saying it over and over—he is not familiar with Agenda 21. The EMA and Trinidad and Tobago are placed way ahead of all the Caribbean countries vis-à-vis this. So I wonder where he is living.

Mr. President, I will now turn to my contribution. As I said, I am truly delighted to participate in the debate. This budget has been passed in the other place by a vote of 19 for, and 14 against. It is interesting to note that some Members on the Opposition Benches saw it fit not to be present at roll-call vote, to vote against this budget.

Mr. President: No, no, no, Senator, what happens in that House must not be debated here.

Sen. Dr. V. Lasse: Thank you, Mr. President, according to the daily news I was able to discern that this took place, in the other place. By way of introduction, Mr. President, I shall start with the bad news. From what I read in the media—and I am measuring my words—pertaining to the contribution of the Opposition and certain individuals, on Saturday, September 22, 2001 it would be recorded, Mr. President, as a shameful day in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. As I said, based on what I read in the media, there existed a type of internecine conflict. Based on the dictionary definition of the word, “internecine”, it means: “Mutually destructive, maiming both on all sides, relating to slaughter and carnage, bloody, of or involving conflict within a group or organization.” Saturday September 22, 2001 was a sad day, Mr. President, for all those who believe in unity, all who believe in collective responsibility, and all who believe in the ideals of our Prime Minister, Mr. Panday. Mr. President, it is against this background that I congratulate the Minister of Finance for presenting to us in the Senate, a budget which gives the people what they want. A budget which is designed to better the lives of our citizens and, in particular, to assist the elderly, single mothers and the disabled.

Mr. President, I was a bit shocked when a Senator, in his contribution, insinuated that he could not support this budget, although we do not have to vote on it here. I am tempted to ask the question, whether the Senator is against the poor, whether the Senator is against the elderly, whether the Senator is against single parent mothers, and whether the Senator is against the disabled. This is only a question I am asking.

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Mr. President, the theme of the budget said it all: “One People, One Nation: Leaving No One Behind”. You see, Mr. President, the Minister took into account the wishes of over 307,000 people who voted for this Government. So he has given the people what they want. As the Minister of Finance said, and I quote:

“This Government will ensure that every man, woman, and child of this nation share in the benefits of the country's success.”

The Minister of Finance went on to state and I quote again:

“This budget is about our future, our people, every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, whether UNC, PNM or politically unaligned.”

So, Mr. President, I submit there can never be, in modern times, a more generous budget. It is a fact, Mr. President, that the people got what they want—among other things: better jobs, a better quality of life and a brighter future for their children. I hope Sen. London is listening.

The Opposition, as I see it, cannot face the reality. They must learn to live one day at a time in daylight compartments. Mr. President, I read an article in the *Express* dated September 20, 2001, in which reference was made to the Leader of the Opposition and his attempts to criticize the budget. The article noted:

“It is an axiom of politics that when you're in Opposition, you always have all the answers.”

They have all the answers, they have all the ideas, Mr. President; they keep all these brilliant ideas in the pipeline, but are quick to blame everyone except themselves for their failures and for the failure of whatever party. [*Desk thumping*] What is interesting, Mr. President, I read again in the media that the Leader of the Opposition, in his budget contribution, was calling on everyone to resign, and he being a perpetual loser, has never considered resigning. [*Desk thumping*] It is said again, and I agree, that he sounds better when he stays silent. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, I intend to deal with two areas in this budget, the environment and housing and settlements.

Mr. President: I think this might be an appropriate stage to break for tea. This sitting is suspended until 5 o'clock.

4.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.02 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. Dr. V. Lasse: [*Desk thumping*] Mr. President, before we took the tea break, I was saying that I intended to speak on two areas in this debate, the environment and housing and settlements but, before I do so, permit me to comment briefly on the excellent ratings the budget received from all sectors, including the contribution of Sen. Christopher Thomas, who is an expert on budgets, having been the chairman of the United Nations budget committee. [*Desk thumping*]

1. The American Chamber noted that the budget will attract foreign investors.
2. The Sangre Grande Chamber stated that it supported the people's budget.
3. The Tobago Chamber described the 2002 national budget as a fiscal package with a soul and a human face; and
4. The *Trinidad Guardian* of Tuesday, September 18, 2001, described the budget as a people's budget to create employment. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, the constituency of Point Fortin, my home town—where I live and where I function as the representative due to the absence of the part-time Member of Parliament, who does not live in Point Fortin—was used as an example of the generation of employment by the United National Congress Government. The Atlantic LNG plant was brought to Point Fortin in 1996 by the UNC Government. Trains 2 and 3 of the plant will employ approximately 3,000 persons at the peak in the Point Fortin constituency and its environs. These positive and progressive developments have instilled fear in the Opposition to the extent that they are prepared to float on a toothpick for their political survival. [*Desk thumping*]

I now turn to the environment. In the *Medium Term Policy Framework 2002—2004*, at page 38 is stated—and I was wondering whether Sen. London had an opportunity to read this, so I will enlighten him. At page 38 is stated and I quote:

“Preservation of the environment is vital for the very existence of life and for future sustainability. In this regard, Government will continue consistent and coordinated efforts to promote the wise and sustainable use of the country's natural resources and to ensure the conservation and controlled development

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of the environment...In an attempt to achieve sustainable development, Government will encourage activities, which will optimize utilization of the country's resources..."

Mr. President, in the *Draft Estimate Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the Financial Year 2002*, the Ministry of the Environment received an increase of \$67.6 million. I want to compare this with the year 2001. In the 2000 Estimates—\$46.1 million; 2001 revised—\$76.8 million, and estimates 2002, \$40.5 million. With reference to the Public Sector Investment Programme 2002, it should be noted that in 2001 the sum of \$8.4 million had been allocated to complete the E2K pilot project and establish the Environmental Management Authority (EMA). The E2K pilot project was completed with the establishment of a solid waste recycling centre at the Beetham landfill. Greater emphasis will be placed on environmental issues, including enforcement and compliance, in the 2002 work programme of the EMA. I want to state that the sum of \$4 million had been allocated for several projects under the EMA.

Mr. President, I have said it before and I would say it again: no other government has focused on the environment as the UNC Government. [*Desk thumping*] When the people gave this Government the mandate to govern this country in 1995, there was no Ministry of the Environment. I repeat: when the people gave this Government the mandate to govern this country in 1995, there was no Ministry of the Environment. The previous administrations and the political leader—the political leader was the person who had in his mind a burning desire to establish a ministry of the environment. So the idea of the Ministry came directly from the hon. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

In 1998, I was appointed by the Prime Minister as Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development and was assigned responsibility for the environment. The Prime Minister then mandated me to create a ministry of the environment in the shortest possible time. On October 22, 1999 the Ministry of the Environment was created. [*Desk thumping*] The Environmental Management Commission was formally inaugurated on the 16th day of November, 2000. Now, the primary function of the commission is the development of environmental legislation and enforcement. The EMA has been working and, with your permission, Mr. President, I shall put on record a list of primary and subsidiary legislation regarding the EMA. At this point in time I would like Sen. London to take note.

Primary and subsidiary legislation regarding the EMA: Noise Pollution Rules 2001—these rules are currently in Parliament, having been laid for negative

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resolution of Parliament; Certificate of Environmental Clearance Rules 2001; Certificate of Environmental Clearance Designated Activities Order 2001; Certificate of Environmental Clearance Fees and Charges Regulation 2001; Environmentally Sensitive Areas Rules 2001; Environmentally Sensitive Species Rules 2001; Water Pollution Rules 2001; Air Pollution Rules 2001; Non-hazardous Waste Rules 2001; Hazardous Waste Rules 2001; and finally, the Beverage Containers Bill, 2001. Mr. President, this should give anyone a very good example of the work being done by the EMA as far as legislation in order to preserve and conserve the environment in Trinidad and Tobago.

I also wish to state that this Government does not only seem to be concerned about the environment. It is concerned with all aspects that would touch the lives of the people in Trinidad and Tobago. On Monday, September 24, 2001, I read in the media a very irresponsible statement. From reading that, one could conclude that the Leader of the Opposition may have lost his way but not his mind, because the rules I have given here, Mr. President, are testimony to the fact that the EMA and the Government have been working very, very hard to preserve our environment.

Mr. President, I mentioned earlier Government's policy on the environment in the *Medium Term Policy Framework 2002—2004* but, to show the consistency of the Government and the progressive development of issues relating to the environment, please permit me to quote a few lines from the *Medium Term Policy Framework 2000—2002*:

“Efforts to improve environmental quality over the medium-term will centre on pollution control both on land and in marine areas. Priority will also be accorded to the management of industrial and household waste, including sewage management.”

The Minister, in his budget presentation—and that is where I am drawing the link—noted that Government is currently examining a proposal to establish a national solid waste management system, including a recycling and a composting element. Steps are being taken to establish a hazardous waste and wastewater treatment facility.

I now come to an area with which Sen. Prof. Kenny will be well pleased. I speak of the transition to unleaded gasoline. Mr. President, the Minister of Finance stated that, in the coming year, legislation will be drafted and accompanying measures put in place to manage pollutants such as vehicle emissions and other hazardous waste.

5.20 p.m.

Mr. President, I want to quote the Minister when he said:

“...as a first step, during the next fiscal year, a new grade of unleaded gasoline will be introduced which will eventually replace the ‘super’ and ‘regular’ gasoline available at present.”

Mr. President, I have a personal interest in this matter, because I was involved in a Cabinet-appointed committee which was appointed on the third day of April 1997 to deal with the matters concerning vehicle emissions. The committee was mandated to make recommendations on a policy and administrative framework for the prevention and control of environmental pollution due to motor vehicle emissions. This committee, Mr. President, reported on the 15th day of May, 1997. I am happy to note that the Minister has already taken on board some of the recommendations and, with your permission again, Mr. President, I wish to put on record the recommendations of this Cabinet-appointed committee.

Recommendations and action plan. I will not dwell too much on the report because my time is limited, so I will simply read the recommendations: Review, update and complement the 1995 Rapid Assessment Study Report as information from the pollutant inventory suddenly becomes available. This was assigned to the EMA to be done in the short term.

Conduct a study to provide recommendations for monitoring and enforcing vehicle emission standards. Short-term as is assigned to the EMA and to the Ministry of Works and Transport. Vehicles imported into the country conform to the national standards for vehicle emissions established by the relevant authorities. A phased approach to be adopted *vis a vis* fleets; that is the “roll on roll off” motor vehicles—that is assigned to the Environmental Management Authority and that should be dealt with in the short term.

Monitor developments in petroleum industry *vis-à-vis* pollution, and so forth. This was assigned to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, and the time frame should have been the short term. Very interesting, Mr. President: ensure phase out of lead in gasoline. This was assigned to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, and is supposed to have been done in the long term. We are realizing that it is on target.

Enforce standards for leaded and unleaded gasoline. Ensure diesel fuels conform with established standards. Develop a national policy on compressed natural gas and, of course, the amendment of the Environmental Management Act to suit. And, finally, develop vehicle emission standards. Mr. President, so when

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the Minister mentioned that we may soon have unleaded gasoline, I thought that we are well on target.

I now turn to housing and settlements. It is said that the basic necessities of life are food, clothing and shelter. Further to this, certain individuals have stated that each individual has the right to shelter. Many individuals, Mr. President, have turned to squatting to satisfy that right to shelter. This Government, as well as other administrations, have inherited a situation whereby it is estimated that there are about 50,000 squatting families in Trinidad and Tobago. It is a fact because I was intimately involved in the process of squatter regularization during 1991—1995 when I served as the Minister of Housing and Settlements.

A draft Bill on squatter regularization started under the NAR administration. It was further advanced under the PNM administration and, it was finally passed, Mr. President, under the UNC administration. This has brought a measure of relief to squatters. Many poor and landless persons in our society are now given an opportunity to legally occupy a plot of land on which they may have been squatting.

Under this administration, the squatter regularization programme has been significantly improved. Squatters who have started the construction of their homes on or before the appointed date, which is January 01, 1998, would eventually receive title for their property. In the meantime, pursuant to that piece of legislation, persons who are squatting have received letters of comfort while the deeds are being prepared.

The Minister of Finance, in his budget presentation on the question of housing, stated that later this year, Government will begin pilot HOME—Home Ownership Made Easy. Project HOME is founded on the principle of Government as a facilitator bringing together the persons in need of housing with private sector providers of housing. The project will cover a six-year period of two phases, and is to be jointly financed, partially by Government and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. V. Lasse: I thank my colleagues. Mr. President, under the HOME programme, some 30,000 housing units will be provided for low-income and

lower middle-income families. Twenty-five lots of land will be allocated to Habitat for Humanity, and another 25 lots to two NGOs for the construction of low-income housing for poor families in Trinidad and Tobago.

From the generous contribution being made to the poor and landless in our society, the 2001—2002 budget is truly a budget designed for one people, one nation, and leaving no one behind. It was interesting to note, and I read in the media, that some members of the Opposition absented themselves from the roll-call vote and this, to me, is a clear indication that they could not vote against the budget that gave the people what they wanted.

To sum up, the Minister of Finance received excellent ratings for presenting a people's budget; a budget with a soul and a human face; a budget designed to create employment; a budget which provides employment for my constituency, Point Fortin; a budget that reduces personal tax rates; a budget that removes tax on interest income; a budget that increases old age pension; a budget that increases personal allowance to senior citizens; a budget that gives support to vulnerable groups, including senior citizens; a budget that increases disability grants; and a budget that provides free bus passes to our senior citizens.

Yet, Mr. President, the Opposition and others used the budget debate to advance their personal selfish and narrow ambitions, as I read in the media. The Opposition wanted the Government to look bad. It is understandable. But others wanted to make themselves look good, regardless of the consequence, and this I cannot understand.

From what I read in the media, the budget debate was marred by an internecine struggle which I explained earlier. The Opposition and others saw themselves as saints and the Government as sinners. But, Mr. President, the people know that one has to repent for a very long time before one is purged from wickedness.

Only wickedness—and Sen. Daly referred to the events of September 11 and September 22, in that vein. These events may prove to be obstacles to our economic development. In Genesis, Reverend, the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually. I submit that only wickedness can cause persons to be against measures designed to better the lives of our citizens. However, I am confident that good will prevail over wickedness, and the budget presented by the Minister of Finance is the first step in that direction.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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Sen. Dr. David Quamina: Mr. President, I thank you for calling on me at this time. I recently read in the newspaper that it would be a “terrorist attack” if the budget was defeated. Well, the budget was not defeated, nobody died but, of course, this brings to mind the fact that there was another terrorist attack elsewhere in which people died. I think the figure is about over 80 West Indians who perished on this occasion. I say that because now we are talking under the lengthening shadow of this occasion and, we hope that it would all blow away, because if it does not, a lot of our hopes and expectations may go with it.

I support this Bill in the main and I am particularly impressed by the motto, the theme that runs through it, “One People, One Nation, Leaving No One Behind”. I think this should be taken very seriously. I think this is very appropriate for these two islands in which we live. We are here imprisoned, if you wish, in these two islands. Some from Africa, some from China, some from India; and I put it in that order because I think my history tells me that that was the order in which they came, except for the Europeans, some of whom came of their own free will, and others who came screaming and yelling. Then there were the Syrians, the Portuguese, and all of this is the one people, one nation, of whom the Minister of Finance speaks.

5.40 p.m.

So I take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Finance, not only on the theme, but what I think is a really meaningful budget that has been presented to us here. I repeat, “One People, One Nation: Leaving No One Behind” and I think in the Finance Minister's benevolence, generosity of thought, he may still have left some people behind, but I have the feeling that if this happened, it was in error. Because it seems that he set out with his aim of leaving no one behind. Put another way, the Minister must have recognized that we are all here together and that he must share the bounty available to him so that all may benefit.

I support the budget also in the way it has been set out. For instance, one part of it looks at the national good. There is a Science and Technology Park to be built, there is an International Conference Centre to be constructed, there is an aluminum centre, et cetera; and all of these go, not to one group of people, not to one individual, but to the national good. The inequality which some people think might destabilize the society is surely a figment of the imagination, because as I said all benefit, even though some may appear to have benefited more than others.

I want to talk about one or two aspects of this budget. The taxes on alcohol have been raised from 15 to 20 per cent, tax on cigarettes has also been raised. If

you wish, you may buy your alcohol and drink it, and buy your cigarettes and smoke them. But the tax from these things as I read on, \$2 million goes towards the cancer society and \$8 million towards the Ministry of Health to care for the very people who, with the cigarettes may have cancer of the lungs, and with the alcohol, the inevitable liver disease.

The Minister has suggested removal of VAT from a few things: Deodorants, toothpaste, soap, they seem to go together. I am slightly amused by the inclusion of salt fish in this group. Why salt fish? When I was a boy—and this was some time ago—salt fish was traditionally a poor man's food, I do not think we can claim that today. Salt fish is a very important part of your Sunday buljol at whatever level of the society you live, but we take it as it is and taxes have been removed from salt fish. What it says, in fact, is that all of us; those who have and those who have not, will share in this *largesse*. Some people are pleased by this. The Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association, the Arima body, regret this change; the cane farmers are unhappy, but one cannot hope to please everyone, such are the vagaries of life and the Minister in his wisdom has done it this way and I am prepared to accept it.

There is a question of hospitals, the very vexed question of hospitals. For some reason that I do not know, it seems that we in these twin islands cannot run hospitals. When I arrived here as a doctor in 1950-something, or the other, people did not go to hospitals except it was an absolute emergency, or except they have tried everything in their homes and were on the verge of death. And the incidence of deaths in hospitals in the 1950s was significantly high because the people who came in, came in at death's door.

Later, around the 1970s or so, treatment in the hospitals improved, people started to think of going to hospitals, and they went. For some reason that I cannot understand, this phase of seeking treatment in the hospital has passed, and now people do not want to go to the hospitals if they can afford not to. There is one of our famous calypsonians lying in the bed whose colleagues are trying to remove him because they are unhappy with the state of the hospital.

Why are we unhappy about the state of the hospitals? Port of Spain General Hospital is well painted, it has beds, it has curtains, but beds and curtains do not cure patients. You need drugs which you hardly get, you need equipment, which if you get it, it is not working. In these days, you need staff and most of our nurses have now left for greener pastures pushed on by sheer frustration, inability to do what they were trained to do. Similarly, many of our doctors who go abroad to specialize stay abroad, or return abroad because when they come home, they

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cannot adjust to what they find in our hospitals.

So our nurses leave in droves, our doctors do not come back, we have poor administration in the hospitals, we have poor supplies and really, the hospitals are in a state that leaves us very sad. To add to this, Mr. President, they do not pay the doctors and the nurses adequately. That is one of the reasons they leave.

I remember when I came here, doctors in Trinidad got a salary much higher than any other island in the Caribbean, and the junior doctors got more than I would have got in England. This has changed. Every island pays their doctors more than Trinidad and Tobago pays theirs. So much so that the junior doctors work extra hours so that they may get extra remuneration, and when they have accumulated enough, they leave, perhaps not to return.

Somebody mentioned it today to indicate the conditions of our hospitals. There are a fleet of five operating theatres today and only two are functioning. Some of the doctors can gain access to the operating theatre once in a fortnight, and some of the patients wait and wait and have to find money to seek their operation at private nursing homes.

There are other problems that I might mention with respect to our hospitals. We have talked about some aspects of cancer which is very important; we have not talked about heart disease which is probably the most common condition in this country; we have not talked about diabetes, which again is one of the common conditions here; and the Minister has mentioned—and I wish to mention again—kidney disease and renal dialysis.

Arrangements have been made in the budget to buy kidney machines for the several patients who are suffering from kidney disease, probably as a result of neglect in the past. All these things redound to the disadvantage of our hospitals and I think perhaps we ought to look more closely at money given to our hospitals because we need supplies, we need equipment and we need to stop the holes from which drugs and equipment filter out of the hospitals by people unknown.

Our senior citizens seem to have done reasonably well. There are some who will say perhaps not well enough, but it is better to give little and some more next time, than to give none at all.

The removal of 6 per cent insurance premium certainly is a step in the right direction. The tax allowance which has been raised from \$30,000 to \$36,000 is worthwhile.

Free travel on buses for people over 60 years, that is worthwhile, and for people with an income of \$100 to \$220 had their old age pension increased to \$700, and those with less than \$100 had their old age pension increased to \$800. This is a significant contribution to people who are hard-pressed for a livelihood.

I see in the booklet that the Public Services Association which had had a long battle with Government will have their settlement in the new year. There is also a reduction of income tax from 28 per cent to 27 per cent, from 35 per cent down to 34 per cent and for the corporations, from 35 per cent to 34 per cent.

We have mentioned in the budget single women and their children; vagrants on the streets who must be removed and whom we seem to set out to remove. Reduction in crime and unemployment is one of the themes of this budget; and treatment to stop or reverse HIV/AIDS which, as you know, is an epidemic in this country at the present time.

One of the surprises with which the Minister has furnished us is free hearing aids. This is a significant gift for the population who have hearing deficiencies. Unfortunately, it seems that this condition occurs more in the poorer people than the people who can afford to buy their hearing aids. So we have a programme of sign language for many people, who, if they had hearing aids might have learned to talk.

It is interesting to meet with people who have responsible parents and who are more or less deaf, and who we will not recognize as being deaf because their parents took time to provide hearing aids and speak with them. Hearing aids will go a long way to prevent this problem in younger people, and it will go a long way in assisting those who are older. This particular allocation by the Minister of Finance pleases me very much, because it would help to relieve me of one of the problems of dealing with children with hearing problems. With them will go the physically disabled and the people with renal disease.

One illustration of our problems in hospitals is a story which I shall tell: A woman went to the Mount Hope Hospital with her two-year-old child who had lacerated a finger. I was told that she waited for two hours before she was eventually seen at Mount Hope and when she was seen, she was told that there was no suturing material at Mount Hope. She was bandaged and sent to Port of Spain General Hospital. When she got to Port of Spain Hospital, she was seen by the receiving nurse, asked what she was doing there, and on being told she telephoned Mount Hope. There must have been a row; “why have you sent her here”,? and she was packed back to Mount Hope, not being treated. I was told that

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somehow they found sutures in Mount Hope to deal with this child finally.

Everybody expects that you do not keep a child two hours waiting; you do not then send the child to another hospital to be treated, and if this happens and the child comes to your hospital, you do not send the child back. Everybody was wrong. We have to do something about our culture.

Mr. President, I end this brief statement by telling you that the attack on the United States of America may or may not frustrate our missions with respect to this budget. It is my fond hope, and I am quite sure it is shared by all of us here that it will not, because we remain firm in the belief that we are one people, one nation and we would leave no one behind.

Thank you very much.

6.00 p.m.

The Minister in the Ministry of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Daphne Phillips): Mr. President, I rise to give my full support to the Appropriation Bill, 2001/2002. It is the first of our new Minister of Finance and one that was facilitated by unprecedented consultation. This consultation was very effective in determining what should be attended to.

Some Senators today have stated that the consultation did not go far enough and did not address some important social groups. But I want to give an example of the accuracy of that consultation, initially, in relation to one small item, and it is the decision to remove the VAT on blue soap.

Mr. President, if you would allow me, I want to quote from an article in the *Trinidad Guardian* of Monday, September 24; section 2, page 1, written by Michelle Loubon. It is in relation to this blue soap issue and it shows how accurate our Minister of Finance was in identifying this as an item, although some say that he was not correct. I would quote:

“Presenting what he called a poor man’s Budget on September 14, Minister of Finance, Gerald Yetming, removed the 15 per cent VAT on blue soap.

In response, Opposition Leader, Patrick Manning poured cold water on the move, saying poor people do not use blue soap any more.”

But in this investigative report by Loubon, she said:

“Contrary to Manning’s claim, blue soap is used by poor people.”

And she went on to give a number of instances, including the younger generation, to whom Sen. London referred.

“The younger generations too, have the greatest respect for blue soap. While myths abound about its ability to combat the AIDS virus, 24-year old—”

And she printed his name

“...a music vendor, said he uses it to shower.”

And in relation to his friend who is 18 years old, he said:

“He does do construction. So he does need plenty blue soap to bathe.”

And in relation to two second form students of Woodbrook Government Secondary School; their names are printed, they said they bathe their puppies with blue soap.

Mr. President, I can go on. A lingerie vendor, and her name is printed, said:

“Them children does use it. My daughter does use it to clear up the “buttons”. The face get clean, clean. My boys like it too. I does buy three-four cakes.’

‘The majority of vendors on George Street use it. It is an all purpose soap.’”

An ex-homeless person said:

“I used to buy it when I lived on the streets. It keeps you cool. It is more economical and apart from that it is a general cleanser.”

Another street vendor said:

“I use blue soap to wash my children’s clothes and mine. I buy it every weekend. I buy it in the shop by me in John John.”

Mr. President, it is also stated here that “the Marketing Coordinator of Hi-Lo Food Stores—”and his name is printed, said that “the huge chain stocks the product, even in the fancy new superstore in Westmoorings.”

Mr. President, I even have a little blue soap in my home as well. So people know blue soap. Young people know blue soap and it is used for a number of issues including, and let me just give another quote here, “Even the little old obeah woman does use it.”

So the consultations of the Minister of Finance were very accurate and to the key. I do not know the young person of whom Sen. London spoke about, who asked, “what is blue soap?” Blue soap is in almost every home in Trinidad and Tobago.

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My experience is also very informative for me that the Minister is concerned and did do detailed consultation. I brought to the Minister the concerns of several women and women's groups in relation to that vexing item of taxation on maintenance, and here we have in the budget, provisions are made to remove tax on maintenance payments, separation payments and alimony for the first time in our country.

There is, of course, further evidence that the consultation has taken into account the concerns of small people, the concerns of the middle-class and the concerns of the wealthy.

Mr. President, I must congratulate the Minister for the strong themes in the budget and I want to emphasize three of them.

The theme of the development of the social infrastructure that runs throughout the documents and which represents the continuation and the strengthening of a theme that we had in other budgets of this UNC Government. This budget, of course, strengthens and reinforces that concern with social development, our social infrastructure.

6.10 p.m.

Mr. President, the ability to deal with the social infrastructure in our country can only take place through the efficient use of our surpluses. Many Senators here this evening talked about how wealthy we are, potentially and actually. The way we contribute to social development and social infrastructure is to use the surpluses of our resources in our natural areas: gas, oil and other areas, as well as from our efforts to diversify our economy. We saw that in the contribution of our Minister of Energy and Energy Industries; what we are doing even in energy to diversify the products so that we can have the resources to put into our social infrastructure. This is, of course, given the dynamics of the world economy.

A second theme that runs through this budget is the inclusion of a values-based philosophy as a backbone to the budget statements, especially as it relates to young people. Again, I must refer to my young colleague's lack of identification of the way in which young people are addressed in the budget. This values-based philosophy runs through all the aspects, I would say, of this budget, especially in relation to emphasis on training, education, creating an intelligent nation, as well as the obvious areas: the increased taxation on alcohol, cigarettes and on gambling clubs, and the penalties for sale of these products to young people.

In relation to young people, I think the reason Sen. London did not see in the statements anything on young people, is because he did not know how to look, because it is right through the budget in all areas: The emphasis on education, the Dollar for Dollar Programme at the tertiary level, the return of 200 per cent of income to employers who employ young people in apprenticeship areas. This was part of the last budget and it was reinforced in this one.

Our Minister of Energy and Energy Industries spoke about the 55,000 persons who were trained in computer and other skills. The National Energy Skills Centre (NESC) is also funded in this budget and will continue its work with young people.

We note the provision for AIDS. This is typically a problem of young persons—a fatal disease, perhaps, of young persons. There is specific provision for this disease in the budget. We have, as well, an open school for the arts. That is starting in the Ministry with responsibility for culture. This, again, is for young persons. We have sporting facilities; the four stadia, which, after the very successful Under-17 event that is taking place now, will be available for our young people for sporting, cultural and other activities.

We have put computers in schools, and in this budget the effort is to put computers in primary schools for young people; computers in communities; distance learning centres where several young people are being exposed to the internet. There is so much for young people.

By the way, Sen. London complained about the lack of consultation on young people, yet he spoke about the national youth policy which came about through national consultation, and which he says contains just what young people are concerned about. The document exists. The Ministry was changed at the end of 2000, early 2001—a new configuration—and that document, with all its objectives, exists for the benefit of young people in our nation. This budget is full of initiatives and concern for all aspects of the life of our young people.

I think that the third theme that runs through this budget—and it is an area, again, where there has been excessive—

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette): Mr. President, in accordance with Standing Order 9(8), I beg to move that the Senate continue to sit not later than 10.00 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

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Sen. Dr. The Hon. D. Phillips: Thank you, Mr. President.

I was saying that the third theme, I think, which runs through this budget is the concern with the administration or the management of public funds, and the efforts to deal adequately with those, even to some extent, before mismanagement occurs. This leads us, of course, to the whole issue of corruption, and I know that this was discussed in detail here today. But I want to make one point on this matter of efforts to deal with management and mismanagement of funds. The Opposition's strategy to deal with its own inaction and non-performance is to paint all of us with a brush of corruption, especially when anything is accomplished by this Government.

I just want to make a small point; I am not going to dwell long on this. But I want everybody to realize that it is, indeed, this Government, in addition to the legislation that has been put in place—and there are several pieces: the integrity legislation, the anti-corruption legislation which I understand is still a bill; freedom of information legislation, equal opportunity legislation, all of this has been put in place. But in addition, even the reports we have now; for instance, the North West Regional Health Authority (NWRHA) Report, which was quoted extensively—who initiated action on those reports? It is this Government. It is not an outside force. Who questioned first whatever seemed to be going on? It was this Government. This Government initiated investigation on the NWRHA, and though this is sad, nowhere in the history of our country has a senior public official—indeed a former Minister of Government—had to face the courts and the prison.

I think that is the example, par excellence, of the commitment of this Government to deal with this problem of corruption. The other reports that were commissioned for investigation by the Minister of Finance—the NIPDEC investigation, the ISS Report—were done by this Government. Those investigations were not conducted by another government out of office. We did not wait for someone else to come into office; we did it ourselves.

So those who want to say that we are hiding, and so on, we did it ourselves. We put the legislation in place and we have been putting the investigation in place and we are doing it. But I just wanted to say that. Led by our hon. Prime Minister, we have had the strength of purpose and commitment to put these things in order, and this also is unprecedented in the history of this country and in the history of government in this country.

6.20 p.m.

Mr. President, I have said that the budget has a clear focus on the social infrastructure and social development in the country and this is demonstrated by the amount of money that is put into social development. If we remove the amount of money allocated for debt servicing from the total budget of \$16.4 billion, because that is not available for our use in the country—the figure for debt servicing is \$3.8 billion according to this document—the social programmes related to education, health, labour and manpower development, human development, youth and culture, housing and settlement and community empowerment, sport and consumer affairs, account for over 40 per cent of the total budget. Over 40 per cent of the approximately \$12 billion is budgeted for social infrastructure. That is about \$5 billion, if my maths is correct.

Mr. President, I want to focus on the work of the Ministry of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs to which I belong. The major focus of this Ministry is to address those aspects of social life—this is my view, that result from the fallout or negative impact of the wider socio-political— and the technological and economical global order in which we are participating. We belong, of course, to a wider world system and whatever the challenges and advantages, there is also a negative fallout. This fallout, or negative impact, is experienced by sections of the society and the specific strength of the impact differs according to the dynamics of the wider order and, to a lesser extent, personal characteristics also determine what happens to us. Although it is my view that whatever the dynamics of this global market economy are, negative impact is inevitable.

We have sections of the population that are, or become poor—we can talk about our traditional poor, or our new poor. The poor is made and changed according to the policies and programmes we put in place. These are some of the sections of the population that are affected by this whole dynamic of what is happening in the world and in our country, and how we act on these.

Mr. President, we have the poor; we have the unemployed, including the unemployable and the under-employed, which is an important group in the society; we have the family to the extent that it is in danger and breaking down. This may be through domestic violence and its consequences, child abuse and abandonment and homeless and destitute people, including children. We have the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons who use or abuse drugs; single parents, especially mothers, among the major sections of our population who are or may be in danger.

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The condition of most of these groups is exacerbated through poverty, therefore, it is the role of the Government—and in our situation through the Ministry of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs—to facilitate the empowerment and upliftment of these sectors. This morning, one Senator said that he did not want to hear the word “empowerment” as it does not really mean anything.

I think to empower people we must find a mechanism through which they would eventually be able to be independent and be able to live on their own; sustainable development. In my Ministry we deal with bringing all these groups that are vulnerable, or that have been marginalized in some way, into the mainstream so that they would eventually be able to live a sustainable life. Part of empowerment, therefore, includes employment—either self-employment or employment in the public or private sector. We cannot empower people if they are not employed.

It is the role of my Ministry to engage in empowering and uplifting those sections of the population that experience certain types of difficulties and that are vulnerable to falling through the cracks.

Mr. President, the ability of Government to perform in this regard is related, of course, to the extent to which our wide economy is managed. Our Minister of Finance has put measures in place to ensure that we manage and improve on what we have and to get—what in the private sector is called—profits from what we have so that we can allow the implementation of strategies to improve the lives of the vulnerable.

For the year 2001/2002, the Minister of Finance has identified a total of \$1,139,601,034 for dealing with matters related to these issues relative to the sections of our population that need help. If we look at it another way, after we remove the allocation set aside for debt servicing, the Ministry of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs received approximately 8 per cent of the budget. It also received, again, by another dimension, 20 per cent of the budget for social programmes in education, health, human development, housing and community empowerment.

Yet another way of looking at it, Mr. President, is that this Ministry is the fifth in hierarchy in terms of the size of the budget—of course, after we remove debt servicing. Most of the budget goes to education, national security, infrastructural development, health and then community empowerment.

I think this attests to the importance that Government puts on social repair, empowerment and the enhancement of the lives of these sections of our population that I have talked about.

Let me just outline the differences between the 2001 and 2002 allocations for this ministry. In relation to personnel expenditure, we have moved from \$40,275,000 in 2001 to \$58,357,000 plus in 2002; that is an increase of about \$18 million. It means to me, that we can employ people, whether on contract or whatever, to do the work that needs to be done. In relation to the area where we do most of our programmes, in the year 2001 we had \$778 million to do those programmes. This year, 2002, we have \$869 million to do this programme, an increase of approximately \$100 million. Overall, the increase to the Ministry is approximately \$178 million. For example, for Gender Affairs, the increase is about \$3 million. This is ample evidence of the importance Government puts on this sector of our population.

6.30 p.m.

Mr. President, let me turn to what we are doing for poverty, the poor. We are engaging in a process called poverty eradication. The Change Management Unit for Poverty Eradication and Equity Building which was created in 1997 has implemented new programmes in microcredit, and these programmes are called a microcredit fund and a micro-project fund, and this is real money which people get to help them start up in business. People get low-cost loans being made available to unemployed persons, to low income groups and to recipients of grants of social assistance, that is, people who have no income whatsoever, except the social assistance grant, to enable them to improve their quality of life in a sustainable manner. We have a grant of EU \$6 million, which is approximately TT \$38 million for this microcredit project.

The Change Management Unit for Poverty Eradication has also engaged in the setting up of telecentres. One is being set up in Couva, and there are five more to be created this year. This would allow poor persons to benefit from accessed information, and, of course, training as well as programmes on services of Government. This unit on poverty eradication is also continuing programmes that had been started before: the Adopt a Community Programme where we have business enterprises assisting in communities; income generation programmes; social development; sports and cultural programmes and infrastructural development in communities.

In addition, the Division of Social Welfare has improved its grants of public assistance. That has been increased in the last year, and now ranges from \$222 for

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a single person to \$720 for four persons and more in a family. So, we have improved the public assistance grants for people, and these same people can now access the microcredit programme where they can get training and go into business. We have also given emergency grants in the Ministry in the last year to 1,169 persons to assist them to meet broad category needs such as, textbooks for children, uniforms, food, travelling allowance and minimal house repair. In addition, the SHARE Programme continues to assist individuals with food hampers while the food kitchens conduct the preparation of food, but also train recipients in literacy, numeracy, and in microenterprise development.

A range of skills training is also carried out through the Community Development Division in various villages and communities in the country. The National Self-Help Commission, in collaboration with the Community Development Fund, continues to assist poor communities. A new window in this programme provides the assistance for poor individuals in crises situations in the area of home repairs to a ceiling of \$10,000. This is all created by this Government to help and to empower poor people.

Many Senators have spoken about the social divide, that is the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and this is also a feature of our international market-economy, globalization, whatever we call it. It is happening everywhere, but in Trinidad and Tobago there has been an unprecedented transfer of resources to lower income groups through these programmes and others, and this has happened under this UNC Government.

Mr. President, I turn to the family. In the last year, five pieces of legislation designed to protect children were created and we discussed them here in Parliament: the Children Authority Act, 2000; the Children Community Residences, Foster Homes and Nurseries Act, 2000; the Miscellaneous Provisions Children Act, 2000; the Children (Amdt.) Act, 2000 and the Adoption of Children Act, 2000. All of these were passed. The Ministry, in most instances, is now engaged in setting the rules and procedures for the implementation of these Acts to allow them to come into force in the very near future.

A children authority will be established early in 2002. This body will serve as a final arbiter on all issues pertaining to the well-being of the nation's children. There will be a board of management and a number of units to fulfil the responsibilities of the authority. These range from monitoring the operations of the children's facilities, as well as acting as an advocate for the rights of children in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, in relation to child abduction, the Ministry has set up an interim central authority for the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The convention was signed in April 2000, and it provides an international mechanism for ensuring the return of a child abducted in violation of custody orders. The National Family Services Division of the Ministry serves as that interim central authority for the administration of this convention, and already, several children have been returned, and have been saved through this facility.

Trinidad and Tobago is also a signatory to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this regard, in the year 2002, as in previous years, we will celebrate International Children's Day and we would do so as a public awareness exercise to highlight the rights of the children in our national community. Our children, so many of them are suffering too much; so many of them are being abused even within the family, and it is time that Government does something about it.

In relation to the young people, again I refer to my senatorial colleague, the implementation of the Community Service Orders which is, of course, a new provision which allows first time offenders—and these are usually young persons who have been sentenced to less than 12 months imprisonment—they can access the provisions of the Community Service Orders. This law allows young persons the option of performing community service as opposed to detention. So far, 39 young offenders have been offered community service in the first six months of this year, so we are protecting our young people from imprisonment and we have put this in place for young people.

In relation to child abandonment and abuse, in the year 2002, the Ministry would assist an NGO in setting up an SOS children village. This village will consist of ten homes, each managed by a housemother who cares ideally for 10 children. This is, maybe, what we were referring to before as community parenting, because the family, in many instances, is not functional and not able to deal with the children, and this is young people, Sen. London. Community parenting for those children who have been homeless, orphaned by a number of factors, drug abuse from their parents or violence, children who have run away. The project will seek to provide orphaned and homeless children with a more realistic substitute for the family environment instead of putting them in some of the bigger homes. Government will assist the NGOs with the provision of land, with the provision of salaries for the housemothers and materials for the homes. This is a new project for the year 2002.

Mr. President, I now turn to the vexing problem of domestic violence. An integrated programme has been implemented in relation to domestic violence and

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we all know that programme was started in 1996, and various elements of it have come on stream over the years. This programme also includes relationships between men and women and the empowerment of women and men in families.

All of the following projects have continued in the last year and are being strengthened in the new budget. I have just outlined that the Division of Gender Affairs which controls these projects is receiving an additional \$3 million to work on these projects. We have the National Domestic Violence Hotline, which, for the first six months in the year 2001 received 4,807 calls, 12 per cent of which were from men. We have the 19 drop-in information centres that were established for offering free counselling on all matters relating to the family; whether it is incest, abuse, violence, difficult children, whatever the problems—and these have provided services in the first six months of this year to over 2,500 persons.

We have a male support programme within this package and it has completed its pilot phase, and it has been strengthened. It is now in this budget a new, full-fledged project of the Ministry dealing with young men, in particular. In addition, there is a youth caravan that was created to introduce final-year primary school children to positive non-violent gender relations prior to their entry into secondary school. This was started and would be continued and strengthened this year. Of course, the new Domestic Violence Act, 1999, has been in effect in the last year, and it has led to the protection of women with children, the elderly as well as men who were violated in the family. In addition to these activities, in the year 2002, the Ministry intends to launch a national domestic violence awareness month to highlight the unacceptability of family violence and to promote the development of positive family relations. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, the programmes for the empowerment of vulnerable women were continued under the rubric of what we call “Women Second Chances Project”. These are also continued in a newer project, IDB sponsored, non-traditional training project for women. I did say, that in order to empower people, we must deal with their training and their employment. This second chances project and the non-traditional training project offers training, with stipend, because we understand the gender issue of women getting employment, getting some kind of income while they are being trained. Many of them are single mothers and have to care for children.

6.45 p.m.

So these projects offer training, with stipend, in activities related to agriculture, elderly care and technical skills. Every effort is made to assist the

women and some men with gaining full employment at the end of their training. Under this programme also, unemployed young women and men with O'level passes are engaged in, what we call, homework centres, which assist children after school.

Mr. President: The hon. Senator's speaking time 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. The Hon D. Phillips: Mr. President, another project called the Women's Leadership in Enhancement Institute has been concentrated on strengthening the skills of the women, allowing them the capacity to enhance their lives through entrepreneurial and personal development.

We know now that for the first time we have removed taxes on maintenance and alimony and that affects women in all strata, including women who are employed. In addition, the Cohabitation Act, 2001 and the Attachment of Earnings Act offer further financial protection to mothers. We are also assisting an NGO called Credo Foundation for Justice in constructing a home for women at risk.

Mr. President, let me turn quickly to the elderly. They have had an increase in pension, from \$620 and \$720 to \$700 and \$800. There was a study done in 1996, which shows that the poverty line was estimated at \$625 per month for a single person. That is why we tried to pitch that income for the elderly at that level. Of course, now that the poverty line has been raised, the income has increased as well. We want to keep our elderly above the poverty line. In addition to the decrease in taxes up to \$36,000, there is the unlimited free bus travel and insurance and exit taxes have been removed.

In addition to the economic provisions we have made for the elderly, the overall national policy guidelines for the elderly include social welfare, income security, employment where possible, participation, involvement, social inclusion as well as dignity for our older people. We have created the Homes for Older Persons Act, 2000 and we are making provision for a Division of Aging to manage this piece of legislation.

We are also working on a neighbourhood care project for the elderly, where young graduates of our Geriatric/Adolescent Partnership Programme are employed to supervise and care for the elderly who live alone. We are also looking at a day care centre for the elderly.

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I have to go quickly. There are two programmes for the destitute and socially displaced. One is the independent living programme for those persons who are employed but have no home. Many of them have to go through a ten-session course to deal with attitude change because they are so demotivated. On successful completion, they are given food hampers and rental assistance of \$200 per month for 9 months maximum. So far, this year 40 persons have successfully completed this project. For those who are homeless and drug users or abusers, we have them in the Drug Rehabilitation Programme and some of them are also sourced for the Piparo Empowerment Centre, which is a drug rehabilitation centre.

We have accommodation for the homeless to be constructed in Laventille to replace the present one downtown and later in Chaguanas and Arima. The Drug Abuse Rehabilitation Programme is at the Caura Drug Centre. The rehabilitation facility is being refurbished. Structural work is being done in order to increase the bed space for 45 more persons.

NADAPP, the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme, continues to play a coordinating role in Government's drug abuse programme, working as well with NGOs across the country.

We have programmes for the disabled to help them with transportation, with five new buses especially designed for them. Bus drivers and conductors are being trained to deal with persons with disabilities. We are looking at better telecommunications for persons with disabilities—having a special type of telephone service for them. We are preparing certain kinds of provisions in supermarkets.

Of course, you have heard that we are now giving hearing aids to all hearing-impaired persons, in the new financial year. We have increased the disability grant from \$520 to \$620. This is where our money is going. We are trying to restructure the social service delivery system where all these projects and others are being done. We want to make it community-based. We want to make it functional so that we can track poverty.

The objective is to provide a mechanism where social services may be more easily accessed by citizens throughout the country. We want to make it community-based, with each community having a centre. We want to deliver a comprehensive package of services related to the needs of the particular region or community and in the context of the emerging social reality. I have a package of services, which we would like to deliver at the community level.

One of the key objectives of this restructuring of the social service delivery system is to reduce poverty. Poverty is a problem which makes everything more difficult. We are using the 1998 poverty survey as baseline data. I have much more on the way the system is organized, but this will be done in another forum.

The Minister of Finance has offered us in this country and in this Government resources whereby we can attempt to empower sections of our population who are vulnerable; not cared for. I congratulate the Minister even in these times when we do not know what is happening with the world's situation. We are assured that something is put aside for our poor—our single women and our families—to help them out of the situation.

I again congratulate our Minister on the budget and I support it wholeheartedly.

Sen. Wade Mark: Thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, I would like to extend, like so many other honourable Members, my heartfelt congratulations to the Minister of Finance, Sen. The Hon. Gerald Yetming, for his masterful presentation of the budget.

Our dapper Minister of Finance was able, skilfully and meaningfully, to distribute the limited revenue of this State in such a way to ensure that the needs of the people are given full priority. This is a budget, not only with a human face, but it is one committed to a policy of economic expansion with social equity and justice, especially aimed at the poor, the destitute and the vulnerable in our nation.

Mr. President, it is said that the real wealth of any nation is its people and the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This is a very simple yet powerful truth that too often in our pursuit of financial and material wealth, we tend to forget this very important axiom.

The 2001—2002 budget is about people. It is about the working people. It is about workers: the women, the small businessman and businesswoman, the elderly, the marginalized and the poor, as well as the vulnerable. It is also for the nation's business community. As the Minister so clearly pointed out in his presentation, we are one people, one nation and we intend to leave no one behind.

As we look at this budget, it represents a continuation of a crusade launched in 1995 by the United National Congress, led by the hon. Basdeo Panday, Prime Minister, to liberate the working people from the shackles of oppression and exploitation that they were subjected to and, to some extent, because of the logic that propels our economy, we still have a long way to go to overcome.

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When we look at the world today, globalization, as Sen. King mentioned earlier, particularly in the context of events of September 11, is going to undergo some change. Whilst we have to recognize that we live in a world today where we have shrinking space and time as well as disappearing borders; in a world where people's lives are linked in a way that we never experienced before; lives are linked more deeply, more intensely and more immediately than ever before.

This is why I say that the budget is pro-people, pro-nation and pro-workers. We take life for granted, but I will show in my contribution, when we look at Trinidad and Tobago, a very small country, just about 5,000 square kilometres of space with a population of about 1.3 million people, the tremendous progress that we have been able to record since gaining independence in 1962.

7.00 p.m.

We must never forget that working people in this country have been grounded on the rocks of desperation for many years. It was in 1995 that a rescue mission was virtually mounted to rescue this nation, and the working people, from the jaws of decadence and backwardness—[*Desk thumping*] and to try to place this nation onto the solid pathway of prosperity, unity and solidarity.

The measures proposed by the hon. Minister of Finance will positively impact on the key problems of production expansion, employment generation and poverty alleviation. Therefore, I would like to look at this 2001/2002 budget from the perspective of the working people of Trinidad and Tobago. I shall seek to point to, and to put into some perspective, the kind of social progress that the working people of this country have recorded over the last six years, given the economic policies pursued by this Government, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, both at a macro and micro level.

We have had exchange rate stability in this country over the last six years. I could recall in April, 1993, we had a massive 35 per cent devaluation of our currency, in an effort to float—as it was then called—the currency and to bring Trinidad and Tobago into a more liberalized economic global family framework. Thousands of families suffered enormously as a result of the devaluation that took place in April, 1993. Luckily for us, Mr. President, our economy is stronger today. We have a very robust economic base, even though as you and I know, our economic nation state is still exposed to the vagaries of the international marketplace.

I will show—based on reports that have been submitted by international agencies—that Trinidad and Tobago's macro economic framework remains

extremely strong, and our outlook remains very positive in the medium term. I agree that we must never dismiss the events of September 11 and beyond. I will have something more to say on that, as I seek to support the hon. Minister's argument for possible adjustments, given the jeopardy that our economy could be faced with as a result of events since September 11. So, Mr. President, exchange rate stability is important for working people because if you have constant devaluation you have, for instance, the purchasing power of working people being affected. In fact, we have had a slight appreciation of our currency over the last few months.

Mr. President, we have seen an improvement in the provision of social services in Trinidad and Tobago. Sen. Dr. The Hon. Daphne Phillips, our Minister in the Ministry of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs, alluded to the kinds of provisions and allocations that have been placed on the social sectors of our society. When we went through the period of stabilization and structural adjustment, Mr. President, back in the 1980s, what the working people underwent in our country were tremendous sacrifices. This Government has been able to ensure that whilst we have to ensure that there is economic growth and expansion, the Government must not lose sight of the fact that it must place emphasis on social equity and justice for the working people of this country: whether it is health, whether it is housing, whether it is education, whether it is community development or empowerment and whether it is human development. What there is—when we minus the public debt—is that we are looking at a budget of just about \$12 billion. Mr. President, over \$7 billion of that \$12 billion has been allocated to the social sectors of Trinidad and Tobago.

So, the Government has placed a lot of emphasis on the poor, the vulnerable, the destitute, the working people, the elderly and our women in Trinidad and Tobago. There has been an improvement—as Sen. Als has demonstrated—in the wages and salaries of workers, because that is a very important indicator in the context of people's capacity to purchase goods and services, and thereby improve their living conditions. I would not go through that, Mr. President; he has already alluded to that, and he has given us enough information.

Outside of this budget, where the Minister imposed taxes on alcohol and tobacco—which is a good thing, especially for our young people—for the last five years, Mr. President, this Government has not increased taxes for the poor and working people. It means that disposable income has either expanded—because there have been increases in wages and salaries from 1995 up to the present time. You have had increases in salaries and wages throughout the public and private sectors in Trinidad and Tobago.

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Mr. President, if we want to demonstrate—in no uncertain way—where our country stands today in the global family, we only have to examine the reality. What is the current reality? I look at the Human Development Report of 2001. I examine, for instance, the Human Development Index. Mr. President, you know, Trinidad and Tobago ranks 49th out of 174 countries in the global village that we live in today—in terms of seeking to improve the quality of life as measured by the Human Development Index in the United Nations report. We are ahead of some 129 countries in the world today. Mr. President, I am talking about countries like Brazil, Malaysia, Venezuela, China and India, Bolivia, Egypt, Indonesia, Zimbabwe—just to mention a few. I repeat, Trinidad and Tobago is ahead of these countries based on the Human Development Index of the United Nations. We have reduced poverty and we have to do more to improve the quality of life of our citizens. Pensions for the elderly stood at \$356 in 1995; today, and at the end of October, the elderly would be enjoying \$800. The fact is, it is still too small, but given our resources, Mr. President, we have consistently increased old age pension from 1997 to 2001. We have said that we are committed to realizing a pension of \$1,000 for the elderly before our term expires in the year 2005.

Mr. President, if you measure the poverty index—I go back to the 2001 Human Development Report—where are we as a developing nation? We are ranked 49th, again, in the world of nations. There are over 174 nations, and Trinidad and Tobago is ranked 49th. I am predicting that given the measures that this Government has taken, I have no doubt—as Sen. Dr. Roodal Moonilal has said—that Trinidad and Tobago will get into the High Human Development Index in terms of those nations in the next two years. Mr. President, I have no doubt! I will demonstrate later on why I advanced that, because the United Nations has not even taken on board as yet the revolutionary step—even as we are criticized for it—to ensure that every child who sits the SEA examination is given a chance to be in a secondary school in Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. President, that is not taking place in the Caribbean! Therefore, I believe that when the next Human Development Report comes out, it will demonstrate this country's movement from the Medium Development Index into the High Human Development Index. I have no doubt, Mr. President.

We are a small but a very proud country—a very resilient people. I have no doubt that we will continue to grow. We make mistakes as everybody else—children make mistakes, and as I said we make mistakes—but the important thing in life is that when you make a mistake, you must be bold enough to admit you made a mistake. [*Desk thumping*] You must be able to say: “I made a mistake.”

Because you have to learn from your errors. If you do not learn from your errors, history is going to condemn you. It is said that those who forget the mistakes of the past are doomed to repeat them.

Mr. President, we introduced the national minimum wage in this country. It is \$7! The trade unions said they want it to go to \$10, but we live in a society, Mr. President, in which all the social partners: the business community, labour, government, NGOs and the civil society, need to meet, to dialogue and to come up with some consensus before we can agree to that \$10. One of the things that we have to ensure for our survival: politically, economically, and socially, is that we have a united nation. We have to ensure that in this period of economic turbulence that we have one head, we have one singular focus, we have one common objective, and we have to share. We have to exchange ideas, to come up with a common vision and a common mission in order to achieve our objectives. [*Desk thumping*]

I am saying that when we look at this budget, we cannot escape the reality in terms of how working people have actually fared. We have to modernize other labour laws. We live in a globalized society. The Caribbean is going to be in trouble—there is no doubt about it—as a result of what is taking place.

7.15 p.m.

The Caribbean, Mr. President, is going to be in trouble, there is no doubt about it, as a result of what is taking place; and even before that crisis on September 11, 2001 the Caribbean began to demonstrate signs of trouble. The tourism product is in trouble. Bananas, which experienced preferential treatment, are going out of existence in the year 2002. Mr. President, we are working towards a common single market and economy. We are supposed to be part of something called the free trade—FTAA—the Free Trade Area of the Americas. That has implications for labour and for the manufacturing sector, so these are factors that we must take on board in analyzing, assessing and evaluating our future as a nation and as a Caribbean community. So I make these points to show that we have to maintain our competitiveness in the region, because we have to face for the first time international prices without subsidies, without allowances.

The Minister pointed out in his presentation, insofar as our manufacturing sector is concerned, given the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement, that the export allowances granted to our manufacturing class are going to expire; they will be eliminated, because of the WTO arrangement. We have to protect our manufacturing class because they are very important in terms of jobs in Trinidad

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and Tobago. This is why I say that we have to focus on the question of the modernization of our labour laws. Our labour laws must reflect the reality; not only the current but also the emerging reality.

This is why, in the last five years, this Government has introduced and passed into law the Maternity Protection Act. [*Desk thumping*] To protect whom? The women, particularly those who are unprotected, and who are not in a position to get any shelter from organized labour, because they are not in trade unions, Mr. President, and we know that they are in the minority. You find them all over the world—unscrupulous employers, who take advantage of workers, particularly young workers and female workers—and we have had to introduce and pass into law the Maternity Protection Act to protect our women at the workplace. You cannot just dismiss a woman because she is pregnant, and that is what employers used to do and some of them, because of lack of enforcement of the law, are still doing this in Trinidad and Tobago, as if these people came from Mars. So we have to enforce the law as well to protect the rights of workers in this country.

Mr. President, we recognize that as Trinidad and Tobago becomes more industrialized, we have to protect our workers. Industrial accidents and occupational diseases, we have to ensure that the laws are modernized. We are still operating under the 1948 Factories Ordinance, but we are in the year 2001 and we are in a period of connectivity. [*Desk thumping*] I have some statistics here by the International Labour Organization (ILO) which show that, for instance, on a world-scale you have over 1.1 million work-related accidents every year. That is a serious situation affecting working people.

The ILO says that 4 per cent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) disappears with the cost of diseases, sickness treatment, disability and survivor benefits arising from work. The GDP—that is 4 per cent of the world's GDP—that is lost, is the combined total of the GDP of Africa, Arab states and South Asia and all official development assistance to the world's developing countries. That is the cost of occupational accidents and industrial accidents and diseases on a yearly basis. As I said, hundreds of thousands of lives are affected every year as a result of this.

We are not immune because, in our own country, it is estimated by the National Insurance Board that between 1993 to 1998 it paid out some \$48.2 million as injury benefits to employees. Do you know the amount, Mr. President? Over 12,800 workers between 1993 and 1998 were injured. They were involved in industrial accidents. They experienced occupational diseases at the workplace. An estimate between 1976 to 1998 showed, in terms of direct and indirect costs,

this nation ended up paying close to \$744 million—close to a billion dollars, Mr. President—between 1976 and 1998. So it tells you that we have to pay attention to occupational safety and health at the workplace and employers cannot come up with the argument that it is going to cost them too much. It is an investment in the future and we have to pay. This is why I raise this question about the need for us to pay attention to occupational safety and health at the workplace.

Of course, we want to introduce things like the Employment Injury and Disability Benefits Bill to replace the old Workmen's Compensation Act of the 1940s, and the Government is moving towards introducing the Basic Conditions of Work Bill shortly in the Parliament to ensure that you have a social floor or a common floor as it relates to basic terms and conditions for workers who are not represented by trade unions in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, I refer to the IMF Country Report for July 2001 in which for instance, on page 9 mention is made of Trinidad and Tobago's external competitiveness as a nation and it says, and I read:

“Between 1996 and 2000, productivity per man-hour increased by 156 percent in the oil and natural gas sector and by 90 percent in the manufacturing sector, well in excess of a 40 percent cumulative increase in productivity for the economy as a whole.”

So it shows that, for Trinidad and Tobago, both in terms of the oil and gas sector and the manufacturing sector, labour productivity is extremely high.

These productivity improvements in the tradable sectors, according to this IMF report, have resulted in large and sustained reductions in unit labour costs and that is very important, Mr. President. We are competing on the international stage and we have to ensure that our unit labour cost is reduced so that we can compete, not to exploit people. I am not saying that we should underpay people, Mr. President, but I am saying, for instance, in terms of the application of modern machinery, in terms of the application of better work practices, because one of the problems that we have in the region is the question of work ethic.

The work ethic in the region has to be addressed as well because we live in a time where people must see productivity not only in the context of business opportunities but also in the context of job security and job opportunity as well. “Da is how” we have to see that question of productivity [*Desk thumping*] and that is a burning issue in the Caribbean today. If we do not improve our labour productivity, Mr. President, then we cannot compete internationally because those businesses that have to export, they are faced with naked, raw international prices

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where they no longer have subsidies and allowances, whether it is export or otherwise, and you have to face the marketplace and you have to survive because this is a world today where it is very hostile. “You ain ha no friends outside dey again, yuh know!”

Years ago you used to have friends. Since we lost our strategic significance after the cold war, we lost our geopolitical strategic significance in the Caribbean and now it is every tub sitting on its own—Mr. President, that is the reality and, therefore, labour productivity is critical for the survival of the Caribbean—[*Desk thumping*—not only Trinidad and Tobago but the Caribbean! So we have to take our business very, very seriously. I make these points to let you know that we are faced with very major challenges in this region and Trinidad and Tobago will have to maybe—this is why we need to speed up the Caribbean single market and economy. That is the basis for the future survival of Caribbean countries, you know. They have to be within this community called Caricom, under one single market and one single economy. That is what we require.

So, Mr. President, when we look at the IMF report we see again where the IMF is saying that Trinidad and Tobago—on page 16—since the mid 1990s its economic performance has been among the strongest in Latin America and the Caribbean. Trinidad and Tobago has performed exceedingly well. We have performed because we underwent adjustments—stabilization and structural. Luckily for our manufacturers they retooled and they are getting more support to further retool but, as the Minister of Finance warned in his statement, we are faced with a serious danger because, if that tourism product collapses—because if these Americans decide to stay home when they launch the attacks, nobody “eh coming out, yuh know. Who out going back in because yuh doh know what the counter attack will be, and this is not the ol’ t’ing like cold war, yuh know. This is not no Soviet Union versus America, yuh know.” This is where, for instance, you have a billion people who are Muslims in the world and you “doh know” what will happen, so “who out going back een”.

Therefore, Mr. President, there is where my greatest worry is, and the Minister of Finance alluded to that because we export so much of our goods and services to Caricom that, if Caricom is affected by removal of preferential treatment with the banana regime and they have a collapse of their tourism product, where are they going to get foreign exchange to buy our goods that we are exporting? They are not going to purchase. Therefore, what you are going to have is a backlash on the Trinidad and Tobago economy. So we have to work together as a family within the region to ensure that everyone is taken care of. That is our responsibility. So

whilst, for instance, Mr. President, we have had very strong economic growth in the region and in Latin America, we cannot fool ourselves. We can also be affected, as the Minister of Finance has pointed out.

The report goes on to say that growth has accelerated, inflation has declined and the balance of payment has strengthened. The GDP per capita rose by about 4 per cent a year and there has been progress in most social indicators. Confidence in the economy is high and the country has benefited from an investment grade rating for its foreign debt since 1999. Prospects for growth over the medium-term are favourable, based on the substantial investment taking place in gas exploration and processing and the continued robustness of the manufacturing and services sector. Now, this is a report coming from the International Monetary Fund in terms of how they view our performance in the year 2001. It is a 2001 report, so maybe for the previous—

So, Mr. President, the Government has recognized the importance of investment in human capital formation. There is no doubt about that. In a knowledge driven global economy, the necessity of developing our human resource base cannot be overemphasized. That is why the Government is placing so much emphasis on education. That is our weapon for liberation and genuine emancipation in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Education and skills development combined with experience will bring about, for instance, what Sen. Daly spoke about earlier.

You see that attitude—you know they have “ah old” saying, attitude determines altitude, attitude determines altitude? [*Interruption*] Ol-ti-tude, I am corrected, altitude; but, Mr. President, the point I am making is that we must have a new attitude—I agree with Sen. Daly on this one—on that question because if you look at the budget allocation, over \$2 billion out of a budget of—“ah leaving out the public debt, eh, Mr. President,” which is close to \$4 billion. Out of \$12 billion we have allocated close to \$2 billion for education, and that does not incorporate the \$240 million that the Minister is taking out of the Revenue Stabilization Fund to ensure that the dollar for dollar education action plan is effected. [*Desk thumping*]

So when you check it out, Mr. President, it is a tremendous amount of investment, and that is the way we have to go. We have to invest in our human capital. We have to invest in our human resources. That is critical for our growth and expansion, and if we are talking about an intelligent nation, as we are committed to creating, if we are talking about a technologically driven society, a knowledge based nation, we have to invest enormously in education. You must

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have quality education. The Minister of Education is revising and revamping the curricula in our education system to make it relevant, because the demand of industry and business must be linked to that educational system because you are supplying labour at different levels to industry and there has to be a linkage between business and education. There has to be a linkage between industry and education and that is the match that we have to establish.

7.35 p.m.

The Government is very conscious of the need, because we want to improve the quality of the lives of working people and the best way of improving the lives of ordinary people is to equip them with the skills, give them the opportunity to be educated, and apply that knowledge and those skills to the production process. That is going to expand our wealth and improve our nation in terms of its future direction.

Mr. President, we are committed to better education. We are committed to better health facilities. We are committed to improving, as Dr. Lasse said, the quality of housing for our people. The Government's economic policy has also impacted very positively on employment generation in this country. In 1993, the unemployment rate was about 20 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago. Today, it is around 12 per cent, and our equipment, given the measures that we are seeking to implement over a period of five years, given the medium-term outlook and given the medium-term policy framework, Mr. President, we are committed to reducing unemployment to single digit in Trinidad and Tobago. That is the commitment.

When people are working, they would not have time to be idle. Idle hands create idle minds and, therefore, in an effort to ensure that our young people are productively engaged, you have to ensure that when they graduate at the secondary, vocational and tertiary levels, they are gainfully and productively employed. So, violence, idleness and crime could be addressed.

It was the great Arthur Lewis, that famous economist who said, Mr. President, in his text entitled *Development Planning, The Essentials of Economic Policy*, the chief condition for confidence between the government and the worker is that any economic plan should clearly be in the interest of the workers. He said that this is hard medicine for some planners. Their test of success tends to be the growth of their aggregate, which is called the gross domestic product. The people's test, however, is what is happening to food, and what is happening to clothes, and what is happening to education and health services and housing and employment, Mr. President. That is what we are about. We are not just about economic expansion and economic growth. We are about social equity and social justice for the masses in this nation.

Mr. President, since 1995, we have made a pledge to enhance the human condition. We are committed to enhancing the human condition, and that is why we have placed so much emphasis on the social dimension of our development programme. The Minister has spent a lot of time on small business—micro, small, medium businesses in this country—trying to provide them with more incentives so that they can grow and expand and employ more people, because the world today is one in which you have to be flexible. You have to be multi-skilled. You have to be able to change jobs quickly otherwise you become outdated, irrelevant. That is the world in which we live today, Mr. President.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, the purpose of economic development is obviously to create a good and just society. That is all economic development is about. We want to create a good and a just society. Therefore, no plan, no policy which makes output its goal rather than consumption would be successful; or which gives excessive weight to future consumption at the expense of current needs. That is what, for instance, we have to address and, that is what we have been addressing as a government. Because we want to make sure that people, at the end of the day, are the beneficiaries, because improving the quality of life and enhancing their standard of living is what we are about. That is why that particular theme is so appropriate, "One People, One Nation, Leaving No One Behind".

We are in our eighth consecutive year of economic expansion. We have to keep it that way. If we have to make adjustments to face the emerging reality, we will have to make those adjustments, but we have to continue on a growth path. That is what we have to do. This is why, for instance, when we examine the performance of this economy, based on what the Minister has outlined, we realize that Trinidad and Tobago has done reasonably well. In some instances, it did exceptionally well.

Mr. President, when our economy grew by an average of 5.2 per cent per annum between 1995 and 2000, this was a higher average than the mighty United States, Europe, the European Union and Japan. As I said, we take things for granted. Our foreign exchange reserves in 1995 stood at US \$652 million. Today, it is over US \$2.4 billion.

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So, we are advancing, and I am so happy that this Government took the decision to establish this Revenue Stabilization Fund. We know there are some queries about it, but the Minister has given a commitment to bring legislation very shortly to effect that particular proposal and policy and put it into reality, because we have to save for a rainy day.

We do not know. Today the price of oil is just over \$22. It could collapse to \$17; it could go to \$16, because we are not in charge. We are price takers, Sen. King. We are not price makers. We are at the mercy of the international economy and the international environment. So, whenever we have excess revenue, we must put it aside. We must stash it away. US dollars earning higher interest, whatever—to ensure that we would be able to provide for our people in the rainy period to come.

Mr. President, \$4 billion flowed into this country in the energy sector between 1995 and 2000, and the Minister is predicting that we are going to have many more billions coming into the energy sector in the coming period. We have had sustained growth in the non-energy sector. Whether it is manufacturing, whether it is services, whether it is agriculture and construction, we have had relatively sustained growth. This is why when we look at the vision of the Minister of Finance and the Government for the next period, we have a 2010 vision, and the Minister alluded to that in his presentation.

Where would we like to see Trinidad and Tobago over the next 10 years? This is something that we have always been talking about. The country lacks vision. It lacks direction. We do not know where we are going, and the Minister of Finance, in his presentation, has outlined a vision for T&T over the next 10 years; where we would like to be in the year 2005; where we would like to be in the year 2010.

We want to move from developing nation statehood to developed nation statehood. We want a knowledge-based society that is technologically driven, that is based on equality, equal opportunity, social security, employment security. That is the kind of nation, that is the kind of vision that we are talking about in the next 10 years. Now, Mr. President, as I said, we may not, for instance, succeed in everything that we would like. We may not. The Minister has outlined, for instance, some initiatives that he intends to pursue. Some people laughed. They said it is a pie in the sky. It cannot be achieved. But, Mr. President, if you do not have hope, you would not have life. [*Desk thumping*]

At the end of the day, we are committed to a process in which, for instance, we will, in fact, diversify in order to create a more competitive, a more dynamic, a

more resilient economy. That is what we want to do. I agree that agriculture in this economic period of uncertainty is vital for our economy. We have to invest, we have to put more resources and the Minister has outlined what he intends to do. He wants to create a one-stop shop in the agricultural sector. He wants to create an agricultural development corporation. [*Interruption*] I am referring to the Minister of Finance. I am talking about his budget presentation.

I am saying, Mr. President, that in his budget presentation he has paid attention to agriculture. I mean to say we have had some difficulties in agriculture. We know this but I believe that in this period, this period of international terrorism—and local, its local version, because we have local terrorism and international terrorism. [*Laughter*] I believe that, for instance, in this period, we can use the opportunity to really solidify our agricultural sector and, I think that the Minister has given some notice, he has given some outlines and, of course, we may not be totally satisfied with what he has advanced, but he has not neglected agriculture.

It is a pity that those terrorists attacked both New York and Washington because we were expecting an inflow of tourists in 2001—2002. For the first time in a long time, the Minister of Finance has allocated close to about \$30 million to \$35 million just for promotional matters; for advertising in Canada, advertising in the United States, promoting tourism in a serious way. But, with all that has taken place, as I said, Mr. President, my feeling is that the Americans are staying home. They “ain’t” coming out and they are supposed to come out in the future.

Mr. President, I feel that the Minister has outlined a number of important measures to help the manufacturing sector, to promote tourism, to promote e-commerce, to deal with international financial services, to develop the infrastructure of this nation, because infrastructural development is very important, and he has allocated \$1.5 billion to the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Local Government.

One of the problems we have in the region is that transportation and poor roads hamper productivity and business development in many Caribbean countries. Poor transportation, poor road networks. We have never seen our roads so finely paved as over the last couple of years, Mr. President! Everywhere you go, the place has been transformed! [*Desk thumping*] Whether it is Tidco or whoever, Mr. President. [*Laughter*] What I am saying is that we have invested in infrastructure and that is very important for national development. It is very important for productivity. It is very important for competitiveness. You need a

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proper infrastructure, and that is why we want to revolutionize our telecommunications sector. That is critical.

Mr. President, when we examine what the Minister of Finance is doing, we have to compliment the Minister—and you know, the hon. Minister has a pet subject. Do you know what it is? He has always emphasized the need for us to pay attention to the destitute. Every time he speaks here, he says we are too rich, there is too much wealth in this country for us to have so much destitution in our nation. Look at what he has done. He has left out no one. Everyone has been involved. The poor, the destitute, the street children, the physically challenged, battered women, fragmented families, senior citizens. They have all been included! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, I think that the Minister of Finance has to be complimented. It is a great opportunity for poor people under the UNC. A great opportunity! [*Desk thumping*] They could not have it better. They could not want more because, as the Minister said, whatever they want, we give to the people. [*Desk thumping*]

What has warmed my heart even more is that a matter that has been outstanding for the last how many years, the Minister of Finance has taken it on board. I am happy that public officers in this country would soon be getting their arrears of increments that have been outstanding for some years. [*Desk thumping*] I want to compliment him for that. I was grappling with that myself when I was there and I am happy that he has been able to do that. It is all part of the democratic process and the continuation of our advancement. So, Mr. President, I think that when we examine our situation carefully, we realize that Trinidad and Tobago is on a forward path.

The 2001—2002 budget is a people's budget, however, we have to be mindful of the emerging reality, given all that has transpired since September 11. We are, however, a resilient people with a relatively strong economy with the necessary unity and solidarity among the major stakeholders: labour, business, government, the NGOs, and civil society. I believe, and I feel certain, that whilst we have experienced over the years, a better society under this Government, there is still better to come. [*Desk thumping*]

One people, one nation, one destiny and, as we say, Mr. President, we intend to take all our people on board, all our people forward, to a brighter, a better and a more prosperous tomorrow. [*Desk thumping*]

Thank you, Mr. President.

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ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette): Mr. President, first of all, it was really remiss of me yesterday not to have congratulated Sen. Lambert on his maiden contribution. It was really most appropriate.

Mr. President, I now beg to move that the Senate now adjourn to Wednesday, September 26, 2001, that is tomorrow, at 1.30 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.55 p.m.