

*Leave of Absence**Wednesday, September 26, 2001***SENATE***Wednesday, September 26, 2001*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, leave of absence from sittings of this Senate has been approved to Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran with effect from yesterday, September 25, 2001.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

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

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ Arthur N.R. Robinson
President.

TO: MR. DEREK IRWIN OUTRIDGE

WHEREAS Senator Professor Ramesh Deosaran is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of illness:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 40(2)(c) and section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, DEREK IRWIN OUTRIDGE to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 26th September, 2001 and continuing during the period of illness of the said Senator Professor Ramesh Deosaran.

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

Oath of Allegiance

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OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Derek Outridge took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

PAPER LAID

The Water Pollution Rules, 2001. [*The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette)*]

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette): Mr. President, I seek leave to deal with “Bills Second Reading” at this stage of the proceedings.

Agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL

(BUDGET)

[Third Day]

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

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Minister in the Ministry of Education (Sen. The Hon. Roy Augustus): Mr. President, I rise to give support to the Minister of Finance on this Bill, and I take great pleasure in so doing for a number of reasons. One, because it is a Bill presented by the Minister on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; a Government of which I am extremely proud to be a member.

I also feel proud to support the Minister of Finance because of our very long relationship. I have heard many of the speakers on the other side give testimony to the quality of the Minister of Finance as a result of his utterances as far as his love for dealing with the poor is concerned. My confidence in the Minister of Finance, in this respect, goes beyond his utterances, because I have been fortunate to have been around him while we were growing together in the East Dry River, behind the bridge, so we have a particular desire to assist those who have been neglected for so long by those whom they have supported.

In fact, he is quality material because he attended school, prior to 1956, at Nelson Street Boys' RC, which has produced a number of very good citizens, inclusive of one from the other side who led this country a few years ago.

Nelson Street Boys' RC was destroyed by fire in the late 1970s. Nelsonians feel proud of that school. It was not rebuilt for the rest of the tenure of a government that was served very well by its ex-pupils. Nelson Street Boys' RC continued to squat in the Nelson Street Girls' RC School. It took a UNC Government to determine that the East Dry River area and a school with serious tradition needed to be treated better than that. So at this moment in the year 2001, Nelson Street Boys' RC is being rebuilt. There will be more Gerald Yetmings, Bartholomews and Chambers. I hope that those other Chambers will choose the correct side when they do reincarnate.

Yesterday I felt very, very proud in this Senate, because I listened to two elder statesmen and, in a way, those contributions defined my approach today. I refer to Sen. Daly who is always talking, but I think yesterday he did extremely well. It has nothing to do with his giving the reasons why I am no longer a part of the PNM community; it is more than that. I say "PNM community" for a very serious reason.

When I listened to Sen. Daly yesterday, I heard a statesman, a man who is passionate about his country; a man who felt that we needed to think, despite whatever differences we might have at this moment, and concentrate on what will be best for our country and, of course, the world at large, given the serious times that we are experiencing.

I listened to his tone. Although when I spoke to him afterwards he indicated to me that he was a little disappointed in himself, because he became too passionate and a bit too loud. But having heard him at the loudest already, I thought that he was really operating in the way a louder statesman should operate. [*Laughter*]

Then I heard Sen. Dr. Quamina. He does not speak much in the Senate, but on this side we have a lot of respect for him, because we have a lot of respect for experience and age. [*Desk thumping*] I heard Dr. Quamina criticizing the health institutions in the country. Sometimes when we are criticized, I tend to want to go into a little hole, but here was criticism with a human face.

Here was a gentleman who had seen it all and he thought that he would come and lend the benefit of his experience to the Senate; the benefit of his expertise to the Senate. I am certain that my colleagues in the Ministry of Health would want to pay heed to what he has said and will even call on him and draw on his experiences to ensure that they do all that they can to ensure that our country provides primary health care to the people of Trinidad and Tobago; particularly those who are less privileged or less advantaged.

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While I am in the mood for giving congratulations, I pay tribute to another good friend of mine; a man who has been vilified throughout this country for a number of years; a man who is totally misunderstood, but a man who, over the last two or three weeks, has ensured that Trinidad and Tobago remains firmly on the international map, not only in sport, because you would realize that I am speaking about Mr. Jack Austin Warner, but a man who has done a lot for Trinidad and Tobago in the international sphere.

While we are experiencing a turmoil in our country at the moment, because an organization is growing openly, and I dare say, sometimes vulgarly, and while the international world sphere is now in a state of doubt—a mild word really—a state of fear, because nobody understands or can really conceptualize where this conflict will end, we are able to keep our citizens' minds off those dramatic events by good quality, top class, cheap entertainment; world class entertainment. [*Desk thumping*] It is time, I would think, that Trinidad and Tobago appreciates its own. While people's activities may not always coincide with how we want our brothers to behave, once it is properly and legally done, we must accept. So I salute Mr. Jack Austin Warner.

Trinidad and Tobago not only benefited by way of entertainment, but because the UNC Government decided to fully support the erection of these stadia and to fully support the activities, we had opportunities for all our citizens to exploit economically. The opportunities were there. Whether it was the question of the hoteliers; whether it was the question of people in transportation; whether it was the question of people providing meals, refreshments or what have you, once you realized that the opportunity to exploit economic business situations was there, you had every opportunity to do it.

I have no problem with one of us using the opportunity to ensure that we are part of the economic growth; I have no problem with that. So I salute Mr. Warner; I congratulate him and I am happy to be able to write this into the record of the *Hansard*.

Mr. President, yesterday there were a number of statements made and, as I said, those two speakers particularly defined my approach to this session. Therefore, where I might have wanted to engage in rebuttal that could probably draw laughter or even other emotions, I thought that I should be schoolmasterly. I thought that I should attempt to correct misconceptions on the part of youngsters. [*Desk thumping*]

There was a circular partially read yesterday; a circular which indicated the eligibility of candidates to write the SEA examination in the year 2001. That

contribution indicated that the eligibility written into the circular allowed children only 13 and under to write the examination. Those who were above that age limit, were not permitted to write the examination, if we take what was read from the circular, at face value.

In other words, if people up to 14, 15 and 16 years were allowed to write the examination, more students would have written—according to what my dear friend was saying—and, therefore, we could not have been able to place all, as we have claimed to have done. That is not true.

I really like the young man. I think he has a lot of spunk and I think he has a long way to go. I do not like his vehicle [*Laughter*] but I think he has a long way to go.

The circular, in fact, does say that eligibility—and having read all yesterday, I will not read that part—but it says that dates of births must fall on or after January 1, 1995. But I must pause a bit, because the young man should have also discussed with his colleagues—I remember reading in the newspaper a report of a meeting somewhere, where one of his colleagues indicated that we were not interested in social development because, on the basis of the SEA results, we were putting children 17 years old into secondary schools, in form Is along with 12 and 13-year-olds.

1.50 p.m.

If what he was saying is true, then there have been no 15-year-olds, or 16-year-olds or 17-year-olds, but I do not know whether what was being said by his other colleague is correct. I did not check that, I checked the circulars that were in the schools and I checked to bring them here because while he was speaking yesterday I smiled, since I was in service at the time and I knew the circular without even having to look for it. The circular of October 27, 1999 to Principals of all Primary and Private Schools, and then there was one dated November 10, 2000. Both circulars are the same and they have the same continuing notes which said that students are eligible for two consecutive attempts at the Secondary Entrance Assessment Examination, provided that they do not attain the age of 15 years before January 01, 2001.

The one the year before had, before January 01, 2000. So that what we were saying is that even though there was a date eligibility giving you 12-plus examination status, we also give you the authority and the permission to allow children up to age 15 in the first instance, and age 16 in the other instance, to write the examination. So that everybody up to age 14 and 15 years were eligible

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to write the examination. They wrote it, and on the basis of the results, they were placed.

Notice I did not say whether they passed or failed because for years those of us in education have been attempting to tell the world at large that we do not operate the entrance examination on the basis of pass or fail, but on the basis of available places. That is what we do.

It is unfortunate for those on that side that last year, for the first time, we were able to make available places equivalent to 100 per cent of the product that was ready to leave the primary school, and I use the word “ready” guardedly. [*Desk thumping*] So all those children wrote the examination, and all were placed. Some were placed in Form 1-S because they could not read well. If I were in the battling mood that I was in before I heard my friend yesterday, I might have said that I would want, therefore, to assign my colleague to Form 1-S, but I am not in that battling mood because I think it is just that he did not continue reading. I am sure he can read well.

What I am saying, Mr. President, is that the SEA examination was used as a basis for moving children from one level of the education that the Government has a right to offer to all its citizens under the age of 15 because the international world is moving not only into UPE which is Universal Primary Education, but the Daka Conference of UNESCO has said that by the year 2015, universal secondary education must be universal. Trinidad and Tobago has reached that stage in the year 2001. [*Desk thumping*] So what we have done is to ensure that we provide enough places in another level of education.

Now of course, when I use the term ready, I know there are pundits among us who may begin to think that readiness only has to do with academic readiness, but there are other areas of readiness. You have got to have social readiness, even physical readiness and emotional readiness.

What you have is a school system that you are attempting to unify properly, you are attempting to convert into a seamless roll. So that while in the primary school 10 or 20 years ago, you spoke in terms of post-primary education in two or three classrooms within the same primary physical infrastructure, what we are looking at is a question of sending children on and dealing with them in post-primary education—which in this case is secondary—in a structure that has more facilities, or I should say, should have more facilities. Because when we began the exercise there were some areas which I am satisfied were not ready. I am satisfied about that.

There are times you have to take a decision and bite the bullet and you had to go there and depend on the most important resource in education delivery—that is a human resource—to deal with what they had at the moment: Deal with the child that came to them, the physical infrastructure they had, the equipment or lack of equipment they had, because the important thing is the delivery from the transmission of knowledge, the transmission of ideas, the cultivation of attitudes, spirituality, morality and values. You had to deal with all that as a teacher, and it reminds me of my friend saying yesterday, and I will go later to that, but I must make the point as I have touched it. It looks as though the UNC Government expects the teacher to be an all-rounder. In fact, not only do we expect the teacher to be an all-rounder, but a teacher is an all-rounder. A teacher has to be an all-rounder, a teacher has to be able to deliver at all levels, a teacher has to prepare himself; a teacher has to continue learning in every field to ensure that at every given moment he is ready to provide, he is ready to deal with that important asset in front of him—the mind.

Mr. President, I told my teachers at both Bethlehem and Rosary Boys' RC that they must always be prepared, they must always continue learning, they must always expose themselves to all kinds of learning opportunities to minimize the possibility of mistakes when they are dealing with their charges. I tried to emphasize that by telling them that teaching is the only profession in which one is not allowed to make mistakes, the only profession.

With all due respect to my friend Dr. Quamina, even doctors are allowed to make mistakes. The most that will happen is that you will die and what is wrong with that? You have to die at some point in time, and in fact, it might mean early admission to paradise wherever paradise is. But when a teacher makes a serious debilitating mistake, society has to live with that mistake or those mistakes all the time. We are living with some now.

Yesterday, when my good friend and colleague indicated that as a result of the A'level Examinations the UNC Government must take credit for the quality of education that was provided in the six years of secondary education that those people had, the matter was taken up on the other side indicating that it was prior foundation. I have no quarrel with that. In fact, with all due respect to my friend, I would like to think that none of us must claim credit deliberately where education is concerned. We must feel happy that our young people are receiving the best that there is to offer at given times.

Since we are quick to say that it was our foundation prior to those six years that has benefited them, what was the foundation that benefited those who are

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now parading the streets in a particular kind of way—violence, brutality, immorality? What was the foundation? What caused it? We must go back, we must introspect, we must work together. That is what I am saying. We must work together, Mr. President. Education is too important for us to play politics, too important. We have got to work together to ensure that the Dollar for Dollar Programme works.

Mr. President, I have heard all kinds of criticisms of the Dollar for Dollar Programme and I listened, I had to listen because even though it does not fall under the ministry in which I am now operating, it falls under education, and I am still a principal. In fact, I warned people, do not call me ex-principal, do not call me ex-teacher, call me principal. They still say Brigadier Ralph Brown, and Brigadier Alfonso, call me Principal Augustus. We will always be teachers, Sen. Dumas; I am sure you agree with that. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, I wonder whether some of us who criticize the Dollar for Dollar Programme without offering suggestions for improvement have read or understand what is being offered and I make the distinction about those who criticize without offering solutions. I have in my hand a critique of the Dollar for Dollar Programme by a gentleman who is an eminent educator, a man who knows his stuff, Mr. Beddoe, retired from the university, still an educator and Mr. Beddoe in his first presentation says in the *Newsday* of Tuesday, July 31, 2001 on page 11:

“The Dollar for Dollar (dfd) Plan must be seen as highly commendable and momentous. The details as presented in the Media should be carefully studied. This article will focus solely on certain proposals with the view of making good better...”

He tells you it is good, but he tells you there is room for improvement.

“...and identifying a few oversights or omission.”

He went on in clear, lucid and informative language to indicate that there must be some attention paid to what you are doing at the teacher's colleges and teacher training. He went on to talk about including distance learning in a particular way in the process, he talked about the accreditation council and how it should be formed. He was offering solid advice even while he was offering his criticisms.

He indicated that we should not have started it this year, actually it was even before we started it, so we ignored that recommendation of his. It does not mean we are going to ignore all. The time was right for introducing the Dollar for

Dollar Plan, and while we appreciate the fact that he said it needed probably a little more time for planning, we felt that we were ready, and as a result of that, there has been an increase in the number of students who have availed themselves of the opportunity for the Dollar for Dollar Programme and there has been an increase in the cadre of cohort of students now exposed to tertiary education.

What is the Dollar for Dollar Programme according to the UNC Government? It says we want to make tertiary education affordable to the individual. In other words, you have the qualifications for university or tertiary education, then we make it easier for you. It is all part of the plan to ensure that human capital, as far as is possible, is properly developed. It is all part of the plan. It is part of the Panday Government's plan to work on human capital which is going to be the single, most important thing in the development of this country, the development of any country, the development of any society. It is the kind of activity that I am certain before the demise—sometime in the distant future—of Sen. Daly, he will see adult citizens who are not snarling at each other, but who are living together in peace, understanding each other because they have learnt to live one with the other, learnt to understand each other so that even the little differences they have, they may be able to discuss in a particular kind of way.

This is the objective of the Panday Government, this is the objective of the UNC Government, it is the objective of all of us sitting on this side, and I challenge anybody on that side to say that is not their objective too. We must all be exposed and work together to ensure that all our children, especially those from East Dry River who have been neglected for so long, Sen. Daly—and that is why I find it difficult to be a member of the PNM community. Not that I was asking for anything for Roy Augustus. My mother has taught me to be contented—as I have said before—with whatever little I have, make it do. I also know that the little I had, there were so many people in that area who had much less than I had and who consistently supported a government that was in office since 1956, and who got zilch.

I heard Sen. Lambert talking about clearing a playing field and waiting for a community centre to be put up and it was only with the advent of Sen. Dr. Phillips and the UNC Government that there is something in that spot.

The name Richard Coombs may not mean anything to anybody here right now, but he was a councillor who had a bakery on Rodney Street—Rodney Street is in the heart of the East Dry River area—and he was a community worker and he mobilized the community—I saw it with my eyes, I was six or seven years at the time—to take mud, straw and make bricks and build the community centre in

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the prisoner's quarry where the National Association of Trinidad and Tobago Steel bands Men was founded.

2.10 p.m.

When that Government came into power under the pretext of building a new centre, they tore it down. That centre was not rebuilt until 1988 under the NAR Government. Those are the things that worry me; the non-rebuilding of the community centre; the non-rebuilding of Nelson Street Boy's RC School; the refusal to find some kind of proper development programme for that area, for my people. The Dollar for Dollar Programme will give more of the people in that area, as in other areas, an opportunity to develop and to return to their community, as all of us continue doing—those of us who have been fortunate to escape the clutches continue returning to that community and giving as much as we could give.

Mr. President, it is history and I have to repeat it, but the time has come when we must go forward. We must understand that the dollar for dollar will give credence to our boast that by the year 2005, tertiary education would be available to 20 per cent of our secondary cohorts. We have to achieve that. These are the objectives. A government that does not dream; a people that does not dream is a people that is dead. We have got to dream and make our dreams come true, and we have got to take everybody with us to ensure that the dream comes true. We have to build and we have to strengthen the national tertiary education sector. We have to establish and strengthen a national accreditation system, which would ensure that citizens have access to the highest quality of tertiary education at local institutions. We are saying that you have the qualifications to go into tertiary education. You know what you want to do. It is available in Trinidad and Tobago, but the funds are not reading right. The Government has said it cannot give you all, it would pay 50 per cent of that cost. That immediately widens the net.

My friends talk about means testing. That would come. You cannot do everything at the same time. We would be able to find a way in the not too distant future to ensure that those who could not even pay the 50 per cent are provided with more opportunity, once they have the potential. We must be able to do that. What is happening now is that this is open to everybody who is accessing tertiary education for the first time in September/October of 2001. We cannot put all in but it is available to them, and we will pick up the tabs.

There are some selections in the post-graduate areas. One of the criticisms of those who have been attempting to criticize destructively is that we are just doing

the thing willy-nilly, and we are not planning for the future, that we are just throwing in anybody we know. We are giving everyone an opportunity to be exposed to the first degree.

When you go to the post-graduate courses then you are talking about information technology, petroleum gas and petro-chemical, geology, geo-science, business management, marketing, economics, finance, human resource and management development, tourism management, environment, agriculture, foreign languages, cultural studies, higher education and teacher-training and specialized medical studies.

On the basis of the research that has been done by the very hard working public servants that we have in this country—Sometimes people talk about public servants in a rather derogatory manner. I was happy to have heard a year and a half ago before I knew Mr. Gillette—I sat in a meeting with him—he was talking about the brilliance of the public servants with whom he was dealing, the “brightness”—according to street language—of the public servants. They are not only bright, but also hard working. On the basis of the plans, the research that they did, we have been able to project the needs of the intellectual community over a period of time and we are providing through the Dollar for Dollar Programme on a selective basis. We go on to tell you who qualifies for the Dollar for Dollar Programme. More than that, people seem to think that it is only available at the University of the West Indies, in spite of the fact that we have been saying that it is tertiary education, wherever that is available in this country under Government-sponsored agencies.

These are: The Institute of Business, The Engineering Institute, Institution of International Relations, National Energy Skills Centre, Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology, Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute, all campuses of Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry, Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies, all campuses of the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT), John Donaldson, Joint Services Staff College, Metal Industries Company, NIHERST, Government Vocational Centre Point Fortin, San Fernando Technical Institute, Tobago Learning Centre—all these institutions—the Government of the United National Congress has made the dollar for dollar options available to our people.*[Desk thumping]*

A national accreditation centre is being developed and that centre will begin to look at the private institutions that are offering tertiary education to ensure that from January 2002, those private institutions are brought under the umbrella of the Dollar for Dollar—I almost said Scheme, but I remember lockjoint—so I say

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Programme. Not only are we exposing our young people—the Government is providing for young people, not only are we exposing them to what we in the State have to offer, but we are widening the net. We are bringing in the private institutions and the national accreditation centre will ensure that they look at these private institutions. It would not only be a question of having a good building, it must be a question of the faculty you have; it must be a question of your track record in management. It must be a question of what you are offering, it must be a question of the financial strength of your institution. I am talking about the private institutions to which we would give access to the Dollar for Dollar Programme. We are saying particularly in the financial sector, we are not going to expose ourselves to fly-by-night lecturers, professors or whatever have you, opening a school somewhere with a false financial base and putting our children there to their detriment. The accreditation centre would look at all those things. We think this is a milestone. We think that along with universal secondary education, we have opened another avenue for our children to develop.

The Minister of Finance, in his budget presentation, catered for all these things to ensure that while we are planning at the Ministry of Education, he has the funds available and ready for us. We are prepared to listen to comments, to listen to criticisms. In fact, I wait with bated breath to hear another man for whom I have a lot of respect in terms of education, and that is Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand. I am certain that I will get ideas this afternoon that I can take back to the relevant authorities so that we can continue to work. It really worries me that another good friend of mine, for whom I have respect, is not here because I know she is also very interested. I do hope Sen. Montano can take my greetings to her because we always must know what is happening to our colleagues on either side of the divide.

Over the last couple years we have been providing the hardware. We have been building. We have built more than ten secondary schools and about two or three primary schools, so that we increased the number of places available. And, we are in the process of building a further ten primary schools and there are two or three secondary schools under construction. And why are we doing all of this? We are doing all of this to ensure that we expand the number of places available to our children for education, which is their right. When we spoke of universal secondary education we were fulfilling a right of the child, ensuring that the right of the child was fulfilled. Universal secondary education—so we are building.

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.

Mr. President: Before the hon. Senator continues, for those of you who have your cellular phones in the Chamber, switch them off please.

Sen. The Hon. R. Augustus: I did not even realize where I was in terms of time. That means, I am not managing my time well, and I probably would have to go back to school. But it is not bad going back to school under a UNC Government.

I have to come back to the SEA examination. There are always misconceptions in this country. Sometimes we do not take time to digest what is happening. Yesterday I heard that the SEA examination was not a complete examination. That we claim to have introduced an examination and it is not complete. I rocked back because I thought that the speaker had an idea of examinations, of setting tests, of measurement, of evaluation—and I am always interested in learning. Then I heard that the reason for the statement is because we have not introduced CAP, the Continuous Assessment Programme in that SEA includes CAP as part of its whole structure. That is not true.

In the first instance, in a limited way formally, CAP is in the schools. There is a pilot project that has been operating in the schools for the last two years, and which will continue beyond September 30, 2001—which was supposed to have been the end of the pilot scheme—because we are putting a number of things in place to continue phasing in the entire CAP. But more than that, I do not know why people feel that CAP is new. CAP as a name is new, because we have put a name to it. These days in education people are finding names for all kinds of things, CAP, SEMP, SEMP 1 and so forth. What is CAP? It is basically the Continuous Assessment Programme. What is assessment? Let us divide it into two.

2.25 p.m.

Let us say formative assessment where you have a period of time over which to provide a body of students with a programme of work. And over that period of time at intermittent intervals, you provided some kind of testing; some kind of evaluation of what has been done in order to see how well it has been taken in. And furthermore, in order to provide you with the methodology to go further. Remember your school days, those of you who are fortunate to have been in school as recent as I have as a pupil. What was the purpose of weekly tests? What

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was the purpose of home lesson and tasks? That was assessment. That was the continuing assessment of the work you were doing. You kept records; you had to keep records otherwise the assessment would not have been valuable and in our very informal way—let me give you the assessment first.

That formative assessment was going on all the time and at the end of given periods, you had disseminative assessment when you do a summary of the work that was done, perhaps at the end of a term, and finally, at the end of an academic year. So you had assessment going on all the time. That was continuous assessment. Record keeping was done by individual teachers, and is still being done by individual teachers—those who teach and teach well. So it has always been done.

We are talking about the question of screening of teachers. All good teachers—because they are all-rounders; because they are medical people in their own right, because of the training that they had to develop—were able to observe, even before parents, that a child was not seeing well; and that a child was not hearing well; and that a child probably had some physical drawback. We are formalizing that now, but we are not going to leave it to the teacher only. In fact, we have continued discussions with TUTTA to ensure that when the phasing-in is completed, we would have done it to the best of the resources available to the country, both human and financial. It has to do with doing the best for our children. So the programmes are going.

When we found at the end of the primary period, that some children were not ready, we developed the 1S classes and removed to special schools—because there were a couple of areas where the incidence of children who did not make a certain percentage in the exam, was greater than other areas, as a result of which we had to develop two schools. In education one must always have ideas, one must always be creative. One must always do what is good and right, in order to provide for those children.

One of the schools is on Sackville Street. I have been to Sackville Street on a number of occasions. One of the reasons is that quite a lot of the children come from that area that has been neglected for so many years. So I have been visiting the school and there are people—I should not call names, but Clyde James comes readily to mind. He understands that we have to work with that human resource that was allowed to drop through the cracks because of a number of reasons. He goes in there and assists and I commend him for that.

There were physical problems and TTUTA came and we discussed and I said that I would ensure that the Minister takes to Cabinet a Note to correct all those

ills. And we did it. The children now have an air-conditioned environment. It is not perfect but we made available, at an expensive cost, a facility for those children. It is the first time in their lives that a government took a concern for children of that level to the extent that they were prepared to say, “go ahead and provide”. It may not be the best facility but we had the courage to do it. When we examined the bills coming in, we said “No, let us go to audit”. We said, “Let us go to audit.” We were anxious to get the thing done but we said let us go to audit. And the people who always talk about the poor people and the little people, rather than assist us in getting the best for those children, talked about the money that was being spent. In other words, in their opinion, you cannot spend so much money on poor people. More than that, we live in a negative society sometimes.

There are two schools like that. One on Sackville Street and one in Valencia. I am happy it is in Valencia and not Caroni. In Valencia there are the same kind of people, who were deprived—that is in Toco/Manzanilla—fully supportive of another group.

When I saw all the problems at Valencia, I said I could not confine myself to one limit. So I went to Valencia during the vacation and the principal was working her skin off to get facilities for the children. I spoke with her. Today, Valencia Secondary Special is a success story. The press does not want that. The press and the others are in Sackville Street. It is a success story and we can transfer much of what is happening in Valencia as “a best practice” to Sackville Street to assist.

I invite people to visit Valencia Special and then understand what we are trying to do. Much work is being done in our schools to the extent that since we have expanded the school community, we realize that we do not have enough school supervisors.

The establishment of schools supervisors should operate at one to 25 schools; because of what the establishment is. Schools cannot be properly supervised, apart from the fact that there are other things that people used to send schools supervisors to do, that we are going to stop, and give them a chance to supervise and develop the young teachers, and assist the principals in developing programmes. So we have taken to Cabinet a Note to widen schools supervision. So that we would have one supervisor to 10 or 12 schools. We are going to ensure that we increase the diagnostic services so that they would be able to assist teachers in screening, even while we are talking with the Ministry of Health. We are doing a lot of training.

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In fact, before I close, in November of this year, we expect some people from the University of Cambridge. They are coming to train our teachers in the Form Is department. The teachers who are going to work with these slower children who can learn—because every child can learn—to train them in IT programmes so that they would be afforded the opportunity to develop a programme within those classes in those two schools. We are starting with Ibis and Valencia Special Centres. That programme would lead to Cambridge Certificate Examinations in the next two or three years. The special schools that people say that we are neglecting.

My appeal is for everybody to join this boat, the education boat is sailing and we must join it together, all of us. We must ensure that we understand that at the end of the day education is to ensure that human beings flourish in an ideal society, and an ideal society is one where there is one people, one destiny, one nation, nobody left behind. Thank you.

2.35 p.m.

Mr. President: Before calling on Sen. Morean, I just want to read Standing Order 35(6) as a reminder to Members, because I observe over the course of this debate there has been a marked infraction of this Standing Order:

“Ministers shall be referred to by the title of their appointment and other Senators by name.”

“By name” meaning, Senator so and so.

Sen. Glenda Morean: Thank you, Mr. President. The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and, perhaps, others on the other side, seem peeved that we on this side have not got up to pat the Minister of Finance on his back for his wonderful presentation of this budget as a first timer. Now, if we were not dealing with a national budget and if we were not dealing with a Minister who has at his—what should I say—disposal, a wealth of bright and knowledgeable technocrats, and he were doing this on his own, we would have said, “Well done, Mr. Minister”. But as the Minister in the Ministry of Education has said, the Minister has all the technocrats at his disposal; they are all very bright; they are all knowledgeable; they are hard working and we expect that when he gives us his final product, we will get something that we can say well done to.

In his presentation of the 2001/2002 budget, the Minister was long on presentation, I can say, but short on detail and analysis of the vision he projected

for Trinidad and Tobago to the year 2002. [*Desk thumping*] Or 2010, because that is what he did in his document. In fact, if we neglect the effects that the events of Tuesday, September 11, 2001 would have on the world economy, including our own, the Minister seemed to have ignored the deterioration in the economies of countries worldwide and has presented no fallback position, no alternative position, should there be a serious drop in expected revenues from natural gas, et cetera.

Now it is true that in his presentation here, the Minister did say that he would have to do some sort of retooling in the light of events, but the events that are occurring and continuing to occur, were not well factored in. We should have been given: look here, if it is he has put a position with respect to the revenues expected; he has put a position with respect to the expenditure and he has told us what the final position is, but suppose the revenues on which he has predicated his calculations do not come to pass, then what is our position? That, we should have been told.

So that while we may appreciate some aspects of the presentation, we cannot be part of the “yes brigade”. Now it is true that we do not have the resources in terms of facts and personnel to work out the best solution, but we can show the Minister where he has gone wrong.

The Minister presented a vision which reads like excerpts from the PNM’s document of its 10-year vision for Trinidad and Tobago. This is perhaps why the hon. Minister spent so much time on this presentation in the other place, making references to the PNM. Now mind you, I said no fall back position, so take careful note.

On reflection, the Minister really does not have a choice in the matter; he has to refer to the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] Do you know why? I will tell you why. Most of the projects undertaken and mismanaged by this Government had been either started in 1995 or prior to 1995, or have been in the pipeline by the PNM. [*Desk thumping*]

Examples of some of the PNM projects are—the favourite one: airport expansion project, though not at that price, because what was contemplated, certainly, was not that we would be paying \$300 million every year in debt; we had contemplated non-recourse financing, where the Government would not have even had to guarantee the loans. [*Desk thumping*] I continue: The LNG project; and that is what we are basing all our buoyancy on; the building of schools for which the Minister in the Ministry of Education is taking so much credit. That is a

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project, not only outlined by the PNM government, but a project for which the financing had already been sourced when this Government came into power. The abolition of the Common Entrance Examination is another of the PNM's project.

So that we have not really seen any new project from this Government during its tenure save for the InnCogen deal—and note I use the word “deal” because there has been no demonstrated need for an additional electricity supply plant; and the unnecessary desalination plant. We have water all over the country. Dig up; go far enough; you are going to get water. There is no need for a desalination plant.

This preoccupation of the speakers on the other side with the PNM is understandable, as I said. I can well understand their fascination and their unspoken recognition of the fact that the PNM is a force to be reckoned with. [*Desk thumping*]

What those persons and the Minister, unfortunately, have failed to realize is that the country is not interested in what the PNM is alleged to have done 20 years ago. The country is interested in what this Government has done over the last five years and what it is continuing to do now. It is true that the PNM had a few bad apples, some of whom have long since died, or have joined the UNC [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] and are playing major roles in that party, either in the background or in the foreground.

2.45 p.m.

Mr. President, before I go there, let me just correct a word used by the hon. Minister at page one of his budget statement made in the other place. The Minister said: “...on December 11, 2000, the people of this country voted the United National Congress back into Government...” That is not correct. The UNC was not voted into Government in 1995. Everyone will recall that it joined with a party, which had won two seats, and it preyed on human vulnerability by enticing two Members of Parliament from the same “bad” PNM, to cross the floor. This is how the UNC came into Government in 1995. In the year 2000, it gained a slim majority of two seats, which majority it is more than likely to lose after the result of the election petitions are announced. [*Desk thumping*] As well, the slim majority of two seats can be mapped on to the two constituencies in which the margin of victory was a mere 300 in one case, and a few hundred in the other. So that victory may well be a pyrrhic one.

Mr. President, I agree with the Minister when he said—and I am agreeing with some things—that the December 2000 election result was felt around the

country and around the region. It was felt because of the uncertainty of the final result. It was felt because of serious allegations of tampering with voters' lists, and other irregularities associated with the voting process which have led to criminal charges being preferred against several persons.

It is being felt because of the fact that the Government's tenure is only of an interim nature, because of the pending election petitions. Added to all this, it is felt because the country is faced with the threat of having to withstand the trauma and the expense of a general election for a second time in less than 12 months. So, when the hon. Minister asked the question at page 2 of his presentation: "And what do the people want?" He went on to provide answers in rhetoric, but those answers were not translated into tangible provisions in the budget, and I have to agree with previous speakers who said that this presentation was more like an election campaign.

Attack the PNM! Give a dollar here, reduce the price of salt fish and blue soap, and give old age pensioners a little trickle. The hon. Minister answered his own question by saying they want a better quality of life, they want better jobs, and I agree with that. They want emancipation from hardship, and I agree with that too. So he is getting his little pat. But where in the budget is the provision for a better quality of life for the poor?

The recitation of ideas with no facts and figures to back them up, and ignoring the macroeconomic realities cannot give the people either of the above. The provision of an increase of \$80 per month on old-age pension is a form of—and I do not want to use unparliamentary language, I use the word—deceit by the hon. Minister. I say this because this Government made a promise to the people during its election campaign just some months ago that they were going to increase old-age pension to \$1,000 per month. No one could have interpreted that to mean that it would have been increased over a period of years. Increasing it in that manner would not provide a real increase because the purchasing power of \$1,000 in 2001 would certainly not be the same as that in 2002, or in 2003 and so on.

Every few months when we go to the grocery we realize that the dollar purchases less and less and these same people are going to be faced with an increase in house rates and taxes imposed by this Minister, because that is the provision he has set. With his planned reform of the existing property taxation regime, as proposed in this budget the rates will certainly go up appreciably so that people who were paying, perhaps, \$120 per year, may very well find themselves paying \$1,200 per year. So there goes your increase. This better quality of life for all would not refer to those people. Sure, certain persons

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associated with the Government have attained a better quality of life, and I am not making this up. Our Attorney General has said so. He painted a graphic picture of persons who could not pay their mortgages and were driving old cars suddenly acquiring mansions and new expensive cars. But not many of us would want to attain that position by the means described.

The hon. Minister of Finance posited that the people want a crime free environment. Again, I have to agree with the Minister. I agree that people want a crime free environment, however, what provision has been made in this budget to ensure that this wish is attained? One of the planks on which this Government based its campaign was the reduction in crime. I do not have to say anything more about that. Figures and statistics have already been given of the continuing increase of serious and petty crimes. Yesterday, while I was sitting here, close to my office there was a shoot-out with three people being shot, and a grocery being robbed. So I do not know where the reduction is. We just have to be in touch with the daily news to test the Government's performance on this score.

Mr. President, the irony of it all is that there has been, as well, a serious increase in crime at the level of the top, and it has reached such proportions that the Minister's colleagues are disgusted to the point of breaching tradition and speaking out against their own Government. In fact, the criminal activities of such persons are putting an even greater strain on the scarce resources allocated to fighting crime. I ask: How has the Minister, in this budget, demonstrated his Government's commitment to the reduction in crime in this country? The Minister has not told us whether he has addressed the need for increased staff for the office of the DPP or whether he intends to make proposals for enhanced emoluments to be paid to such staff in order to stem the outward flow of competent and experienced staff from that department. This was not readily apparent from the appropriations to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. When one looks at that one can see that there is no such contemplated provision, and when we talk about crime, we have to look at the judicial arm. There is no point in passing legislation, getting the police to act and when you bring them in the final place—the courts—they walk, then there is no fight. What is the point? It is useless.

There were situations where certain courts were introduced to help relieve the load of the day-to-day courts and I am talking now in particular about the night court. That was tried for a little while and then it was abandoned. It was abandoned because of the fact that there was no money really to run the courts properly. The magistrates who sat all day complained of having to come back in

the evening to work at no extra pay—if they were getting the pay they would come and work, but they were not getting the extra pay, so there it is, that was closed down.

The judicial arm of the state has an important part to play in the fight against crime and it must be properly tooled. There is this scandalous situation of the relocation of the Port of Spain Magistrates' Court. Millions of dollars are being spent in the construction of a new building, but because of a power play between the particular Minister and the judicial arm of the state, a building has been lying, closed up and unoccupied, since November 2000. In the meantime, what has been happening? The Port of Spain Magistrates' Courts are operating from two venues, the one on St. Vincent Street and at NIPDEC house, and what do you find here? You find that you have problems of logistics daily in that files have to be brought from one place to the other, records have to be brought from one place to the other. Sometimes a court is packed with people waiting for their cases to be heard, only to be told that the file did not come, and all that stems from the fact that proper arrangements have not been made for the new building to be occupied. The money is spent, and it is just wasting there and the congestion and the inconvenience go on. I could go on and on but I would not.

I will mention the Arima Magistrates' Court and in particular, I make mention of the criminal court there. Fortunately, I do not go to that court often. When you get into that court you get a horrible smell of a mixture of urine and other wastes. Magistrates and practitioners alike have to stomach this smell daily. The prisoners are herded into a small enclosure which does not provide toilet facilities and they may spend a whole morning there, and you know what happens when nature calls, they have to answer the call right there. So you have a cumulative effect and no matter how much disinfectant they throw the morning before, you are still going to have that smell.

3.00 p.m.

How does this help in the fight against crime when you have persons being treated in that way? Whether or not they are accused of having committed crimes or not, you are just hardening them to become more deviant. Here again, when the Minister says they want a crime-free environment, he has to make the provision to ensure that we the people do get a crime-free environment.

Mr. President, the hon. Minister was correct again when he said that the people want good governance and transparency. The questions are: Are they getting good governance? Are they getting transparency? Can you honestly say what is happening now is good governance? Can we say that? There is one

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minister standing and saying one thing and another standing and saying, “No, that is not so”. You have one signing a contract and the other one saying, “That is illegal”. Is that good governance? That cannot be good governance. As a lawyer, I do not want to run afoul of the law, but people in the public service are suddenly becoming rich. When I say in the public service, I do not mean public servants. Is that good governance?

We cannot have good governance when ministers are openly jostling with each other for position. We are faced with the scenario of one minister ignoring the functions of the Attorney General and usurping those functions of reports being withheld from the Attorney General. Worst of all, we have infighting among ministers of this Government without and within the Cabinet. This is evident from the recent disclosures coming from Government ministers. It seems that the Prime Minister is incapable of disciplining any of his ministers. All he seems capable of doing is branding them as gangs and other colourful descriptions, but he has to sit with them in the Cabinet. He sits with those fellows in the Cabinet. What sort of governance is that?

In addition, we have ministers openly criticizing each other, disputing what one or the other has to say, and they call this a family squabble. Well, if that is family, I do not want family like that. Not at all. [Desk thumping] It seems more like a full scale war to me. People on the streets are openly saying that these fellows are holding secrets for each other because, they can get on as bad as they want and the Prime Minister cannot do a thing about it. That is great governance. Almost, from day one of this Government’s tenure, there have been serious allegations and no concerted effort has been made to stem the flow.

The PNM and other members of the public have been very vocal in their call to the Government to take meaningful steps to arrest the flow, beginning with the airport project. Palliatives are not enough, they only act as a plaster to cover the sore of corruption. Therefore, sending documents to the DPP and the police without first carrying out a forensic enquiry to at least give these agencies a chance of nailing the culprits is useless.

Therefore, Mr. President, all the measures outlined by the Minister of Finance in his presentation are laudable but, unless proper steps are taken with the proper consultation with the office of the Attorney General—I am not talking about a person now, I am talking about the office—these measures would be ineffective. Unless this is done, it would be ineffective.

It is puerile, even to suggest that because misdeeds of certain PNM members, some 20 years ago—well, 20 years ago, none of those are around now—that

corrupt acts on the part of officials associated with the UNC Government are excusable. It is no excuse, it is infantile to say, “PNM did it, so we could do it now.” That cannot be correct. That is not governance at all. That is not progress.

Mr. President, I agree with the saying that corruption and poor governance go together. Just look at what is happening to our resources. How are we to take the Minister of Finance seriously when he says, in all righteousness, at page 16 of his presentation, and I quote:

“...I want to assure the national population that the transactions involving the Rum Division of Caroni and Tanteak were done in a most transparent manner, without political interference...”

How can we rationalize and reconcile this statement with the revelations by the Attorney General of the levels of corruption which are rampant in the Government and with the fact that the Solicitor General has given an opinion that these two transactions are illegal? How do we reconcile that?

How are we to take the Minister of Finance seriously when he says at page 17 of the Budget Statement, and I quote:

“I am satisfied that everyone on this side is committed to dealing with any acts of corruption on the basis of fact.”

Facts have been presented to the Government and nothing has been done. It is only because of the power struggle within the UNC that the Attorney General is now coming out on the side of prosecuting his corrupt colleagues and echoing the concerns of the PNM in this respect. It is only because of the power struggle. Make no bones about it.

Mr. President, I say this because the acts of corruption which he has identified did not occur yesterday; a lot of it was brought to his attention during the Government's 1995—2000 tenure, by his own admission. He did not do anything about them and went back into office after campaigning with these corrupt individuals. He has laid a serious indictment against the Government, including himself, for being part of that organization in which corruption has taken on epidemic proportions. He sat back and did nothing all this time. Where is the honesty and integrity? Where is it? *[Interruption]* You take it easy, your turn is coming.

While I do not support the actions of anyone, I will agree with the Minister of Finance when he said that the disclosures with respect to Clico—as I have read in the newspapers—by Mr. Sudama reading something from 1997/98, now into the record of the Parliament, was a disgraceful act. I agree with that. Do you know

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why? The gentleman was there all the time in the Government with all these facts before him and never said anything. It is only when he is there in his power struggle he comes out with this. Where is the honesty and integrity? Where is it? [*Desk thumping*] What is he trying to do there? A lot of poor people's pensions and other moneys are tied up in this institution. Why should he want to do that at this time just in pursuit of his power struggle? I think that was a disgraceful act and that tells you what is on the other side. They are all working together, none has said, "Look, get out of here. This kind of behaviour we cannot take." Nobody has said that yet, not even from the head come down.

Mr. President, after what has been going on in the UNC, over these last five years—I should say almost six years—I thank the Lord that I am a member of the PNM. I am happy with my little house on the hill in Trinidad and Tobago.

3.10 p.m.

In respect of tourism, the Minister has stated that there is need to provide some strategic direction for the next few years, with respect to long-term development of the sector. He has identified the drafting of legislation, in the interim, to take care of a certain aspect. However, nowhere has our Minister of Finance linked our national airline to the tourism thrust. The Minister has failed to identify any measures which should be put in place to ensure that our civil aviation system, which was recently downgraded to Category 2, is restored to Category 1 status.

BWIA has a significant role to play in the overall tourism picture. As it stands at present, the airline is denied any significant route expansion or code-sharing with other international airlines because of the downgrade and nothing has been said about this.

Now the Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Manpower Planning and Industrial Relations has said certain things. I would say that I like the Minister. He has the right spirit, but I think that his soul is in the wrong place. In his contribution, he noted that nowhere in our contributions did the PNM show what we would do and what our plans were for the economy, or words to that effect. In so saying, he was making the same mistake that the Minister of Finance has made. They were both under the impression that they were on an election campaign. Perhaps they are.

What they failed to realize is that the PNM's development plans and fiscal policies are still being implemented by this present Government. For example, when the Minister of Finance spoke of growth in the economy of 6.4 per cent in 2000 and 4.2 per cent in 2001, that growth was started in 1994, under a PNM

government, after years of measures directed at stabilizing the economy during the economic decline.

This is not something that happened overnight. You put good measures in place and the others come and run with it. In fact, the present Prime Minister highly commended the PNM government for the handling of the economy and the tight control of government spending, in his speech at Tidco's Seminar in Boston in 1997. So that, in the face of all this squandering of the country's resources by this Government, the economy continues to grow because of the initiatives put in place by the PNM.

The Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Manpower Planning and Industrial Relations was very vocal in his condemnation of bacchanal and scandal. We cannot get away from that because that is what we are getting from this Government. We cannot get away from it. Let me assure the Minister that we are all disgusted with it. I am disgusted with it. I am disgusted with what is passing for governance in this country.

The whole country is concerned about the recent revelations. I have to mention the Attorney General because, while I am not so enamoured of his new-found concern, nevertheless he has expressed concern, which means that there is a concern. It is not something he has made up. Whether he is using it now for his own purposes or not, he has expressed concern to the extent that he has requisitioned a forensic report. We are hearing about a report from a Mr. Lindquist and millions of dollars have been spent on obtaining this report and other reports of corruption of one form or another. Millions of dollars will continue to be spent unless something is done and done quickly.

There is the big fuss and the hon. Minister was quite disturbed over the fact that a photograph was presented in the other place. That has caused questions to be raised in the minds of others. These questions have not yet been answered. We need to be told. We need to have answers. We do not want wishy-washy answers. We want to get answers, and direct answers. The people whom we serve, the people for whom we speak are also asking for answers. No answer has as yet been forthcoming as to who the owners are.

While we need answers to these questions, Mr. President, we need more answers to more pressing questions like, why has the North/West Regional Health Authority been used as though it is a privately-owned institution? We need answers on that. When we get answers, we need action. We do not want people to say, "Look here, I am not at fault." We do not want that. Organizations are being

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paid large sums of money by this Government to investigate these matters and we want the answers. We want action.

We want to be told why people are paid by this institution stipends or consultancy fees, despite the fact that these persons are employed on contract, which excludes such activities. We want answers to that. We are reading in the newspapers about contracts and we are seeing that such contracts exclude employment elsewhere. We are seeing that this institution is being used to dole out funds as though it were a private institution.

The Chief Executive Officer of this institution has been breaching—we have seen the report which has been laid before us—every rule and regulation governing this institution.

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. D. Montano*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. G. Morean: The chairman of this institution has been breaching every rule and regulation governing this institution and he says he has done nothing wrong. The fellow who sits here. People unlawfully remove funds from the North West Regional Health Authority and the chairman just tells them to put back the money and go back to work. How can we sit by and allow that? The chairman has the temerity to say that he has done nothing wrong.

The Minister of Finance was a banker and he knows what happens to people in the bank. They have this problem all the time in the bank. I have handled many such problems. They deal with them quietly, but the people have to walk. They are not going to keep them on their payroll and say, "Pay back the client's money and stay." They are not going to do that.

So, Mr. President, when we are faced with such occurrences, we have to ask where is the good governance. We have the answer to that, too. There is none.

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Mr. President, I want to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance on the presentation of his maiden budget. This budget statement touches upon many topics and the Minister has attracted both fire and light. I am sure that he recognizes that in this exemplary Chamber—in this Chamber at any rate—the priorities are generally observed. There is neither smoke nor brimstone and the fire only seeks to light up some of the dark and shady places that the Minister must enter in his book of numbers.

Sen. Daly had a severe but entertaining critique of the proposed special audit and controls unit of the Ministry of Finance. He referred to the overseer in Sen. King's plantation economy and his call for strict, meticulous, visible and undeviating tendering procedures are not hostile. They are in accord with the Minister's stated stance against the abuse of power or corruption in the public sector.

The Minister's own comments make it clear that he, too, knows that it is better to prevent white colour crime, raids on the public purse, crimes against every one of us, than to chase after them when the money has been laundered, camouflaged or spent.

Incidentally, I am disturbed when calls for investigation or enquiry are dismissed by the glib and unreasonable advice that, "If you have evidence, take it to the police or the Director of Public Prosecutions." If you have evidence, they say. But what they mean is, if you have proof. Mr. President, you do not have to have proof to ask for an investigation. You are asking for an investigation because you do not have proof.

3.25 p.m.

In the case of the missing dancer, the accused was convicted of murder even though there was no body and in spite of the fact that there was no Loomat to say: "He see Boysie." Somebody acted on the reasonable inference that a crime had been committed, investigations were then conducted, leading to charges and to conviction.

Mr. President, if it looks to high heaven and, perhaps, even stinks to high heaven, that a crime has been committed, and that there are indications as to where the perpetrators may be found, we have a perfect right to call for an investigation or enquiry. The call cannot be dismissed by the bland suggestion that if you have evidence—meaning proof—go to the police. That is not what our Government is there for.

If we are raising questions, if we have doubts, we call for an investigation or an enquiry, do not shunt us off with: "If you have proof go to the police." When Prince Hamlet said that something was rotten in the state of Denmark, he had no proof at all that there was shame and scandal in the family. When his father's ghost came and told him what had happened, all he could say was: "Oh my prophetic soul, my uncle." But he could not act on that. He could not take it to the DPP. He could not take it to the police. It pushed him to pursue his investigations.

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I should add, in tribute to Shakespeare's understanding of modern sinister realpolitik, that after Hamlet investigated and set traps and got proof, the machinery of state was used to project him as emotionally disturbed to ship him out of the country.

Sen. Daly: He must be Dhanraj?

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: And to make sure none of the allegations reached the public ear. But all of this, of course, Mr. President, is only literature and art, and in a knowledge-based economy, literature and art are irrelevant.

I speak in this ironic and sarcastic vein because of the budget's attitude to the National Trust and to the Nelson Island Project. I feel that the attitude to the National Trust in the budget casts doubt on whether the other promises made about art and culture will be fulfilled if there is the slightest need to cut back spending. Mr. President, in this very Senate, I read all about the massive responsibilities of the National Trust with respect to the national heritage, to buildings, to places, to the memory of people. I read it out at length and now I am looking in the budget for some reference to the National Trust. The Chairman of the National Trust tells me that he thinks he is getting \$100,000.

Mr. President, I looked in the Medium Term Framework and I saw that they said for 2002/2004, Nelson Island Project is going to go on. But I see no money allocated anywhere for the Nelson Island Project. I hope that I am blind or it is only an oversight, but I am very depressed about some of the promises—very nice promises—being made to art and culture.

The Minister is determined that everyone should benefit from the material resources that it is this country's good fortune to discover and—to a limited extent—possess. I, therefore, join the hon. Senators who have already welcomed the measures in the budget that offer relief to those who suffer most from poverty, homelessness and a lack of care. Mr. President, some of these charities are premised on assumptions that I would not really like to have. I do not want to think that the poor will always be with us. I look forward to the end of gender oppression in all its forms. So I set much more store, by measures that point to the eventual creation of a society where there is no need to deliver Christmas hampers to the poor, or to legislate charitable reliefs, year after budgetary year, for those who are disadvantaged. That is just putting plasters on sores, year after year, and at the very best, you are maintaining the status quo of poverty and underprivilege. I am looking in the budget for measures that are going to remedy this situation, and bring us to a point where you do not have to offer charity of this sort. You are

empowering people to help themselves. You are giving people opportunity to learn and opportunity to work.

Mr. President, I cannot help observing that although the budget does, indeed, speak of empowering people to help themselves, and although it boasts—perhaps quite rightly—that the Government has done more than any other government to promote social equity, the measures with the big numbers do more for those who are rich than for the poor majority, whose cheap labour is partly responsible for the swelling GDP, and the cleavage between rich and poor. Those are some general remarks.

I am very happy to see—and it is not only in the budget—that this Government has taken an interest in sport, that it tries to organize competitions, it tries to provide facilities, it is addressing the young people and saying “Listen, come out. I commend the Government for this, not only in the budget, but even before that. I do that for a number of reasons. One of them is that in the kind of society that has evolved over the last few years, sport might be the only, and the last place where you have to perform and be seen to perform, in order to get rewarded. Sport might be the only place where teamwork, courage, hope, persistence, dedication, work, discipline, talent all count; and where no one can scam you or deny you of what you have earned. It is the last area of sanity, the last area where idealism can operate. That is one of the reasons I am happy that this Government is spending money on sport and community activities. Because, at least, people are getting a chance to live as if they are living in a decent world.

I know that these four stadiums—the scholars among us say stadia, but, Mr. President, I really cannot say stadia—and for a long time we wanted to know who owned them, who built them, how much they cost and what are the terms. We never heard anything about it in Parliament. And I thought it was a certain gentleman, but apparently it is not. What I heard or saw in yesterday's *Express*, makes me want to ask some questions, or at least to have the questions that have been asked, answered. According to Minister Ramsaran in yesterday's *Express*, the stadiums cost \$369 million—the four stadiums. With respect to the cost, Government did not put out a cent. The cost was totally covered by RGM, which is a company formed by Royal Bank, Guardian Life and Mutual Life. The arrangement is that we will pay money for 15 years after which the stadiums will belong to us.

Now I am a little worried. The Minister says that one payment of \$73 million has been paid. I want to know if we are making 15 payments of \$73 million—I do

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not have a computer, but I do mental arithmetic and I think that comes out to a little over a billion. Mr. President, for that you could get a half of a terminal building. *[Laughter]* I would really like to get answers to the arrangements that have been made about the stadiums. If the interpretation that one makes on reading this—I think the Minister would tell us that too, who gets the advertising revenue.

Mr. President, I do not want to be distracted from my commendation of the Government for putting emphasis on providing facilities for sports. I would like to encourage them to carry this further and to build proper facilities in Cedros, Point Fortin, La Brea—all over the country. These facilities would form a chain for community activities, for young people to know about one another; for young people to find out their own strengths; for young people to express themselves and discover their originality. Who knows, Mr. President, it may lead to young people waking up to an interest in politics and stepping forward to rescue us from the tired old alliances and mis-alliances of the politics of privilege, insecurity, lack of self-respect and lack of self-knowledge which we see being played out, year after year among our generation.

I really hope that through their participation in sport, the young people will get a sense of their own strength and be able to say: “A pox on all of you; this is our society, we have the power, we are going to build”. The Under-17 Championship is very interesting to me because I like football but also because, contrary to what I thought might have happened, you cannot get a ticket to go. For every match, the place is full—cheap or no cheap—people are turning out. I just want to warn the political parties that the people are turning out because they want to pay tribute to the qualities I have mentioned above, which they see being exhibited on the playing field. They are fed up with the other qualities which operate in their own society. These matches give them a recess, a time to get away from a very depressing scene.

Of course, I lament the habit of the press of degrading these things. If I see an article that says: “Junior Soca Warriors Playing” I am not reading that article. I do not know who are the Junior Soca Warriors. I never knew who was the Strike Squad! I do not know who are the Reggae Boys! I do not know who are the Samba Boys! Why do we have to get these stupid names to describe something serious? Why do we try to degrade everything into this kind of joke? The Under-17 Championship has presented to this country two very important spectacles: when one looks at the maturity, poise and skill and obvious dedication of these young people from all over the world, I am sorry I would die and not see what

these people make of themselves in time to come. I really feel proud and encouraged by the way in which young people are comporting themselves.

3.40 p.m.

The second thing is, I do care if there was skulduggery, but I do not think that the people who were organizing the competition are into any skulduggery. This competition moved so smoothly that it strengthens my view that there are skills in this country that the Government does not use in the whoring after foreign consultants and foreign experts to do everything. These people who have organized the football have said that we have the skills to do it better than anybody else, or just as well as anybody else.

Mr. President, to come to some of the items in the budget, I have misgivings about the nature of foreign investment in our economy. The first thing I note is that they invest in the sure things. All of them want to invest in the energy sector. None of them will come and say, we want to set up a peanut farm here and we want to produce salted peanuts. None of them is saying you people in Trinidad eat a lot of dhal, channa and red beans and you have middle men who are importing this from all over the world, why do you not grow your own channa, dhal and red beans? We are putting money to grow dhal, channa and red beans, we want to invest. Why does the Government not tell the foreign investors we need dhal, channa and red beans, and we need rice. If you have money to invest come and invest. That is where we want you to invest. Do not come and say they have natural gas, let us invest there, that is a sure thing. Make them take risks, make them work for their profits. Make them wonder in the night whether it would work out. Make them develop human relationships with the workers so that when they fall down and die, they would not say they should have buckled up. Make them know that they are going into partnership with a workforce to produce something that the people of the country need.

I am worried about the direction of foreign investments, and I am worried about our failure to get up and tell them what it is we want. I want to quote a paragraph from a book that came out in 1971. It is called: *The Mechanics of Independence*. It is written by the present President, and a former Prime Minister. This book came out in 1971, and as somebody involved in politics and an economist, he offered a view as to one of the problems that we have to deal with in developing our economy. He says:

“...the main problem confronting Caribbean countries, whose development has long depended on external capital, is the extent to which foreign

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corporations can fit into the perspectives and principles of national development plans.”

He is saying you must have a national development plan. When people want to come and invest, you must ask them to make their operation fit into the perspectives and principles of these national development plans. They cannot come and say they would be making hoolahoop. Hoolahoop is not in our development plan. Even if they say they would bring all the raw materials and people from Colombia and Haiti to work on those things, we do not want that. We did not ask for that.

“Domestication of the foreign firm is an attempt to induce it to accept the same obligations as a domestic owner. This means basically sympathy with and acceptance of the social and economic goals of the host country.”

He goes on to talk about the responsibility of Government to have a vision of what they want to do with their society, and to ask the people who want to invest in the country to fit into our vision about how we want this society to develop.

Mr. President, I have looked at the Minister’s five-prong diversification thrust. It sounds okay, but they share certain characteristics, and one of those is utter dependence upon foreign capital. Some of the key terms being used—and we talk about these drivers of the economy—are diversification, alleviation of poverty, sustainable development.

Mr. President, I cannot go and discuss all those terms. I will get into too much trouble because I will get into enough trouble discussing one of them: sustainable development. What does sustainable development mean to me? When I take the word “sustainable”, to me, sustainable means it is able to carry on itself. Sustainable implies it can generate or reproduce. A thing is not sustainable if it cannot carry on itself after a while, and if it cannot reproduce or generate. It has to be an organism that is capable of growth, development and adaptation. That is one part that sustainable means to me. While development may take place in sectors, the ultimate value and meaning of development has to be that it is development for the society as a whole, and not for any particular class or tribe in it. When I look at these five main drivers of diversification, they fail the test. They do not represent anything that I mean by sustainable development.

To be harsh, the proposals for a National Science and Technology Park are really for a science export processing zone, and I will come to the one-stop shop in agriculture and to the tourism thrust in a minute. I have already spoken about controlled development to provide further incentives to manufacturing, to

facilitate retooling, expansion and new investment with it. I want something more specific than that.

I want to be told that we are going to encourage certain kinds of manufactures based upon indigenous material, and I want to encourage manufacture based upon agricultural products. I want men to start making furniture out of coconut tree trunks. I am not giving away my teak. I am going to use my teak to do what they do overseas, make teak veneer furniture and make people feel it is teak they are buying and double up, treble up, quadruple up on the value of my teak. Teak is a wood of prestige. I want people to go into manufactures that are going to use and multiply the natural resources of the country.

Mr. President, I am very unhappy about the expensive dependence upon foreign consultants in all of this, especially in areas like education, where people from overseas come and design our schools. They do not know when the breeze blows, the angle at which the sun comes, how hot it is. They do not know anything about when it is shade and when it is not shade, they do not know what it is our capacity to withstand heat. They do not know anything about solar energy, and they are coming to design our schools, They do not know about our children, they do not know about our history, they do not know the needs, but they are coming to design our curriculum. It is very dangerous in certain parts of the economy and the society to have this kind of reliance upon these foreign experts, and we could do with the money.

I am unhappy about the continued faith in tourism as a means of diversifying the economy. I am worried about the blurring of distinction in all that is being said about education, the distinction between becoming an educated person and getting training in certain skills, training to have certain kinds of expertise. Training is only one component in education, and an educated man will make a lot more of training than somebody who is just trained. When I look at some of the things that are being said about education, and some of the provisions that are being made, I feel that we have lost sight of the distinction between education and training, and I feel that we are tending to fall victim to the economism of the world, victim to the so-called realistic view of the world, to the so-called realistic view of human possibility which is really a cynical view of human possibility, of human development and what constitutes human satisfaction and fulfilment.

Sen. Daly touched on the question of fulfilment, of what is happiness and what is the good life when he said that if he were not given the opportunity to serve in the Senate, that would give him more time to go to Mayaro. Mr. President, when he said that, I really felt good. Sometimes I feel the same way. I

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am not dealing with that—I am going to Cedros. I could go down there, take breeze, think, write, relate to people, get out of the hustle; catch fish.

Mr. President, one only has “three-score and ten” if one is lucky. You cannot spend your life hustling, and we are making plans for the development of the society that are turning our people into individualists, hustlers, and economic creatures, and we are denying so many other sides of the human being that are there to be developed and to enjoy. Mr. President, that is my preamble.

My real title is culture, education, and agriculture. My motif and purpose are to suggest an educated approach to agriculture and an organic approach to education.

3.55 p.m.

In what I have to say, Mr. President, there will be an underlying insistence—because I know I would not finish talk about these three things—on a connection between culture, education and agriculture and the fact that we need to hold on to that connection if we are to take our place as a new people and a new society with special gifts and qualities to bring to the world. These gifts were defiantly claimed by Mr. C.L.R. James one year when some Black Power people started to attack him. He said, “I doh care what you say. We as a people, for better or for worse, and we could not help it, have a grounding in Western civilization that makes us insiders and outsiders at the same time.” He said also, “We have”—he did not say it, he meant it—“ancestral legacies to draw upon—Africa, India, China, other parts of Europe—that will protect us from mental colonization by any one of the forces acting upon us.”

We have so much to draw upon that not one of them could control us and turn us into robots. We have also a very wonderful history of the meeting of peoples and cultures that makes us the forerunners of a cross-cultural civilization. We are the people who are becoming naturally in our contexts—we do not have to travel to be it—citizens of the world. The possession of those gifts and qualities, Mr. President, makes it very necessary for us to see ourselves as inventors and creators. We must not put ourselves in the way of people making us and making us over and telling us what to do. We have something to teach the world about social development, about cultural development, about how to exist in the world with other people, and we are bringing in a set of—I was going to say bandits—businessmen from abroad with their own business plans and policies.

We are bringing educators from abroad. Now “ah” hear we have “fellas” from Cambridge coming to teach the special form children Information Technology.

We are bringing “fellas” to run the post office and now we decide we want IT centres all over the place. “Dey closing down post office like mad”, now we want information technology centres! New Zealand is “ah real back ah de way place”. They “doh know” anything about future development. “You bring some Trinidadians or West Indians there to sit and talk about how we going”, they would have told you your post office development has to be Internet-based. “So doh go and spend all da money building big post office all about, and then two years later yuh fin’ out, because some foreign expert tell yuh ‘Ey, Internet is de way to go’. We could ah tell yuh dat before yuh give TTPost the contract.”

Mr. President, the Minister has indicated that amendments to the Tourism Development Act will be brought to further assist the promotion and advertisement of tourism. I believe this will be money wasted, but I will leave that for now. I just want to look at the Tourism Development Act and see what it gives to tourism projects. The Tourism Development Act gives a wide range of customs and excise duty exemptions—building materials and articles of tourism equipment. The Tourism Development Act gives tax benefits.

A tax exemption period has been granted in respect of that project, et cetera, tax exemption for a number of years on the approved tourism project. So customs and excise duty exemptions, in large measure, tax benefits, even the provision—and the tax benefit could be retrospective. When you look at the schedules you see how extensive the concessions are, how much revenue is foregone and “ah not” counting the money spent paying people in Tidco. My colleague knows how the Tidco money is spent. So look at what we are doing for the tourism projects.

Now, I want to look at the tourism arrivals. “What are we giving up all this revenue for?” “Why are we allowing these men to build hotels and buy knife an’ fork and all kind ah China and air-conditioning equipment?” Why are we doing all of that? Look at the arrivals—January to June 2000—visitors. Mr. President, this is from Travel Bulletin Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Planning and Development Central Statistical Office, Volume II No. 258. I am supplementing it with a sheet that they sent relating to the period January to June 2000. The visitor arrivals from January to June 1999—174,328; hotel holiday—28,260; private holiday—94,408; business holiday—30,752; residents, just travelling up and down—and we should not really include that in the total figure—98,511. The figures are very similar to 1999/2000 and 2001.

What the figures tell us is that it is the ordinary people of Trinidad and Tobago, people who used to live here and who are now living in Toronto, New

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York, DC and all over the place, who come back for Carnival, for Divali, for Christmas, for the new year, and who come back to “lime” with their partners from time to time. They make up the bulk of the tourists to Trinidad and Tobago and you “doh” have to advertise for them. Yuh “doh need” a Tidco to bring them in. More than half the tourist arrivals is a captive bunch of tourists who are coming back home to spend money.

I feel that if you have a constructive attitude to tourism and you look at those figures, you are going to say, “I want to do something for those people. I am going to target them. I will get BWIA to charter air flights for them. I going to offer them investment opportunities. Those are the people who I am going to target for investment opportunities.” Use your “salt-water Trinis”, Mr. President, in your tourist industry and use them to invest in your economy.

The point I want to make, however, is that tourism at present makes a small contribution to the economy, and this faith in continued investment in the building of hotels and more hotel rooms, et cetera, is like “minin’ ah mark in whe-whe. Yuh sit down dey on dis mark and week after week yuh losing and yuh hoping one day yuh go win. You jus’ mindin’ it. You will mind it until yuh broke, and if yuh mind it until you win, what you win will never cover what yuh spend”, so I do not understand this faith. “Maybe Yesenia tell dem something.” I “doh” understand this faith that is demonstrated in the massive investments in tourism. Tourism does not have a fraction of the importance of agriculture to the economy at the present time and it will not have even a fraction of the importance of agriculture to the economy in the future.

I am calling upon the Government to make good the promise that we extracted very vaguely from a previous Minister of Finance to be logical. Since tourism does not have a fraction of the importance of agriculture, we want you to come to this Senate with a Bill called the Agriculture Development Bill, outlining in loving and lavish detail all the concessions and allowances that you are going to give for approved tourism projects. We want an Agriculture Development Bill corresponding to the Tourism Development Bill, at least equal in incentive and encouragement to agriculture.

Mr. President, I am not in the habit of using the *Express* for research or any of the newspapers. “I doh trust dem”, but sometimes they have news and they have things that happen—they get them recorded. In this morning’s *Express*, there I was sitting trying to write my speech—“Farmers hit hard by low prices”, Wednesday, September 26, 2001:

“The National Food Producers Association (NFPA) is calling on Government to set up plants to process fruits and vegetables, especially when there is a glut on the market.”

They are calling on Government to set up plants to process fruits and vegetables when there is a glut on the market.

“We do not need a one-stop agriculture shop, we need processing plants and we need the rice industry to be resuscitated...”

This is the NFPA President, Mr. Chaitram Gayah. He lamented that he went to the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) wholesale market, Debe, on Thursday and there was a glut.

“‘I had to give away my ochro at 30 to 40 for \$2. Tomatoes dropped to \$1 and \$2 a pound, while bodi sold for two bundles for \$1, and cabbage went down to .75 cents a pound.’

‘What are we farmers getting for our labour? How can we meet our loans payment when we have to give away our produce?’

But a spokesperson for Namdevco...said the current prices for vegetables were ‘good’. ‘Those prices are the wholesale prices, so that’s not as bad as in the dry season around May,’...”

The farmers of this country need the kind of encouragement that is being given to the hoteliers and the people who are building these tourism projects. Mr. President, I realize I will have to do something about time, so I am going to do a bit of cutting. [*Laughter*] Oh, I reminded you?

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. Prof. K. Ramchand: Thank you for the extra hour, half-hour, Mr. President. [*Laughter*] Mr. President, former Senator John Spence has circulated a paper on the proposal for the creation of an agricultural development corporation and I will pass this on to the Minister for his consideration.

I have to speed up and add that I am seeing agriculture not only as more and more necessary for ensuring the food supply, because what we have learned in the

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last few weeks is that the world is very unstable and things can happen, over which you have absolutely no control. However, the one thing you could have control of is your agriculture, and you can make a substantial contribution to the security of your citizens if you encourage agriculture in the first instance as having to do with the food supply, if you see Trinidad and Tobago as a market basket for the rest of the Caribbean. As it is, I am eating Grenadian tomatoes, St. Kitts this, peanuts from St. Vincent, “all kind ah t’ing”—small-islanders feeding us! We should be feeding them. What we need is to encourage our farmers and agriculturists.

In addition to the economic and the psychological benefits, I just want to say briefly that the life in agriculture, which has had a very bad historical press because we are ex-slaves and ex-indentures, is a life that leads to serenity, a life that leads to being at peace with yourself, a life that puts you in touch with the land and with the seasons, a life that teaches you respect for the environment, for the rivers, for the forests and for the water supply. I go to the supermarket and I see everybody selling bottles of water—bottled water! Why? Do we not have enough respect and care for the environment, our rivers, our forests and our water supply?

Why can a small country like this not guarantee safe drinking water in the taps in our house? Why are all these—bandit is one of my favourite words—people being allowed to sell bottled water? Now it is becoming a thing of prestige. People come by me and say they want some water. I say, “Well, okay.” They say, “Dah is bottled?” “Ah say, ‘No, I bottle de water mihsself’ out of my tap.” [Laughter] They want Aqua Pur and they want this other “kind ah thing”. Why, Mr. President, can this country not provide safe drinking water for citizens? Is because we “nastyng up de rivers”? “We polluting the air.” “We doh care.” “We destroying the forests.” So we have to take a different attitude to the land and many things will come right to us, and we must begin with agriculture.

Mr. President, I have to hasten into education—some very brief comments on Minister Augustus’ statements. The circular that he spoke about, which allowed people to write the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) at age 14 and 15, was not intended to give people two or three chances at the examination. The purpose of that circular was to free up the principals and the teachers and to say, “Do not rush these children to the 11-plus regardless. If in first or even second year you discover that this child needs special help and needs to be slowed down, slow him down. Doh worry, he could write the examination when he is 15.” That is what

that was. It was an intention to encourage schools and teachers to discover problems at an early time and deal with them early.

So I do not think it is a great thing to “leh everybody rush up and write de SEA at 12 and then dump dem in the secondary school”, because you are now placing the problem of remediation several years later and in a quite different place from where those problems started. That old circular was trying to deal with the problem when and where it happened and would have led to a freeing-up within the secondary school; but, I “doh” know why, we went the other way. The much-vaunted abolition of the CEE and replacement by SEA, I “doh” care which one is the better examination.

The whole intention behind the abolition of the examination, not—we “doh” want to abolish CEE, we want to abolish the examination, and we wanted to tell our children, “When you go to school, sing song, play music, paint, draw, play games, develop emotionally, find yourself. Be human beings.” That is what we want to tell them and “Do not bother with your parents who trying to push yuh to take Common Entrance to pass de 11-plus to get into QRC or Fatima or Presentation, Chaguanas.”

4.15 p.m.

Forget that. Relax, you are a child. Be a child. You have riches. Develop those riches. That was the intention. So come and tell me you moved the CE and you have the SEA and that is wonderful, six of one, half a dozen of the other. Mr. President, I look forward to a day when the exam will be abolished, entirely. I do not even care about the continuous assessment. Just abolish the exam and make sure you have a wide range of secondary schools waiting there and, when the child's primary education is over, he moves naturally into the appropriate secondary school. That is what we need.

That is what universal secondary education ought to be about. It ought to be about creating a whole different set of secondary schools to satisfy the attitudes and needs and abilities of our population. So, I have some reservations about what is going on with the Secondary Education Modification Programme (SEMP) where the intention is to produce some monolithic model and all the secondary schools in the country would be the same. All those millions of dollars would be wasted if, at the end of the day, they ever come out—which I doubt—with this curriculum which every secondary school—it is just like the same book thing.

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This country has different kinds of communities, different kinds of people, varying abilities, and so forth, and we have the opportunity to study those and develop a secondary system that will catch them all at a later stage in later secondary education. So we have early secondary education, and later secondary education; the various levelling out will go on as we move on to the tertiary institutions.

Mr. President, I have some stuff to say about the dollar for dollar plan and tertiary education, but want to interject at this point, a plea for the poor people of Icacos who, for the last five years, have not had a school. On February 11, 1998 a beam at the Icacos Government School fell rendering the building unsafe. The children were then accommodated at the Tabernacle of Prayer Church Hall. They began there in April of 1998. The church gave the hall free of all rental to the Government and told the Government, come here, put in some fans, put in some furniture, seal up the building, make it a bit soundproof, fix it up and use it. It was not done.

This went on with the children being housed in these temporary and uncomfortable quarters until this year when they wrote to the Minister saying, “Please, what are you doing about our school?” They got a reply that the school was scheduled for construction in the 1999—2000 programme. It did not happen. They wrote again. They were told that it is now in the 2000—2001 programme. The church got fed up. The church wrote to the Ministry saying, “For years children have been suffering in this place. You have not done anything about the space. We are giving you a deadline up to July of 2001 to do something about it. Let us know what you recall doing about it. Tell us you are building the school.”

The Ministry’s response to that was to hire a maxi-taxi at \$20,000 a month, not a Cedros maxi, you know. I do not know whose maxi it is, but one at \$20,000 a month to transfer the children from the Icacos Government School to the RC School in Fullerton Village at great inconvenience to the villagers.

The church now wrote back and said, “Oh God! I beg you. We gave you a deadline, but come back. Help out the children. Put them back in the church.” And the village and the church are now on their knees begging the Government, “Do not put us to this inconvenience. If you have \$20,000 a month to spare, bring them back in the church hall, fix up the church hall and tell us that you will build the school this year.” Mr. President, I am begging the Minister of Finance to look into the plight of the villagers of Icacos and see whether some acceleration can be done to give them a school in the year 2001—2002.

Mr. President: Three minutes, Senator.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Oh. Well, Mr. President, I have said what I have to say about tourism, I have said something about agriculture. I have implied a number of things about education and, behind what I have to say about education is the question of what is education and what is education for and, who is the educated person.

I am going to use my last two minutes to talk about a man called John Jacob Thomas. For the last three years I have been nominating John Jacob Thomas for a Trinity Cross posthumously. I do not know who says no, but they said no, no, no! John Jacob Thomas, 1840—1889, Mr. President, was the first black intellectual we produced. He was one of the earliest graduates of the system of education established after emancipation and, he was its first major critic. His expertise in Caribbean linguistics and history was the result of determined self-education and original thinking at a time when the intention of the colonial authorities was to use the schools as an instrument for producing black Englishmen.

Thomas was the ancestor in outlook and in accomplishment of George Padmore and C.L.R. James. In 1869, Thomas produced a book called *The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar*, and this book was written to deal with practical social problems, but it was a work of high and systematic scholarship, all the more remarkable for having been done by a self-taught linguist.

Thomas argued that the Creole or the Patois was a language and he proceeded to describe its phonetic system and its spelling, the sources and the development of its vocabulary, its grammatical forms and their use and function; and that book today is regarded as the first text in Caribbean linguistics. When, Mr. President, the British historian, Mr. Froude, visited the islands and published his book, *The English in the West Indies* about that visit in 1888, John Jacob Thomas replied to that book in a work entitled, *Froudacity, West Indian Fables Explained*. It was published in London in 1889.

Thomas's book answers Froude's imperialist grime by going over the Englishman's text closely and patiently—

Mr. President: We will break for tea at this stage. This sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.25 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.02 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Minister of Transport, the Minister of Tourism and Tobago Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Jearlean John): Mr. President, I consider it an honour to stand in this Senate today to present my own contribution to the debate on the national budget. I take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance on all the thought that went into this budget, the breadth of the consultation and, really, his stamina in standing here for three hours to deliver what, in effect, is a good budget, which attempted to leave no one behind.

I have sat here for the last two days of the debate. More recently, Sen. Morean, in her contribution, said that Senators on the Government side seemed peeved that the Opposition had not sought to pat the Minister of Finance on his back; but it is not so. Yesterday Sen. London said that we subscribe to the Westminster system of government and, as such, that system is adversarial. Of course, Mr. President, you reminded him that it was adversarial but, at least, there is a certain amount of dignity that goes with that.

Sen. Glenda Morean was one of the few Senators who, in their contribution, pointed out that the Minister of Finance should have taken into consideration the events of September 11 and changed direction. This budget was delivered on September 14.

As a perennial student of management, I have been up many nights looking at the various business news on the cable channels and, as recent as early this morning, I saw Mr. Alan Greenspan saying that he was going to give it a week. He is going to give it a week.

Of course, I expect that the bright technocrats we talk about today in the Senate, will be busy with their scenario analyses and their econometric modelling and, basically, that is what you do in preparation. You do not go all helter-skelter—we do not run our houses that way—and decide that we are going to take a 180-degree turn and change the whole course of things. Of course, we have to be aware of what is happening on the world stage. I mean, stocks are falling, but there are still some encouraging signs, because we are talking about the major economy of the world. Sen. Gillette can correct me, because I know that he is an avid watcher of the stock exchange in New York [*Laughter*] and maybe Sen. Daly, but I know that on Monday there was some bit of recovery and yesterday the Dow and the NASDAQ were up again and the SMP 500 was also up, so you can see that America will not allow its economy to go to hell in a basket.

This brings me to a little article I saw in the Tuesday *Guardian*, a letter to the editor written by Lystra Lythe; I do not know if that was an alias. It states:

“America has sneezed—try to avoid cold

The Mighty Sparrow said, ‘When America sneezes, the world catches the cold. Even if the US Government pumps a lot of money into the economy, it will affect people all around the world.’ An admirable philosophical statement from a highly travelled and great calypsonian, and how true it is.”

This sounded somewhat like some of the dramatic phrases being used in the Senate, a bit of high drama, so when I saw this yesterday, I thought that I must bring it to the attention of the Senate.

The article goes on:

“Recession will hit us. Jobs will be lost. New jobs will not be created. New investments will be sparse. Homes will be broken.”

Well, it did not say marriages here.

“Mortgagees will suffer again. Squatting will increase. Crime will increase...

The politicians will be enemy number one, so Mr. Politician, practise the oath you took and come up with something to avoid the cold now, for America has sneezed!”

Basically, when Minister Yetming came to this honourable Senate he sought at that time to factor in the events of September 11. He told us that he was aware, as the whole world is and they are all looking. He said that at the time he was reading the budget, it was too early to assess and analyze what really was the fallout. Yes, we are seeing business in the airline industry taking a plunge, but on the other side you see for businesses in the defence sector, money is being pumped into them. Of course, we have to be very vigilant. We have to continue with the scenario analysis, but we cannot be too quick to start to tweak the economy.

Mr. President, coming back to what I mentioned before, the adversarial way sometimes in which we attend to our business, all of this is because, again, of the events of September 11. They impacted on us in a particular way. I think Sen. Daly based his whole contribution, more or less, on that particular date also. The cover of last week's edition of *Newsweek* said: “One nation, indivisible.”

What we are seeing happening now is a coming together of all the forces in America to really make America stronger; they are all coming together as Americans. Maybe it is not too bad a model to look at. I am not saying that we do not have to have divergent views, but if something is good, it is good, and if the

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man write—sorry—the hon. Senator wrote a good budget [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] and he said “One People, One Nation: Leaving No One Behind”, at the end of three hours, we came away with that feeling, that really he tried to leave no one behind. I see nothing wrong in us saying, “Yes, this was, indeed, a good budget.” [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, it is within that context from the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Tourism and Tobago Affairs that I have based my own contribution this afternoon, because I do know that we have a tomorrow.

Of course, I, too, subscribe to widespread consultation and I wanted to know what the business sector was saying. I know that Minister Gillette is no longer there, so I cannot depend on him for an opinion. [*Laughter*] The *Business Express* of today's date has Mr. Andrew Aleong, President of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association saying:

“It is unfortunate that serious external forces have come after the budget was presented.

They will impact on the running of the country or any country for that matter.”

We know that. We still need to try to achieve what was set out in the budget, even if we do not achieve what we set out to do, we still have to try.

I think there must be a framework. We just cannot say, “Okay, the events of September 11 happened”; we all know that. We cannot now say, “Well, Minister of Finance, let us just sit; do nothing in tourism, for instance; do not build the commercial centre in downtown Port of Spain.” I am hearing in this honourable Senate: Why are we doing that? Why are we not doing it? I have not heard a reason why we ought not to do it. But here is a businessman saying:

“The events of last week are not healthy for local manufacturers...”

But while manufacturers are going to be affected, we have to continue with our lives.

If we show fear, it is not going to work.”

It comes back to Mr. Greenspan; he is going to wait a week. Mr. Greenspan would have described what I see exhibited in this Senate as “irrational exuberance”. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] It must be irrational exuberance; I cannot explain the phenomenon.

Regarding tourism and transportation, we see them as strategic economic drivers in the diversification of the economy and contributors to full and

rewarding employment, because taking everything into consideration, we have to continue to run a country. We have to continue to provide good governance. The Government's vision, as enunciated in the *Medium Term Policy Framework 2000 to 2004*, is geared towards Trinidad and Tobago becoming a knowledge-based society with a globally competitive, technologically driven and diversified economy that will sustain full employment, equal opportunity, growing prosperity, a secure life and a high standard of living for all our citizens.

That is the vision; I cannot see anything wrong with it, because there must be a framework within which you work. You cannot say, "September 11 happened so we are not going to do anything; we will stand up like the little boy and wonder; the Minister of Finance should go home; this budget is no good."

Mr. President, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Tourism and Tobago Affairs have sought to gear their own policies and programmes to the realization of this vision. We have structured our work around this vision. The area of transportation can be broken down into its natural components of land, air and sea. The aim of the Ministry is to develop and sustain, for the benefit of the citizenry, a fully integrated and seamless transportation network, where one can journey from A to Z anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago—that is the vision—and be reliably assured that the transportation mode you will need to access in order to complete your journey, will be available to you at all the times you expect and at a cost you can afford.

With respect to air transportation, I will begin with a review of the air transportation sector. Of course, I offer my condolences to the people of the United States. I can tell you, Mr. President, that as the events of September 11 unfolded, I was on my phone to the Civil Aviation Authority and the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago ensuring that we had put security in place. We did not know when this thing was going to end and we still do not know; the scenario is still unfolding. Every night I see more fellows dressed in green army fatigue going on big boats.

Basically, I wanted to ensure this, both for the security of our own country and, certainly as a longer term strategy. I mean, people will have to travel at sometime and even now for the adventurous in the US, they are going to be looking for what they probably will term "safe destinations". I wanted to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago would be looked on as one such destination. [*Desk thumping*]

We immediately took some action and put several initiatives in place to ensure that the security of our airport was not compromised and that airlines registered in America were safe and secure. Of course, that included our own beloved BWIA.

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I know many people want to know about the new airport. In the aftermath of the terrorist attack, we placed extra police and airport security patrols were introduced. Immediately we convened an Aviation Security Committee headed by the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority with cooperation from all the relevant agencies inclusive of the Piarco police and BWIA security. They are working cooperatively to address the changing demand of the international aviation security community.

This brings me to the Civil Aviation Act of 2001. When I came into this Senate, we debated having the regulations annexed to the Act by affirmative resolution. That was the opinion of the Opposition at the time. When we got to the Lower House, it was agreed that, indeed, we would go for the affirmative resolutions. Thereafter, the President of ICAO came and he said that it was a most grievous error, one, because of the technical nature of the regulations, and now that the events of September 11th have occurred.

What is happening is that the FAA's own rules and regulations are emerging day by day, moment by moment even. Each time, as the investigation unfolds, there is a new annex within the regulations. It means, therefore, now that they have decided that you cannot take even knives to cut cardboard boxes on the plane, all you can take is a butter knife, plastic and so forth, and it goes on and on, each time something changes, I have to come back to this Senate and have it debated. Mr. President, if the Federal Aviation Agency says that you cannot take a glass or this post-it note on an aircraft, we can say nothing; we are at their mercy.

As a matter of fact, when BWIA took off one evening, ill-advisedly, to New York, a couple days after the events of September 11, and they were turned back, Mr. Aleong called to ask me to intervene and I said: "President George Bush cannot intervene at this time; you are calling me to intervene." That is the same situation. I cannot intervene in Port of Spain because this is now under the Federal Aviation Agency.

In matters unrelated to airport security, best practices of airports worldwide have been identified with a view to developing the capability of front line employees to provide superior services to customers.

The second phase to the Piarco development is the build out of the estate with a view to establishing an aviation city at Piarco Airport. This land use plan will include: scheduled airline operations; chartered airline operations; cargo complex and hub, we want to convert the northern side, the old terminal to a cargo complex and hub; free trade zones and bonded industrial park, to integrate with

Wallerfield and the science park; an aircraft refuelling centre, an airline catering centre; air craft maintenance; an aviation training centre and so forth.

5.20 p.m.

Mr. President, I know the Senate will be interested to know—and I heard Sen. Morean mention that she had not seen anything in the budget for the Civil Aviation Authority with specific reference to the civil aviation system in Trinidad and Tobago now being downgraded to Category 2. That is the subject of a Cabinet Note and there has been in terms of reporting to the House, an implementation of several initiatives. So far, we now have the legislation, the regulation is on its way to the House because it must be debated and thereafter, the human resource department has been hiring and training people.

I am expecting that ICAO will be back in Trinidad by December of this year. I cannot now suggest a timetable for the FAA given that their hands are now full looking after their own business in the United States of America.

Mr. President, I have been receiving numerous complaints about the Tobago Air Bridge, and with regard to that, I myself found that service very unsatisfactory as a Tobagonian. It was one I could not have lived with, and I convened a meeting in Scarborough with the Chief Secretary and Mr. Wilson—yes we consult with the Chief Secretary and BWIA. We consult on this side, and basically, we came up with a package of services and initiatives in terms of delivering services to the customers and I must say it has been working very well so far.

Additionally, LIAT was allowed on the route to ensure that some further measure of relief was provided and another regional airline—which does not originate out of Trinidad—their application is before me now and basically, I had indicated to BWIA if their service had not improved significantly, that even with the threat of what they call “cargotage” that I was going to put another airline on the route. [*Desk thumping*]

Somebody had to take a decision and I asked whether it was written in law, if there was some bit of legislation guiding the decision and they said no. I was told that basically, if an airline does not originate from a country, it does not fly the domestic bridge—however, I thought as long as it was not written in law, and it was just a convention I had no use for it at that point in time because what I saw from time to time were people suffering, and, because we are a caring Government, I just could not have left it and not attended to it.

Additionally, Mr. President, a committee was established to further review the operations of the air bridge and identify measures and ways of encouraging other

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operators—because I have been receiving unsolicited applications from persons wishing to operate dedicated services.

Mr. President, with respect to land transport, the Traffic Management Branch of the Ministry of Transport is mandated to manage the regulatory aspects of traffic management in Trinidad and Tobago. Its prime objective is to make the nation's roads safer and more accessible to all. In addition, the branch is engaged in public awareness and education on all aspects of road safety.

With respect to fiscal 2001—2002, the Traffic Management Branch is mandated to focus on some critical areas; traffic signal coordination, and that basically is right now. For instance, we had that unfortunate accident when we had six persons killed in one tragic accident and the argument was going backward and forward as to who was responsible. Mr. President, at that time, the traffic lights were non-functional and there was no way for them to know in the Traffic Management Branch although the technology exists, and within this fiscal year, we intend to have some remotes at major junctions. Again, the Information and Technology Minister spoke about having some remote sites where these traffic lights can be manipulated from the Ministry of Transport.

It will help because when you have a non-functional traffic light you will know immediately. Additionally, you can manipulate the traffic signals, so if there is some kind of a traffic pile-up, you can decide which light you are going to put on red and which one on green and it will help with the easier flow of traffic.

We are seeking to establish traffic hubs in Chaguanas, Arima, San Fernando and Sangre Grande. Then we have new legislation that are almost here in the Senate. Basically we are looking at the zebra crossing legislation, the intersection yellow box legislation, aimed at the regularization of taxis, and the famous breathalyser which would assist. The breathalyser is really to give some kind of assessment of the level of alcohol in someone's blood stream, because we know for a fact that many times drunken driving accounts for more than the acceptable share of deaths on the nation's road.

Additionally, Mr. President, we have before the Central Tenders Board a tender for the computerization of the Licensing Division. [*Interruption*] I know, again, but this time it is happening. I know, Mr. President, that at this time people take up to seven days to access a certified copy, this is unacceptable. So we are hoping that at least by the end of November there will be a successful tenderer and we can get about the business of computerizing the records of the Transport Division. This would also facilitate the implementation of the much mooted point system.

Mr. President, under Act 20 of 2000, which is the legal framework for the driver disqualification programme, better known as the point system, the Transport Commissioner will, through his computer network, be able to manage the points awarded to delinquent drivers who are convicted in court for traffic offences, or who are served tickets for traffic violations.

Additionally, we are going to have the computerization system networked to the private vehicle testing stations where they will have limited access so one would not have to go into the main centres of the Transport Division to access the certified copies. So if you have your vehicles that are over five years and you are going to have them inspected, you can go to the private vehicle testing station and they can pull up the certified copy on the screen, and that will alleviate the trouble of going to the Licensing Offices in Port of Spain or San Fernando. Additionally, it will be networked to the Transport Division of the police service and the insurance companies.

I am hoping that this initiative will assist in at least making people more aware of their driving habits. We are getting involved in defensive driving and basically, that is to improve the skill of drivers on the nation's roads and to create a more credible network of drivers. Defensive driving would be an integral part of the driver's certification programme.

Mr. President, let me tell you a bit of the other initiatives from the Ministry of Transport as they relate to land-based transportation. We intend to put cameras at the traffic intersections that will be utilized to trace traffic violators, especially those who heedlessly break traffic lights and put the lives of other road users in jeopardy. [*Desk thumping*] There will be radar to detect excessive speed and this will be employed along with the breathalyser to detect drunken drivers. All these initiatives are aimed at making our nation's roads safer and better places for us all. I am sure, Mr. President, you would have been following very closely our partnership with FM 102 where we have this whole thrust, sensitization about safer driving, and I do not think one can forget the voice of the little child telling you to buckle up.

Mr. President, the Government is committed to improving the public transport system in order to meet the challenges of development in Trinidad and Tobago. We have a plan. In this context, the Cabinet recently agreed to a steering committee to undertake in the first instance, a strategic mass transit investment project in the East/West corridor. The three stages to be implemented by the committee are: Conceptual planning, design planning, and design and commissioning.

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Mr. President, the conceptual planning stage is currently ongoing and the steering committee has to date prepared the terms of reference for the pre-feasibility study which is soon to be evaluated by the board of the Public Transport Service Commission (PTSC). This brings me to the Vehicle Maintenance Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (VMCOTT) and this company, as I saw reported in one daily newspaper, is one of the newest state agencies and the philosophy behind this company was largely because of the lack of maintenance within the state sector for their vehicles.

Mr. President, the outcome of this is basically one of the best facilities in the world as it is now. The Vehicle Maintenance Corporation, as a maintenance facility, I think without a doubt is the best of its kind in the world and I say that without any fear of contradiction. I invite my colleagues to go and see what we have in Trinidad and Tobago because we were not afraid to dream and to create, and to stretch, not reach. [*Desk thumping*] We cannot be confined and limited as I saw in one Senator's contribution—what is the competitive advantage? What was the competitive advantage for the creation of VMCOTT? You decide you have to be the best in the world, that is all you need to know. I have to be the best in the world and if you decide—

Hon. Senator: Thinking in a box.

Sen. The Hon. J. John: Thinking in a box? Why are we thinking in a box? Now we have to think out of the box. So basically, I am putting it to the Senate that we have to be the best that we can be, and we cannot be limited by our geography, by the thought that we are some kind of plantation economy. I do not know what is that. I was appalled to hear that in the year 2001—I expect to hear that in the House of Commons in the 1940s not here and now. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, luckily I did not speak on that day because you would have ruled that I was being unparliamentary. I was that confused. I could not understand what was happening in my Trinidad and Tobago. After we created vehicle maintenance, I heard Minister Gillette talking about British Petroleum Trinidad and Tobago (BPTT) yesterday, and that they can stay in Trinidad and Tobago and evaluate geological problems and if they cannot do it here, they can send it via some kind of information technology to what you call remote location and have it analyzed, and that is being done right now in Trinidad and Tobago and BPTT is being managed by a Trinidadian, a citizen of this country, a man with a vision. [*Desk thumping*] A man who dares to think out of the box. So are you going to tell me that Robert is part of the plantation economy?

Mr. President, I probably should not go there because I am getting emotional again. [Laughter] I think it was a sad day in this Senate. If the word terrorizing was not an overworked word these days, I would have said my ears were being terrorized when I heard this thing.

Mr. President, the whole initiative to establish in the first instance three full service facilities at the old PTSC garage at the Beetham Estate, and this one is up and running as well as the other garages in San Fernando and Tobago, the Vehicle Maintenance Corporation in the past fiscal year 2000—2001 has managed *inter alia* to hold discussions with the Licensing Department and what has happened again, because we dared to use the technology, because we dared to think out of the box, there is now established at the Beetham facility, a fully computerized vehicle inspection system and testing for light and heavy vehicles for use by the Licensing Division. What that means is that the inspection services of the Licensing Division are going to be moved out of Port of Spain into Beetham. It means that the congestion at Wrightson Road will be a thing of the past. [Desk thumping] That, Mr. President, is thinking outside the box; that is being creative; that is stretching, not reaching; that is daring to think that you are outside a plantation economy. [Desk thumping]

Mr. President, the Transport Division of the Ministry—and I told you about the computerization—is in an effort to ensure safety on the nation's roads. The division intensified its enforcement through regular road checks for road worthiness of vehicles. Emphasis was placed on the detection of traffic offences relating to the defective vehicles re the wipers, steering, tyres, horns, et cetera and as I mentioned before, we are on an education and awareness drive, and the traffic safety division of the Licensing Authority has been giving lectures to schools. We are going to focus on transport companies and other institutions soon.

In the next fiscal year this initiative will be taken to a higher level because of a joint collaborative effort with NGOs and other groups, all in an effort to make prominent the importance of road safety on the nation's roads.

Mr. President, let me turn my attention to tourism because much was said about tourism by some Senators. One in particular took the position that it was a waste of time and I guess the Senator is entitled, but I must say that the 15,000 persons employed in that sector will not thank you, Sir. [Desk thumping] Sometimes when we cast around these comments and what have you—a statistic is a person, many times it represents a person. We said the contribution to GDP is negligible, 3 per cent, but 3 per cent represents 15,000 persons, men and women of our country, our citizens. What are we going to do to them when we say it is a

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waste of time? Three per cent, maybe all of them are Tobagonians, because tourism is the main staple in the Tobago economy. We could stand here glibly and talk about—I almost sounded like the former Minister of Tobago Affairs, I almost said—talk foolishness, but that would be unparliamentary, Mr. President, and I take that back. [*Laughter*] We cannot stand here and say the contribution is minimal. It is 3 per cent, it is negligible, but 3 per cent is representative of \$450 million and that is not chicken liver. Three per cent represents 15,000 persons, 12,000 of them are probably Tobagonians.

Mr. President, yes, tourism in Trinidad is dependent on the US market, it is more business travel moreso than leisure. We are more into visiting friends and relatives, even BWIA as an airline, does not really bring in tourists as we know, they are more a visiting friends and relatives airline. From the United States, we have 32.9 per cent of our tourists, but it is mainly business. From the Caribbean it is 27 per cent; Europe, it is 22 per cent and almost the entire 22 per cent go to Tobago; Canada is 12 per cent.

So, Mr. President, tourism is important. [*Desk thumping*] It is the main staple in the Tobago economy and I expected Sen. Dumas to have interjected and made his presence felt because I know how passionately he feels about Tobago and at least we will have a Tobagonian who will stand up for Tobago.

The Ministry has concentrated on building a solid foundation in the critical areas of legislative reform, institutional strengthening, human resource development, product development, marketing and social and environmental issues.

Mr. President, I must tell you that only this weekend I was in Tobago and I was privileged to deliver the feature address at the opening of one of its new facilities—Stone Haven Villas. I think maybe as the Minister of Tourism I should not say that either—but it is really fantastic. Our quality, our standard are things of joy when you see the kind of tourism facilities we have in Tobago.

5.40 p.m.

Mr. Presiden, all the workmanship was done locally, even the furniture. The wood was local mahogany. They now have 14 luxury villas targeting the upscale market and I can tell you I was very proud to see what we have in Tobago as part of the tourism initiative. Additionally, before I go into the tourism initiative, I know another point that kept coming up was the International Conference Complex. We have been asked why are we investing in that? As Sen. Daly would say, two towers down and six more collapse; men writing their social security

number on their arms. Mr. President, it is tragic but life goes on. We have to plan, we just cannot sit down and do nothing. We have to do something.

Basically, the partnership for this project, the International Conference Centre, is with Centera International, and their claim to fame is that they facilitated a 1400-room Marriott Convention Centre Hotel in the heart of Philadelphia. Now Philadelphia, as far as I heard, was a dead city. When they did this hotel, which is referred to now as the "palace", in 1995, that spurred on seven additional hotels in the same area. What is being said in this document is that Philadelphia which was merely an afterthought to many people, is now considered one of the five top best cities in the United States for tourism, business travel and conventions.

If they had asked, why are we going to do that, or said that tourism is nonsense, it does not make sense; the 15,000 people employed, send them home; 3 per cent of GDP is no statistic, forget that—but no, they went there and invested in a 1,400-room hotel and now they have seven additional hotels. They are now known as the Convention Capital. Actually, I think the Republicans held their convention there and I think the Democrats are now to hold theirs there.

That is what we have coming down to our humble waterfront and we are saying do not bother with them. After September 11, Marriott wrote the investors and recommitted themselves to the project. We are saying, do nothing, but the investors from America are saying that they are going ahead with their project. Irresponsible!

Just a bit about tourism. In the area of legislative reform, the Tourism Development Act, No. 9 of 2000, seeks to facilitate the development of the tourism industry by providing concessions to investors and it serves as a catalyst for investment in projects that would contribute to the development of tourism in Trinidad and Tobago. Since the proclamation of this Act, stakeholders in the tourism industry have expressed concerns with certain sections of the Act and that is now being reviewed.

Mr. President, we recognize the need to provide strategic direction for the tourism industry. In this regard, a national tourism policy would be finalized for Cabinet's approval in the shortest possible time. The strategic plan is now a document, and this is expected to guide the tourism sector in a sustainable manner over the next 10 years.

Another point I should make within the context of tourism and partnership et cetera, I was trying to find my notes on this—just coming back to the airlift situation because I know that also was a burning issue. I am pleased to report that

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basically, we have one flight with British Airways (BA) every week; Condor coming out of Germany. [*Interruption*] They are pulling out in April of this year? They were really partly responsible for the crisis because there were people in Europe wanting to go to Tobago but could not get to Tobago. They have reaffirmed their commitment and they are coming back in December of this year. Just last week, Conquest Tours of Canada had 152 journalists in Tobago and I think another 150 are coming back this week. They were so impressed with the level of service by the immigration, by the customs, by the hoteliers. Air France started a regional schedule on September 17. So the prognosis is good and during this period I know many airlines—BA during the first few days of this September 11 event lost \$2 billion of their share value; American, they are in a tailspin. I saw last night where their CEO offered to give up his salary for the rest of the year. I am hoping, the way we like "monkey see, monkey do", that we would follow suit in the region. [*Interruption*] Not me, my salary is too small.

Mr. President, I just want you to understand what tourism means to Tobago, to the hoteliers in Tobago. They think about it with passion. As a matter of fact, one of the chartered flights, Monarch Airlines, we have partnered with the Government of Grenada to bring in that flight and they had asked for £500,000 to be placed in an escrow account to mitigate against any risk in bringing in the flight. Now you have to give concessions, it is the industry now, I am told. Grenada has put up 50 per cent of this charter. I found although the money was not to be used, but to be drawn down upon, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's share of it, £250,000, was still too much and that the beneficiaries—because Sen. Prof. Ramchand spoke about the concessions the investors receive. I just want you to understand that it is not just a gimme, gimme thing, that people are really passionate about what they do and they partner with the Government, at least I insist that they do. I then wrote to the Tobago Chapter of the Trinidad and Tobago Hoteliers and Tourism Association asking them to contribute 30 per cent. Mr. President, I am pleased to report that last week Friday, they handed me a cheque for £75,000.

The private sector got together, although they have had the worst winter of their tourism careers, those hoteliers from Tobago felt so strongly about what they are doing, they feel so passionately about tourism; tourism means something to them; it is not just a statistic; it is not just 3 per cent. It is their livelihood; it is their bread and butter; it is what they eat and sleep; it is what they dream about; it is what I am now very passionate about, the marketing of Tobago as the ideal, the supreme and the best tourism destination.

In an era where we must provide quality products and services in order to be internationally competitive, the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Industry Certification—because we are insisting on standards in the industry, one will not be just giving the concessions or having people make the investment because Minister Yetming in all his consultations, and it was based on those consultations that he heard what was previously allocated to marketing was just not enough and I heard in this House the question asked: What are they going to do with it? I do not want to talk about Jamaica and the level of crime, but certainly people cannot get enough of Montego Bay. Any time you put on CNN or the travel channel, you see a little woman with a short top spinning around with one love. I am sure Sen. Daly can relate to that. This woman spinning around, one love, and they spent thousands of dollars just to get that one love thing. I too just feel I can pack my bags and run to Jamaica for one love.

5.50 p.m.

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. The Hon. J. John: Thank you, Mr. President. My mother always told me I can make my money by talking, but I never knew the Senate would have found out that I can talk so much.

All tourism industry operators will be expected to obtain certification which is being conducted under the aegis of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, the Tobago House of Assembly and the Tourism and Industrial Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago. Duly certified tourism operators would obtain promotional and other beneficial services through their participation in the programme.

Just in case someone talks about the events of September 11, 2001 and what we are doing, there was an energy meeting last Friday at the office of the Ministry of Transport and all or most of the tourism stakeholders were there. It was very enthusiastically attended. The people came with all their ideas. We are actively working on those. The marketing plan which was approved by Cabinet is being reviewed, because we had targeted North America, but now we are saying, okay, we are going to invest the money elsewhere and we are going to build up our business. I know Germany is now a mature market, but certainly we can still get

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something out of it. Air France is coming in as a regional carrier. I did indicate to them whatever level of concessions we gave to them was not in the interest of furthering friendships, but it was an investment in the future.

I am aware that now our tourism product is being marketed by only one out of 30 tour operators in France; and when we attend the world travel market in November, we are certainly going to be marketing to those other 29 tour operators in France. The Italians are also being targeted. So there is a plan and we are looking at what we are doing.

In conclusion, I really did enjoy the debate, but I really yearned for the incisiveness of Dr. St. Cyr. I remembered his contribution so well—as an economist—last year, and I felt that I could not end without just quoting a bit—such a gracious man, and, really, a worthwhile professional. He had said, when he was winding up, that he believed that we have, sort of, come full circle. I think in a way this is where Minister Yetming is trying to bring us—full circle, and then we, again, break out of the box. We are building. We have to build. I am not an economist, but at least I have studied economics. I quote from his contribution:

“In other words, the way our economy now fits into the world economic system is not vastly different from the way it fitted in 1950. Now, I do not want it to come over as saying that this Government has thrown our gains away, because that is not true. I am saying that when things went wrong in the early 1980s, we lost round one and, since we were saddled with those heavy debts, then we were driven to the international financial institutions.”

This is a man with clear and incisive thinking, who understands. He is not saying, “Well, you did not do this; you did not do that”; he is saying what he thought went wrong. It is not about why are we building that centre down there; where is the competitive advantage? We have the capability. We have a vision. We have to be a knowledge-based economy. It is not just information technology; it is knowledge-based. I heard Sen. Augustus talking about what they are doing in education. Certainly, if we had taken the new American model, where it is not Democrat and Republican, but American, I think we would have gained so much more out of this debate, but we followed some colonial system—some Westminster system—and talked about cut and thrust and adversarial. And squandered two days. I continue to quote:

“I would not be surprised to think that they would have been just waiting for the opportunity to bring us back in line so that their capital could be used with their expertise to exploit the resources here...”

He went on to say:

“So, Sir, we have to keep building up...”

And he referred to Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt, another worthy Senator at the time:

“...as our stock of social capital, the essential element of which is an understanding of how the world system works and how our own society works...”

So he put it into context:

“...how the two fit together and all the institutions that go with it. So our economic history of the last 50 years is a crucial area which we must understand. But that said, I would think that the two elements that are crucial to putting in a proper long-term springboard would be the area in which the Government is now pressing, and I said that full marks there.”

That is a gentlemen and an economist. He said “full marks”. He has nothing to lose; he is a professional. He said:

“They are the human resource development and the other area on which I have spoken so often, supporting Prof. John Spence on this, and the area of raising factor productivity in the production of wage goods, the essential element of which is agriculture.”

The point I am trying to make, basically—I am not criticizing any contribution, I am simply saying, you put it within a context and Sen. Dr. St. Cyr, at the time, did just that. He put it within the context of the world economy and, really, gave this Government full marks for the economic initiatives that it had taken.

I want to thank you for the privilege, and again congratulate Sen. Yetming for his budget and his philosophy of “One People, One Nation: Leaving No One Behind”.

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

Sen. Christine Kangaloo: Mr. President, in what has now become typical of this Government's approach in dealing with the public on matters of national importance, the hon. Minister of Finance in this budget presentation of two Fridays ago, and the hon. Senators on the other side, for the last three days in this Chamber, have painted a thoroughly lopsided picture to the population in describing the state of the nation's economy.

While we on this side have long grown accustomed to this Government experimenting with the truth, particularly in matters of public importance, so

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much so that we almost automatically discount for unreliability everything that we hear from Government speakers, unless, of course, it is information from the hon. Attorney General—and we were wondering today who the Attorney General would be—we were still taken aback by the smoke and mirrors production that was put on September 14, 2001 by the Minister of Finance, and which was followed in this Chamber, as if on queue, by those on the Government Benches.

The hon. Minister, at the outset of his budget presentation, threw a few statistics together and sought to persuade the population, if not himself, that the Trinidad and Tobago economy was in the throes of accelerated growth, expansion and diversification. So that early on in his presentation we were told, for example, with all the misplaced pride the Minister could muster, that between 1995—2000, the economy expanded by an average of 5.2 per cent per annum; that over the same period inflation averaged 4.1 per cent; and that the country's foreign exchange reserves rose to US \$2.4 billion at the end of August 2001.

Sen. Dr. Moonilal followed up in this Chamber by referring to 70,000 new jobs being created by this administration. It seems that this figure grows by a few thousand every time we hear from this Government on this topic; and to unemployment having dropped by 6.5 per cent between 1996 and 2000.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. President, on the surface these statistics do suggest the appearance of a buoyant and growing economy but, what the population was not told, and what is made clear in the *Review of the Economy 2001*, is that the domestic economy grew at the slower rate of 4.2 per cent in 2001 compared to 6.4 per cent in the year 2000, down from the Government's projection of 5 per cent growth for 2001. What the Minister and my colleagues on the opposite side did not do, but what the *Review of the Economy 2001* and Sen. King thankfully did, was to complete the picture by bringing to light other critical economic measurements which showed the troubling picture of an economy undeniably in contraction.

For example, Mr. President, the *Review of the Economy 2001* tells us that from a figure of 48.1 million barrels of crude oil production in 1995, this country has sustained annual declines in oil production since 1996, down to an estimated 41 million barrels in the year 2001. According to the *Review of the Economy 2001* this trend is expected to continue in the year 2002.

What we were not told by those seeking to sugar over the bitter realities was that in 2001 there was a demonstrable weakening of the agriculture and manufacturing sectors which recorded declines of 2.1 per cent and 0.2 per cent

respectively, compared to growth rates of 6.3 per cent and 8 per cent in 2000. Export agriculture declined by 15 per cent in 2001 following a decline of 11.7 per cent in the year 2000. Sugar production declined by 5.3 per cent in 2001 from a growth of 13 per cent in 2000.

The *Review of the Economy 2001* records that while total Government revenues increased by \$2.102 billion in fiscal 2001, the current expenditure increased by \$2.148 billion in the same year. The increase in the current expenditure, therefore, exceeded the increase in total Government revenue by some \$46 million. Put simply, the economy is being managed by a Government that is spending more than the country is earning. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, for all the Minister's vain boasting about this country's foreign exchange reserves position, the reality is that at the end of August 2001, the country only had sufficient foreign exchange reserved to provide for just over five months of import cover. When one looks beneath the surface of the glossy indicators quoted by the hon. Minister in his Budget Statement, and by the hon. Sen. Dr. Moonilal, hon. Minister Gillette and Sen. Mark in their understandable and dutiful defence of it, one sees a sobering picture of an economy nowhere near—much less in the throes of—economic growth, expansion and diversification as contended by the Minister of Finance. What we see instead is a progressively weakening domestic economy moving inexorably into a serious downturn much like the Titanic drifting haplessly into its destruction. [*Desk thumping*]

Instead of bringing the population's attention to this alarming reality, the hon. Minister, for purposes we on this side can only guess—the words "snap election come to mind—presented the population with an irresponsibly unbalanced picture of continuing and seemingly unending economic prosperity. [*Desk thumping*] However, as the indicators from the *Review of the Economy 2001* show, nothing could be further from the truth.

The truth, Mr. President, is that apart from its own internal weaknesses Trinidad and Tobago today finds itself as part of an overall global economy that has, as the *Review of the Economy 2001* points out, weakened considerably in the last 12 months. In particular, and as Sen. King pointed out, there has been a marked slowdown of economic growth in the United States of America, this country's leading trading partner. There has been a continuing decline in global equity markets and increased unemployment for most of the world's major economies; and to these, the as yet unknown long-term effects of the tragic and horrific events of New York and Washington on September 11, 2001. What

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emerges is a picture of a global economic contraction from which no nation will be spared. Quite apart from the attacks building from within, Trinidad and Tobago's economy is, therefore, about to be mercilessly attacked from without.

Mr. President, there was nothing to be gained and everything to be lost in persisting in this adolescent illusion of unbridled economic prosperity in this misguided machismo of monetary might. [*Desk thumping*] What this country required of its Minister of Finance was an outline of quick and concerted action designed immediately to arrest the developing decline in the local economy, the detailing of measures aimed at buffering Trinidad and Tobago from the punishing and inevitable effects of a global recession; and the setting-out of meaningful measures aimed at placing our economy back on the track on which we, the PNM, left it in 1995, of ordered and sustained economic growth as opposed to the unbridled borrowing and squandermania that have been the hallmarks of this administration's so-called performance. [*Desk thumping*]

In the year 2001, Mr. President, this borrowing and squandermania have resulted in an accumulated debt stock of 60 per cent of the gross domestic product, and in a shocking capital expenditure of \$1.4 billion, and counting for a second-rate airport which, to our national shame, now swallows international carriers in open and unmarked trenches mere months after its expensive and gaudy opening. [*Desk thumping*]

What we, in fact, got was a 1 per cent reduction in personal and corporate income tax; the zero-rating of blue soap and feminine napkins; an \$80 increase in old age pension; vague promises to provide more to the faltering manufacturing industry, without any clear deliverables being identified; the expected but regurgitated platitudes about the need to improve the performance of the agricultural sector, without any meaningful structures or policies being fleshed out as to how this was to be achieved; overambitious and wholly unrealistic rhetoric about technology and science parks and conference tourism. Above all, there is absolutely no meaningful direction from the hon. Minister as to how he proposes to steer the domestic economy out of the turbulent waters into which it has begun to sail. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, the main focus of any budget statement is, of course, on mechanisms for achieving economic growth and diversification. In our case, the main ingredient in the Minister's recipe for the growth of the domestic economy—he called it the main engine of growth—was stated to be the energy and energy-based industry. This ingredient is contaminated on at least two levels: first, it has been contaminated by the recent terrorist attacks upon the United

States of America and the expected resultant global economic decline which will severely affect the market both in the United States and Europe for ammonia, urea, methanol and LNG and which will likely cripple the domestic economy in these areas in the process. As Sen. Daly pointed out, these events have all but reduced the Minister's presentation to irrelevance.

6.10 p.m.

Secondly, the Minister's ingredient is likely to do more to harm than to assist the diversification process, by entrenching the historical over-dependence on a single sector of the economy, by promoting a new kind of 21st Century monocrop, energy-based economy in which all that we would have learnt from the experience of the 1980s and early 1990s would be how to have exchanged our dependence on one strain of the same crop for another.

Diversification of the local economy cannot be limited to an expansion of the energy-based sector. The same weaknesses that applied in relation to our over-dependence on oil will continue to apply to an over-dependence on any other area of the energy sector. Because we do not consume any appreciable portion of what we produce, we will forever remain dependent for our long-term economic well-being on the vagaries of the foreign markets to which we must turn to absorb our excess production. That is the very antithesis of sustainable growth and diversification.

The Minister also pointed to various so-called other drivers of diversification in his presentation. The first of these was the construction of a national science and technology park to be located at Wallerfield at the site of the former aerodrome. According to the Minister, this facility is expected to attract foreign investors seeking the right location to establish near-shore operations as well as industries that produce or use information technology to service the North American market.

The Minister was deafeningly silent as to any indicators that might have suggested that this should be so in the first place. We join with Sen. King in asking: What is there about the proposed science park that will attract foreign investors to Trinidad and Tobago? There was nothing in the Minister's presentation about preferential tax treatment or tax shelters for such investors nor about free zone facilities being extended to them, for example, as an incentive for investment. There was not one shred of credible evidence placed before us by the Minister, from which we might reasonably be entitled to expect the inflow of foreign investment upon which the Minister has pegged this particular hat.

The population of Trinidad and Tobago is, therefore, asked to accept that simply because the Government intends to build a science park, this will be a magnet for foreign investors. How can we be called upon to accept such empty economic rhetoric about attracting foreign investment when the Government has enough problems holding on to its own local corporate investors? So much so, that for almost every day of this week, from about 6 o'clock in the morning, one of the largest corporate investors has been delivering, what can only be termed an address to the nation, in an attempt to stem the damage to its corporate image and reputation, inflicted on it by agents of this very Government. If that is how this administration rewards investors from within its own fold, how on earth does the hon. Minister expect his Government to be able to attract investors who have absolutely no patriotic links to this country?

Then we heard talk about a plan to develop agriculture. Even Sen. Als, in what struck me as a weary admission of this Government's failure meaningfully to address this sector's development in any of its previous budgets, was driven to declare, at the eleventh hour, that we needed to go back to agriculture. This time around, the Minister's grand plan to develop agriculture was stated to surround the creation of a one-stop shop in the agricultural sector to be named the Agricultural Development Corporation.

This Government's complete lack of imagination in the area of reform of the agricultural sector is reflected in its inability to rise even to the psychological challenge to choose a name for this new company, which sounds different from anything that has gone before. However, the approach in setting up the Agricultural Development Corporation is typical of this Government's thinking on any issue that calls for more than a cursory analysis of a given economic problem and of the factors that give rise to it. Their culture is one of avoidance.

Applied in the context of the rationalization of the agricultural sector, it drives them simply to step around the challenges posed in operating the long-established Agricultural Development Bank on a viable basis, to discard it, to turn to new palliatives and to call forth to the light from the dark abyss of their collective imaginations this new creature called the Agricultural Development Corporation.

In retrospect, Mr. President, we perhaps ought to have considered ourselves warned that the use and discard approach to the Agricultural Development Bank would have manifested itself sooner or later in this Government's overall approach to agriculture. After all, it is precisely the approach they have taken with the Minister of Agriculture himself.

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 continues to sit until the conclusion of this debate.

Question put and agreed to.

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Sen. C. Kangaloo: Mr. President, so it is that the Minister proceeded to tell the population, after having committed his Government to this new corporate creation, that the Government next intended to evaluate the functions of the Agricultural Development Bank—a simple, but sadly all too familiar example of this administration putting the proverbial cart before the horse. No wonder, Mr. President, that six years after assuming office in this country, on the backs of supporters, a significant proportion of whom are from and depend upon agricultural-based communities, that the agricultural sector in Trinidad and Tobago has never been in a more depressed and depressing state.

The Minister did not stop there. We were told bedtime stories about Trinidad and Tobago becoming the conference and convention centre hub of the region and of the establishment of an international conference centre on the Port of Spain waterfront to serve this objective. Again, Mr. President, it is as though this Government intends to do nothing more than wave some magic wand that will lure businessmen away from their established business centres and cause them to rush to the conference centre to hold their meetings.

Moreover, it is clear that the Government here is thinking backwards. The critical fact that appears curiously to have escaped the hon. Minister is that in the world in which we live today, sit-down meetings at which people are required physically to be present together to conduct their business are fast becoming a thing of the past. With new technology, including teleconferencing and instant messaging, the viability of any endeavour that is predicated upon the physical gathering together of individuals for conference and meeting purposes is almost laughable.

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

In case the Minister had not noticed, Mr. Vice-President, people are now terrified of flying. What is there to persuade them to overcome this fear that they should risk their lives and fly to this particular conference centre? The 400 rooms

which the Government will be building in the Marriott Hotel are being built for individuals, who will have no need to occupy them in the first place. The 1,400-space car park which the Minister so naively boasted about during his presentation is being constructed for vehicles whose drivers will never need to park them there.

At times it seems that this administration's grand plans of an intelligent nation really need to be carefully and slowly explained even to those in charge of its very implementation. Not everyone in Trinidad and Tobago is asleep, nor is the People's National Movement detached from reality as Sen. Daly has suggested. We on this side note with keen interest the projected cost of this proposed white elephant conference centre which the Minister gave as \$1.2 billion. Given how close this figure is to the \$1.4 billion of taxpayers' money thrown behind the airport, we wish to assure this Government that the people of Trinidad and Tobago will not allow themselves to be hoodwinked a second time around.

We have every expectation that this Government will throw good sense to the wind and will persist with this ill-advised project. We also have every fear that the suggestion that arises from every historical imperative of this Government's record of spending will be realized and there will be mass misappropriation of public funds in the execution of this lame duck project.

Let it be known, Mr. Vice-President, and let Sen. Daly be assured that we in the PNM will leave no stone unturned in investigating and bringing to the attention of the public every act of defalcation perpetrated against the people of this country in furtherance of this inane undertaking.

The way to strengthen and diversify the economy is not by committing the national patrimony to foot the bill for pie-in-the-sky and off-the-wall schemes; for science parks and conference centres. It is not by lightly tinkering with the fiscal regime or by doling out incremental, annual increases in the pensions of senior citizens. None of these strategies will come to the people's aid in the event of the implosion of the local economy or of a global economic recession.

The way to ensure sustainable economic development is to develop viable, long-term strategies aimed at developing the most critical asset of any economy—its human capital. Long before it became fashionable for governments to mouth commitments to the educational development of its citizens, we on this side recognized the need to invest heavily in ensuring that quality education was made available to every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. We on this side might have considered ourselves flattered, therefore, by this administration's copycat

attempts at a so-called revolutionalization of this country's education system. Had it not been for the disastrous consequences of the dangerous political games that are being played out by this Government in our nation's classrooms at every level—primary, secondary and, of late, tertiary.

We have already made our position very clear on the Secondary Entrance Assessment Examination developed by this administration and the traumatic effects this indiscriminate system of secondary education for all has had and will continue to have on the self-worth of our nation's children and even of our nation's teachers.

The Government's latest misstep in the area of education is, of course, its notorious dollar for dollar plan, which featured prominently in the Minister's presentation under the heading, "Improving the Quality of Life". This is an example of one of this Government's policies in the sphere of education, which has not been properly thought through and which, from all appearances, seems to be part of some macabre strategy of this administration to compete with the People's National Movement's achievements in this sphere of education—an impossible feat because history can never be rewritten.

The objective of the dollar for dollar plan is, as the Minister stated, to introduce a greater proportion of the 18—22 age group to tertiary education at the University of the West Indies and other institutions.

6.25 p.m.

Mr. President, the thinking, if it can be called that, is that Government will bear 50 per cent of the tuition cost to new students pursuing tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago, thereby enabling more students to attend the University of the West Indies and other institutions. The Minister has stated in his budget presentation that for fiscal 2001/2002, the Government has set aside a sum of \$240 million to meet this commitment.

Mr. Vice-President, quality education, particularly at the tertiary level, involves much more than a throwing around of cash. It is not every problem that can be spent out of existence, or every difficulty that can be buried under a mountain of money, Mr. Vice-President, even if those on the other side might believe so. Quality tertiary education involves the careful analysis of our educational institutions—in this case mainly the University of the West Indies—and the development of long-term sustainable educational strategies. One does not simply wave \$240 million, and say more young adults will obtain quality tertiary instruction and training in the fields of their choice.

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A careful study of the capacity of the University of the West Indies and these institutions to cope with the increased intake of students—which is, of course, the end desired by this administration in relation to the plan—needed first to be undertaken before this Government committed the national purse to support the plan. Mr. Vice-President, none, in fact, was. So that the result—if this Government has its way—is that there is likely to be a significant increase in the number of students attending the university with no corresponding increase or upgrading of the university's capacity to accommodate and facilitate the new influx of students.

Make no mistake, Mr. Vice-President, the administration's dollar for dollar plan, if implemented without the necessary feasibility studies, is guaranteed to turn the university, in particular, into a blackboard jungle and to deprive all students of the quality education which the People's National Movement fought to establish, as something to which each of them should have a right.

The Government's approach to education is typical of its penchant for wielding the butcher's axe when instead it should be applying the surgeon's scalpel. [*Desk thumping*] But I suppose we should not be expecting any finesse from an administration, which has as its head someone who, despite the glowing tributes paid to him by Sen. Mark, nevertheless, regularly and hysterically screams threats and insults from public microphones at his own members in a most unseemly manner. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, a government that is committed to sustainable development and, therefore, to investing in the country's human capital, would have addressed, meaningfully, in its budget presentation, the question of the development of the health sector, and the provision of proper health care services to the afflicted in the society, particularly, those afflicted by the scourge of AIDS. The Minister's budget address did nothing of the kind.

There was, of course, a promise of 17 new health facilities to service, in particular, remote communities in the society. There was also talk about allocating \$10 million under the Capital Programme for maintaining major hospitals throughout the country. But a health care system is not merely about buildings, Mr. Vice-President. In fiscal 2001, the country was faced with walkouts by staff at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, and other institutions, because of poor working conditions. The country saw the spectacle of cancer patients mounting protests outside the St. James Medical Complex in March 2001 and heard complaints in relation to the national Radiotherapy Centre of a shortage of radiographers and a malfunctioning of equipment. The

Radiotherapy Centre reported in the same month that there was a backlog of 3,000 people waiting and suffering to receive medical care. There were newspaper reports about the continuing mass exodus of nurses out of the country.

Three Sundays ago, one of the country's daily newspapers carried an exclusive and extremely disturbing story about staff at the St. Anns Mental Hospital sexually abusing patients under their care. While all of this was going on, Mr. Vice-President—while the country's health care sector was literally burning around them and collapsing to the ground—those responsible for the administration of health care services in the North/West Regional Health Authority busied themselves, not in seeking desperately to find solutions to life and death problems, but in lining their own pockets and in arranging the purchase of expensive Audi vehicles for themselves. So that merely erecting more and more buildings will not solve the problem in the health sector. It will likely only spread the diseases of maladministration and corruption even wider. Mr. Vice-President, a government committed to alleviating poverty, would focus more on the health institutions.

Still on the question of health, Mr. Vice-President, the Minister's approach to the question of the management and treatment of AIDS, and the diverting of adequate resources in this regard, would have been laughable were the situation not so tragically serious. In June of this year, the President of the World Bank reported that the AIDS epidemic is threatening to derail decades of economic progress in many impoverished nations. The World Bank predicted that by 2010 economic output in some of the hardest hit countries could be cut by as much as 8 percentage points. There is an urgent need in Trinidad and Tobago—which has a very high incidence of AIDS—for increased funding, as the cost of drugs used in the treatment of AIDS is prohibitive and remains out of reach of the vast majority of persons afflicted with the disease. The World Bank President also pointed out that in order to fight AIDS effectively, international donors needed to commit new money towards management of the disease, instead of playing the shell game of merely reallocating funds away from other development projects.

Against this background, Mr. Vice-President, the Minister's allocation of \$10 million to begin, what he describes as “an all out assault on HIV/AIDS”, is woefully inadequate for his stated purpose. [*Desk thumping*] In April of this year, the Minister of Health advised that it costs US \$10,000 a year to treat a single AIDS patient in Trinidad and Tobago. The Minister also emphasized that this was a price beyond the reach of the public health system. We, on this side, can be forgiven for assuming, Mr. Vice-President, that the Minister of Health and the

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Minister of Finance are probably no longer on speaking terms; after all, their party is now so caught up in the death roll of its indiscipline, that it is impossible to say which end is up on any given day in the house of the setting sun. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

It is universally acknowledged, Mr. Vice-President, that a critical component of any plan towards sustainable growth is the focus and the protection and sustaining of human capital. This involves not only the physical aspect, but the mental and emotional aspect as well. Strategies regarding health, which make no mention of the rising suicide rate among our young people, are a betrayal of the population. Nowhere in his budget presentation, Mr. Vice-President, did the Minister make any meaningful attempt to address the development of a plan for mental health in this country—and sitting for the last three days obliquely opposite Sen. Dr. The Hon. Moonilal, I would have needed some sort of plan to be in place, Mr. Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

Recently a psychiatrist stated that a depressed person is worse off than a diabetic, because it brings on other problems such as high blood pressure. Depression was said to be the number one cause of economic health care usage in the world, with the US alone spending about \$4.3 million a year—actually \$4.3 billion—to treat depression patients.

You have, Mr. Vice-President, the former Medical Chief of Staff at the St. Ann's Hospital pointing out in an interview that since December 2000 when this Government took office, no Minister of Health has visited the hospital. And you talk about alleviating poverty.

Mr. Vice-President, in the debate on sustainable development that was held earlier this year, I made mention of it, and I would repeat it again. It is one thing to build—at 20 times the economic cost—an airport still not fully functional, and tell the population that as a people and as a nation, we believe we can fly, but for there to be sustainable economic development, there must be a real commitment to a far more critical project, namely that of human, mental, and emotional health and development.

Mr. Vice-President, in your address you commented on the finely paved roads, which in your view, the country now has the benefit of. But everyone else on the other side failed, altogether, to touch on the adverse psychological effects of urbanization, which are well researched and documented, and which have to be taken into account in any programme of sustainable growth. We must take into account the loneliness, despair, and suicide, which are the side effects of

technological and industrial expansion, and which affect even our talented and otherwise outwardly highly successful young musicians. This administration's silence on these aspects of our people's well-being, and their failure to address it in any meaningful way in the Minister's budget presentation, is unforgivable.

There needs to be established, as an urgent imperative of any plan for sustainable growth, an adequate social safety net to address emotional, psychological and spiritual wounding that is a side-effect of economic expansion and urbanization. This administration has fixedly failed to address that. Unless and until they do so, Mr. Vice-President, with all their glorified ambitions of sustainable growth, and all their so-called development policies, we will only be "spinning top in mud".

As I conclude, Mr. Vice-President, I want to touch on a matter—on which I feel very strongly—relating to corruption. Mr. Vice-President, one of the most devastating and debilitating afflictions in the context of a young and emergent economy, is that of government corruption. Any government that is committed to developing a sound economic base must be committed to uprooting and punishing corruption. But a Government can hardly do that, Mr. Vice-President, if it steadfastly refuses to own up to the corruption within itself; to react to genuine concerns about corruption within the ranks of Government by spitting rabid invectives against the perceived historical offences of a previous administration. By violently snapping and snarling at historical ghosts on each occasion that the finger of shame points at you, Mr. Vice-President, is no way to fight, much less win, the colossal battle against corruption. [*Desk thumping*] Indeed, it is the one against corruption, and not in relation to any electoral contest, that has proved to be the mother of all of this Government's battles.

Mr. Vice-President, a responsible Government will recognize and acknowledge the challenges from within its fold and then move swiftly to conquer them. Nothing is gained by the elders of that administration persuading its younger minds that the appropriate response to allegations of corruption is to line up servilely behind their leaders and curse the past. Nothing is gained by Minister Moonilal dismissing the mountain of evidence as to corruption on the part of his administration as "the resurrection of cheques from political dustbins"; or by Minister Kernahan dismissing genuine enquiries concerning misappropriation of public funds as the work of "evildoers" or of "megalomaniacs". The only thing worse than the example of their leaders is the fact that as such obviously intellectually gifted individuals, they seem prepared, so easily, to follow it.

6.40 p.m.

How can we talk about economic development based on the creation of an intelligent nation, Mr. Vice-President, when this administration daily insults the nation's intelligence by reacting to perfectly valid complaints and concerns about misappropriation of the public's funds in the manner that they have, which has become the ugliest and most objectionable of the legacies of this administration? [*Desk thumping*] We live in a world in which young people have grown tired and have sickened of politics and politicians and of the seemingly unending stream of corruption that appears to follow them wherever they go, like some objectionable substance stuck to the bottom of one's shoes. If this Government is serious about eradicating corruption, it will not merely rely upon the passage of 101 pieces of so-called anticorruption legislation.

Mr. Vice-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. C. Kangaloo: If this Government is serious about eradicating corruption, it will not merely rely on the passage of anticorruption legislation. After all, you cannot legislate matters of the soul. [*Desk thumping*] Rather, if they are serious about fighting corruption, they will start by acknowledging it within themselves and treating with it in an adult and responsible manner instead of descending into the childish tantrums for which they are now collectively notorious. [*Desk thumping*] If the Government is serious about its fight against corruption, Mr. Vice-President, then it will begin by the former chairman of the North West Regional Health Authority doing the honourable thing and resigning forthwith from his position in this Chamber [*Desk thumping*] and, with that signal move, hopefully there will be sparked a series of long overdue resignations, starting at the very top of this Government or, at the very least, a temporary stepping aside until the clouds of suspicion over the conduct by certain officials of the people's affairs are lifted.

There is only one chance which we will have, as members of Government, to rescue the minds of the young from the clutches of indifference and hostility toward public and political life in which they are now so hopelessly ensnared. That chance, Mr. Vice-President, is now. For, if not now, then when; and, if not us, then who? The question of corruption in Government goes to the very centre of the credibility of democratic systems and of our people's entitlement to rule

themselves. Unless and until those on the other side accept and discharge their responsibility in the fight against corruption, this and every other budget that is passed by any of the Parliaments of this country will ultimately come to naught and we will descend irretrievably into the barbarism of which the older heads on that side have already given us such ugly glimpses.

Mr. Vice-President, “One People, One Nation: Leaving No One Behind”—leave the corrupt ones behind. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Vice-President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie: [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Vice-President, let me say how happy I am to be here this evening and to make my contribution to this debate. I want to say that I consider this a very historic occasion, historic because it is the first for this hon. Minister; [*Desk thumping*] historic because no one from the other place came to this place to make a contribution. [*Desk thumping*] Every year since I have been here, Ministers have been coming from the other place to make contributions in this Senate and it tells me that we are saying to the Senators of this Senate, “You have what it takes to deliver the message of your Government.” [*Desk thumping*] So I want to say congrats to the Leader of Government Business. I guess he must have stood on his four legs to ensure that only the Senators speak in this debate.

I want to give a message to the hon. junior Minister in the Ministry of Education. I am sorry he is out of the Chamber but I was very disappointed in him this evening when I saw him waving a booklet indicating that they were going to bring in people from Cambridge to tell the teachers how to teach Trinidad and Tobago children! Mr. Vice-President, I want to tell the hon. Minister, it is my honest opinion—and I have known him for a number of years—nobody in Trinidad and Tobago could tell Trinidad and Tobago teachers how to teach slow learners in Trinidad and Tobago better than Roy Augustus [*Desk thumping*] and I am not just saying this. I am saying this because of my knowledge of the competence of the man as a teacher and as a principal and working with him.

I want to make another observation and it is a call to the public servants. I am so happy that I am seeing so many of them sitting in the Chamber this evening. I want to say to them, through you, Mr. Vice-President, and through the hon. Minister, we are depending on the public servants to implement this budget because, from what we are seeing and hearing, I think the burden will fall upon them to implement this. I also want to say how much I recognize the resilience, perseverance and co-operation of the parliamentary staff where members of staff

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are now housed downstairs. I saw how they are making themselves so comfortable and how they have spruced up the place and they have made it so nice, you know, when you consider the inconvenience of all the packing and moving and sorting and so on. I also want to recognize how comfortable they have tried to make us while moving from upstairs to downstairs while “we doing the repairs”. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, I also want to recognize the efforts of the hon. Minister of Transport and Minister of Tourism and Tobago Affairs in the area of the Under-17 football championship and I will tell you why I am saying this. In Tobago, we had four teams, and Tobagonians adopted the four teams as if they were Tobago teams. After our Trinidad and Tobago team got knocked out, we pledged our allegiance to the four teams that were placed in Tobago—the United States, Japan, France and Nigeria. When Japan and the USA went out, we had the two teams—Nigeria and France—as our teams, and we said to ourselves, “No team from Trinidad could come to Tobago and beat our two teams”, and we stuck behind them and we supported them. Minister Phillips and Minister Augustus could tell you when he comes in how we roared and yelled and supported our teams.

What I want to praise the hon. Minister for is that she made sure that the port allowed the boat to leave Trinidad at hours where Trinidadians could have come over to Tobago, get in there on the morning of the match and go back over to Trinidad after the match was finished. [*Desk thumping*] I thought that that was excellent and these are the little things you know, Mr. Vice-President, that make me feel very happy. I also want to recognize the volunteerism that we have seen in the staging of the football championship. When I saw administrators, school supervisors, principals of schools, high-ranking public officials in Tobago volunteering their services in all spheres to ensure that the Under-17 tournament in Tobago ran without a hitch, I said “Hats off to our people.” I want to recognize the volunteering spirit of all those people who worked for free to ensure that we put on a good show.

Now, Mr. Vice-President, I want to turn very, very briefly to the budget. When I read the budget, I felt happy, and at another time I felt sad, and at another time I felt very sympathetic. Then I said to myself, as an old primary schoolteacher, a child did not have to have a perfect score for me to rate his or her work as excellent. The Minister might not have had a perfect score but I would still rate his work as very good. [*Desk thumping*] So I want to recognize the efforts and the balance that I suspect would have been brought to this budget by

this hon. Minister. I also want to recognize the language of the budget—top class philosophy, the phrasing, the academia—I could have felt it, and I say praise to those public servants who helped to write this budget.

I also recognize that when that positive exuberance went overboard the Minister brought it back. He brought back a reality check. For example, on page 4 of the budget, when I saw all the lovely things about the performance speaks for itself and this and average what and—I said, is the only measure of success money, foreign reserves? Are these the only measures? Then when I went further on I saw where the hon. Minister would have said, “Oh no; let us also remember that we have shortcomings. We have to be a cleaner society. We have to do something about crime. We have to do something about corruption. We have to do something about our debt stock.” So I want to recognize this sort of sobriety, if you want to call it that, in the hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Vice-President, I also want to commend the hon. Minister for the consultations he has held. I would have heard on the radio in Tobago the hon. Chief Secretary always talking about having consultations with the hon. Minister and meeting him and chatting with him and trying to lobby him and so on, and I think that that is very good. However, when I went through the budget, let me tell you some of the things that got me very concerned. I saw where, 27 times, the hon. Minister of Finance had to indicate that he had to amend some Act. Then I said, “He probably has to have more staff or agencies preparing these amendments. He has to do something about them.” Then I looked at the Order Paper and I saw 14 bills and four motions. Two of the motions and 10 of the bills are under the name of the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs and I said to myself, “Poor Gillian, poor Gillian.” *[Laughter]*

Mr. Vice-President, let me just flip through the budget very quickly and make some brief comments. You know I am not a very long speaker. I looked and I want to tell the hon. Minister what people say on the ground. I am not going into academia. I want to tell you what people say on the ground, things that you may not hear. When it comes to the Integrity in Public Life Bill, as you have mentioned on page 15, you know what is happening, Mr. Vice-President? Many worthy people do not want to serve in areas where they have to reveal what they have, and I will tell you why. It is not because they are scared that you will know. It is not because they are scared that you will be envious of them. They are scared that, when they reveal the information, somebody tells somebody what they have and they come and kidnap them. *[Interruption]*

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No, this is what people say, and they were not wrong because you have seen it happen in the TSTT case that was reported in the newspapers. Some fellow in the bank said, "This person ha' plenty money in de bank. Kidnap he daughter and ask him to pay so much money." People are saying, "I doing dat and tell you that I have 100 sheep, leh yuh come an' tell people, 'Boy, she have 100 sheep', and you gone and kidnap mih only child and say, 'Gi' mih 50 ah yuh sheep?'" Mr. Vice-President, I want to tell the hon. Minister, that is one of the fears and, coming from board meetings in Trinidad I have heard people travelling with me on the plane and saying, "Eastlyn, today four ah we members say dey not coming back on any board." Why? "Dey not declaring no nutten for nobody to kidnap dey children." Mr. Vice-President, hon. Minister, "doh bother wid all dis ol' talk whey people telling yuh. I tellin' yuh de troot." [*Laughter*]

Mr. Vice-President, I looked at page 16 and I wrote some comments. "What a pity!" "Now tell me." "Terrible!" "Decency gone." That was because the hon. Minister had to safeguard whatever assets and procedures and so on that he had by putting watchmen. I say public watchmen. You say "overseer", I say "watchmen". Where will you get the people to carry out this watchman job for all these people? Mr. Vice-President, I want to advise the hon. Minister: Set out your rules straight! Set your regulations straight! Make sure everybody knows the rules and regulations! When you appoint somebody, give them the rules and regulations and you ensure that they carry out the rules and regulations! [*Desk thumping*] "Dey doh carry out the rules and regulations, you know what to do!" [*Desk thumping*] Let them know what "de" penalty is!"

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Let "dem" know what "de" penalty is! "Doh" look for any watchman, Mr. President. "You was'in people time and yuh was'in money. I am appointing you to this organization, this board, this position", you hand them a booklet of the rules and regulations. You make sure they could read and understand, and that is it. You have a meeting with them and you discuss it and you finish, and leave the people to do their work. They "doh" do their work in the manner it should be done, you know what to do [*Desk thumping*] because "de" book has it. Mr. President, I am a loyal and a very obedient taxpayer. If I know the Minister of Finance "taking my tax money" to hire people to be watchmen, I do not know what I will do.

Mr. President, I want to tell you also how I wish he would speed up the regulations dealing with credit unions. I know what the problems have been. I am a member. I have been in the movement. I have revived credit unions. I know

what people are saying. However, what I want to tell him and why I want to ask him to speed it up, is because, in our society, you cannot forget the impact of culture on the behaviour of our people. Nearly every village has a credit union and our people will go with their little cheque and say, "All right, change it fuh mih, but put ah hundred dollars in mih credit union book."

In Tobago, all "de" banks in town and we have one down in Canaan. So the person in Charlotteville has to come to town to cash "dey" cheque whereas, if they could go to their little credit union and cash "dey" cheque, "dey" might leave ah twenty dollars there or ah hundred dollars." "You think anybody dressing up, pay \$20 return from Charlotteville, going into town, go in the bank, change dey money, dey ha to dress up, dey ha to put on—home dey could drag dey slipper, go to the credit union, everybody know them and so on." I am not saying to give the privilege immediately because I understood what you have said. What I want to tell you, you will be surprised to know how much poor, ordinary people will save through their credit unions in their villages if you speed up the legislation and get the things functioning as they should.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. President, well, I have already spoken about the Ombudsman. I have this recommendation at the end. I go to page 31, the manufacturing sector. Mr. President, I want to ask the hon. Minister, please Sir, when these people come in to invest, please consider Tobago. Direct some of them to Tobago in some of these areas. You have heard how wonderfully the hon. Minister of Tourism and Tobago Affairs has spoken about the atmosphere in Tobago and if you would speed up, not only in tourism, but if we could find a little of the manufacturing.

I am so happy about the allowance that he will give for sport, filming, drama and so forth. You know I like that. I love it. You know that. So, I want to take the opportunity to say I have always advocated two things in this place. One, implementation and two, public education and, at this point, I want to commend the hon. Minister of Transport again for using drama and the slogans and the children to put over the message about being careful in driving, about buckling up and so forth. You would not believe how much I have heard drivers say, "Every time I hear that little gyul voice, I does have to drive slower." It has created an impact. It has made people check on what they are doing. Continue to use your drama in this form.

I come to the question of Tobago and I listened to what the hon. Minister said. I want to stress a point made by Sen. Dumas about Tobago's part of national

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programmes being specific. I remember I was having the Agricultural Incentive Programme and other programmes that are administered from Trinidad, and I think you need to set a policy in train where Tobago itself will know what is available to it and how it could be disbursed. We are not finding this.

Well, do not talk about the airline! Mr. President, I want to tell the hon. Minister, we cannot get our mail on time, we cannot get our newspapers on time. By the time I get my—I do not want to say the name of my newspaper because I am an addict to it—by the time I get it, it is history. The papers are still coming to Tobago late. Sometimes one set gets on and the other set does not get on. Sometimes they come 2 o'clock in the day. So, please, Mr. President, I am asking the hon. Minister to see what could be done.

I want to talk a few seconds on education. When I listened to the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Education, I had to send and get a copy of the task force report on Common Entrance and, my goodly friend, Prof. Ramchand said, “Eastlyn, we said that in the Senate already.” But I said this Minister was not here, so let me say it to the hon. Minister here.

I am looking at the task force report on the removal of the Common Entrance Examination, and I am at page 46, looking at the 1992 Common Entrance results. These are things I have said in the Senate before. At that time, 30,960 children wrote the examination, and the task force looked at the scores and these children were graded. We placed 21,000 children in that year. Let me tell you, of the 21,000 children, when you looked at the grading, only 9,000 of those children should have been in secondary school. Mr. President, 12,000 of them made from zero up to 15 marks, I am not talking about percentage. Real low percentage.

What we were saying is that you must make these children ready. What I want to say is that our emphasis should be now also on the primary schools. We are not getting the results in the primary schools that we should get to enable these children to move up. Minister Augustus would not have that kind of problem. He was in a prestige school where select children used to go to his school. That is why I said at the beginning, if he were one of my students I would beat him—*[Laughter]* for telling me about Cambridge.

As I said in your absence, Sir, for me, I know—I have read about you, I have had the experience—that you are one of the best teachers that I have ever known and read about, and you are telling me you are sitting and hearing somebody telling you about bringing people from Cambridge? “Wha wrong with you, man?” *[Laughter]*

Mr. President, my problem is, focus on the primary schools and make sure that—SEA and CAP were to ensure that the promotion in the primary schools was not automatic and that children would move from one level to the next according to their readiness and then, therefore, you would not send a child to write the examination if that child was not ready.

That is what happened in the SEA. The number of children who wrote the SEA this year was less; about 10,000 children less. Because schools got into the thing of this child would be able to write the examination where he or she is ready—there is no need for them to cram the child and force the child to write Common Entrance because they have one or two chances. This is what is happening. We are sending up children who are sort of ready.

What has happened, Mr. President, and I have been to the schools. I use my time as a Senator going around to the schools. Last week Monday I spent a half-day at Roxborough Secondary and on Monday I was at one of the special schools. The children there cannot read and write. I heard a teacher saying to the SS3, “Sir, I get some of them to spell C-at, cat; and B-at, bat; but I cannot get them to say L-amp, lamp”. That is in the secondary centre.

What bothers me, Mr. President, because I am there helping them to see what methods we could use to bring these children up—the teachers we have teaching them are Assistant Teachers III, graduate teachers from A’ levels. They do not know head or tail how to handle them! Therefore, I am saying, if I had a preference to get a special class in my primary school and put a special teacher trained specifically to bring these children up to the level, and so on, I would have preferred to do that than make their parents pay transport, books, uniform and fool them and say, “You are in secondary school” and they cannot handle this. I met another teacher in another school driving a car. “Where are you going?” “Ah going down. Some of the children run away from the school and gone down by the beach in Store Bay.” [*Laughter*] They cannot manage and do not have the teachers who have been prepared to handle this. Mr. Augustus! Mr. President, I think that is enough to make the hon. Minister understand what I am saying.

Now, I want to go to dollar for dollar. When I came into this Senate in 1995, in 1996, the former Minister of Finance had something about education, and I made the point, I said, “Sir, our people from Tobago cannot access education in Trinidad, as your people here. Nor can the people of Toco or La Brea or wherever they are from.” They have nobody to stay by, no boarding and lodging, and so, they do not avail themselves of the opportunity.

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He was trying his best to get them to have some house in Chaguaramas where they could stay and come to school at the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute. Many of our children, our young people left, started at John Donaldson and had to drop out because they did not have anywhere to stay. They cannot pay . The boarding and lodging is more than the dollar for dollar. I am appealing to you, Sir, and this has happened before in Tobago. I remember in the 1970s when I worked at Community Development, there was a special vote given by Trinidad to the Permanent Secretary in Tobago to assist people from Tobago who wanted to access that type of training in Trinidad and help them to pay their boarding and lodging. Mr. President, I want to beg the hon. Minister, "Sir, you are a listening man. I want you to listen. Try and see what you could do." [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, on page 44, the dialysis machines, please see whether he can send two to Tobago. Every week I come to Trinidad, people come down with me to dialyze. Sometimes they have to come Tuesday and Thursday, some of them have to stay. They have to expense themselves and stay out of home, and so forth. Please, Sir, if you could send one or two of those machines to Tobago, I would be happy.

I want to come to the liquor and tobacco and the under-aged. Mr. President, the hon. Minister is talking about penalizing the people who sell it to them. I want you to add another group of people. Penalize the parents who send some of the five- and six-year-old children to go by the place to buy it. They send them and say, "Go by the parlour and buy a pack of cigarettes." "Go by the thing and buy a bottle of rum." Penalize the parents who send them too. Do not only penalize the people who sell it to them.

Mr. President, I looked at the driving schools. I have never found any problem with the people who teach people to drive. They could drive so good that when they graduate, that is the time that they do what nobody ever taught them to do. As soon as they learn to drive, Mr. President, they do everything that they were never taught to do. The driving instructor never tested them on that. [*Laughter*] If you see how they drive! Some of them are driving with their feet, some, one foot out the window and they are driving with it there. Some of them in the back seat driving in the front, because they pull the seat quite back behind. [*Laughter*] Who taught them to do that? What is he doing with the driving instructors? Nothing is wrong with the driving instructors. We have people who drive how they were never taught to drive. So, I do not know how you are going to solve that.

I go on to culture, Mr. President. I want to appeal to the hon. Minister, please continue the programme of the aesthetics, the dance and the music and the drama.

How much it brings out in our people. I like the incentive that you are giving to our local television productions and our shows, and so forth. I like that. I want to ask you, Sir, the Ministry for Tobago Affairs started a programme like that under former Minister Morgan Job in Tobago. I want to ask you, Sir, please do not cut the fund from it because the Minister has been cut. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, I want to go to page 58 and I want to talk about this maintenance and alimony and people who do not pay. That is not the problem in Tobago. The problem in Tobago is that they will carry these people, they will get a warrant, lock them up, but they go and pay their money. Sir, the trouble is to collect the money. The system that they have of depositing the money and then you have to go back and collect the money, and when you go back—The man deposit the money since last month, you go this month for the money and they say, “It ain’t come back from—” Where does it go? I do not understand where it goes, but somebody puts it in some kind of fund and it is difficult to get it back. Mr. Minister, could you kindly look into the process of how maintenance money is collected and how it is given to the people who are supposed to get it to feed their children? This is the problem. I am telling you about what happens on the ground.

Mr. President, public education is necessary, we have to educate the public, whether in pullouts in the newspapers, whatever have you, of what the new rules and regulations will be. I read on page 60 about public servants and how much they are going to pay them and the settlement. What about the SRC report? You see, when they talk about money for themselves, everybody is afraid. I am not afraid. The Salaries Review Commission made recommendations, and we have implemented them in part. Forget the Leader of the Opposition. [*Laughter*]

Last year we had money allocated and nobody paid anybody. When I looked at the salaries of some people in local government bodies and they are getting \$1,600 a month, below the minimum wage, they should lock up the Government. Why are we breaking the rules? I want to appeal to the hon. Minister, please Sir, implement the Salaries Review Commission recommendations in full.

Mr. President, I have a habit of going around after the budget is read to the people of the villages of Tobago. I pick about six and go around and discuss the budget with them. But this year, I was not able to do so. I want to tell the hon. Minister that personally, I congratulate him, I thank him for the concessions and the appreciation and the assistance he has given to individuals: to the aged, to manufacturers, developing science, tourism, for the hearing impaired, the physically challenged, the mentally challenged—because I am the Chairman of

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the Tobago Council for Handicapped Children, a voluntary organization. I was pleased to see that you gave us not only what we asked for, but a little thing more.

So we want to thank you. The battered, the destitute, the homeless, Tobago, the AIDS victims and, health. Talking about Tobago, Sir. I see where you have—we could not get all, nobody got all—you gave us the permission, the grants and so forth. But Sir, are you going to do anything about the collection of taxes, levies, duties and fees? Section 49(2) of the Tobago House of Assembly Act? I hope, Sir, that you would be able to work something out.

I want to ask, to advise, that you do some public education to make people aware of some of the benefits and the assistance, where they will get help, probably every division could have a pullout. Use the television and radio, use skits and posters, educate the children in the schools that the parents are not supposed to send them to buy anything that is not legal, like alcohol, and so on.

Clarify the tax breaks. You said from January, 2002. People are not aware that you mean income year 2002. So some people feel that when January comes, the thing is law, so when they are making up their tax returns in April, they will get the tax break. They will claim 27 per cent and whatever per cent. I think you need to make that very straight. I spoke about the boarding and lodging, and so forth, the SRC, collection and maintenance and mobilizing divisions to set up their plans and begin to implement your proposals without haste.

As I was saying Mr. President, I could not go around this year to the people in the villages. So, one little old lady wrote me a letter and I would like to read it to you, Sir. If you will permit me, I will try to read it in the voice of the old lady as I thought she would have been speaking to me. *[Laughter]*

It says, Mr. President:

“Dear Eastlyn,

Is a long time I write a letter, so pardon the writing. I hope you can read it. My eyes not as good as long time, but I can see good enough to write to you.

When you go down in Trinidad in the Red House, I want you to give the Minister responsible for money the thanks of we the old people.

I don't know him but I does see him on T.V. sitting down next to mi goddaughter Jearlean. *[Laughter]* *[Desk thumping]* That man look so clean with his pretty white shirt, he look as a man with a clean, good heart and clean hands.

Tell him that we old people thank him for the raise in old age pension and for the bus passes. Tell him make sure we have plenty bus to carry us around and kind drivers who know how to treat old people.

Tell him that the drugs in the drugstore does eat out we money.

Eastlyn, most of all, I want you to thank the Minister for removing VAT on things we old people does buy, especially the blue soap.” [Laughter]

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“Make sure you explain to him what we in Tobago used to use blue soap for. Tell him that we used to use blue soap and scrubbing brush to scrub people tongue when they use bad word in public and when they suck their teeth.

On T.V. I see some high people—man and woman—calling one another donkey and bad names and talking out private secrets. Girl when dog bite you it bad but when your own dog bite you it worse. [Desk thumping] [Laughter]

Girl, Tell them it don't have any sea to throw way bad family. But mi husband say bundle wood have to loose before it tie good.

Well, praise God for the Minister, tell him get the new boat quick—we fraid aeroplane—we coming to Trinidad with we blue soap and scrubbing brush and we scrubbing their tongue clean as whistle. Tell all of them to stop washing their mouth on one another.

Mi husband say to tell them kitchen dresser brock down marga dang a larf. [Laughter] Tell dem they making we old people nervous and carrying up we pressure. Tell them behave they self.

Eastlyn, careful when you down in Trinidad. Crazy people bombing tall buildings in America, when you see trouble run, run fast. Dem in Trinidad sound like they tired wid one another. We not tired with you yet.

P.S. Tell mi god daughter to bring a liniment B when next she coming to see me. The arthritis in meh knee hurting for so especially when rain set up. Tell the Minister dont pay anybody no big set of money to find out who tief what and how much. I go use me ring and Bible and glass of water and ah go do it for free. When you come back tell me what he say.

Tan Tan

P.S. Is true the Prime Minister does give 10 days?

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When crayfish come out a river bottom and tell you eel deh deh it dere for true.”

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

Sen. Derek Outridge: Mr. President, it seems that that is a very hard act to follow. [*Laughter*] It seems that one of the criteria for being a good leader is to be a good actor as well.

Earlier in the day, I was very disheartened with one black spot that I considered in the contributions. The Minister of Transport and Minister of Tourism and Tobago Affairs did an excellent job during her delivery. It was an almost flawless contribution. However, I was very disheartened with the fact that the Minister considered the contributions made by the Members of this honourable Senate as squandering two days. I think that that is an unfortunate remark. I am sure the Minister probably did not mean it in that manner, but it certainly came across like that. I hope that she would understand that the contributions of Members of this honourable Senate are committed and deserving and Senators spend lots of long hours, lots of time preparing their contributions and, therefore, they ought to be recognized for what they are worth.

Sen. John: Thank you.

Sen. D. Outridge: The Minister also mentioned that with participation from others, in respect of coming together to achieve something, this brings forward the best of people. I certainly believe this and it is something I would like to ensure that the Government would do even more, to allow the public to participate whenever they are preparing their presentations and their projects.

The Minister also mentioned the fact that the contribution and talent of our locals are second to none and it is a message we need to get across to anybody who considers bringing out many foreign consultants and designers; foreign people. Our people go into the universities and schools abroad and they top the classes; they are on the Dean's list. They come back home, only to find that the Government does not require their contribution, but brings a lesser standard person from abroad to impose upon us in our local environment and local culture what they believe we must have. I think that is quite unfortunate. I would really like that the Government looks inward, towards its own, in respect of getting contributions, developing programmes and in respect of delivery of goods to people.

Mr. President, I am not as optimistic as others. I was deeply disappointed with the Minister of Finance. My disappointment stemmed, not from the fact that his

presentation was longwinded or that it represented a manifesto of some sort, it stemmed from the fact that—and I believe that, and people say it, when politicians tell you to stand up is to run—it will not deliver to the people what the Minister of Finance claims that they want. That is, it will not deliver a better quality of life with more and better jobs. We have to know that we are in an era of jobless growth.

It will not deliver a crime-free environment. I do not know anywhere in the world where there is a crime free environment; it would be better to have stated a reduced crime environment. It will not deliver emancipation from economic hardship. Enough has been said in respect of recent events and in respect of recession and depression. It will not deliver more equitable distribution of income, better health care and greater access to educational opportunities. It will not deliver a brighter future for our children. It will not deliver good governance and transparency. One only needs to open a newspaper daily to understand what good governance we are getting. The vision of: “One People, One Nation: Leaving No One Behind” was also a disappointment, as this budget clearly was not a people's budget.

The construction industry welcomes the several construction projects and initiatives. It welcomes the application of a penalty interest for late payments to local contractors and suppliers from government ministries and government-controlled agencies; that has been long in coming.

The Minister outlined several projects which he stated he has allocated to spend \$241 million on rehabilitation of existing buildings and the construction of new public buildings specifically mentioning the construction of a new Board of Inland Revenue building and Custom and Excise Division headquarters. In both instances financing will be through the build, operate, lease and transfer (BOLT) mechanism. To my knowledge, the only BOLT project that was previously undertaken by this Government was the FIFA 2001 stadia project, which gave rise to four new stadia and has led to several raised eyebrows on the question of a \$73 million allocation in this budget for leasing.

Under this BOLT mechanism, some financiers will group themselves with some project or construction managers, consultants and contractors to finance and build the facilities. They will own the facilities for a period of time and during that period they will lease that facility to the Government for an annual rental. At the end of the lease period, the facilities' ownership is transferred to the Government. During the leasing period the Government can own and operate the

facility. The drawback of this mechanism is that it lends itself to limited competition, so only some people will benefit.

We have about 800 engineers; about 50 architects, about 400 land surveyors, valuation surveyors and quantity surveyors, about 1,200 construction contracting companies and relatively less than 10 financiers of which, less than a handful have the ability to undertake such projects. What this mechanism holds for the construction industry is a virtual closed shop for a few.

The Minister of Community Empowerment, Sports and Consumer Affairs is quoted in today's *Express* on page 50 as describing the \$73 million budget allocation for rental of the stadia as being sensational. He was responding to a comment that came from this Senate. The Minister is quoted as saying that the Government did not put out a cent and the cost was totally covered by RGM Limited, a company formed by Royal Bank, Guardian Life and Mutual Life which developed the stadiums. The Minister is also quoted as saying that payment has been spread over the next 15 years and one such payment is the \$73 million. The overall construction cost of the stadiums is \$369 million. I only hope that this \$73 million is not an annual cost, as this would mean that by the end of the 15 years, the Government would have repaid to RGM Limited the sum of \$1.095 billion under this BOLT scheme.

The Minister of Finance needs to explain to us what these BOLT schemes in this budget would actually cost the people of Trinidad and Tobago. He needs to explain to us whether the moneys from this BOLT scheme will also increase the debt stock of this country and by how much, because the repayments will be going over 15 years, in some cases, and probably more, I do not know.

The Minister of Finance must also tell us if under this closed shop BOLT scheme he intends to have: the \$21 million Siparia Administrative Complex constructed; if he wishes to have the new head office of the Ministry of Health constructed at St. Joseph; the \$55 million Science and Technology Park constructed at Wallerfield; the \$1.2 billion waterfront project comprising a Marriott hotel, improved breakfast shed, National Centre for the Performing Arts, shopping complex and the Association of Caribbean States office towers; the Invaders Bay project with plant facilities and the world class cardiac centre.

I am sure that the Minister of Finance would not want to leave anyone behind. I would like the Minister to reconsider this form of procurement from which only a few can achieve any benefits and to consider a form of procurement for the construction of projects which would provide an opportunity for greater

competition, participation and achieving his vision of: “One People, One Nation: Leaving No One Behind”. I am sure the Minister of Finance would want this.

Our track record for large projects has not been good, where we put these in the hands of a few people. Remember the airport? One cannot say more or heap more scorn upon a project which Government boasts as their achievement, which continues to demonstrate the poor approach to construction solutions, starting at \$600 million and ending up at well over \$1.4 billion. There can be no excuse, except to accept that our approach to these projects is wrong.

Mr. President, the stadia cost is claimed at being \$369 million and I really truly hope that this is so, as we do not want to hear later, people coming to this honourable Senate to ask for more money for the stadia. As far as I know, there is no final account agreed to as yet and several contractors have not been finally paid, nor have their final accounts been settled. One cannot say if there has been success in respect of construction and cost of these four stadia.

The Golden Grove Prison Complex. Remember that? Over \$200 million. As far as I understand, this prison is still not operational. Remember that this was a variant of BOLT. This scheme was called design, finance, construct, we have now just added operate, transfer and lease. Remember, also the several police stations done under design, finance, construct? They cost over \$400 a square foot for basically glorified sheds. Remember the Ministry of Works head offices? This was done under design, finance and construct too and the quality was reduced by the developer and they nearly did not get structural approval from the Ministry’s own engineering division.

Once these projects have been handed to a financier, the Government no longer has any control of what the developer does. The financier, we must remember, only wants to maximize his profits at the risk of quality, cost and delivery.

I know that this Government, in particular, has shown, even in the face of the best advice—and I personally know—given to them freely by the Joint Consultative Council for the construction industry and other construction associations and institutions, they will not heed that advice and before we can “bat an eyelid”, these projects will be announced and handed to the RGMs, the London Street Properties Group, the Carillions and so forth.

I want to make two suggestions to the Minister of Finance: I want to tell him that in negotiating these contracts, Government should set aside enough money to have its own construction cost consultants, to audit on a regular basis, the claims

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and charges of cost variances and changes that the developer would want to implement, so as to ensure that the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago get value for money.

Another suggestion is that the Minister of Finance seeks, through his Ministries, to break these large contracts into smaller, manageable portions within the contracts, handing these out in work packages, thus ensuring that the several hundreds of our consultants and contractors would have an opportunity of getting a fair share whilst, at the same time, the Government would be dictating the level of quality, cost and delivery of these projects.

7.40 p.m.

Mr. President, I am asking the Minister of Finance to leave no one behind, to be transparent, to be fair, to provide a better quality of life for our construction industry, to provide good governance. Is this too much to ask?

Mr. President, let us not have collective groups benefiting from the spoils of our sacrifices and hard work and earnings of our nation. I firmly believe this thing called the doctrine of collective responsibility is not in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is not.

We are now hearing about the level of transparency and good governance of Government business. If the “gang of four” had not fallen out with their leader, we would not have known the truth in respect of the many deals—wheeling and dealing behind the scenes—of board members, chairmen and favoured consultants and contractors.

Mr. President, the people are now fed up with the utter disgraceful behaviour of our politicians. My colleague, Sen. Daly, aptly described it as “jametizing”. It seems that the people of Trinidad and Tobago have no voice anymore in respect of how we expect our politicians and state board members, chairmen, consultants and contractors working on behalf of the Government to behave in the public’s eyes. It now falls upon us here and especially on the Independent Benches to say to all these players that they better behave themselves. We are watching and we are taking action in respect of our contributions to ensure that we achieve, or move in the right direction in achieving a better quality of life for our people.

The people responsible for administering the moneys allocated within this multi-billion dollar budget for the programmes and projects, must begin to understand that this is not their own personal moneys, but the moneys of the people of our nation and they must manage this within the rules and regulations

under which they must operate, and if they step over the line, they must be brought to face the penalty of so doing.

Mr. President, people in public office must have a higher standard of behaviour. They must not put the population through undue stress and trauma, they must learn that the resignation route is one used in public life to ensure that a greater amount of persons are not affected, and not seek to hold on because of their own pride and narrow-mindedness. I say this, because I support the call made by Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh that the whole board of the Elections and Boundaries Commission should resign so as to guarantee the people the assurance of future free and fair elections.

Mr. President, I have read in the newspaper recently that there were calls on others to resign and I believe that those so affected should do the honourable thing and resign.

Several organizations submitted proposals to the Minister of Finance who stated that the Government sat down over a three-day-period with representatives from labour, business and interreligious organizations. I know of proposals of groups outside of Port of Spain who are saying that no one consulted with them and they submitted proposals. There was no mention of their proposals in the budget to help the poor and under-privileged, to improve literacy levels, to ensure the environment is protected, to ensure that not only salt fish and other things be zero rated, but that more basic items be zero VAT rated.

The Supermarket Association is one such organization; the Rotary Club of Piarco is another; the Greater Tunapuna Chamber of Industry and Commerce is also another and there are probably others who feel that their contributions were not important because they are not of the Port of Spain Chamber, the South Chamber, the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, or the Employers' Consultative Association.

Mr. President, I want to say the contribution of everybody is important. We need to do better next time to communicate with these non-government organizations in respect of the acceptability or unacceptability of their proposals.

Mr. President, with respect to the environment, I was quite disappointed that the Minister did not use the Green Fund Levy in his proposal to force companies that are not environmentally friendly to become so. The Minister of Finance should have not just reduced the Green Fund Levy, he should have put a mechanism in place whereby firms seeking to have their Green Fund Levy reduced could enjoy this benefit by satisfying Government that they were meeting

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certain minimum environmental standards. It should also have been used to create jobs, whilst at the same time, promoting environmental projects.

Mr. President, I hope that the Minister of Finance takes on board these suggestions which I have presented today and expands them to ensure that his vision would have a better chance at being achieved. In so doing, the goal of making our country a better place would be realized.

Thank you.

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Yetming): Mr. President, first I would like to express my sincere thanks to those who have congratulated me on the budget. I know you do not like reference being made to the other place but, I was rather surprised that about seven Members of Parliament on the Opposition Benches in the other place congratulated me on my budget. That shows a kindness and civility which I did not find here.

Whether the budget was good, bad, or indifferent, some of the Opposition Members in the other place found it important to congratulate me. I was rather taken aback. I also want to thank sincerely the seven or eight Independent Senators who congratulated me.

Mr. President, there appears to be a problem with me and the People's National Movement. Again, elsewhere, one of the early things mentioned was my involvement with that party and Sen. Montano found it necessary to make reference to my involvement with the People's National Movement. I am not too sure he knows anything about my involvement with the PNM, but for the purposes of this Senate, I should say what my position is or was with the PNM because I want to put that to bed.

In 1995, a particular gentlemen who was a former member of the NAR and who had gone over to the PNM, and who was reputed to be a close adviser of the political leader called and asked for a donation, and I agreed to give a donation to the PNM in 1995.

I subscribed to the view then; I subscribe to the view now that the democracy in this country requires two strong political parties and I have absolutely no problem providing financial support to any political party. I have done that for many years.

In fact, in my early years in politics with the formation of the ONR I knew what it was like not to have money to pay your telephone bill. It is all well and good to talk about campaign contributions, but outside of a political election

campaign, a party needs—as you have in Balisier House, or otherwise you have to have a staff, whether it be one person or two; you have to have telephones and electricity.

The reason you would have these financiers—and you know we will criticize financiers and be upset with them for the control they may have on a political party, but the fact of the matter is that many of us who are upset with financiers would not put a cent to political parties to help them pay their telephone bill.

So when I was called upon for a donation in 1995, I readily agreed, and this particular gentleman, who was, like I said an ex-NAR colleague and one aspiring to be close to the leadership of the political leader, Mr. Manning, he came with a form and if people know who the individual is, they would know that he is an individual who can badger and plead and he wanted to create an impression with the political leader that he had sway with the NAR people, and I signed the form. I was, at the time, not politically aligned having come out of the NAR.

I have never been inside the Balisier House, I have never been to a constituency meeting, and I have never had any official meeting with the PNM. I signed a form.

I had two calls from the Leader of the Opposition in the lead-up to the 2000 election; one call was to ask that I coordinate the activities of some of his constituencies and I declined because I was not interested, and in the later part of the campaign I was asked to coordinate meetings with the private sector for the Leader of the Opposition, political leader of the PNM, and I also declined. Those were my two interactions with the PNM. I do not want to hear another word about me and the PNM. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] I do not want to hear another word about me and the PNM.

Sen. Daly used some language about “maco” and so on, and I do not want to use the word “horn” or the word “tabanca” I will use “woman scorned” to describe the kind of reaction I am getting from both places on this PNM membership issue.

Mr. President, I had the good fortune of having eight economists in my budget team, coupled with experience, a couple young ones, a good blend, but eight economists all from within the public sector; two from outside the Ministry of Finance; one from another ministry who was brought in for the exposure; one who had joined a 100 per cent state enterprise but was part of the budget team last year—we brought her in—and I am very proud of the budget team I had that helped put this budget together.

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I would say first of all that unlike previous years, this budget was entirely home-grown. There was no external party from outside the public sector as happened sometimes in the past, neither foreign nor local. There was no writer brought in to help write this speech, it is all home-grown and I think that my budget team would also say that both the content and the budget statement reflect my stamp. [*Desk thumping*] The good, bad, or indifferent; that is mine.

It is not a copy of anything PNM, I have not read any 20-year vision of the PNM. It was said in the other place and I hear it again now. I find it rather strange that for all the commendations that I would get both in here and outside by a lot of public commentators, organizations and so on, the six Opposition Senators would find absolutely nothing good to say about this budget—absolutely nothing. Amazing. Yet they say that I copied their 20-year vision. On the one hand, I copied their 20-year vision, and on the other hand there is absolutely nothing good to say from the six Opposition Senators.

They criticized every single measure: Reduction in corporation tax, criticized; reduction in personal tax, criticized; every single measure for the poor, the dispossessed, the disabled, criticized. They offered no alternative, real solution.

I missed Sen. Prof. Deosaran. I come here and I enjoy listening to the Independent Senators because to me, all nine of them are wise in their own right and I come to listen to independence, objectivity, and wisdom. I come for that. [*Desk thumping*] Other than that, from the six Opposition Senators, all I get is no solution, no offering of anything, only criticism.

I hear talk about the United Kingdom's pension is so many pounds. I do not know what is the relevance of that. The UK pension is a contributory pension plan, we are talking about a pension we are giving to people in Trinidad and Tobago moved from about \$300 and something a month five years ago to \$800 a month five years later.

In the five years that the PNM was in office they gave an increase of \$15 per month. We have more than doubled the pension and I am hearing from an Opposition Senator something about UK pension and so many pounds a month, and I do not know what is the relevance. And then being asked for "what-if" scenarios. I developed "what-if" scenarios, from early in my office I asked for five-year projections. We were dealing with five-year numbers and they had to be dealt with. We have had consultation with the oil companies and with all kinds of people on oil prices.

Nobody got any crystal balls but we have to sit down and do some projections. We have got to do 'what-if' scenarios. We do that every day. I had extreme difficulty getting this thing down to three hours. I could have spoken for four or five hours and given all kinds of explanations about all kinds of things; maybe next time.

8.00 p.m.

This budget, as I have said before—I cannot remember whether I have said it here—is not about numbers; it is not about balancing numbers. As far as I am concerned, I tried to set the budget in a ten-year time frame because we had a visioning exercise in Tobago this year with the private sector, inter-religious organization, unions and so on and we came up with what we call the 2010 vision. That was read out a number of times. What I attempted to do in this budget was to set some targets for the year 2005. Because, notwithstanding developments within the organization and notwithstanding whatever may happen with the Gypsy/Chaitan case, as far as I am concerned, I have five years to go and I have to set my sights for five years. I tried to present a budget that would lead on to what should happen five years from now. I attempted in the budget to paint a picture of where Trinidad and Tobago ought to be five years from now. It was vague. It could not be precise but I think the public of Trinidad and Tobago have a right to know where this Government intends to take them.

The people voted the UNC in office for five years and I do not know that we should come with a one-year plan and the public does not know what we would come with next year; or the following year. The public ought to know and business ought to know. Business ought to know because they have to plan based on where the Government is taking them five years from now.

I said a corporation tax reduction of 1 per cent; but once the conditions are right, the rate is going to go down further. I did not say it in the budget statement that my target is 30 per cent—likewise personal income tax—but I did signal that it was a move. I know it is a small rate but it was a signal that that is the intention of the Government.

Businesses can plan; individuals can plan. Like I said, when we talk about the diversification of the economy, diversification cannot take place overnight. As far as I am concerned, we have now set five drivers to diversify the economy. It is not going to take a year and one can say, as has been said, why are you mentioning that because that will take three years to happen. But do you not think that the public has a right to know? This is where we are going, and if there is any strong

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objection, if there is any other wisdom, then we could change, but unless we have that, this is where we are going. Like I said, progressively, annually hereafter the budgets are all going to lead us into that direction.

Sen. Daly is correct. September 11 changed everything. I am going to read what I said in my opening statement of this budget:

“Government recognizes that the aftermath of the September 11 events in the United States has wide reaching implications and that it will not be business as usual. I wish to assure this honourable House that the preparation of this Budget for fiscal 2002 took due consideration of the developments within the international economy, particularly, the slowdown of the U.S. economy and by extension the world economy. However, the only recent development that was not fully factored into the budget exercise was the crisis of September 11, mainly because of its timing.”

I have seen at least one editorial, not on a broad sheet, on a tabloid, that criticized my budget statement of September 14, because I did not factor in the events of September 11. In fact, on September 11, this Senate was sitting and I was asked by a member of the media, what am I going to do about the budget? People were still dying; buildings were still falling; nobody knew what was going to happen next. Nobody knew what was happening and I had to factor that into a budget.

Mr. President, this is from a press conference held today by the IMF Chief Economist. I am reading from his briefing paper:

“While there are clearly substantial uncertainties about unfolding events, one should not overlook that the economic fundamentals in many countries have in many respects improved within recent years and from an economic perspective, this leaves the world somewhat less vulnerable than it might otherwise be.”

He was talking about the events of September 11.

“These improvements, together with the aggressive response by Central Banks across the globe, should help reduce the risk of sustained reductions in consumer and business confidence, a key concern in the months ahead.”

He went on to say, Mr. President—

“On the economic front, there are a number of reasons for cautious optimism. First, there is now a stable amount of policy stimulus in the pipeline in most economies, even more than we had anticipated a few weeks ago.

Second, economic fundamentals across the globe are considerably stronger than they were a few years ago. This is reflected in lower inflation, stronger fiscal positions, greater monetary policy credibility, and in many emerging markets, more flexible exchange rates regimes and lower external vulnerabilities; and third, the terrorist attack should not substantially affect underlying productivity growth in the United States economy on which economic prosperity ultimately depends.”

He went on to say:

“With the situation remaining fluid, it is premature to try to quantify the implications of the attack for growth in the United States and elsewhere. There would surely be a short-term effect on activity, particularly in the last part of this year, both in the United States and other countries. However, there is still a reasonable prospect that a recovery would begin in the first half of next year.”

So to suggest or to criticize the fact that I may not have factored in the events of September 11 into the budget, even now, we cannot, because I do not know what is an all out war on terrorism.

8.10 p.m.

While forces might be amassing in places, we are taking steps within the Ministry of Finance since from the Monday after the budget was read, and before, to evaluate events on a daily basis, and I indicated that in my budget statement here in the Senate. I have to admit that there are many unknowns. The IMF is now saying that the price of oil through this year to next year will range between \$22 to \$24.50 a barrel. If that is so, we are fine. If it should drop below \$22 on which the budget was based, we have a problem. I have already signalled that to the national population in my budget statement in the Senate. All I could do is to assure the Senate that we would respond to the changes in the world situation in the prices of oil and commodities and we will respond to changes in our financial situation on a very timely basis.

Sen. Daly is also correct, the events of September 22 also will have, and can have, a negative impact on the budget and we would have to work with that in the best way we can.

For many, many years, from since the oil crash, so to speak, of the ‘80s, we have been talking in this country about the diversification of the economy. I think that post-1986 the non-oil manufacturing sector in this country has done

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extremely well to bring itself to the point that it is at. Some attempt has been made at tourism as one of the means by which we will diversify the economy. We have been talking about it; we have never stopped talking about it.

I have announced five drivers. Not only did I do that, but I specifically allocated money for those drivers, because as far as I am concerned, the Government's policy now is to focus on those five drivers to take us away from this dependence on oil and gas. We could criticize the five; we could discount two; we can throw away one, but somebody needs to tell us if we do not do this, where can we go? If we accept that we must diversify the economy, and if it is not in the five that we have announced, where is it? Do we sit back and do nothing?

Let us suppose we say oil and gas. We talk about them being depleting assets, and maybe we have got 50 years of oil and gas left; perchance it is 50 years—in the lifetime of the children today we would run out of oil and gas and everything that is down there in south, generating and driving this economy, will disappear. What will we have, apart from Maracas and whatever else that might still be around?

The point that we have been trying to make, which is why we are determined through the dollar for dollar, however much you criticize it, is that we have got to increase the intellectual capital of the country. [*Desk thumping*] We are starting now to prepare for 50 years down the road. If we are doing it wrong, we could correct it, but that is what we are determined to do.

There is no question also that the way of today, and moreso of the future, is in science and technology. There could be no question about that. In fact, I think Sen. Thomas made the point that Costa Rica is way ahead on this, and Jamaica and so on, and I really do not know whether we should not pull up ourselves by the bootstrap and see that in preparation for 50 years down the road; in preparation for 10 years down the road, the way of the world today is science and technology and we must be part of the world, and the science and technology park is the first step in that direction. I think that Sen. Gillette made the case for that science and technology park in a manner that I do not think anybody could challenge. So to say that it is just low level jobs and call centres is absolute nonsense. In fact, I was hearing a story today that when Singapore started, they started to assemble keyboards many years ago. They used their brain power. Now they are designing keyboards in Singapore.

That is the point I think Sen. Gillette was making. You start off small, but then you have to move up the chain, and I do not think anybody could argue with the

fact that we have the brain power to do it, but you have got to start somewhere, and we are prepared to make that investment, both in terms of the establishment of the science and technology park and with respect to education, through the dollar for dollar plan.

With regard to the conference centre, the fact of the matter is that tourism is the mainstay of the economy of Tobago. The Marriott people are prepared to make a financial investment to take a 50 per cent equity position in this hotel. They are not coming to run the hotel for you for a fee; they are taking a 50 per cent equity position in the hotel and they are satisfied. In fact, post-September 11, 2001, I asked for the people to be contacted to establish whether they were still interested and I got an affirmative response. Because whether people get scared to travel for the next year or two, I really do not know that the whole world for the next 10 or 20 years, whatever it is, is going to stop travelling.

Tourism is a major industry in most countries of the world, and I really do not see why we cannot have a share of that. The fact of the matter is that we have an established player in Marriott that is prepared to come and put their money where their mouth is, in taking this equity position in this hotel. The fact of the matter is that this conference centre is going to increase the need for traffic; it is going to bring the traffic and it is going to be, in my view, very complementary to the tourism sector in Tobago, because people are not going to come for a convention in Port of Spain for two days and not spend three days in Tobago. So it is going to be very complementary. There will be tremendous spin-offs, I think, for Tobago.

I accept that post-September 11, 2001, we would need to re-assess and we will re-assess, but when we talk about diversifying the economy, it is not a one-year thing; it is not a two-year thing; it is a thing for three, four, five and ten years down the road.

With respect to agriculture, I got a call from former Sen. Prof. Spence. He had some ideas and I asked him to put them in writing, which he has since done, and I have already received a copy of his submission. The fact of the matter is—and Sen. Daly is correct—whether it is to feed yourself in a state of war, or you need to develop this as a critical part of your economic landscape, we have determined that agriculture must be a major plank of a diversification thrust. We intend to review the functioning of the Agricultural Development Bank.

8.20 p.m.

I have a report that was done by a Cabinet-appointed team made up of a number of different people in the private sector. The report calls for the shutting

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down of the Agricultural Development Bank, because to put that bank on its feet, so to speak, would cost this Government at least \$300—\$350 million, immediately. I am not prepared to accept the recommendation to shut it down and it is in that context that the question of the role of the Agricultural Development Bank and NAMDEVCO and in the context of how we wish to drive agriculture—I think Sen. Prof. Ramchand asked about getting investors in the non-oil sectors, and he is absolutely correct. That is what we intend to do.

I accept that we have not put in as much money as I would have liked into agriculture for this year, but I had extreme difficulty. There are a lot of criticisms, “Well, you only put \$10 million for AIDS, \$2 million for this” and so forth. I had requests for the Public Sector Investment Programme for this year that totalled \$981 million and \$1.34 billion for next year, an increase of more than 30 per cent. However, the requests coming into the Ministry of Finance totalled about \$6.5 billion. That \$6.5 billion had to be cut down to a figure. As I said, it is \$981 million this year. They cut it down to \$1.2 billion and I told my people from the Budget Division, “Go back and find another \$100 million for me” because this \$1.2 billion was business as usual. There would be few new projects inside that \$1.24 billion. I said, “Find another \$100 million for me”. That \$100 million was allocated between the science and technology park and agriculture to get them going. It was not as much as I would have liked to put but, I also put some in one or two other areas because I needed to do more than simply say that we are going to diversify, where we are going to diversify and how we are going to diversify. I had to put the money and that was done.

Mr. President, I do not think anybody can challenge that the non-oil manufacturing sector has done an extremely good job for Trinidad and Tobago. My commitment to the manufacturing sector is that they would be given everything that is required for them to maintain their competitiveness and to improve it, and I have done as much as I could have done during the course of this budget.

I just want to say that in addition to attempting to grow the economy by the specific new economic drivers, an area that I thought required considerable attention was the question of taxation; tax reform and reform of the Board of Inland Revenue. I have been speaking publicly before now about what I consider to be leakage and I have been speaking a lot about things that I need to do to improve compliance. There are a host of measures that I have mentioned in the budget statement and a host of measures not mentioned in the budget statement that I intend to pursue aggressively to impose compliance on people. I believe that

if we can achieve the level of compliance that we ought to have, then the question of reducing corporation tax, personal income tax and of providing other benefits to the disadvantaged would be far greater.

In addition, I made two announcements in my budget statement in that context. One is that there is a Cabinet-appointed team which is to review the taxation regime in the oil and gas sector. The last time that was done was about 10 years ago. The fact of the matter is that our revenue from gas is now growing to proportions that are significant and the intention is for us to ensure that we maximize our tax take in that area. However, I have also said that in any change that we wish to make that consultation will be with the players in the industry so that nobody gets surprises and nobody gets upset.

Mr. President, I also announced that there will be a review of the VAT system—this is not Cabinet-appointed but an initiative within the Ministry of Finance. Value added tax was introduced in Trinidad and Tobago just short of 10 years ago, and progressively, we have zero-rated items. I have to admit to Sen. Thomas that I really only reluctantly increased the number of zero-rated items this year because at the time when I tried to assess the budget as a whole, I realized that I had not done sufficient for what I consider to be the poorer people. The 1 per cent would have touched a few. The 5 per cent removal of tax on savings released \$88 million to people's pockets. Okay, so that would not have reached the poor, the 1 per cent tax would not have reached the poor and I took the decision, notwithstanding my reluctance to do it because I do not like this idea of zero-rating of items, the only choice I had, for this budget, was to identify items that would have reached the poor. It reached everybody, therefore, the point is that there was not equity—I believe that was your point, Sen. Thomas—but I really did not have a choice in this budget. However, the intention is that the VAT system will be reviewed in total during the course of the next year, partly to rationalize the zero-rated items and, if we can do so successfully, the intention—I am not saying it will happen—is to reduce the rate of VAT from 15 per cent.

I think the challenge will be how do we reach to the poor because if we remove the zero-rated, although you may drop the rate, how do you reach the poor. We are already developing some ideas on that within the Ministry of Finance. The point is that that VAT review will take place so that, in a sense, there is going to be an almost comprehensive review of not only inland revenue but the taxation systems.

Sen. Thomas also raised the question of the debt management, the 50 per cent of GDP and, therefore, if GDP increases whether we should be talking about debt in

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absolute terms. There are a couple of motions that we may have to debate within the next two weeks relative to the increase in the borrowing limits of the Government and I would reserve comment on this for that debate. That debate already took place in the Lower House and it would be coming up to the Senate within the next two weeks. Obviously, we would have to have a comprehensive discussion on the whole question of the debt stock of the Government and the question of debt management.

8.30 p.m.

Sen. Daly made reference to this overseer position and, I believe, Sen. Prof. Ramchand made reference to it. I accept fully that what Cabinet has given approval to do, which I had announced before and which is in the budget statement—setting up this audit and control unit within the Ministry of Finance—is really not the ideal. I just thought it was necessary to put an interim measure in place. I shall call it an interim measure, for the time being, because there are a host of other things that we need to do, one of which will be the new Central Tenders Board legislation. This is already fully drafted and I expect it will come to Parliament, if not by the end of this year, then early in the new year.

Apart from this, the Central Tenders Board legislation may not touch some of the statutory bodies that may have their own Central Tenders Board rules. I have to find a mechanism to link the two. This is why, when I decided to put up this proposal to set up this unit and to have contracts reported to the Ministry of Finance, I bore in mind that the Central Tenders Board is a division of the Ministry of Finance and that the Director of Contracts reports within the Ministry of Finance. Therefore, when these reports come, they will go to the Director of Contracts, who heads the Central Tenders Board. That is the plan.

Contracts below the threshold that would already have been awarded, I want her to know that they went through a process. I want to see the minutes of those meetings. I want her to check the process for contracts above the threshold amount. She is not necessarily going to review all the technical details, but she will review the process before we give them permission to award it. I accept that it is not the ideal and I do not want to create another level of bureaucracy, but in today's situation, with the charges of corruption and so forth, I can only do what I can, at least to control, stem and stop. That is what I am attempting to do.

That control unit will also have the capability to go into any unit to do random checks on how our moneys are being spent. It is not only how contracts are being awarded, it is how moneys are being spent. Go and check the expenditure of this

agency or this authority for those two months—every item—and see what kinds of bills are being paid and for what.

Until such time as we can put such mechanisms in place, I think that Sen. Dr. McKenzie is absolutely correct. We will have to strengthen our guidelines. There are guidelines in place, you know, but the problem is that somebody has to go in to see that they are adhered to. We will still have to take on staff, if only to do that.

Sen. Dr. McKenzie, I heard you were an actress. I hope they have taped that letter that you read, you know. I think I would like to get a copy of that, but not because the lady praised me up and so on.

There is a unit within the Ministry of Finance that is being strengthened at the moment. We are developing within that budget statement a checklist of everything that we said we will do—every single thing—regardless of the line ministry. This unit's responsibility will be to monitor that on a monthly basis to ensure—I want to ensure that if I have to come back to this House for the next budget statement, I would not have to be told that I was told about 50 things and only 10 got done.

Therefore, the question that Sen. Dr. McKenzie asked on the implementation unit is a very valid point and is, in fact, a key responsibility of the Ministry of Finance. In fact, I propose to report to Cabinet on a monthly basis, so that they know, because there are going to be some weak ministries that I will need to highlight to everybody in Cabinet.

We accept the fact that the integrity legislation is a disincentive to many people from serving. I am not too sure what the resolution to that might be. The Judiciary had raised some concerns about the integrity legislation and I know that some Senators had raised the question of the integrity legislation. What has been discussed is the fact that we may have to bring that legislation back to the Parliament, probably for a joint committee to examine it.

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. The Hon. G. Yetming: Sen. Dr. McKenzie also raised the question of credit unions and I also fully accept that. I just want to repeat the fact that the

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Government is totally committed to supporting the credit union movement, but we have certain responsibilities to the depositors and the members of credit unions that we must carry out.

I have spoken in this budget about the specific areas for the diversification of the economy. The question of Tobago came up in the other place because Tobago is almost singularly dependent on tourism. Somebody on the Independent Bench, maybe Sen. Dr. McKenzie or Sen. Prof. Ramchand, asked why we could not get manufacturers and investors to go to Tobago to set up their plants. My understanding from speaking to the Member of Parliament for Tobago West is that the Tobago House of Assembly is itself considering how to diversify its economy. I have signaled that I would be quite prepared to sit with the Chief Secretary and his people to work with them in developing their plan—not for me to advise on their plan, but to see the extent to which we can provide the Tobago House of Assembly with support, financial and otherwise, for them to achieve their goals. They have the same concerns in Tobago that we have.

The two other points I want to make reference to, Sen. Dr. McKenzie, is the question of the dollar for dollar accommodation for Tobago. I propose to discuss with the Minister of Human Development whether we could not, for dollar for dollar students from Tobago, include accommodation into the cost of the tuition and giving dollar for dollar on that basis. I am certain it is something we can do. I would certainly be pursuing that.

I had also stated that where newspapers and post for Tobago are concerned they are vital and necessary. I have, in fact, had discussions with the CEO, Conrad Aleong, at BWIA not only on the question of the volume of freight going across first thing in the morning, but also on the cost. They wanted to raise the price from 35 cents per pound to \$2.66 a pound. I believe that he has made concessions in that area. I do not see a price of more than 50 cents per pound being applied, even though it means that Government subsidises.

I admit that it was from Sen. Dr. Quamina that the idea of providing hearing aids free of charge came. When I considered what a poor child with a hearing impairment will do, not being given the opportunity to live a normal life, I could not help but put in that measure. I propose that, in any other budget that I might have to produce, other impairments would be considered and Government will provide financing for that.

Sen. Prof. Kenny, there are no companies exempt from the Green Fund tax. Before the budget, I listened to your concerns on the Green Fund and how the

moneys can be used. We have made some concessions to try to meet some of your concerns. You will appreciate that I could not and did not wish to turn it upside down. You could be depending on the experiences of the first year—on usage. We will probably have to give a greater percentage of the money to the Environmental Management Authority to do some of the major projects, like reforestation. You can be assured that that is something that will be done.

The point that Sen. Prof. Ramchand made about empowering people to help themselves is absolutely correct. We do have the Employment Training Programme (ETP), which used to be the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP). We brought in a training element. We have been making substantial investments in training young people. We are trying to do as much as we can in job creation. The question of the eradication of poverty will only come with education and jobs. That is the only way poverty will be eradicated in this country.

In the meantime, while we create the jobs; while we do all we can in education; while we do all we can in diversifying the economy to create the jobs, we have the poor and the disadvantaged to look after until that time comes five or 10 years from now.

I have been criticized for putting forward an election budget. Some people call it a manifesto. I would say that events within this party had absolutely no influence on the preparation of this budget. My budget team of public servants can testify to that. No measure was put into this budget with any election in mind. We have a responsibility, in my view, to take care of the poor, the disadvantaged and the disabled. We have to show heart. We have to take care of them. For as long as I am Minister of Finance, every budget that I present will be an election budget, if an election budget is so described by virtue of what we do to help the disadvantaged.

Mr. President, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

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

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Lindsay Gillette): I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, October 02, 2001 at 1.30 p.m.

We hope then to debate the Value Added Tax Order, 2001, to confirm the Excise Duty (Tobacco Products) Order, 2001, which will, hopefully, be passed in the other place tomorrow. We should also prepare ourselves for the Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) Bill.

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, before putting the Motion, I want to express my thanks to all Members of the Senate for their participation and contribution to this budget debate.

I particularly thank the parliamentary staff [*Desk thumping*] for the hard work they have put in to ensure that on each of the three days that we have been meeting, the documents have been in order so that Members have received their Order Papers and other documents, allowing us to do our work here.

I also thank the security staff for providing us with the necessary security.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.48 p.m.