

SENATE*Tuesday, October 29, 2002*

The Senate met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS**

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I have been advised that a new Senator is required to take the oath. I am still awaiting the instrument of appointment from Her Excellency The President. I therefore ask that this item be taken at a later stage of the proceedings.

*Agreed to.***PAPER LAID**

Annual audited financial statements of Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2001.
[*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill)*]

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 28, 2002]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Glenda Morean-Phillip): Mr. Vice-President, on October 08, 2002, the country exhaled. Every right-thinking citizen of Trinidad and Tobago breathed a collective sigh of relief in the expectation that the three arms of Government would once more function in the manner in which they were intended so to do under the provision of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.

Therefore, it is with a great sense of relief that I rise to contribute to the first budget debate in the eighth session of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. The citizens of Trinidad and Tobago deserve the highest commendation for the dignity, intelligence, patience, and good sense that they displayed in breaking the 18/18 deadlock and ensuring that the People's National Movement became the Government of Trinidad and Tobago once more.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. G. MOREAN-PHILLIP]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

Mr. Vice-President, I feel very privileged to be part of this Government, and as the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, I want to assure everyone that I intend to hold steadfastly to the oaths I took both as a Minister and as a Senator. In particular, I would observe that part of the oath which enjoins us all to uphold the Constitution and the law, and would do everything possible to discharge my duties with truth, justice and equity.

Mr. Vice-President, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate, through you, Madam President on her return to this august Chamber as President of the Senate and extend to you, my heartfelt congratulations on your appointment as Vice-President.

I also take this opportunity to extend congratulations to my colleagues on the other side—though not to all—but to my colleagues on the other side. *[Interruption]* You will hear why soon. I am sanguine, Mr. Vice-President, that we are all eager to get on with the people's business, and we on this side look forward to the cooperation of all Senators—especially those on the Opposition Benches—in ensuring that the enactment of Government's proposed legislation to which I would refer presently is not impeded by filibustering and spurious arguments.

Mr. Vice-President, an example of filibustering is the point of order raised by the hon. Member of Parliament for Siparia on Monday last just before the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance commenced his budget statement in the other place. The hon. Member sought to block the presentation of the budget and throw the country into chaos by contending that section 113 of the Constitution, and the practice of this Parliament, has always been that before the Appropriation Bill for any new fiscal year is presented, any supplementary moneys spent, expended, or any variation made, the supplementary estimates must be brought to the Parliament to close off the last fiscal year before you can move into the year.

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. Under our Standing Orders, is it proper for a Member to refer to proceedings that have taken place in the other House? I think it is improper, Sir, and the Senator is going along a dangerous line.

Mr. Vice-President: I would prefer if we all observe the Standing Orders. I do not have it at my fingertips at the moment, but I would prefer if we observe the Standing Orders, please.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: Mr. Vice-President, I am quoting from the newspaper report of Friday, October 25, 2002.

Sen. Mark: Which one?

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: All the newspapers, and I can do that, Mr. Vice-President.

Sen. Mark: Could you tell me what page?

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: All over the newspaper. Every newspaper.

Mr. Vice-President: Senators, whereas Sen. Mark is correct that reference should not be made to the debate in the other place, the hon. Attorney General has indicated that she is quoting from a newspaper. We would prefer if you indicate which newspaper please.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: I am quoting from the *Newsday* and the *Trinidad Guardian* but I do not recall the page, Mr. Vice-President, but that can be supplied at a later date. This is what I mean by filibustering. Let us get to the point, Mr. Vice-President.

As reported, that was not really a point of order that would have led to disorder.

Sen. R. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order—

Hon. Senator: What point of order?

Sen. R. Montano: The same point of order that Sen. Mark put forward. The point is what my friend on the other side is doing, is referring to a matter that took place in another place, and I understand that the Standing Orders and the conventions of this honourable Senate, are that we do not refer to those proceedings.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, we are aware of the Standing Orders, and I think at this level, we should exercise the necessary sense of discipline. We are not supposed to persist with referring and repetition where it is not right. I would like at this point, hon. Senators, to insist that we observe Standing Orders 39(a) (b) and (c) which clearly state that when a Member is making a contribution, we should not be interrupting indiscreetly.

Could we please let good sense prevail and let the honour of this Senate remain intact?

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: Mr. Vice-President, a point of law has been raised as to the legality of the procedure adopted by this Government and I would like, as the Attorney General, to clarify this point of law. In so doing, I

Appropriation Bill (Budget)

[SEN. THE HON. G. MOREAN-PHILLIP]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

would say that my Government is committed to the rule of law and has been acting and will continue to act well within the ambit of the Constitution and the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, both in the letter and in the spirit.

It seems, Mr. Vice-President, that it is not well known among some persons that the Government has the option, either during the course of a financial year, or during the first four months of the new financial year before the appropriation accounts are transmitted to the Auditor General, to bring to Parliament for its approval, Supplementary or Variation of Appropriation Bills.

By way of example, I cite the following: A Supplementary and Variation of Appropriation Bill, and a Variation of Appropriation Bill were enacted in August 1998 and January 1999 respectively in respect of the financial year ending September 30, 1998. Again, a Variation of Appropriation Bill was enacted in January 2000 in respect of the financial year ending September 30, 1999.

Thirdly, a Supplementary and Variation of Appropriation Bill and a Supplementary Appropriation Bill, and a Variation of Appropriation Bill were enacted in June 2000, September 2000 and January 2001 respectively in respect of the financial year ending September 30, 2000, all of which were done during the tenure of the last administration.

It is the practice, Mr. Vice-President, of the Members of the last administration to frustrate the will of the people by trivializing the work and purpose of the Parliament as was done on April 05, last, but the people of Trinidad and Tobago have resoundingly elected a government and we now have a sitting Parliament. I expect that in the tidying up exercise of the appropriation accounts by the Budget Division, if it is deemed necessary to lay supplementary estimates and bring a Supplementary and/or Variation of Appropriation Bill, this Government will not hesitate to do what the law requires.

Mr. Vice-President, I think it is important as well to put to rest the persistent, misguided, and misleading comments emanating from the mouths of the UNC Senators over the past several months that the PNM Government was illegally spending money over the last nine months. It just shows that after spending six years in government, they still did not learn about good governance and how the various ministries operate in government. In fact, their problem is that they are so used to doing business in a corrupt way, that they expected that the PNM Government would have acted in like manner, but I say to the UNC: "No way."
[Desk thumping]

With respect to the budgetary allocation for the financial year 2001 to 2002, to the Ministry of the Attorney General, all the requisite approvals were obtained for

the transfer of funds under Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs by way of virement under the same sub-head, and by way of transfer between sub-heads. The approvals for transfer of funds known as virements, were obtained from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and approvals for transfers were obtained from the Minister of Finance. This is how we do business.

Mr. Vice-President, when I became Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago in late December 2001, my portfolio included responsibility over the Civil Law Department headed by the Solicitor General, and the Chief State Solicitor, the Criminal Law Department, headed by the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Legislation Drafting Department, headed by the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, the Law Commission, the Human Rights Unit, the Mutual Legal Assistance Unit, the Special Security and Facilities Management Unit, and of course, the general administration headed by the permanent secretary.

Legal officers who are professionals, and who have to work under very exacting conditions, account for a major portion of the staff. In each of the legal departments in this ministry, there is an acute shortage of staff mainly at the middle and senior levels. In fact, of the established positions, more than 25 per cent are vacant in each department.

Mr. Vice-President, this is a matter that I am committed to improving because it affects the State's ability to prosecute in criminal matters and to defend in civil matters. I therefore wish to highlight this as a matter of priority in my agenda for the ministry. The situation in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has been somewhat relieved with the addition of some new staff members, but it is far from ideal.

Before I recount some of the activities of the Ministry of the Attorney General over the past eight months in office, I would like to refresh the memories of hon. Senators of the events that led to the collapse of the UNC government in the year 2001. In fact, the *Hansard* will show that the very last time an attorney general spoke in a budget debate in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, was on Saturday, September 22, 2001. At that time, the then Attorney General, in his contribution spoke at length on the issue of—you know what, Mr. Vice-President—corruption. He spoke at length on the issue of corruption and the unsuccessful efforts he had made to obtain money to investigate the several allegations of corruption against his government, the UNC government.

At that time, he had called for a full commission of enquiry. Do you hear what? A commission of enquiry is not useless; a commission of enquiry says a

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. G. MOREAN-PHILLIP]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

lot of things; you find out many things. Who was doing what, and not observing the law. Many things are disclosed. So it is not a waste of time, and a lot of action would follow.

Mr. Vice-President, at that time he had called for a full Commission of Enquiry into the North West Regional Health Authority, but to no avail. Nobody took him on. In the meanwhile, he had used moneys under his vote to retain a forensic expert, Mr. Bob Lindquist, and a special counsel Mr. Karl Hudson-Phillips to assist in an anti-corruption squad in investigating corruption in his regime. It could not have been stomached any longer.

Of course, Mr. Vice-President, shortly thereafter, that Attorney General was fired. He was fired as the Attorney General and another one replaced him. For this new Attorney General, it was business as usual. I have since discovered that during the few days that my predecessor carried out the functions of Attorney General, several strange and mysterious events occurred within that ministry.

You will recall the newspaper report that the *Bob Lindquist Report* could not be found under her stewardship. Around that time as well, the UNC had launched a scathing attack on the President, and as the political debate focused on the powers of the President, and the loss of confidence in the Prime Minister, the then Attorney General took a note to Cabinet to seek its approval for the use of State funds in the sum of \$453,297.07 to pay the UNC's advertising firm of Valdez & Torry the full cost of a media campaign entitled: "Let the people decide."

Again, this was a political action on the part of those people, the UNC. Not a government action. *[Interruption]* Did you teach this boy properly? You did not teach him that he should not interrupt.

Hon. Senator: I failed miserably.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: You failed. Okay. Again, Mr. Vice-President, the procedures with respect to tendering were not observed, and in any event, this was an expense of the party, and not of the government. I have the note in my possession. Now if this is not an abuse of power and a misuse of State funds, then what is?

Sen. Mark: Arrest them, you are the Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: Hon. Senators, this was the kind of "squandermania" that was taking place under the UNC just prior to the election of 2001. I thank God, Mr. Vice-President, that the people of Trinidad and Tobago saw the light, and now that the PNM is fully secured in Government, I want the

national community to know that my Government will be relentless in its fight against corruption. [*Desk thumping*] There will be no letting up. In fact, the UNC should hesitate to use the word “corruption”. Those words that they were using yesterday “corruption”, “voter padding”, “stealing the election”, are words they should be afraid to use because they have given new meaning to them.

“Voter padding”. Did we know anything about “voter padding” before the year 2000, before that election when there was a concerted effort on the part of operatives within the UNC? They had a unit called PASU headed by Suzanne Seepersad, not this Senator here, her sister. Yes, that is the unit which sat down, hatched a plan to subvert the course of the democracy of this country. And now you are talking about “voter padding”, and telling PNM about “voter padding”? Get real! And about stealing elections—people sat down and made a plan, and you are attributing—You know, in my practice of law very often you have a case dealing with a person, and you find one witness is saying that this person did that to me and so on, and the other one, just what was said was being done, he says the same thing. Throws it on, and that is the kind of action we are getting. You are trying to impute your behaviour on us. We do not stand for that! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark: You all stole the election. You stole the election.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: Mr. Vice-President, when I assumed office in January 2002, this Government, the PNM Government immediately took steps to ensure that resources were made available for the proper establishment of the Anti-corruption Investigation Bureau. Since the establishment of this Bureau, several prominent personalities including a former Minister of Finance under the UNC government have been charged for various offences related to corruption.

Further, investigations conducted with the assistance of this unit have led to the former Prime Minister being charged with a criminal offence. These matters are yet to be determined in the court. It is the Government's intention that the structure of this unit should be expanded to accommodate the requisite forensic skills which would enable it to function more effectively and efficiently and will thereby save the country lots of money which we would then not have to spend on importing these skills.

Mr. Vice-President, Senators would recall that prior to the 2001 General Election, the People's National Movement had promised to appoint several commissions of enquiry into allegations of corruption. I can use that word. We have to use that word because we have to root it out totally from Government. Foremost among these was an enquiry into the functioning of the Elections and

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. G. MOREAN-PHILLIP]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

Boundaries Commission. In fact, when the present Prime Minister and the former Prime Minister met at the Crowne Plaza Hotel after the 2001 General Election, both parties put forward a list of matters to be enquired into. Some matters were mutually agreed to and others were not. However, as promised, immediately after the PNM formed the Government, several commissions of enquiry were appointed, and the records will show that the report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Elections and Boundaries Commission confirmed much of what the PNM had been telling the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. R. Montano: On a point of order, Mr. Vice-President. That is simply not true. Will you listen to me? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Vice-President: I am on my feet, Sen. Montano. I would prefer if you make a note, and, my information is that you are down to speak. You will deal with that at that time please.

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, just to get your guidance. If a Senator is misleading the Senate based on the information that they are proffering here, is that not something for which we can rise on a point of order? I would like to get your guidance on it please.

Mr. Vice-President: Certainly, it is something that you can rise on a point of order for, but the matter of misleading the Senate is a matter of interpretation. I would prefer in this case if Sen. Montano deals with it when he is speaking.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. Now I hope that I can proceed uninterrupted to the end of my contribution.

Sen. Joseph: You have to ask for injury time.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: Yes, that is 10 minutes to be added on.

As I was saying, Mr. Vice-President, the records would show that the report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Elections and Boundaries Commission confirmed much of what the PNM had been telling the people of Trinidad and Tobago long before the 2000 General Election. A number of criminal cases relating to tampering with the electoral processes are still pending. Most of the recommendations made by this Commission have been accepted by the Government, some of which have been, or are in the process of being implemented.

Similarly, Mr. Vice-President, the report of the Commission of Enquiry into the construction of the Biche High School confirms that that school is unsafe and unfit for occupation by the innocent children of our nation. Wicked! It also

confirmed that in the face of reports from the professionals of the unsafe nature of the site, the UNC government continued with the construction of the school at full speed.

Sen. R. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, I object on a point of order. That is not true.

Mr. Vice-President: Would you please quote your point of order?

Sen. R. Montano: The hon. Senator is misleading the Senate, that is my point of order.

Mr. Vice-President: You may proceed.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: Thank you very much again, Mr. Vice-President. I am going to get Clive Phelps here with me you know, to help me deal with him. I have to bring my lawyer.

The report shows that the UNC government continued with the construction at full speed without care for the prospective occupants. Action is still pending on this report. Meanwhile, the Commission of Enquiry into the Piarco Airport Development Project is in progress and, daily, Mr. Vice-President, the evidence of mishandling of public funds and the flouting of the law emanating from the witnesses are scandalous to say the least.

I want to let it be known to the hon. Senator of this Chamber who served as Minister of Works and Transport when these misdeeds were alleged to have been committed, that he will be called to account sooner or later. [*Desk thumping*] He cannot adopt a pious air and be part of the law-making process, while at the same time maintaining membership of the lawbreaking posse.

The Central Tenders Board Act is there to protect the citizens of this country, including those who have to work the system, by providing built-in mechanisms of checks and balances. This Minister, it would appear, seemed to have totally ignored the provisions of the law. As Members of Parliament, we have a sacred duty to respect the laws of the land and when anyone who holds, or has held such a high office as a Minister of Government, openly flouts the law and refuses to submit himself to scrutiny, then he has to feel the full brunt of the law.

In the face of all the revelations and actual prosecutions of persons in relation to the Piarco Airport Development Project, and in light of the fact that this Member lost his seat in the general election, it is a slap in the face of the people in this country by the United National Congress to have Sen. Baksh sitting in this Chamber. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. Under Standing Order 35(4) which states:

“It shall be out of order to use offensive or insulting language about Members of either Chamber.

(5) No Senator shall impute improper motives to any Member of either Chamber.”

So we would like you to rule on this, Sir.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Attorney General, I would ask you to desist from referring to that matter, especially since it is before a commission of enquiry. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: Mr. Vice-President, I will say no more on that. We would leave that for constitutional reform.

Mr. Vice-President, in the administration of justice in a country, it is imperative that a wide cross-section of persons work together to ensure that there is an effective justice delivery system. I am very pleased to report to the nation that after many months, perhaps years of having to endure a virtual war between the judicial arm of Government and the Executive, under the past regime, when we had to endure the spectacle of having the Prime Minister of the country call the Chief Justice his enemy, the country can now be assured that there exists a healthy working relationship and a significant easing of tensions between the two arms of Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, this Government is conscious of the doctrine of the separation of powers, but Government is also mindful of the Executive role of the Attorney General as a facilitator to the Judiciary, and that politically, the Attorney General is accountable to the Parliament for certain aspects of this relationship.

Since assuming office at the end of 2001, the Government has worked with the Judiciary to bring about several improvements and developments within that institution. A Judicial Education Institute has been created under the Judiciary to provide continuing education for judges, magistrates and other judicial officers, administrative officers and other staff.

To address the problem of note taking in the Magistrates' Court, an audio digital recording system was installed in the magistracy in two courts in St.

George West Magistrates' Courts. This is a pilot project which will allow any glitches in the system to be ironed out before it is implemented throughout the magistracy and in the Civil High Courts on a phased basis.

Also, the security of the Magistrates' Court has been a matter of great concern and this is now being addressed by the Judiciary Security Unit which was established a few months ago and for which funding has been provided in this budget.

Mr. Vice-President, I cannot speak about court buildings without speaking about the St. Vincent Street Magistrates' Court which was built under the former government. For the building to be corrected as far as it is possible to do so, we have to expend in excess of \$5,000,000. This building was built without a vault area for court files, without space for a staff room, without sprinklers in case of fire, without basic security features necessary for a court and with magistrates coming face-to-face with prisoners in the corridor. Needless to say it would not have been functional for the magistracy and could not be granted the necessary approval.

We can all remember the crude manner in which the former administration tried to hand over this building to the Judiciary in this incomplete and unsatisfactory state. We are in the process of correcting these deficiencies as far as possible, and I hope that by the beginning of 2003, this new wing of the Port of Spain Magistrates' Court would finally be ready for occupation and use.

In the meanwhile, the budget documents would show that funds have been made available for the commencement of construction of the Arima and Sangre Grande Magistrates' Court. Already the designs and drawings have been prepared, there are also plans to construct a new Chaguanas Magistrates' Court, a new Rio Claro Magistrates' Court, and a new Siparia Magistrates' Court.

In addition, modern accommodation will be constructed for the south and north offices of the Director of Public Prosecutions and other divisions of the Ministry of the Attorney General. Perhaps, Mr. Vice-President, the project that I am most excited about is the establishment of the long-awaited Family Court. Shortly after assuming office, I appointed a committee to make recommendations for the establishment of the Family Court. Since 2000, a Family Court Bill was laid in Parliament, but it is currently being reviewed because lots of inadequacies were found in the Bill. In the meanwhile, the committee has recommended the launch of a pilot project using the existing court infrastructure to give effect to the salient intentions of the draft Family Court Bill.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. G. MOREAN-PHILLIP]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

The use of social services, counselling, and mediation in the operation of the court are key aspects of what the pilot project would seek to do. A building to house the Family Court has been identified, and Government intends to move swiftly to facilitate the implementation of the pilot project.

Mr. Vice-President, this is why I endorse the sentiments by Sen. Seetahal in relation to the manner in which the penal system deals with young offenders. I, too, have endured many moments of anguish in the Juvenile Court. I therefore want to assure her that this Family Court project is intended to provide some measure of relief to this problem by having a dedicated court system to deal with such matters in a non-adversarial atmosphere.

As well, the mediation and parole system mentioned by Sen. Abdul-Hamid as part of this Government's social intervention programme would go a long way towards further addressing the Senator's concerns.

I now turn to the Caribbean Court of Justice. Mr. Vice-President, the PNM Government remains committed to deepening the regional integration process through the establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice, which has a contemplated start-up date of April 30, 2003. Towards this end, preparatory and refurbishment works at the WINSURE Building on Richmond Street were completed sometime ago and whilst we await the coming into effect of this court, our Government has been using the building to house the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the commissions of enquiry.

In the meanwhile, Trinidad and Tobago hosted the Caribbean Court of Justice Workshop for the State sector in July of this year, around which time the agreement establishing the court came into effect. Trinidad and Tobago lodged its Instrument of Ratification in September last, and the necessary legislation to give effect to this agreement is under consideration by the drafting section. So that on this project, there is no turning back.

In addition, Mr. Vice-President, our country—

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. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President, thank you colleagues. In addition, we hosted the Fourth Organization of

American States Meeting of Ministers of Justice, or Attorneys General of the Americas in March this year. Coming out of which is the formulation of draft legislation to combat terrorism.

The plight of persons holding external degrees is under consideration by a committee appointed by me under the chairmanship of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel whose report is still outstanding. However, a short-term measure has been put in place to accommodate some of the students both at the Hugh Wooding and the Eugene Dupuch Law Schools.

Cabinet has also agreed to bear the full tuition costs of those Trinidad and Tobago nationals who have accepted the offer of places in the Bahamas to pursue the Legal Education Certificate Programme from September of this year, and this is really a temporary measure until a final solution has been found to the problem.

In addition, Mr. Vice-President, the Ministry of Community Development, together with the Ministry of the Attorney General, jointly hosted a conference to discuss the findings and recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The follow-up legislation is under consideration by the Human Rights Unit and the Law Reform Commission.

Mr. Vice-President, now that we have a sitting Parliament, the Government's main focus would be its legislative agenda. In the Prime Minister's presentation of the budget statement, references were made to several pieces of legislation which the Government intends to pursue vigorously. Several pieces of legislation have already been drafted. In fact, the Police Reform Bills which were circulated last week and which require a bipartisan approach, as was previously agreed to by the hon. Prime Minister and the then Leader of the Opposition, will be among the first on the agenda. These measures are intended to enable our police service to deal more effectively with the crime situation in the country and I will leave the rest for the hon. Minister of National Security.

However, I can only appeal to the patriotic and matured judgment of all hon. Senators and hope that at the appropriate time, we would all be able to put country first and have these measures enacted.

As well, I trust that Sen. Baksh was taking note when the hon. Prime Minister made mention of the fact that steps would be taken to amend the present Commissions of Enquiry Act. A draft Bill has already been prepared to stiffen the penalties for persons who treat with contempt a summons with which they have been served to appear before a Commission.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. G. MOREAN-PHILLIP]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

In an effort to deal with the current spate of kidnappings in the country, we propose to introduce a Kidnapping Prevention Bill and to widen the ambit of the offence and provide stiffer penalties. While we are mindful of the fact that legislation is not the only response to criminal activity in this area or any other area for that matter, nonetheless, it is the duty of the Government to ensure that our laws are adequate to provide a commensurate response to those who are criminally inclined.

I would like to ensure Sen. Seetahal that the Government is aware and it is attacking this problem in a holistic manner, but she must appreciate that we have a duty to deal with the problem by utilizing all available resources.

In accordance with our International Treaty obligation, the Terrorism Bill has been drafted and is intended to give effect in Trinidad and Tobago to the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism which was developed by the OAS at the behest of the United States following the September 11 terrorist attack.

The Bill will inter alia seek to stipulate penalties for the commission of a terrorist act. It would also include measures to prevent, combat, and eradicate the financing of terrorism. In drafting this Bill, special attention would be paid to our own peculiar situation in relation to the disparate groups in the society who may be inclined to foster terrorist activities.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan accused this Government yesterday of fostering terrorism. But I would say, Mr. Vice-President, that she should be the last person to even mention the word “terrorist”, having been a member of the National United Freedom Fighters, a group—

Sen. Mark: Union! Union!

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean-Phillip: The National Union of Freedom Fighters. Whatever—which was involved in a senseless execution, bank robberies, lootings and arson. Both she and her sister, Beverly Jones, who was killed in a shoot-out with the police, took to the hills from which they waged war on innocent citizens of this country. They even had as one of their objectives, the assassination of Mr. Theodore Guerra, the Commander of the Defence Force, and the Commissioner of Police and, actually invaded the home of Mr. Theodore Guerra, terrorized his family, and shot him. So do not mention terrorism in relation to the PNM. We would have none of that. [*Desk thumping*]

So, as our country positions itself for developed country status by 2020, we

would embark on a programme of law reform to ensure that our legislation is kept current with the changing global environment in which it operates. Accordingly, legislation in the areas of finance, investments, information technology, insurance, taxation, consumer protection, planning and development, and the environment would be reviewed.

The Chief Parliamentary Counsel has already prepared drafts of a Revenue Stabilization Fund Bill, the Unit Trust Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Vesting Bill, Prevention of Corruption (Amdt.) Bill—and that is important—so that it would not be so difficult for us to seek out those who would treat the Treasury as their own personal property. The Company Act, Validation Bill, Freedom of Information Bill, Leases of State Land, Extradition, these are all areas in which our legislative agenda would be continued. Conservation of Wild Life, the Environmental Trust Fund Bill, National Parks and the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill, just to name a few.

11.00 a.m.

Some of these were already in the pipeline when we assumed office but we intend to proceed with them.

During the upcoming months the Ministry of the Attorney General will pursue several other projects, including the proper establishment of the Sentencing Commission and the putting in place of the necessary administrative mechanisms for the implementation of the Enforcement of Maintenance Orders. As well, the Government will be continuing with the programme for the institutional strengthening of the Ministry of the Attorney General.

As Members can see, Mr. Vice-President, we have done a lot of work in the last nine months and we have a lot more work ahead of us in the coming five years. Thanks to the strategy adopted by the UNC, we were able to concentrate on delivery since there was no sitting Parliament during this time. Their plan of making a mockery of the Parliament backfired. It sure did; it backfired. That is what you can describe in local parlance as “making track for agouti to run” and the agouti ran with it.

Although their intention was not to favour us but to save their hides by getting the PNM out of office as early as possible in order to put an end to the corruption investigations, all I can say to them is, tough luck. There is a lot more to come.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, at this time I must inform you that I am in receipt of the instruments of appointment for a new Senator and I should like to proceed with that now.

I would like to read, first of all, the letters from Her Excellency:

“Whereas by the provisions of paragraph (e) of subsection (2) of section 43 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the President acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, is empowered to declare the seat of a Senator to be vacant:

Now, therefore, I, Linda Baboolal, Acting President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, in exercise of the power vested in me by the said paragraph (e) of subsection (2) of section 43 of the Constitution, do hereby declare the seat of you, Jennifer Kernahan, to be vacant.”

In continuance:

“In exercise of the power vested in me by paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section 40 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago,

I, Linda Baboolal, Acting President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, do hereby appoint you, Rudranath Indarsingh, as Senator.”

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Rudranath Indarsingh took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

Sen. Robin Montano: Mr. Vice-President, after experiencing three elections in a row the entire country had hoped that the campaigning would stop after the October 07th election and that whoever won would get on with the most serious business of running the country. Regrettably, this has not happened. We have just seen an example from the hon. Attorney General of her continuing the campaign. The hon. Attorney General made a number of statements in her Senate contribution that were simply not true, and I would like to deal with them one by one.

She went on, in essence, to talk about voter padding and how “we” she said, “in the PNM, had never heard of voter padding before 2000.” Really? Let me tell you a little story. The man responsible for the voter padding was a man called Richard Bickram. Bickram came to see me in May of 2000. At that time I was still a member of the People’s National Movement, and he said to me: “Robin, you are a wasting political asset and you should get involved in the politics with the coming election in December, 2000.” So I looked at him at that time and I said, “I am sorry, I have no intention of crossing.” Because I knew him to be a member of the UNC. He said to me, “No, no, no, I am not talking about your going over to the UNC; I am talking about your working for the PNM.” So I looked at him and I said, “What are you talking about?”

To make a very long story short—and I can repeat the whole conversation if you so desire—Richard Bickram told me that he had been planted as a spy by Patrick Manning in PASU—[*Laughter*] They can laugh, but it is true. He told me that he had been planted there to do certain things. I asked him what. He would not tell me. Well, I discovered later, why he had been planted there. He said, “No, I am doing certain things; I am setting them up.” That is what he told me.

The Attorney General says “everything that we have been saying in the EBC Enquiry came out.” In the EBC Enquiry—let me tell you something—the Chairman of the Enquiry himself, Justice Lennox Deyalsingh, told me, “Mr. Montano, I do not need to hear any submissions from you. There is no evidence whatsoever against your client.” No evidence, and yet “everything that was said”.

But you see, the Attorney General has embarked on a dangerous course, showing full well that she does not understand the law. There is a case *Re Erebus Royal Commission/Air New Zealand Ltd (No. 2)*; it is a 1981 case. Let me just find—I am sorry because I had not intended to talk about this, this morning—but let me just find something for you in the law here.

At page 629 in the judgment it says here—and this is why it is so important for the other side to be heard. This is why the findings of this Commission are so wrong, because no allegations whatsoever were made against the Commissioners at the time of the EBC Enquiry. And the question of *audi alterem partem*, to hear the other side, was completely bypassed. Listen to the law:

“All these considerations suggest that the Commission was bound by the broad requirements of natural justice. These included a reasonable opportunity of meeting the unformulated allegation of organised deception and concealment that was apparently passing through the Commission’s mind.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. R. MONTANO]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

Some of the reasons why experience has shown the importance of this sort of opportunity were well put by Megarry J in *John v Rees*.

'It may be that there are some who would decry the importance which the courts attach to the observance of the rules of natural justice. 'When something is obvious,' they may say, 'why force everybody to go through the tiresome waste of time involved in framing charges and giving an opportunity to be heard? The result is obvious from the start.'"

And I am not referring only to the EBC now, I am referring to my good friend, Sen. Baksh. Why bother to give him a chance to be heard? The result is obvious. Make up your mind—guilty! Really? Listen to what Justice Megarry says:

“Those who take this view do not, I think, do themselves justice. As everybody who has anything to do with the law well knows, the path of the law is strewn with examples of open and shut cases which, somehow, were not; of unanswerable charges which, in the event, were completely answered; of inexplicable conduct which was fully explained; of fixed and unalterable determinations that, by discussion, suffered a change. Now are those with any knowledge of human nature who pause to think for a moment likely to underestimate the feelings of resentment of those who find that a decision against them has been made without their being afforded any opportunity to influence the course of events.”

And you want to hear about what my friend is saying about being given an opportunity? You could ask the Attorney General, for example, why was not a former Minister of Government, or former Ministers of Government, given an opportunity to have their legal bills paid? I did not know I was going to talk about this so I did not bring the exact figures with me. But I have it. I got it under something called The Freedom of Information Act. I have it back at my office.

They paid, for example, Pamela Elder and Gilbert Peterson in the Biche Commission of Enquiry, \$150,000 fee on brief to each one. Then they were paying them—I cannot remember the figure now—about \$6,000 a day, or something like that, for each one, and they were there for about 30 or 40 days. Figure it out! They paid several hundred thousand dollars to the lawyer for the Commission in the EBC Enquiry, and what is going on now? Millions are being paid out. But Sen. Baksh? “Oh, we will give you \$10,000.” Really? Is that justice?

I am waiting for them to bring this Bill to amend, because I have all the information. She talks about other things. Do you know what other information I have? And again, I did not bring it this morning. Between January and September,

the Attorney General has spent something like \$30 million on consultancy fees over the last nine months. I have it! I can give you the exact figure if you want. I will get it at lunchtime and bring it back. It is approximately \$30 million!

It goes on. They want to talk about corruption? The Prime Minister spent—I cannot remember the figures, because I did not come prepared to talk about that, but she asked for it and she will get it. The Prime Minister spent somewhere close to \$800,000 in entertainment this year, including approximately—and I have the exact figure, but I am giving you an approximation—something like \$230,000 on a birthday party on August 17 of this year. He spent something like \$30,000 or \$35,000 for a PNM San Fernando West constituency party on Carnival Tuesday. I have the figures. And they talk about corruption, misuse of it? I was going to say it later on, but I will say it now.

In the budget—let me find it—the Prime Minister's allocation this time around is close to 7 per cent of the budget—\$1.3 billion. Why? In the previous budget the Prime Minister's allocation was \$86 million.

Well, I am going to tell you why. You see, as I was saying, regrettably, the campaigning has not stopped. For what was presented to us last week by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance—Oh, before I continue, I almost forgot. Porter and McGill, the house padding case, where a conservative party chairman used the public power to pad. She was ordered to pay back something like £26 million. Listen to what the judge says, and I am warning my friend, the Minister of Housing, because I know very well why they moved my brother from housing, because my brother would not house pad. In a thousand years my brother would not house pad. [*Desk thumping*]

Listen to this. I will just say this for now. I am quoting 2002. This is a brand new House of Lords case:

“A public power is not exercised lawfully if it is exercised not for public purpose for which the power was conferred, but in order to promote the electoral advantage of a political party.”

Which is what these people did. Do you know what the judge calls it? He calls it later on—and as I said, I was not prepared to do this today, but it is here in the law. The judge says: “This is political corruption.” That is what he says. No money passes, but this is political corruption of the highest order.

And that is it. This is what has happened. The budget is simply the gross and corrupt use of the State funds to continue campaigning, and campaigning with the

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. R. MONTANO]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

dual purpose of trying to use the upcoming local government elections, as well as trying to wipe out the UNC.

Why do I say this? Let us take a look at some of the specific items contained therein. The rationale for some of them is simply stupid. For example, the Minister of Finance said at page nine that:

“A strong agricultural sector is important to Government’s Vision for 2020 and we are laying the ground work that would finally develop the potential of the sector.”

There are two things to note here. One, nobody has been able to do this since 1956 to date; two, there are no real specifics. Nowhere does it say exactly how this is going to be done or, more importantly, how it is going to get done. The Minister said at page 10—listen to the beautiful words—that they:

“...will focus on enhancing the physical infrastructure namely: marketing facilities, water management, flood control, irrigation and agricultural access roads and land settlement.”

Really? What exactly do they mean by that; and I mean “exactly”? What specifically in detail do they mean? What is meant by “land settlement”? Are they talking about giving lands to the Jamaat Al Muslimeen outside of Mucurapo? What do you mean by “curly land settlement”?

If the budget is a continuous campaign, then “eradication of poverty”—you know that lovely phrase—is a lovely smokescreen to get votes. But what exactly do they mean by that? What are they talking about when they talk about “redistributing wealth”? If the idea is to create a developed country by redistributing wealth, where is the historical precedent for this? What country in the world has succeeded and made the transition from underdeveloped to developed by redistributing wealth? None. This is a very emotional and emotive term, but there is no historical precedent for this. No country, historically, has ever developed itself by redistributing income to the poor.

This budget lacks vision for obvious reasons. It is callously designed to get votes as opposed to go for the long-term beneficial development of the country. They do not believe me? It is very specific on the short-term issues and extremely vague on the long-term ones. It is a budget targeting specific constituencies. It is all about votes in marginal areas. It is not a budget; it is a campaign, and a campaign that is using State funds.

Speaking of that, I wonder if anybody on the other side could confirm the following information that I have received. If any part of it, or all of it, is not true, could that person say exactly what is the truth? That is to say, how many new people, both temporary as well as permanent, were given jobs in all of the state-owned enterprises as well as the State, between January 01, 2002 and today? How many? You see, my information is that the total figure is in excess of 15,000.

Is this true? If it is not correct, then what is the correct figure? I have been told, for example, that WASA has now more than 300 extra workers. I understand—I have been told—that Petrotrin has over 1,000. And the list goes on. Now they can answer at this time, or I can file a question and will get the information. Take your choice.

You see, there are two ways to get votes:

- (a) give people what they want regardless of the consequences, e.g. increase old age pension, hand out hampers, etc.;
- (b) by employment via state enterprises—hike up the wage bill.

Tell me that I am wrong! You see, the beauty is that if anybody criticizes this, they can and will say, “Look at how terrible he is; he doesn’t want you to get whatever it is.” And although that would be a gross distortion of the truth, the person who will say what I have said, opens himself up to this red herring of an argument.

Let us look at this another way. Just suppose we take them at their word, that these are good and decent programmes, who is going to administer them? You are going to have to increase the bureaucracy. In other words, more jobs; more of a drain on the exchequer. Do you remember what I said earlier about getting votes the easy way?

To make the point, let me remind hon. Senators of what happened when an investigation was launched into charities in the United States of America. It was discovered that 80 cents out of every dollar given to charity was spent on the bureaucracy and 20 cents was spent on the needy.

What the Government is proposing in this budget is simply not cost-effective. The proposed social programmes are really a giant URP designed to keep our citizenry in bondage and the PNM in power.

You remember I told you about stupid things in the budget? Look at page 22. “Youth in Agriculture.” Tell me, do you really believe that you are going to get

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. R. MONTANO]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

young people into agriculture? Nobody has ever been able to do it. But—"ta dat ta dah"—listen to it. They are going to hand out over \$33.5 million over a six-week period for this purpose. Any bets that six-week period comes before local government election?

Look at what they are doing. They are taking \$23 million for the SHARE Programme; Adolescent Mothers, \$4.2 million; YTEPP, \$11 million; Civilian Conservation Corps, \$25 million; GAPP, \$3 million; On-the-Job Training, \$18 million, and so on; all non-sustainable projects. But they do not care. They are doing what was done in Nigeria and you saw what a mess that unfortunate country got itself into.

Do you want to hear another stupid thing? They removed the dollar for dollar programme. Why? I will tell you. It was too democratic and it did not require much administration. Furthermore, you could not control who benefited from it. In its place they are putting bursaries and scholarships. Why? Simple: Control and jobs. They can control the extra bureaucrats employed to administer this programme, who can control who gets the scholarships and bursaries.

The back pay for public servants at page 39, they are buying votes; they are not paying off. They are paying to get votes.

Caroni lands—they want to vest it in the State and then hand the lands out. To whom? What will be the criteria to be a successful recipient? Who will administer this programme? What will the extra cost be? They say that they established a company—that is at page 16—to manage these lands, how many extra people are going to be employed in this company? Who is the board of directors? Who is the CEO? Most importantly, what exactly will the criteria be for a citizen to get any of these lands? Or is this yet another not so subtle plan to try and destroy the UNC's base and make the UNC's safe seats marginal?

Then look at this on page 16—and listen to this one because this one is going to make your hair stand on end.

“We are now taking steps to restructure and strengthen the balance sheet of FCB Limited.”

So says the Minister of Finance. Hello! Why? What was the problem in First Citizens Bank? This is a wholly-owned Government bank. In fact, I believe that the Speaker in the other place has been the chairman for the last nine months. Why does this bank need to be restructured? A serious question! The bank's balance sheet was showing millions in profits. Or is there some nefarious and

unseen purpose at work here? Was the FCB used to finance the last campaign, this election in October? Why?

I could go on, but surely you get the point. Where is the transparency? The answer is, there is none. The thing is murky. It is as clear as mud and it hides a lot more than it reveals.

I could talk to you about housing and the so-called 10,000 units a year at page 30. This line has become a staple of the Prime Minister's housing-related public utterances. It is effective because it makes it appear as if there is a plan on the table that would magically create 10,000 houses a year, something the entire economy has failed to do over the last 40 years. It allows the Prime Minister to express solidarity with the working class—swing voters.

If the Prime Minister repeats the number frequently enough it might even enter the lingua franca. But that does not necessarily make it accurate or feasible. It is difficult to conclude that it is possible to build 10,000 houses a year without there being serious dislocations in the economy. Indeed, it is incumbent on the Government to explain in detail how they plan to avoid the obvious resulting dislocations if they really embarked upon such a scheme. I had rather hoped that the Minister of Housing yesterday would have told us—and not given us platitudes—specifics.

I could talk to you about national security and how the kidnappings have not surprisingly started again, and nothing is happening. Speaking for myself, I am personally convinced that the PNM does not want an effective and efficient police force. I have an example staring me in the face, where a friend of mine was robbed of his motorcar last week Tuesday evening by bandits who had sawed-off shot guns. They threatened to kill his eight-year-old daughter. The little girl, for the last week, wakes up screaming in the night: "Daddy, daddy, don't let them take me." It took the police 20 long minutes to respond to the 999 call. What did the police do? They drove around in the area as if 20 minutes later the bandits in the car are going to be sitting down saying, "Hey, police, yoo-hoo, here I am." Yes, right!

I could talk to you about the University of Trinidad and Tobago. If you are setting up such a university, answer these questions:

- (a) What will the entrance requirements be? Will they be higher than UWI, lower than UWI, the same as UWI?
- (b) What will the accreditation be, that is to say, the international recognition of the degrees?

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. R. MONTANO]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

- (c) Who is going to head this university?
- (d) How much is it going to cost?
- (e) Where is the proposed campus going to be?
- (f) Why set up a separate university? Why not simply strengthen the UWI, St. Augustine campus and expand the UWI campus to Central and South Trinidad so that more people can have easier access to it?

They say they want a developed nation by 2020. How? They have already said that they intend to use the coming oil bonanza to redistribute wealth, not to develop the nation. But if they really have this vision, answer this: Where exactly do they want the economy to be in 2020? How exactly will the country look then under their vision? What will be our leading sectors? Where are people employed? What is the size of our population then? What do you envisage the unemployment rate to be then? What percentage of our people then will have a tertiary education? What will they be working at? What benchmarks have you established so we, the citizenry, can judge whether or not you are achieving or failing in your goals? How will we know if you are succeeding or failing? Or do we have to wait until 2020 to find out?

I ask the same questions for the years 2002, 2007, 2010 and 2015. Obviously, I expect different answers for each of these years.

You see, if I can quote the famous American, William Jennings Bryan, he said: "Destiny is not a matter of chance. It is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for. It is a thing to be achieved." If we have a date with destiny in 2020, the time to start is now. Let us talk about our country; our future. What kind of country do we want? What do we need? We do need education. The UNC has a vision for education. It includes more schools, rationalization of school books, better terms and conditions for teachers, better and easier access to tertiary education via the dollar for dollar programme, and so on.

We do need better health care. The UNC's vision includes decentralizing primary health care facilities, better terms and conditions of service, better pay for doctors and nurses, upgrading of hospitals and other health care facilities.

We do need a better and more efficient police service. Our plans include implementing the Ellis Clarke Report, better pay for police officers of all ranks, better promotional prospects.

Let me pause a moment and say this, because certain things have been said on the other side. I want to make it clear here and now, that we on this side of the

Senate will support any and every measure that is brought by this Government that is for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We will oppose any and every measure that is not for the benefit and we will at all times, whenever and wherever possible, provide an alternative vision. [*Desk thumping*]

We do need the overpass at the Uriah Butler/Churchill-Roosevelt interchange. Let us forget about partisan politics. We need it. We need a highway to Toco and a bridge to Tobago. Yes, it really can be done. It is feasible.

We need to do the land reclamation project in San Fernando. We need it.

We need to create, to quote former American President Ronald Reagan, a “shining city on the hill”, in which everyone shares in the city’s splendour and glory. We need to create a “shining city on the hill” where opportunities are open to all. We can do it. We cannot do it with failed 1960s type thinking, or by constant electioneering and campaigning. We need leadership, not salesmanship. The only valid test of leadership is the ability to lead and lead vigorously.

We do not need more promises to this group or that; more harsh rhetoric about one’s political opponents, whichever side you happen to be on; more assurances of a golden future where taxes are always low and subsidies always high.

The test of truth is simple. There can be no persuasion but by deeds. Where is the concrete evidence of the PNM’s concern to make this country a developed nation by 2020? The test is clear. There is before us a precious chance to turn the tide of events in our favour, to make this country a truly better place for all, to rid ourselves once and for all of the dependency syndrome that has plagued us since 1956.

If we fail to strive to seize this chance, the judgment of future ages will be harsh and just. If we strive but fail, the country at least need be divided no longer in its clear knowledge of who has condemned the citizenry to this fate.

My purpose in stating these proposals is simple and clear. These proposals spring without ulterior purpose or political passion, but from my calm conviction that a hunger for a better life is in the hearts of all of our citizenry, those who support the UNC as well as those who support the PNM. They conform to my firm faith that God created men to enjoy, not to destroy, the fruits of the earth and of their own toil.

We in the UNC aspire to this: the lifting from the backs and from the hearts of men, of their burdens and of their fears so that they may find before them a golden age of peace, prosperity, brotherhood and freedom.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. R. MONTANO]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

I stand up and for this ideal, and to quote one of my heroes, Robert Kennedy as he said in Cape Town on June 7, 1966:

“Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different countries of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep away the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

Why have I bothered to tell it like it is, when everyone else seems content to tell it like it is not? Why struggle to set the world to rights, when all around me, people seem determined to do wrong? Why offer light to folk who claim to be happy in the dark? Why pursue the challenge of education when everyone knows ignorance is bliss? Because I cannot help being who I am. I believe what I believe. As long as there is life in me I will continue to cast pebbles of hope into the pond of life and try to create a ripple that one day will turn into a tidal wave for the benefit of my people and my country.

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

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Mr. Vice-President, I feel like a lamb cast among the lions, coming after two previous speakers, but I will try my best, with my sober contribution, to attract the deserved attention from my limited audience.

I would also wish to extend my sincerest congratulations to you, Mr. Vice-President, and judging from your performance at yesterday's sitting, I think you are enjoying your duty. I hope this continues with deliberate effort, because I think looking at the experiences we have had over the last two days, you will have to be fair but firm, in my view.

I want to congratulate you and also congratulate the Government side for having won the election and giving us a budget which I do think poses great promise for the development of this country in a general way. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance, having watched him on various media, in his very self-effacing but equally deliberate manner, I want to commend him for delivering the budget in the way that he did and moreso, for manning the Ministry and responding to the various questions of varying complexity in the way that he has done; sometimes with a brief, “yes”, “wait and we will see”—very cleverly.

But sometimes I feel that we are living in two countries. When I hear what the PNM side says, how they interpret events in the country, and then I see how the

UNC side interprets what has happened in this country, I see such disparities, as if the chance for consensus keeps fading further and further away on the essentials that are required for proper governance.

It makes the role of the Independent Bench, or at least from my point of view, a little more difficult, because two wrongs do not make a right, and it distresses me to hear when an allegation of wrongdoing on one side is made, the other side defends itself by pointing out another wrongdoing, as if we will never reach the junction of righteousness at any point, but excuse wrongdoing because somebody else has committed a wrongdoing.

But that is for the electorate to work out. What I can say, in looking at the budget for 2003, is how it struggles to meet a very complex society, judging from the society that the late Dr. Eric Williams faced when he delivered his budget in 1956; a budget that took only 15 pages with only \$100 million expenditure. Today we are talking about a budget speech with 45 pages, an appendix of 18 pages and some \$20 billion in expenditure.

Things have really changed. It did change during the last Dr. Williams' time as well. His last budget speech—about the longest he ever gave; the year before he passed away—was about 50 pages. But changes are not only in terms of the society itself; the glossiness of the covers of these budgets have certainly changed. Dr. Williams' budget was a few pieces of crumpled paper typed on a manual typewriter. Today, we have computers, and the glossiness improves with every budget. Last year's budget was—you will say—pretty, but this year's budget cover is even prettier. Of course, the slogans are also there. The last time we had, "One People, One Nation, Leaving No One Behind", but this year's budget suggests that so many people have been left behind that you have to have almost 20 social sector programmes to pick them up. So it is "Vision 2020: People, our Priority."

But of course, we have learnt that you cannot judge a book by its cover and length is also not a reliable measure of effectiveness.

I think whilst we celebrate a plural society, not only in terms of culture, but in terms of the different NGOs, the different interests which have grown over the years, it seems to me that the need for consensus is imperative, and I would want to suggest to the Government, with respect, that in implementing its budget projects, the challenge for consensus along the way be abided by as far as is practical.

All organizations in this country do have an interest. Some of them have a political agenda, which, I think, must also be taken into consideration. But I

remember in the budget that Dr. Williams presented, on reading it he said, very proudly, that that budget was not the result of pressures from individuals or interest groups, but from an organized party. And he was applauded.

I do not believe that any political party today could claim such fame and be applauded. These are days you have to listen, and listen well to your NGOs; you have to take into consideration a million and one opinions and put it into some coherent framework with the attempt to please as many people as possible.

It is for that reason that I extended my commendation to the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, who I suspected did a lot of the spade work in getting all these ideas together, because it is, indeed, a compassionate budget, something which I would elaborate upon later on.

So the question of participation is essential; the participation of your citizenry. The question of being accountable is another essential; the question of having consensus is another essential, and the question of being transparent is another essential. So you form a pact with the people.

That is the new mode of governance that is required of this Government, given the scope and the specific projects that they are embarking upon. But the gap between the State and those objectives, not only in this country, but in countries all over the world, in this gap you must have, what is commonly called now, social capital, meaning that there must be trust between the governors and the governed; there must be creditability between the governors and the governed; there must be a spirit of cooperation within the different communities and the Government must facilitate that kind of cooperation.

In a nutshell it is called social capital. It is in that context some of us do feel distressed about the fragmentation that exists in the country—ethnic fragmentation, particularly.

This country will never make the progress that it can make, or the progress that is expected of it, if this ethnic conflagration continues, because you are disrupting the elements of social capital which are so essential to economic prosperity and economic progress.

Money may be necessary, but certainly not sufficient to drive an economy that gets related so much to the NGOs and your various institutions, if the elements of social capital are not present. Sometimes I wonder why it is so, because people of all races, they mix; they mingle at the workplace; in maxi taxis; at functions; at the cocktail parties, and yet one or the other group seizes upon ethnic conflict as a vehicle for political mobilization.

It is as if there are two kinds of process: a formal process and an informal process; as if there are two countries. Well if there are two countries in these practical ways, we should have dual citizenship; those who want to forge ethnic conflict and those who want to seek consensus.

As far as the budget is concerned and apart from the question of social capital, I think the late Dr. Williams used to say that this country has "champagne tastes and mauby pockets". And along the years another Prime Minister, the late Mr. Chambers, spoke in one of his budget speeches, about the enigma of rising expectations. In 1987, Mr. A.N.R. Robinson, who is now President, spoke about the dangers of raising expectations.

Then we have this notion about an oil boom being imminent and I think the public is now in a state of rising expectations, with all the implications that go with those expectations. But my point is, these expectations do not arise naturally in the public mind; and in the context of a budget like this, we have to look as well at the psychological context in which the budget is placed. A key and possibly debilitating aspect of that context will certainly be the rising and sometimes unmanageable expectations of your population.

But budget after budget—this one included, perhaps unwittingly—tends to raise people's expectations into champagne tastes when, really, you have a mauby economy, in relative terms. So the engineering of expectations, though it has political value in terms of mobilizing your supporters, that is merely a short-term objective.

But then that is the political culture in which we have found ourselves. The campaign is short-term, the promises become short-term and so you subvert long-term sustainable development.

I cannot be against that because those are the necessities of an election campaign and the politics which we live with. But I must, in providing a sobering thought, warn against unleashing rising expectations amongst your population, because it does come back to haunt you when you least expect it.

In congratulating the Government, I must also commend the Opposition side. Perhaps they are a bit too over-enthusiastic, but I think we would need the Opposition to keep guard against what the Government is doing, and it is a feature that we should encourage, because in the arithmetic of the economy, the Opposition will have to demand quality control.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. PROF. DEOSARAN]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

The last speaker did make mention of the question of: Are we succeeding with the objectives that we set out to achieve? I think that was one of his important points. I am not saying that was one of his only points, but I think it was an important point made by Sen. Robin Montano in terms of asking for measurements of success with these projects.

So we are wrapped up on the election campaign by promising so many things, even for unborn children; all kinds of things, as if we are bordering upon a kind of political promiscuity that has no checks and balances, and after the elections people expect more than what we can afford.

I am making the point in this general way because over the years, as budget expenditures have increased, public confidence in the political system, and especially in Parliament, has diminished. Parliament has lost a lot of its credibility. That is why I say there is a tremendous responsibility on this new Government by the way it not only manages the economy generally, but by the way it executes these specific projects to regain that confidence of the public.

I wanted to hear something about NBN in the budget, as to what this Government is really going to do about the National Broadcasting Network, and also about the Information Channel. You have Mr. Maraj in the Ministry now. I think he piloted the Telecommunications Bill here, and we expected this matter of the Government-owned television station to be settled by now.

Apart from that, we wanted to see the Telecommunications Act with fuller life, because I remember during the debate that we had on that Bill, an amendment was proposed that before any telecommunication company, including cable company, would raise its rates, there should be a public hearing at which consumers would be present to state their views on the quality of delivery, quality of service and whether this rate asked for is reasonable.

The monopoly cable company we have in this country has increased its rate, but we have not seen any such hearing. My understanding is that the Act is now law; it has been assented to, but I want to see the provisions of the Act manifested. How can a cable company—its monopoly is another serious issue—raise its rates with diminished efficiency in service at the same time, and the consumer has nothing to say? If I had more time I would have spoken about the banks and this \$4.00 charge for utility bills. But time is usually the enemy in these matters.

I want to get to something which is at the heart of our problems in this country in the relationship between education and the family. On pages 25 to 26 of the

budget, I think there is a well-timed set of programmes and policies in education, especially with the deliberate effort to remove the shift system, to increase the number of secondary schools, and especially improving governance and the management of secondary schools, particularly, and the school intervention programmes. I am also very pleased indeed that when you look at the Social and Economic Policy Framework, these intentions are well spelt out, with performance indicators alongside.

So I get the feeling—I have heard a criticism, but as a professional in the field of education as well, I have some satisfaction that the Government means business on this occasion, and I have no reluctance in saying so if only as a means of encouraging them to be diligent and deliver.

I, however, do not support—or I should say I have strong reservations at this time on the installation of metallic detectors in our schools. I think it is responding to a panic button. I think it will do us no good in the long run, except to “ghettoize”, to give some schools a ghetto atmosphere, especially as I suspect, when I look at the figures on deviance of various forms, that these metallic detectors will be placed along the East/West Corridor.

The East/West Corridor has enough a burden of negative stereotyping. If it were a deserving case, to protect life and limb in the schools and metallic detectors would have served that purpose, I would say, well, it is a necessity, even temporarily. But the evidence does not suggest this need of security at this time. Your guards, governance and good management in the schools, all those things can apply, but to go to the extreme in this country with metallic detectors, I think I have a reservation because of the long-term damage it would do to the school’s reputation.

Once you stigmatize certain schools in this way—because certainly not all schools will have metallic detectors—parents will be resentful of sending their children to those schools. The particular schools are so identified. I notice they are called high risk schools. But metal detectors should not come into the picture at this time, because once you stigmatize the school, once you apply these metallic stigmas in such a permanent fashion, you create a self-fulfilling prophesy over time that will never be removed, as is the experience in countries abroad.

In any case, children who want to bring knives and weapons into schools, they do not necessarily have to walk through the front door where the metal detectors are. Children smuggle these weapons—I have seen them—through the fence; through the back. There are a million and one entrances, apart from the front door

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. PROF. DEOSARAN]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

where the metallic detectors will be. You are really not solving the problem by metallic detectors.

12.00 noon

Amongst this concern is a parallel issue. The schools in the East/West Corridor need help. I note with great pleasure about \$100 million is allocated for social programmes of one kind or another. Most of these programmes are designed to retrieve young people who fell out of the system for one reason or another. The question of falling through the cracks, where are these cracks? What are these cracks? I am sure my distinguished colleague Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie will elaborate on some of these issues. I am touching upon them because whilst you are dealing with the end side of crime and you look at deviance and all those social programmes designed to create a more civil society, you have to look at the supply side. If you do not make that connection you will end up spending money after money without knowing from where the production side comes.

I would identify two institutions that are the supply side of the problems that you are trying to cure by this range of social programmes. One is the family and the other is the school; part of a project I am doing—a full report would be submitted to the Government to assist. What I am saying is not a matter of malicious criticism, but it is to try to give the Government and the country the best of what I know. Research as I know it, is not sitting in an office and doing it by remote control. You have to go in the field. Over the last weeks I have been to most of the secondary schools across the country. I do not have to call the name of the composite school, but in a far off rural area, as you enter there are the words, “The Cure For AIDS Is Abstinence”. You are spending \$500 million to deal with AIDS. There are different ways to deal with AIDS. I was very struck by the symbolic message on that school wall to the children. I do not have to say anything more about morality.

I also learnt that about 75 per cent of the students come from homes with only one or no biological parent. It is in the school records. That is what the principal and teachers say when you interview them. In those schools, it is not uncommon to have parents complaining that they cannot control their children and they come to the teachers to help them put those children somewhere. I was very happy with my colleague. I always need some help on this Bench and I am very grateful for the remarks Sen. Seetahal made. I am also thankful to the Attorney General for that rapid response. I think we are on the way to alleviating some of these endemic problems, structural as well as social in the field.

Parents cannot control children 10, 11 and 12 years old, including many girls. It is worst than that. I think it is a new phenomenon in these secondary schools where bigger boys and girls bully the smaller ones and take away their money and lunch. When the principal told me that this is now a prevalent act, I was stunned until I witnessed an actual episode when the children were brought to explain what happened. Extortion in secondary schools? In other words, white-collar crimes have reached our secondary schools. The principal said that the teachers are having a very, very hard time trying to work out these problems, largely because there is no parent to come or go to. You understand the complexity of this phenomenon called crime prevention. There is rehabilitation at the lower end. I will come to that if I have time in a few minutes.

Let me affirm the position I am pronouncing by referring to the *Express* dated October 27, 2002. The letter writer is Miss Thomas from Barataria. It states:

“I would like to know if the Minister of National Security, the Minister of Education and the Commissioner of Police are aware of the gross criminal activities that are taking place in secondary and in some primary schools. I wonder why so many parents are silent to the crimes of extortion that their children endure day after day.”

I ask: How would the budget deal with this particular problem? I do not think metallic detectors would solve these problems.

The *Newsday* dated October 26 states:

“Police on Thursday issued a stern warning to three students of the Princes Town Junior Secondary School about coercing younger students into giving them money on a daily basis.”

These are just two examples, but the number is high. If you look at what is happening in these schools it is frightful. From a nationwide study that we have done with 30 secondary schools, I can tell you that about 40 per cent of those secondary school students live with only one parent or guardian. I am not into the business of criticizing single parents. The point I am making is that in terms of resources to support students, especially since most of the students are from poor homes, it compounds the problem of indiscipline, low achievement and subsequent deviance in the larger community.

Let us take a further glimpse of this relationship between parental status and school achievement. The sociological implications are the opportunity to get good jobs and fitness for employment after schooling. Why is it that 80 per cent of the

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. PROF. DEOSARAN]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

students in government assisted denominational schools—I really do not want to use the name, but for easy communication I will say the prestige schools—live with both parents at home, whereas only 47 per cent of the students from the junior secondary schools live with both parents at home. Does that not worry us as to why that is so? After you get the answer you have to ask: What are the consequences for civility for the future of these students? The poorer the household, the more likely it is that the child is living with a single parent. That too, is part of the sad picture.

There is a far greater proportion of poor single parents than there are wealthy single parents. The child suffers from double jeopardy. Overall, poor students go to the less than successful schools; are likely to get fewer passes; live in single parent homes; live in larger families and here we also have a greater proportion of teenaged pregnancies and unfitness for employment. Then you wonder, where is the cycle of poverty hatched? It is hatched right here in the schools. You get locked into a family life that is impoverished, not only in terms of physical resources, but also support services, psychological resources that a child needs to move effectively through a school system.

The reasons contributing to single parent homes are many. One of the major reasons these days is because of men who desert their spouses and women who migrate to work. It could be the death of a spouse, divorce, separation, for some people it is by choice because they prefer to live so or even through rape. The question does arise: How can government policies deal with family life in this configuration? On the other hand, there is the right to privacy, or to put it in a nutshell there are limits to which government's policies can be implemented in such matters. When the Government says that it wants to eradicate crime, I always raise my eyebrow; when it says it wants to eradicate poverty, I raise two eyebrows. Neither could be accomplished. The UNC tried it in terms of crime. But that is another story for another time.

There was a Common Entrance placement report in 1994. That was one of the decisive things that the PNM did. I stood here some years ago and moved a motion to have this Common Entrance survey done because I was worried about equality of opportunity in secondary schools. Years passed by and the PNM Government saw that this survey was implemented. I think that the PNM Government shows a social conscience in these issues. I must admit that. There were many findings and some of us know the report. A key finding was the conclusion of that Common Entrance Placement Report, that the most disadvantaged group in the secondary school system is the black female student, in terms of achievement and school

allocation. When we say that there are many more females at university than males, you have to take this particular group into account. It is an excluded group. To add to the phenomenon of social exclusion, there is the other phenomenon of the crisis of the young black male especially along the East/West Corridor.

The Public Services Association contacted me several times for us to do a joint project on analyzing and trying to get solutions to this problem. It is eating away our fabric in many different ways. Some people attribute the rage of the young male to this realm of dispossession and exclusion. The Minister of Social Development made a very important point in terms of public policy targets. I agree with him. I am sorry he did not elaborate on the point because I do not want to put too many words in his mouth.

Here we have two cases which are ethnically connected. They are disadvantaged groups. We should not always feel that if we spend money on such groups, it has an ethnic bias. These are deserving cases. If you spend money in certain areas either in terms of the country or social groups and you can show these are deserving cases, I do not think the policy makers should be seen to be biased. That is an important point to consider in this plural country where some groups are more disadvantaged than others. In the introduction pages of the budget there is so much vision about equal opportunity.

I want to refer to a report submitted to the then government on December 24, 1975. I am bringing this to the attention of this honourable Senate because much government irresponsibility in the past, if I might say so quite frankly, has contributed to the burdens that the present Minister of Education is carrying today. The same PNM government, but the PNM government in those days I believe was quite different from the one we have now. The PNM government in those days was not really easy in some respects. This PNM Government today has grown a bit more mellow and more compassionate in dealing with people and their suggestions for national development.

Dr. Edward Moses chaired that report dealing with the shift system which was very troublesome. He wrote a letter to Dr. Williams in which he said:

“We hope the findings and recommendations of this report may prove successful in realizing not only an alleviation of the problems of the shift system, but much more importantly, the establishment of a more realistic system of education.”

What happened? Nothing! Today there is this crisis of one kind or another in the junior secondary schools. I think it was a mark of government irresponsibility.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. PROF. DEOSARAN]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

Three weeks ago I went to a function and Fr. Girod from Fatima College touched me. He was a counsellor for many years at Fatima College. He told me that if they had taken our suggestion a lot of these problems would not have existed. What was he talking about?

On August 13, 1979, after a two day workshop on student problems and counselling in the secondary schools across the country, when these problems were now rearing their heads, an expert group called the Professional Committee at Student Counselling at the university, as organizers of the workshop, submitted to the Ministry of Education a list of 20 solid recommendations to deal with the rising level of school delinquency and disruptive behaviour at that time. Some of the problems are the same ones we are trying to tackle today.

I will with respect, if she is agreeable to it, give the Minister a list of the findings and recommendations of this committee. The committee dealt with fighting and violence in secondary schools, absenteeism, illicit sex, answering back teachers, drug taking, disruptive talking in class, cursing, stealing, vandalism, molesting female students, gambling and alcoholism, when the problems were now showing their heads. It was because of structural dislocation through the shift system. We must make the point because we do not want to repeat history. That is why I am commending the Government and in particular the Ministry of Education for putting these plans and showing a deliberate commitment in some detail to execute this planning now. We then wrote the Ministry of Education and told them that if they did not attend to those problems, they will get worse. Nothing happened. We did yeoman work with this particular problem. For the record some committee members were:

Dr. John Neehall, psychiatric director at the St. Ann's Mental Institute; Mrs. Annette Wiltshire, then principal of Mucurapo Senior Comprehensive School; Fr. John Girod, a teacher at Fatima College and secretary to the group; Mrs. Nestor Patrick, principal of the school for retarded children at St. Ann's; Dr. Ralph Henry, director of research at the National Training Board and many others.

I happened to have the privilege of being chairman of this particular group. Like Sen. Dana Seetahal, I can speak about this, especially when I have some regret that these things led to nought by the public administrators.

I cite these cases to encourage the Minister and to let this honourable Senate and the country know what happens when a government is irresponsible in responding to issues of the day in a proactive manner. I now see a set of reactionary projects. They want to stop things and solve things. The time for

proactive action was many years ago when the government turned a deaf ear. I think that the Ministry of Education, given the scope of work I have seen on the books and the range of problems that we know across the country in the educational system, the Ministry of Education can do with two ministers. In fact, if Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds finds it more comfortable because of the apparent gentility and charm in that ministry, rather than the one he does not want to go to, that is a welcome place for him, I am quite sure.

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. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Mr. Vice-President and colleagues, thank you very much.

In terms of policy, the Government is retrained by another consideration which is the question of constitutional guarantees of having a parent send a child to a school of his or her choice. That is backed up to some respect by the concordat. The consequence of that has presented us with a perpetual dilemma. There are some very good schools and some that are not very good. What can you do about that? If our schools were equal, at least in the output, you could have tackled some of those problems more easily. There is a constitutional guarantee that is a barrier to send children randomly across the country so as to achieve the equality of opportunity that they deserve. The concordat remains a double-edged sword in this respect.

That is why the Moses committee of 1974, suggested zoning. It is just one suggestion. I am not saying that I support it. What is the way out to try to have our schools equal? People tell us they are unequal because of the input, lower passes and poorer students. I do not see it that way. I think in an educational institution at this young age of 11 and 12 years, no child should be said to be lost. The responsibility is just greater when you have less to work with, but the challenge should be taken up. That is what I mean by a self-fulfilling prophecy. I hope this is diminished over the years. Perhaps, one of these days somebody might file a lawsuit against the government for unequal schooling. The Constitution might be sensitive to such an action.

I want to speak briefly on the other aspect of school, that is the juvenile institutions. In a recent study we did, 27 per cent of these teenagers 12 to 18 years old, are there for running away from home; 14 per cent are there for being beyond

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. PROF. DEOSARAN]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

control. In the institution with only girls, 61 per cent are there for being beyond control. Who is responsible for controlling the child? Could the government play father and mother at every step of the way? That is the fundamental question we have to ask. How much caring could a government give with money? The government has the bureaucrats to supervise, but there is no substitute for good parenting. I cannot tell you any other way. If that has collapsed, whose responsibility is it to put it back together? When you speak about people slipping through cracks, what kind of cement could a government provide? I hope that these social programmes that they have in mind could help. I see no specific targeting in these respects. I see blanket programmes, for example, 16–18-year-olds and on the job training. I hope it would work out later on. The rhetoric, programmes, intentions and money are there. The specific application of those programmes has to go more on the ground level.

Robbery is 40 per cent. Over 80 per cent of the inmates in our juvenile homes are there for either robbery, running away from home or being beyond control. There are therefore three major reasons. That makes it easy to form a policy to take care of these three aspects. At this age robbery is a character issue. Do they not have moral restraint? How can they get moral restraint? Not in the schools. I have told you what the schools look like. Not by parenting. I have told you the fractured state of parenting and 55 per cent of those in juvenile homes had only primary or no education. Over 75 per cent live without both parents at home. The parenting issue has come back to haunt us. These are likely to become dead-end kids. A serious review of the level of care at these schools must be taken, as Sen. Seetahal alluded to, in some specific ways.

Look at the prison. It is the young black male again under 30 years. The bulk of them are there. When you talk about ethnicity, these are the areas we should look at in terms of caring and stopping the flow. You tell me on page 1 that all citizens would be given equal opportunity for personal growth, self-expression and active participation in their own development. There is a crisis.

I wish to take the opportunity to allude to crime on the campus. The Minister of National Security is very active and I commend him for his support in trying to solve that problem. There were 93 crimes which went to 101 between 2001 and 2002. Off campus it is 29 to 30 within that same period. Crimes against the person on the campus went from 20 to 28, an increase of 40 per cent. For crimes against property, it is 78 to 90 which is 40 per cent. All other crimes decreased by 46 per cent.

The director of security is an able and competent person; a lawyer who was a superintendent of police. The problem is not so much the director of security as it

was made out to be. The question is the rising expectations that students have about security and so many people have about being protected. The university never had a shuttle service as this type. We never bent backwards so much to accommodate students' requests for lighting. Two editorials were written on the subject for better surveillance. Students have to learn to take care of themselves too.

I wish to get on the question of governance. You cannot run the country and implement these projects without a proper system of governance and Constitution reform. I suggest to the Government that the parliamentary committees which section 66(A) establishes in the Constitution be invoked expeditiously. As I have said before in previous committees of which I was a member, it will not operate effectively or with due credit if a government member chairs those committees. I say no more.

The other issue is election financing. We would always be haunted by this question of who is pulling the strings behind a government. We ought to dispense with that partly by having laws governing election financing. I think section 75(1)—there is a section which tells you that Cabinet is responsible collectively to the Parliament. That is on paper. As long as a government has the majority, the Executive will always control the Parliament. The provision in the Constitution is of no effect unless there is a coalition government which is an exceptional case for the future. We need a cabinet and perhaps a prime minister who sits outside of Parliament with the Parliament having its own autonomy as a check and balance over the government. I would ask the honourable Leader of the House to do the country a great service and serve the present circumstances quite well, if he should announce before this budget debate is over, the establishment of a constitution commission which should report before next year's end. It would bring great comfort to the people of the country.

My last point is the question of economic determinism. I think that the budget presents an issue as if the Government must dispense everything for the country to run well. There is a book called *On Liberty* by J. S. Mills written in 1859 the same year that Darwin wrote his book on the origin of species. Marx propounded the idea of economic determinism. We have to get serious about the role of responsibility. I am not seeing that word personal responsibility in the budget and the consequences of personal choice. If you have social programmes and issues like AIDS, teenage pregnancies and parenting, we cannot ignore the importance of self-responsibility and proper choice. Do not create the picture in this age that government will only be giving out things to the consequences that flow from wrong choices and personal irresponsibility.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. PROF. DEOSARAN]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

I also believe that the fear of God for kids is still a proper answer. I am sorry that people ignore that, but in the final analysis it is a key mechanism for controlling deviant behaviour. I am sorry I had to rush through my contribution so quickly. Mr. Vice-President and my colleagues, thanks for the extended time and for listening to me.

Thank you.

Mr. Vice-President: The sitting of the Senate is suspended for one hour.

12.35 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.35 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation (Sen. The Hon. Howard Chin Lee): Mr. Vice-President, this being my maiden speech as a Senator and Minister of Government, I take this opportunity to thank you and the other Senators for giving me this opportunity. I wish today to not only give a quick review on the 2002/2003 budget, but also to respond to some of the comments made by my senatorial colleagues on the other side.

Earlier, we heard Sen. Robin Montano speak about the slow response by the E999 to a call made by a friend of his. He dramatized it quite well as he usually does, with the cries of a young child to drive the point through emotion. The point was well taken. I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Senate that upon taking office in January this year, we inherited a very bad situation with the E999. It did not have the vehicular mobility to deal with rapid response. The E999 had 12 cars at its disposal to deal with rapid response for the entire nation. These cars consisted of many different types and mix such as Taurus and Cherokee. It was imperative for the government of the day to take immediate action to increase its strength for vehicular mobility.

Immediately, we standardized the type of vehicles that are being used in the E999 and have VMCOTT as the maintenance company to maintain a standard type of vehicle. We increased the total strength from 12 to 114 vehicles in three months. On these vehicles we installed global position systems which are location vehicle finding systems that can determine the nearest vehicle to the scene of a crime, thus having the shortest response time. We invested in the E999 call centre as well as improved the wireless data to and from the vehicles. You would note in the budget which I intend to comment on later, the improvements we would make in E999 in terms of investment technology and improvement of the call centre, so that we can reduce the rapid response by the means we have outlined in the budget.

I compliment Sen. Prof. Deosaran and Sen. Seetahal for their contributions on structural dislocation, as well as the study on the background of prisons, to separate the young criminals from homeless children to deal with orphans. I am pleased to see that the Senators have indicated that in order for us to deal with crime and tackle the spiralling situation, we must address the social issues. The PNM is committed to dealing with these social issues.

The Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation has increased by forming an added area of rehabilitation. I invite Independent Sen. Seetahal to join with us in contributing and fine-tuning our social programmes.

On the issue of the University of the West Indies, we have had several meetings with not only the president of the UWI guild but also the head of the estate police. We have looked at all areas of security of students and addressed issues such as lighting, estate policing, shuttle service and the police patrols around the campus. However the problem of security on campus will continue unless the planning development and infrastructure of the University of the West Indies is addressed. In other words, I understand that at the University of the West Indies there are 9,000 students of which there is accommodation for only 900 on campus. That says that 8,100 students reside off campus. The safety and security of all these students is now placed outside the confines of the facility. I recommend that the accommodation ought to be looked at in terms of having gated accommodation for students; proper facilities off campus; a proper and effective shuttle service to and from these facilities and a properly planned infrastructure for the development of the future for accommodation of the students.

A quick review of the budget reveals two very important components. The first has to do with upholding and advancing human dignity of every individual within the confines of Trinidad and Tobago. Integral to this objective is the establishment of safety and security within our twin island State, so that individuals can promote their own development and that of their communities and the nation in general.

The second component relates to the inter-ministerial linkages which will facilitate the prompt delivery of goods and services necessary in the fulfillment of said development.

This budget is a giant step forward in making Trinidad and Tobago a developed nation. In this race towards global modernization, we, as people, must

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. PROF. DEOSARAN]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

put nation first. When we speak of race, ideology, class, culture or physical predisposition, we must be forever mindful that they must all be subordinated to the strength of nationhood. In securing such a patriotic environment, the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation has a strategic role to play. Pride in national identity is closely related to being comfortable and secure as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

On January 7, 2002, when I assumed responsibility for the Ministry of National Security, there was undoubtedly an urgent need to address several key issues in the various divisions of the ministry. Perhaps, the most notable was the issue of crime. You will appreciate that there has been a rapid increase in sophistication as it relates to the execution of crime globally. Technological advancements, a more highly trained criminal mind, new methods of instilling fear into the innocent, an increase in deportees in Trinidad and Tobago, a systematic level of organizational infiltration have all conspired to make the objective of crime eradication more challenging. The Government is psychologically and resolutely prepared to confront such challenges.

During my nine months in office, I toured the various divisions of the ministry. They include all eight divisions of the police service; the Defence Force in Tetron, Stables, Camp Ogden; the prison service, Golden Grove, Carrera, YTC, Maximum Prison, the prison at Port of Spain and saw the deplorable conditions in which the prisoners lived. I also visited the National Emergency Centre, immigration and the Cadet Force.

I listened attentively to the needs of managers at all those various units. A needs assessment list was drawn up. Coupling with this was the learning of some valuable lessons in all aspects of crime prevention. The ministry then proceeded to implement some of the initiatives with a view to revising some of the impediments that plague this ministry. All attention was placed on programmes aimed at improving the safety and security of its citizens. Emphasis was placed on strengthening the operational capabilities of all divisions and the development of the human resources of the ministry as well.

The budget clearly falls in line with the Government's commitment to addressing aggressively the problem of crime. You will note that the ministry's allocation for recurring expenditure has increased from \$1,577 million in 2000, to \$1,798 million in 2003. This represents an increase of \$221.7 million over the last fiscal year. The development programme for the ministry increased from \$30.91 million in 2002 to \$32.88 million over the last fiscal year. These figures represent a positive upward movement for the ministry. Notwithstanding the optimism of

these figures, the essential focus has to do with the programmes which would be undertaken to address the burning issue of crime.

I now propose to outline the status of the major activities which were undertaken in the divisions of the ministry when I took office in January 2002. These activities have engaged our attention from then to now. I will give some indication of the plans for the ministry for the fiscal year 2002/2003. The police service continues to be preoccupied in its mission to maintain law and order and the reduction of the incidents of crime. To this end, the police service concentrates on bringing immediate relief through strategic intervention should criminal activities prevail.

1.50 p.m.

The commissioning of Operation Anaconda, is one case in point. This law enforcement exercise covered all areas in Trinidad and Tobago and it was aimed at curbing criminal activities in the entire country. A review of the data on the success reveals that up to October 27, 2002, 1,687 persons had been arrested. This was realized as a result of a greater level of vehicular mobility within the police service. Since then, we have purchased 62 new vehicles for the defence force to increase our mobility for future operations, as the mobility was seriously lacking in the last six months. The ministry has also acquired 114 police vehicles to complement its existing fleet.

To solidify the national crime detection machinery, my ministry also introduced scientific and innovative approaches, which include the use of the most advanced techniques. The establishment of the new confidential crime unit would be undertaken to supplement the work.

There has been the acquisition of 15 digital cameras to enhance a mugshot identification system, which currently operates in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. In further strengthening the national crime detection machinery, the Automatic Fingerprint Information System, better known as the AFIS, has already been implemented in the police service. This system is used to identify criminals through a computerized database. It also reduces the waiting period for a Police Certificate of Good Character. In addition to all of this, there will be the acquisition of computer hardware, software and related equipment for the installation of a fleet facilities management system. Further deployment of the AFIS, mugshot and criminal record database systems, as well as programmes for Certificate of Good Character and upgrade of the Internet connection.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. H. CHIN LEE]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

The E999 Communication Network System would be further expanded to more adequately serve the needs of the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation and government agencies in the field of telecommunication, through its high capacity microwave backbone and point to multi-point system, which is the LMDS System. The divisions of the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation and other selected government ministries and departments will have the capability to communicate with each other, without the intervention of TSTT, by voice data, fax or video. Application of this system includes a private telephone system; e-government, distance learning, telemedicine and school security.

In view of important organizational changes and efficiencies engendered by technology, my ministry would focus and continue to focus on the training of its human resources in high priority areas. These include bomb disposal techniques, information technology, project management, narcotics, investigation and intelligence gathering and analysis, money laundering, drug enforcement, fire and training, computer training and forensic training.

The Government is also placing great emphasis on technologically modernizing the operations of its Forensic Science Centre, which also falls under the Ministry of National Security. To this end, Mr. Vice-President, the forensic science services offered will be of world-class quality. There will be a revision of the scholarship system at the centre to provide training in tool-mark examinations, DNA analysis and forensic toxicology.

Continuing on the issue of crime, Mr. Vice-President, you would recall that the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, in his budget presentation stated and I quote:

“All citizens would be given equal opportunity for personal growth, self-expression and active participation in their own development.”

It is against this framework that the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation would be encouraging greater community participation in the prevention and detection of crime. The implementation of the weed and seed programme would witness the weeding out of criminal activities within the communities and the planting of positive seeds, which would enhance the law-abiding and productive potential of your young people in the community.

The Neighbourhood Watch Programme presents the ideal opportunity for citizens to ensure that there are no unwelcomed visitors within their neighbourhood. This programme is a major component of the community-policing

concept in which citizens and the police work side by side, attempting to eradicate crime.

The business sector is also playing its part in this crime reduction challenge. They have injected large sums of money in the re-launching of the Crime Stoppers Hot Line. The anti-crime initiative is operated by the business sector, in conjunction with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and is aimed at procuring and acting upon information in order to prevent a criminal act from being committed and to ensure the arrest and conviction of criminals. The input of the community here is absolute, if this programme is to be successful.

At this point, I would like to remind the honourable Chamber that in the recent arrest in the Sniper Case in Washington, information obtained from the ordinary citizen contributed significantly to the arrest to the alleged perpetrators. I therefore urge citizens not to hesitate in calling the Crime Stoppers Hotline, 800-Tips or 800-Stop to report any suspicious activities they may observe, especially in the area of kidnapping. Collective national participation is absolute if we are to instill caution in the minds of the potential criminals.

I now move to Research and Training. Mr. Vice-President, I move to the work being done by my ministry on the issue of research and analysis on crime. Financing arrangements have been undertaken to facilitate projects of the Centre for Criminology and Criminal Justice on prison recidivism and youth deviance, and the recommendations of the Task Force on Prison Reform and Transformation on the issue of research and training.

There would be an extensive training programme in the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation to strengthen the human resource base. This will be activated by the implementation of specialized training in narcotics and money laundering; crime scene technology, telecommunication fraud, handling of blood-stained evidence, advanced hostage negotiation, bomb disposal techniques, drug enforcement, forensic science, financial crime investigations and criminal investigations. We also intend to upgrade the physical facilities within the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation.

We intend to create an appropriate professional physical working environment. The Government is committed to the continuous upgrading of facilities and equipment. At present, the following is on stream: The design and construction of police stations at Gasparillo, Tunapuna, Phase 2, and Roxborough in Tobago; the reconstruction of the old police headquarters on St. Vincent Street in Port of Spain; the refurbishment of police stations at Chaguanas, the Mounted Branch, the stations in Couva and San Fernando; Phase 2.

Mr. Vice-President, I now move to the legal aspect of the administration and management of new crimes. The act of kidnapping for ransom has been occupying the attention of the society, and this Government, over the past five years.

The Government proposes to introduce legislation aimed at eliminating this crime. A kidnapping prevention bill, with stiff penalties, would be piloted in Parliament within the next three months. This piece of legislation would, *inter alia*, declare, as a criminal act, the following: Detaining of someone against his or her will for the purpose of receiving a ransom; the payment of any ransom demand by any one representing the person who is kidnapped. When the bill becomes law, it would be a crime for anyone who takes part in these activities. The bill would also designate the crime of kidnapping as a non-bailable offence. Financial institutions would also be mandated by law to provide confidential financial information to the police in kidnapping cases. To complement this bill, there will also be a terrorism prevention bill to deal with all aspects of terrorism.

I now turn to external security and operations of the defence force unit. Mr. Vice-President, the Government recognizes the commitment and dedication displayed by the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force to effectively secure the safety and security of all of its citizens. To this end, my ministry has been actively addressing the needs of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force.

During the past nine months, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force has seen the following: Installation of surveillance equipment on its two C26 aircraft for the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force of the Coast Guard Air Wing. This surveillance would enhance counter-narcotic operations, in the air. Recommencement of the Civilian Conservation Corps Programme in the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. This programme was stopped by the UNC in 1999. This Youth Training and Employment Programme targets young persons between the ages of 18 and 25 years, with low levels of literacy. For the current fiscal year, the Civilian Conservation Corps Programme would be expanded to areas including, Maracas, St. Joseph, Valencia, Tabaquite, Biche, Siparia, and Roxborough, Tobago.

The award of a contract to Nipdec to complete phase 1 of the infrastructural work on the coast guard base at Staubles Bay and the Piarco air wing and at Tobago is also on the way. The construction works commenced on a sewerage treatment plant and an administration building at the Teteron Barracks. Construction, refurbishment works at the cookhouse and the dining facilities at Camp Ogden and Camp Cumuto are in train for completion in 2002.

The establishment of army camps at Hope Estate, Tobago, Champ Fleurs and Golconda are, as well, on the way. A global maritime distress and safety system to monitor shipping would be installed by the coast guard, in accordance with the international conventions and a joint venture with the telecommunications services of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Maritime Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport. In addition, coverage of a new radar surveillance system, commissioned in 1997, would be extended by the construction of a new site on the North Coast of Trinidad and Tobago. Added to that, Mr. Vice-President, are the 62 new vehicles, which were purchased for the defence force.

I now move to the Immigration Division. The Immigration Division has embarked on a thorough computerization of its information base. This exercise began on October 21, 2002 and is mainly designed to connect all relevant units, for example, the police and customs with respect to movement of people at various sea and air ports. We need to know who is in our country and who is out of our country. The improvement in data collection and dissemination is necessary, particularly, as it relates to the deportee situation in Trinidad and Tobago. There will be a deportee database on Trinidad and Tobago nationals. I am happy to report that 90 per cent of the Immigration Department is computerized, with nine data entry operators fully on board.

I am also pleased to announce that we have increased the strength by 70 new immigration officers with effect from February 18, 2002. This increase in staff would reduce the waiting period at the immigration counters, at the airport and at the other ports of entry. It is also our intention to improve the passport system and the technology used for that system.

With reference to the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service: the Fire Services Division is also faced with various physical and mental challenges, which they must confront daily in discharging their duties as fire officers. My ministry has attempted to address these constraints by the following measures: We intend to purchase a water tender tanker and a one-hose laying lorry, together with a recovery and fire rescue vehicle.

A contract was awarded for the construction of 36 valve chambers, which is intended to increase the saltwater protection to the city of Port of Spain and its environs.

The fire services would continue to provide efficient fire protection and emergency services to the nation. To achieve this objective, new fire stations would be constructed at Sangre Grande, Piarco, San Fernando and Couva. The

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. H. CHIN LEE]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

refurbishment of the existing fire stations nationwide is also in progress. In addition, a 24-hour ambulance service would be maintained.

I now move to the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service. The Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service is about to fundamentally redirect its focus of operation. This unit has fully recognized the needs to address the entire criminal justice system so as to move from retributive methods of justice into restorative mode. There are cognitive programmes coupling with changing mindset amongst the staff, in anticipation of this globally modernized method of operation. The Cabinet-appointed Task Force on Prison Reform and Transformation has already submitted its first report in which recommendations arising therein have been accepted by the Cabinet. My colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation, has already outlined in the Lower House details of such penal reform.

Mr. Vice-President, after reviewing these developments in the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation, it is clear that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is resolutely committed to changing the modality of operations of the ministry, to effectively confront the modern pattern and sophistication of crime. This is, indeed, necessary in order to maintain relevance in terms of responsiveness and accountability.

The business of security calls for the training and equipping of professionals who are thoroughly in tune with the demand of global technological advancements. In responding to the dictates of developed nation status by the year 2020, the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation would continue to furnish its units with all the enabling facilities to secure the safety and security of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

On that note, Mr. Vice-President, I thank you.

Mr. Vice-President: May I, hon. Senators, compliment Minister Chin Lee on such a good speech; it is his maiden speech and I compliment him. [*Desk thumping*] I also take pleasure in recognizing at this time, Sen. Rudranath Indarsingh.

Sen. Rudranath Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President and hon. Senators on both sides of this Senate. I feel an extreme sense of pleasure at being afforded this opportunity to address Members of this honourable Senate on this matter of critical national significance and importance. I must express my deepest sense of gratitude to those who made my appointment to this august Chamber, a reality. Mr. Vice-President, it is a reflection that this side of the

Senate recognizes the importance of this issue at hand, and that it merits the full attention and scrutiny of this Upper House and also that of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Today, I intend to deal with the all-important matter of the future of Caroni (1975) Limited and, by extension, the future of the sugar industry in Trinidad and Tobago. This matter has been occupying the attention of our nation, the workers in the industry and the representative unions within the industry for some time. I wish to highlight the major areas of concern to this honourable Senate.

I must state from the outset that I speak on behalf of approximately 10,000 workers within the industry. I also speak on behalf of the families and dependants within the industry who number approximately 300,000. My thoughts on this particular issue were formulated through personal interaction with workers in the industry. It did not come from a book; it is a reflection of the pulse of the people.

Indeed, I speak on behalf of the representative trade union bodies that have been advocating the views and aspirations of the workers for some time. It is no secret that the trade union fraternity within the sugar industry has realized that there is the need to restructure the industry. In fact, the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union has been at the forefront of this call for restructuring the sugar industry, which began in 1978 when the union participated in the Sugar Rationalization Committee Report.

The union has been involved in a process of consultation and dialogue and pointing the way forward for the industry since that year. In fact, that union was part of a consultative process—which in 1992, more precisely, Mr. Vice-President, in July of 1992—gave birth to the compilation of the Tripartite Committee Report, when the Prime Minister was also at the helm of government in July of 1992.

We have participated in other plans over the years, and were also involved in a deep process of consultation and dialogue with the United National Congress administration on their plans for restructuring the industry. I want to stress all of these plans for Caroni (1975) Limited, and more so, for the future of the sugar industry, saw a deep process of consultation and dialogue unfolding between all parties concerned and the stakeholders within the industry.

Mr. Vice-President, hon. Senators, allow me the opportunity to put this contribution into perspective. In fact, I want to make the point this afternoon, that this particular restructuring plan, or reorganization plan that is being envisaged by this administration seems to be the most atrocious and vindictive and one which reeks of discrimination.

Mr. Vice-President, in June of 2002, the Cabinet considered a report of the committee on the future direction of Caroni (1975) Limited. In that report it was recommended as follows:

(a) Sugarcane production Proposal I:

All sugarcane to be grown by cane farmers, possibly by 2007, and it was recommended that the production of cane should entirely become a cane farmer operation with a transitional period of five years. It also focused on sugarcane milling—the milling of cane to be controlled, eventually, by the cane farmers in a corporate structure that would own and operate the mill, equipped with modern techniques as a separate business activity.

This future direction committee's report also focused on sugar refining and it envisaged that the refinery should be upgraded and a corporate structure developed with shares allocated as follows: Equal shares for cane-milling operation, Caroni (1975) Limited and regional participants who may want to utilize the mill in Trinidad for the refining of their raw sugar. And also on rum distilling, where the existing rum-distilling operation is to be placed in a corporate structure following the mode utilized for Trinidad Cement Limited when the Government changed its capital structure to reduce direct control.

Accordingly, the report also focused on the issue of the diversified agriculture of Caroni (1975) Limited. Given that attempt to diversify Caroni (1975) Limited agricultural operations as being relatively land intensive types of agriculture: the existing activities in beef, cattle, dairy, aqua-culture and citrus should be leased as is, preferably to domestic interest.

It also focused on the need for agricultural diversification and for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, and Caroni (1975) Limited with the assistance of expert advice. It identified with the proper land use plan, the areas that should be retained in agriculture and which can be leased to farmers of different sizes for a range of agricultural activities, and industrial development. Plipdeco is to be contracted to manage the use of all lands to be allocated for industrial, commercial and housing purposes, also, for institutional development to take place whereby there is development among the existing training institutions and the capacity for upgrading workers through short courses.

It also focused on research and development and for residual issues whereby the infrastructure services that Caroni (1975) Limited now performs in the areas of operation to be fully transferred to the regional corporations in the respective areas and to be funded by the Central Government. This was envisaged to be done

with the collaboration of Plipdeco, which, as I alluded to previously, would manage most of the land that would be allocated to industrial and commercial activities.

Following this, you had the future of Caroni (1975) Limited more or less being decided through a Cabinet Note, and via a press briefing by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. Then in his budget presentation for the fiscal year 2002/2003, the hon. Prime Minister in the other place indicated that the time has arrived to reorganize and restructure Caroni (1975) Limited, through what would be a voluntary separation programme for all employees within the industry.

I want to make a very fundamental and critical point for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to consider at this time. If all employees should accept the option of a voluntary separation programme, the Government and the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources must ask what would become of the 2003 sugar crop to which Caroni (1975) Limited has already spent millions of dollars. Also, what would become of our commitment from the perspective of international trade to our commitments to the European Union and the US market and the overall impact towards our domestic economy, from a manufacturing point of view?

It is important that we understand that these are very grandiose plans for the sugar industry. Immediately the respective trade union bodies in the land took offence to the proposal, not because of some of the pie in the sky ideas contained in it, but it is important to understand that the Government has flouted the recognized industrial relations practices by failing to meet and treat with the various stakeholders to discuss this very sensitive matter.

On the one hand, the report recommended that there be dialogue but the Government has so far, through the divestment secretariat, refused to meet and treat with the workers or their representatives to consult on a plan, which would effectively affect, as I said, hundreds of thousands of people. The Government must understand that we, on this side, are not opposed to change but we are for change to be meaningful and to fulfil its objectives. It must be done in a very open and, what we would call, transparent manner.

In fact, Mr. Vice-President, I want to quote briefly from a report of the committee on the future direction of Caroni (1975) Limited, which in its Executive Summary II.6, says:

“A central tenet in the reorganization of Caroni was, in the Committee's view,

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. INDARSINGH]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

a need to treat with the issues of political economy particularly since Caroni was of concern to the entire country,..."

I want to reiterate this.

"A central tenet in the reorganization of Caroni was, in the Committee's view, a need to treat with issues of political economy particularly since Caroni was of concern to the entire country, including its major stakeholders—the Central Government, the cane farmers, the employees, suppliers and contractors and the residents and businesses in the surrounding communities."

It goes on to say, under point 13 of the Executive Summary that:

"The Committee was of the view that transparency was a critical factor in ensuring an orderly and expeditious transformation of Caroni."

A report, which was accepted and endorsed by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to take the opportunity to underline that the most insulting aspect of the proposal that is currently being envisaged by the PNM administration is one where the Government intends to restructure Caroni (1975) Limited under the guise of a voluntary separation programme. This is being heavily marketed and promoted at this time. But they are failing to divulge how Caroni (1975) Limited is to be transformed in a holistic manner. They call it VSEP but it boils down to nothing more than forced retrenchment. This means that those workers, who do not leave voluntarily after the first year where VSEP is offered, they would have no option but to take the money and go, beginning 2003.

This is, in effect, forced retrenchment and dismissal of gainfully employed workers. In fact, this PNM administration has displayed its utter contempt for the trade union movement by paying little or no attention to the spirit of good industrial relation practices, and also circumventing, what we would call the collective bargaining process.

Mr. Vice-President and hon. Senators, I refer you also to a report of a ministerial committee on the design of an Enhanced Voluntary Separation Employment Programme for the Employees of Caroni (1975) Limited. It is Executive Summary 0.3. Which states clearly:

"The Ministerial Committee took due consideration of the prevailing legal and industrial framework within which the enhanced VSEP would be designed."

But under 0.4 also they indicate that:

“...the Ministerial Committee took the view that the offer of enhanced VSEP did not require Caroni to enter into negotiations with the representative unions in order to design the VSEP. However, the Ministerial Committee thought that it was advisable for Caroni to keep representative unions apprised...”

Apprised of what, Mr. Vice-President, because so far this Government even, in its budget presentation, has failed to outline a holistic plan for the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited.

We, as a responsible body within the industry, are also aware that there is little doubt that there are some workers—older workers, because of ill health; age and sometimes other factors of personal reasons—are willing to accept or consider the option of a voluntary separation enhancement programme and slip quietly into retirement. But what about the younger workers who may have their entire future before them? What is their future? What jobs will they get with their experience in the sugar industry? Surely, Mr. Vice-President, the Government must be aware that any lump-sum payment to sugar workers—taking into consideration that in the budget presentation it indicated that the wages in the agricultural sector was the lowest in the country—certainly, would not last forever.

In fact, some sections of the media seem to have gone mum on this aspect of the report and I do not know why. But that is how they intend to implement this VSEP. In the first year they are of the opinion or they envisage that 2,072 persons would accept VSEP at a cost of \$188 million. In the subsequent year, a plan of involuntary separation, and I want to stress, Mr. Vice-President, in the subsequent year, a plan involuntary separation would be engaged; take it or leave it and go—3,495 persons; and in the following year 2,151 persons; and in the final year 2005, when they envisage that the sugar industry—by July 2005—would be closed, 1,978 persons would have been sent home. So that in four years this Government plans to send home 9,697 persons within the sugar industry, and they say they care.

This Government says that it cares. But, Mr. Vice-President, I am forced to ask the question: Care about whom? Themselves? Their supporters, perhaps? Their financiers? Certainly, not about the workers and their families within the sugar industry. They never thought of the social implications of this retrenchment scheme; not only would 9,697 workers be affected but their families as well. We must ask, and focus also on the very relevant and pertinent issue of the downstream industry that relies on the sugar industry: the confectioners, restaurants, and small business. What would happen to thousands of blooming businesses? Tens of thousands of people stand to be negatively affected by that

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. INDARSINGH]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

proposal, but that does worry the PNM because their supporters live outside of this political constituency, no hurt and no love lost, Mr. Vice-President.

Is this one whereby the PNM philosophy seems to be a commitment of ensuring that there is more unemployment, crime and social-related problems? Further, they want workers to accept VSEP, when the recognized trade union is engaged in negotiations for a new collective agreement covering the period 2002—2004. I want to stress the point that the concerns of the resumption of the negotiating process is not only the concerns of the daily paid employees within the sugar industry, it is also the concerns of the junior staff, senior staff, the Estate Police Association, the Sugar Boilers Association, within the parameters of the sugar industry, and yet one only hears of certain matters which are being reported to the Chief Personnel Officer of Trinidad and Tobago. The Chief Personnel Officer has indicated to the management of the company and stakeholders within the industry, that awaiting a directive from the Inter-ministerial Committee of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have to understand and, I think, more so, the Government and the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources have to understand, that a sugar crop is shortly on the horizon. It will start in January 2003. Workers have been operating and working on expired terms and conditions of employment since January 01, 2002. That we felt was highly disrespectful of this administration. The trade union fraternity within Caroni (1975) Limited—and Minister Rahael, is entitled to do his research—they have declared, as of yesterday, that there would be no reorganization or restructuring in Caroni (1975) Limited until the negotiation for 2002—2004 is settled. [*Desk thumping*]

The representative trade union also took offence with what was clearly an attack on the practice of guaranteed work. You have to understand what is being done by this Government, under what is called: The report of the ministerial committee on the design of an enhanced voluntary separation programme. The report states, very clearly, in its Executive Summary, under point 7:

“If all employees avail themselves of VSEP, Caroni would seek to rehire workers on the basis of needs and on contract...”

New terms and conditions of employment so the trade union movement of Trinidad and Tobago must understand, what is the philosophy of the PNM administration, in relation to the working class in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, here you have a plan to lick up; to get rid of—what we would call—the concept of guaranteed work in the sugar industry. And, also, we must understand, to get rid of unionized terms of employment in the employ of

the industry. Guaranteed work has provided a platform; a bedrock, for social and economic stability of sugar workers since 1975. In fact, as a result of guaranteed work being realized by sugar workers, workers have been able to acquire housing; a decent standard of living; they have been able to facilitate their children's education; and overall, to expand and develop the ambitions of their respective families.

The plan seems to be contract work now for Caroni (1975) Limited. The trade union movement must be aware that now it is Caroni (1975) Limited and which other sector would be next, where there is this policy of eroding unionized terms and conditions of employment within the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have to understand—those Senators on the other side must do their research—that none of the financial institutions in Trinidad and Tobago would enter into any financial discussions to facilitate the education of the sugar worker's children if they are characterized as seasonal or temporary workers. Financial institutions are not willing to enter into discussions, which would facilitate the acquisition of housing and motor vehicles—and what have you—by sugar workers once they are characterized as seasonal or temporary workers. And it is the focus and target of this Government, under the guise of a voluntary separation programme, to get rid of guaranteed work and unionized terms and conditions within the industry.

When one looks at this report in its totality and, also what was envisaged in the budget presentation by the hon. Prime Minister in terms of figures, they simply do not add up. They are just like the budget. And in my wildest dreams I do not know, for example; what was the yardstick used to calculate how much it would cost the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to send home 9,697 workers. How was this calculation done? With whom did they negotiate? What was the criterion used? Certainly, there was no agreement between the Government, the divestment secretariat, or the stakeholders within the sugar industry.

I wish to reiterate to this honourable House that these questions are being asked, not only by the daily-paid bargaining representatives, but also the other bargaining units within the sugar industry. We have been asking, and would continue to ask these questions, not for the sake of opposing, but out of a call for honest dialogue. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Always dialogue! Always dialogue!

Sen. R. Indarsingh: The unions, as I said, are not opposed to change or restructuring of the industry, so the views of the workers must be taken into

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. INDARSINGH]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

consideration. In fact, both reports, which were endorsed, accepted, and discussed, call upon the Government and also the divestment secretariat to realize the importance of consultation and dialogue.

Mr. Vice-President, how were the pension and other related liabilities calculated? Has there been a proper audit of the pension scheme in Caroni (1975) Limited up to this time? The actuarial firm of Bacon, Woodrow & de Souza has said very clearly—and I want to reiterate this point. The actuarial firm of Bacon, Woodrow & de Souza, which has been commissioned by the divestment secretariat, has said that the figures that have been submitted to the divestment secretariat by Caroni (1975) Limited need to be validated before any restructuring or reorganization of the company could take place, yet they are paying no heed to this. [*Desk thumping*]

What was the exercise of ensuring workers the outstanding pension contribution, in terms of paying the liabilities to the respective pension plan, be it at the daily paid or the staff level in Caroni (1975) Limited? How are workers to access their benefits, as I have said, such as pensions and other gratuities? How would they be able to accept national insurance benefit? Would these benefits be lost under the restructuring or reorganization process? In fact, there is a critical need for pension reform at both the daily paid and staff level within the industry.

Then there is the major aspect on the proposal of the valuable land of Caroni (1975) Limited. The Government—as indicated by the hon. Prime Minister in this budget presentation—said that a Land Estate and Business Management Development Company has been formed to deal with the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited. Who are the board of directors of this particular company? What is the mandate or the agenda of this particular company? Like a thief in the night, this Government has appointed a foreigner to deal with the land issue at Caroni (1975) Limited. What utter disrespect to the nationals of Trinidad and Tobago!

Again, there was no consultation on the issue of the formation of this company up to this time. As I said, Mr. Vice-President: What is the mandate? What is the agenda? Who are the board of directors on this company? These things need to be clarified. This is one time all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago should be concerned. The forefathers of this nation toiled and shed their blood, sweat and tears to ensure that these lands become fertile and bountiful. The lands belong to every one of us; no one group. When the Government attempts to transfer the assets, for unknown purposes, there is, obviously, a need for concern.

What is the future of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee in the entire land issue within the sugar industry? We have heard nothing, and you must be aware that this committee has been responsible for facilitating low-cost housing to needy families, particularly those of sugar workers. Would these people lose their lots of land? How is the committee to be restructured?

The decision to retain Caroni lands is dangerous, and may have political implications. What are the lands to be used for? If for housing, this could be a sophisticated voter-padding exercise. [*Desk thumping*] These are agricultural lands and should be kept for that purpose. Suppose we are incapable of feeding ourselves in 10 years, whom will we turn to? Agricultural lands must always be used for that purpose. The time has arrived for the Government to be transparent and to declare its agenda and tell the nation what would be done with the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited.

Caroni (1975) Limited—if we are speaking about reorganization and institutional strengthening of the industry—could certainly manage its lands, from a business point of view and sell those lands, which are not in agricultural production, to business entities at prime commercial rates in Trinidad and Tobago, and be able to acquire money directly within the coffers of Caroni (1975) Limited.

2.50 p.m.

They have continued to say that Caroni (1975) Limited has a financial shortfall to the tune of approximately \$500 million to the Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago. This is totally false. They say that Caroni (1975) Limited is a loss-making enterprise and that it has never generated revenue, but I want the Government to consider: Why is the Government failing to take a critical look at the cost of corruption, inefficiency and wastage within Caroni (1975) Limited in its restructuring and reorganization plan to put checks and balances in place? It is touted that these figures are in the vicinity of \$100 million. [*Interruption*] Minister Rahael could do his investigations about the unauthorized expenditure at the distillery of \$14 million and also the disappearance or unaccounted \$5 million at the La Gloria Tree Crop section of the company.

Mr. Vice-President, we must understand what the facts are and what the reality is. Last year the estimated income for Caroni (1975) Limited was \$300 million and it was expected that at the end of 2002 it would be \$490 million.

This means the actual shortfall of the company is closer to between \$150 million to \$200 million. This is surely aimed at creating hysteria and is an attempt

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. INDARSINGH]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

to justify their illogical policies. We must be mindful that Caroni (1975) Limited contributes to 44.7 per cent of the GDP in the agricultural sector. Caroni (1975) Limited injects approximately \$720 million annually into the economy. The employees, farmers and contractors earn approximately \$475 million annually and they inject approximately \$45 million in taxes.

Caroni also provides medical services and also helps, in a way, to subsidize the cost of health services in this country to the value of approximately \$7 million. Earlier this year the Prime Minister said that WASA was in a more troubled financial position than Caroni (1975) Limited. We also heard that at the end of the fiscal year 2002 that Petrotrin had lost approximately \$200 million dollars.

Mr. Vice-President, it seems to be an easy avenue to be willing to rescue—I have no problem when you make outstanding payments to public servants from a worker’s point of view and also when you are indicating to the nation that WASA and other state enterprises need restructuring and reorganizing, but we hear of no plans. There seems to be a focus on Caroni (1975) Limited.

Mr. Vice-President: The hon. Senator’s speaking time has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President and hon. colleagues.

As I was asking: Why has Caroni (1975) Limited and the sugar industry come in for this treatment? Is it a question of different strokes for different folks? If the PNM administration wants to address the question of national healing, then it must give the sugar industry the due attention that it deserves.

In fact, the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union has no problem with the establishment of a holding company and the establishment of strategic business units within the operations of the rum, rice, citrus, dairy and field operations of the company; field engineering operations. It must be based on a process or the concept of private sector participation which the union submitted to the UNC administration in a document entitled “Prospects and Proposals for the future of Caroni (1975) Limited” and we would continue being a responsible trade union, willing to work with any administration to develop a win-win situation at Caroni (1975) Limited.

Private sector participation must be based on the concept that the Government must retain the majority shareholding and the private sector, the minority shareholding; a policy of job-creation and job-expansion, unionized terms and conditions of employment and there must be no forced retrenchment within the industry.

Mr. Vice-President, and Senators, the sugar industry represents the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. It is their water, their everyday meals, their shelter and comfort. To move towards a total shutdown would be a most inhumane act. Let us sit down as a people and chart the course together. Let us decide the direction of the company. Dialogue, consultation and transparency must be the order of the day; workers must be made to feel comfortable if the trade union fraternity is to bind and embrace the restructuring and reorganizing of Caroni (1975) Limited. Failure to do so can result in social instability, protests of a mass nature and definite failure. As a society we cannot afford to divide our people and the nation.

Thank you.

Mr. Vice-President: My congratulations to Sen. Indarsingh. [*Desk thumping*] Having come in only this morning—was that your maiden speech, Sir? My compliments. At this time I invite Sen. The Hon. Rahael to respond.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. John Rahael): Mr. Vice-President, may I congratulate you on your elevation here. To the Independent Senators, again, congratulations and to my colleagues on the Opposition Benches, my friends—especially to Sen. Wade Mark. I remember him during my term, 1991—1995 and when I reflect I recall he was there and I was here. I see it is the same thing again, he is there and I am here. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] I want to tell him that I think his best role is there. He spent five years over here and did absolutely nothing, as one of your friends said in the other place.

Mr. Vice-President, the previous Senator spoke a lot about dialogue and consultation giving the impression that this administration has not entered into dialogue with the stakeholders with respect to Caroni (1975) Limited. Let me put on the record that the dialogue started in our term of office from 1991—1995 and continues. [*Desk thumping*]

This document is one that was completed in December 1992; this report of a tripartite committee to investigate Caroni (1975) Limited and, in particular, the sugar industry. At that time those who made up the committee were Members of

the government, members of the management and the board of Caroni (1975) Limited and the unions representatives. The representative of the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union at the time, and who signed this document, was one Mr. Basdeo Panday, together with the general secretary at the time, Mr. Sam Maharaj and other representatives from other unions in the sugar industry: Mr. Raffique Shah of the National Federated Workers Trade Union, Mr. S. Ramsingh of Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association (TICFA) and so on.

This tripartite agreement was agreed to by all the stakeholders in December 1992. It was signed by all the stakeholders. I shall highlight some of the points that clearly state that greater attention should be paid to the cane farming sector with the aim of promoting the adoption of new varieties of cane—because there are different varieties of cane and if you can adopt new varieties you would get better return on value. Steps should be taken to decrease the ratio of tons of cane to tons of sugar by the following strategies:

- (a) payment to growers by quality; and in order to achieve that a review of the existing cane payment system known as the Seemungal formula.

The idea at the time, that everyone agreed to, was that we were going to move away from purchasing cane by weight only, and move into the position of buying cane by quality. When you buy—it is like everything else that you purchase—based on the quality of the product you will get a relative price for the quality. We said then, in agreement with all the stakeholders, that we must move towards purchasing the cane by quality.

It also stated that the farmers' direct delivery of cane to the company's milling facility should be increased. Again, at that time, as of today, the private farmers, in fact, produced cane at a more economical price than at Caroni (1975) Limited. And it was agreed that Caroni should now slowly remove itself from the cultivating and harvesting of cane and put it in the hands of private farmers and that the private farmers would bring the cane directly to the gate of the factory.

It would eliminate all the waste, mismanagement, maintenance of equipment and make the farmer responsible for his own delivery of the cane to the factory. The company should take steps to achieve, as far as possible, within its capacity, the status of the major sugar refining centre for the Caricom region.

What we have seen happen for the past six years, is that the shift has moved now from Trinidad to Guyana. It says that the labour force—I repeat—that the labour force be reduced through enhanced pension and new retirement arrangements. It goes on to say that the domestic price of sugar be increased by 15 per cent and the recommendations go on and on.

Consultation started since then. So, to come here now and say that there was no consultation is really not speaking accurately. Let us talk about the current framework. *[Interruption]* You talked about consultation. I do not know if you are aware of how many unions there are in Caroni (1975) Limited. There are eight unions and this Minister has met with every union on more than one occasion. *[Desk thumping]* We have met with Sen. Indarsingh's union at least four times; Minister Valley and myself on one occasion. I met with the union on various occasions. Not only did I meet with the union, I met with the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturing Association, because they have been clamouring that they can purchase sugar from the international market at a much lower price than they are paying for it at Caroni (1975) Limited.

I had to meet with the manufacturing association to get them to understand that everything is not dollars and cents and, therefore, they need to pay the extra 15 per cent at this point in time. I met with the Employers Consultative Association. As a matter of fact, when I met with the ECA, Sen. Indarsingh and his executive members were present. So when he comes here in this honourable House and rants and raves about there having been no consultation, what is this? Was this not consultation? *[Interruption]* We will get there, I just want to discredit all that he has said because he spoke about high-handedness and no transparency and that we are not consultative. That is not accurate and I have demonstrated that. Let us go on. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Vice-President, in February 2002, it was brought to my attention that Caroni (1975) Limited was strapped for cash and that there was a need for some \$277 million, in order for Caroni (1975) Limited to fulfill cultivating and processing of the sugar and cane. Obviously, I went to my Cabinet and we were able to get the necessary funding for this year.

Let me say that in 1993, as well, the PNM administration, in putting this plan together, decided that we needed to give Caroni (1975) Limited a clean slate; a good balance sheet, so that they could go forward. We wrote off approximately \$2.3 billion. *[Desk thumping]* PNM 1991—1995 administration wrote off \$2.3 billion for Caroni (1975) Limited. The purpose of writing it off and putting this plan in place was so that we would not have found ourselves in that position again. Do you understand?

Let me tell you what were the requirements for Caroni (1975) Limited in 2002. Again, the Senator talked about Caroni (1975) Limited's losses being between \$115 million and \$150 million. Well, I do not know, but for the past six or seven years, we, the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago have been subsidizing

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. J. RAHAEL]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

Caroni (1975) Limited in excess of \$400 million per year and I have the figures to show it.

The operating and financial requirements for Caroni (1975) Limited for the year 2002: Receipts—that is the sale of sugar for export, local and other sales—total sales—\$495 million. Operating expenses, financing and other expenses, \$291 million as a deficit—for operating in that area; and \$175.6 million for bank interest and other expenses, making a total deficit—when you add up the \$291 million and the \$175—of \$467 million. Then, in addition to the expenses you had operating expenses. I will repeat this, because it is important that we have it very clear: Revenue, \$495 million, operating expenses, \$786,900,000, showing, therefore, the operating deficit of \$291 million and when you add the other financing cost of \$175 million you will come up with a total operating and financing deficit of \$467,500,000. *[Interruption]* That is the net loss. So, it is not \$150 million or \$100 million. *[Interruption]* The revenue is \$495 million. After the revenue is deducted, there is a deficit of \$467.5 million. Copies of this can be made available to you, Sen. Mark. *[Interruption]*

That is not all. What is Caroni (1975) Limited's position today? Right now, Caroni (1975) Limited's liability is \$2.4 billion after writing off \$2.3 billion. I am saying that this cannot continue. This cannot continue indefinitely. *[Desk thumping]* No government or country could continue to subsidize an industry—whichever industry it is, which is something we need to move away from. The Senator tried to compare the fact that we are going to pay public servants millions of dollars, saying that he had no problem with that, but I do not understand how that came into the equation. What was the point that he was trying to make? That is money due and owing to the public servants that was taken from them by an administration other than the PNM and we are making it good now. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Vice-President, Caroni (1975) Limited is owing \$2.4 billion today. So, we said, "Let us dialogue." We started to have meetings with all unions. Every single union.

Sen. Indarsingh: One meeting.

Hon. J. Rahael: That is not accurate. I met with you on more than three occasions and with the ECA on another occasion; All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union; the other union, the Association of Technical, Administration and Supervisory Staff; Estate Police Association; Sugar Boilers Association; Sugar and Industry Staff Association; Cane Farmers Association of Trinidad and Tobago; Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association; Cane

Producers Association of Trinidad and Tobago. We met with all of them. So, again, the question of dialogue and consultation has been going on since 1991 and it continues up today.

I have said it over and over, openly and publicly, that any union, any stakeholder, any one of the stakeholders who wish to meet me, my doors are always open. That is why I met with ECA, TTMA and all the unions. Let us move on. Let us go forward, now that we have dealt with all of that.

We are in a position now to restructure Caroni (1975) Limited. We said that one of the things we have to do is to deal with the labour force. How are we going to deal with the labour force? We said that we would offer an enhanced Voluntary Separation of Employment Plan (VSEP) where the workers will have the opportunity to accept or reject.

I say here that I have had calls and visits from many of the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited urging this Government and urging me to make the offer. The Senator talked about what is going to happen to the young men who are now working in Caroni (1975) Limited cutting cane. What is their future? I do not know if you see that these young men's future, and the rest of their lives will be spent cutting cane. I do not know if you see that as their future. We want to move in to mechanization and so on and the Senator is talking about 29-year-olds continuing to cut cane for the rest of their lives.

Mr. Vice-President, I understand the Senator's position. If too many people accept the VSEP his paisa will get low. [*Desk thumping*] That is what he is worried about, the paisa. His presence here is not in the interest of Caroni (1975) Limited workers. [*Desk thumping*] It is in not in the interest of Trinidadians. [*Desk thumping*] It is in his own interest; his own profit interest. [*Desk thumping*] That is what he is doing here.

The hon. Senator spent five or six years as a board member of Caroni (1975) Limited; from 1997—2001, he was a board member. What did he do when he was on the board? He talked about corruption. What did he do?

Sen. Indarsingh: I do not micromanage.

Hon. J. Rahael: He does not micromanage. The Senator went on as if VSEP is something new that this Government is imposing on the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. Let me tell you that the previous board of Caroni (1975) Limited, of which Sen. Indarsingh was a member, agreed to VSEP. I confirm it.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. J. RAHAEL]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

With the past Chairman of Caroni (1975) Limited, Joe Ramkissoon—
[*Interruption*] During the period Sen. Indarsingh was a member of the board, here is what Mr. Joe Ramkissoon had to say in the *Trinidad Guardian* of Friday, June 21, 2002:

“But immediate past chairman of Caroni, Joe Ramkissoon, says the issue of VSEP is not new at the Company.”

He goes on.

“Ramkissoon, who relinquished the Chairmanship in January” of 2002 says the matter had been discussed ‘for some time now’ and agreements had been reached in certain areas. He said the Company’s unions were also involved in the VSEP talks.”

He went on.

“The Board had made provision for that (VSEP) and quite a large number of people were willing to accept it...”

This is what the UNC, Caroni (1975) Limited’s board agreed to. When he quoted 2,072 persons were prepared to accept VSEP and they had quantified it as \$188 million, do you know where that came from? Their board. We did not do an exercise like that. It was their board. It came from their board. Do you understand? We did not do an exercise to find out or quantify how many people would accept VSEP. We are making an offer for voluntary separation of employment to the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited.

Sen. Mark: Let me ask you a question.

Hon. J. Rahael: No, I am not giving way.

Sen. Mark: You are not giving way?

Hon. J. Rahael: No.

In addition to that, Sen. Indarsingh made the point about people getting their money and they would not know what to do with it. I do not know what is the problem with people getting a lump sum of money. It seems as though you have a difficult with that; that they will waste it away.

I am confident that the people of Central Trinidad are entrepreneuring people and they will not throw away a lot of money. [*Desk thumping*] Let me give you just two examples. In a discussion with one of the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited, he indicated that he wanted the VSEP, and I asked him why he was so anxious. [*Interruption*] Mr. Vice-President?

Mr. Vice-President: Senators, this morning I asked for us to exercise discretion and I even quoted the Standing Orders I was referring to. I would like to remind everyone that we are still in Session and the Standing Orders still hold. Let us please avoid the amount of crosstalk and interruption. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. Rahael: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

So, this gentlemen from Caroni (1975) Limited, came to me and said, “Please, Mr. Minister, offer us the VSEP so that I can take it.” I asked him: Why are you so anxious to take this VSEP? He said, “Because I have plans.” I asked him, “What plans do you have.” He said, “I have plans to do something with the money.” I asked him, “What it is you are going to do with the money?” He said, “Well, my wife have a little parlour, and she is doing very well, but we need to expand, therefore, I would use that money to expand the parlour”—these were his words—“so we can carry more lines and do more business.” I was impressed. So, there I was thinking that I was some smart businessman, I said, “Why do you have to wait on the VSEP? Go to the bank, borrow the money and do your thing.” He said, “But, Mr. Minister, if I go to the bank, they will want collateral. I have no collateral, you will sign for me?” I said, “Nah, not me, partner.” [*Laughter*] Do you understand?

Here is another example. The other guy said that what he proposed to do was to buy a pick-up because he sees that there was an opportunity for transport in certain areas.

So, when the Senator comes and makes statements, it only goes to show that, in fact, he really does not have the interest of the workers at heart, because they know what they are going to do with that lump sum of money. We are putting other types of financial instruments in place that will help them—the Unit Trust and so forth for those who wish to take advantage of that. We are not only offering the VSEP and giving them the money and leaving them alone. We would also provide avenues and opportunities for them to invest as well.

Sen. Indarsingh also spoke about those who may want to be re-employed and continue in agriculture. We have said it over and over again. We are going to have agricultural estates. Those who have accepted the VSEP and are willing to continue in agriculture—because we are going to keep all the lands that are suitable for agriculture in agriculture—will have the first option to lease those lands. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we are doing. We have a social conscience. We are thinking of the people. We are not thinking of ourselves and our union dues, what we are going to get and what we are not going to get. When we put

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. J. RAHAEL]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

plans in place we put people first. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we do. [*Desk thumping*]

The Senator talked about the previous administration and that, in fact, they had a plan. Their plan was to shut down Caroni (1975) Limited. [*Interruption*] I would quote for you. [*Desk thumping*] It is a whole different thing. We made it clear from the very beginning that we are not shutting down Caroni (1975) Limited. We are restructuring Caroni (1975) Limited because we cannot afford to plow \$467 million of \$500 million every year into Caroni (1975) Limited.

This report, dated May 2001—from a group that was commissioned by and reported to the UNC—says quite clearly that an objective analysis of both internal and external environment confirms that the local sugar industry cannot become financially viable. That is what it said. It also said that a total shutdown of the sugar industry was inevitable. It goes on to say that a long-term solution for Caroni (1975) Limited must be developed and implemented. They decided that they are not just going to do it, they are putting a plan in place, a marketing plan. You know they are very good at marketing.

There is a heading “Communication and Marketing”—that is the Senator’s field. They decided that a well-crafted marketing strategy to capture the national community and targeted audience must be developed. It says that this strategy will include the following: speeches and announcements by government officials; Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers; feature articles in printing press providing positive reviews of selected aspects of Caroni (1975) Limited’s solution; radio, television and print advertisements aimed at shaping the public’s opinion. All this report was looking to do was fool people. While we are being honest and transparent, they wanted to fool people. [*Desk thumping*]. Do you understand? They went with a marketing plan.

Mr. Vice-President, there is something else. We said, in restructuring Caroni (1975) Limited, that we are going to vest the lands back to the State. We are going to lease to Caroni (1975) Limited the lands required to operate in the sugar industry. They are now going to focus only on sugar. They do not have to worry about citrus, fishing or any of the projects and endeavours that they undertook and which have all failed. They are going to be focused; their core product is going to be sugar and they are going to focus only on the sugar industry.

Let us face it, Caroni (1975) Limited has an asset of 77,000 acres of land. They want to get involved in all kinds of different activities and that is why they are losing money in every area. They failed in everything because it is too much

to do. In addition to that, over the 25 years, with almost every board—whether it was a PNM, NAR or UNC board—there were accusations and allegations that the board, because it is a PNM, UNC or NAR board, was giving lands to supporters and so on. Caroni (1975) Limited does not need to deal with that. They do not have the competence to talk about development of land.

So, we looked at what was successful. Look at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. [*Desk thumping*] Point Lisas Industrial Estate is a success because PLIPDECO is a land management company focusing on land management; what is best suitable for what land, in what area and monitoring the development of the land that is in Point Lisas.

We are saying that we will have the Estate Management Committee that will look at land, after Caroni (1975) Limited takes what is required for it to remain in sugar, develop and focus on the sugar industry and reduce the liability to the State. They would be able to say, “Well, we know we are having agricultural estates, what is the best land to put for the agricultural estates and who are the people that are coming to apply for it.”

We have already indicated that those who accept the VSEP and are interested in farming and are serious, and others who are serious and want to get into agriculture as a full-time business, as a career, we will make the land available because we see agriculture as a very important industry. We see agriculture as providing food for the nation. [*Desk thumping*] We talk about food security for Trinidad and Tobago. That is our mindset. We want to develop the agriculture sector.

In 1996, under the UNC, agriculture contributed 5 per cent of the GDP. In the year 2001 the contribution is 2 per cent. In every area of agriculture, under the past administration, everything was on the decline. Let me give you some ideas: cocoa production declined from 1.4 million kilograms to 650 million kilograms. So 1,400 million kilograms in 1995 and in 2000, 650 million kilograms. A decline of more than 50 per cent.

Let us go to coffee production: 1.1 million kilograms in 1995 and 410 million kilograms in 2001; citrus production declined from 10 million kilograms to 3.9 million kilograms. Agriculture is so important in so many areas; employment, food security and rural areas. It is amazing how a party that came from the rural areas—the sugar belt, so to speak—did absolutely nothing with Caroni (1975) Limited. They did absolutely nothing with agriculture. They totally ignored agriculture in every respect and the statistics show it in every single area.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. J. RAHAEL]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

The Senator spoke about employment in the rural areas, but if they really wanted to help agriculture, they would ensure there was a strong agricultural presence. In 1995, 51,800 persons were employed in agriculture. In 1999—that is the statistics—39,000 persons; a loss of 12,000 jobs and they talk about there being no loss of jobs under the UNC? Twelve thousand jobs were lost in agriculture between 1995 and 1999. What are you doing about that, Mr. Labour Representative? What are you doing?

The point is, as I am about to wrap up—

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Mr. Vice-President, I wonder if the hon. Minister would clarify one point for me. Can the Minister state whether any of the Caroni (1975) Limited's lands, vested in the State will be sold outright to anybody? Can he confirm that all Caroni (1975) Limited lands vested in the State will be redistributed only on a lease basis?

Hon. J. Rahael: Yes, that is the intention; that the Estate Management Committee will identify all the lands—we have identified part of it; there are 77,000 acres of lands; there are squatters on lands; so we need to do an audit—and then the lands are going to be leased back.

As a matter of fact, the intention is that when we are giving leases in the future, one is not going to be able to speculate with a lease. One will not be able to do that. [*Desk thumping*] I am glad that you raised it, Senator. There is going to be a clause. If one applies and indicates that he is going to do this project—whether it is a factory, agriculture or whatever it may be—and puts a proposal forward, we are going to have a clause, even if it is for housing—there will be a timetable for achieving certain mileposts. In the first two years, if nothing is done with the land it will revert to the estate company. We have looked into that as well.

Just to make the decision that was taken by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago—the Government of Trinidad and Tobago—let me read just a few of the decisions:

- that the lands owned by Caroni (1975) Limited be transferred to the state and appropriate arrangements be made to lease back to Caroni (1975) Limited, lands needed for its own operations.

That is a decision.

- that the Government establish a new entity as a wholly owned state enterprise with a mandate to manage the lands and stimulate and facilitate new business activities in the following four areas:
 - (i) industrial light manufacturing

So there is going to be an estate that industry and manufacturing will be able to be located in that area. This is not a pie-in-the-sky dream of 1,000-room hotel. Do you remember that? A glass plant and a paper mill. We are talking about local entrepreneurs, right now as we speak—I have on my desk—local companies that want to expand and are looking for land. One company in the east needs to relocate because they have outgrown where they are now. They are exporting and they have indicated that, in addition to the amount of employees they have right now they are going to guarantee us, within two years, 500 additional employees.

Then we talked about housing estates. When you create economic activity, people have to live. There is another thing, the Senator said that we are going to put housing there to put PNM people in it. I really do not understand what that means. Who are PNM people? I do not know. I do not know who are PNM people. They believe that once you are of East Indian descent that you are not PNM, but that is not true. I heard somebody say that we want to win Couva North. We will win Couva North with the people in Couva north. We do not have to carry new people there. [*Desk thumping*] That is it. We will win it with the people in Couva North. Do not fool yourselves. They believe that if you hear the name Ragoonath, they will figure that person is UNC. That is the thinking. In fact, in the *Daily Express* of Friday, October 18, 2002, page 12, Mr. Ragoonath wrote, “Indian, but I voted PNM”. Do you understand?

The point I am trying to make is that when they say “PNM people”, who are they. The PNM people are all the people in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] All citizens of Trinidad and Tobago we see as PNM people because we represent all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We do not just mouth about unity and all different types of words. Our actions prove it. Therefore, no one has anything to fear with a PNM Government. Do you understand? So, this thing about us not caring about workers and we are only looking after our financiers, we have no financiers. We have no financiers. All the people of Trinidad and Tobago are our financiers.

We are going to have light manufacturing, housing estates, commercial complex, commercial activities, malls, different types of office buildings and then agricultural estates. These are the decisions that were taken. Everything else that you are hearing, ignore. [*Desk thumping*] These are the decisions from the Cabinet.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Mr. Vice-President, I just want to reconfirm that none of the lands will be sold outright.

Hon. J. Rahael: Senator, I have tremendous respect for you and I want to reassure you that the lands will be leased and not only will it be leased as I

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. J. RAHAEL]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

indicated, but there will be clauses to ensure that people do not speculate with state lands. That is so important because it has happened in the past where people would get a lease with an option for 30 years and say they are going to do a, b, c, or d and they do not do anything. They would wait for three or five years—I understand how it works—the value increases, someone else comes and the lease is transferred to another person and put a couple million dollars in their pocket. Not under this administration. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, as I wrap up, let me thank this honourable Senate for giving me the opportunity to set the record straight. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Let me just say that I am comforted. Thank you.

Hon. J. Rahael: You are comforted and I am very happy to hear that. I hope I have been able to comfort some of my friends on the Lower Bench. It is very difficult for them to comprehend, but that is alright.

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President.

Mr. Vice-President: Thank you, Mr. Minister of Agriculture. I wish to recognize at this point, Sen. Noble Khan.

Sen. Brother Noble Khan: Mr. Vice-President, may I congratulate you on your election to this high office of Vice-President. We have all confidence in you and pledge our support. Indeed, for the last day and a half this confidence has been re-enforced by your very articulate way in which you have governed the proceedings so far. [*Desk thumping*] May God Almighty continued to guide you.

All praise is due to God Almighty and may his peace and blessings descend on us.

Today I have a feeling of *deja vu* as we consider this budget here presented. It is over 40 years that our country has been independent and, obviously, even before the initiation of these 40 years there has been a gestation procedure. How much has been achieved, how much we hope to achieve are all matters which I think will come to our attention here today as we reflect.

I suggest a recommitment be made to freedom; freedom being the bedrock on which our nation was founded on August, 31 1962, some 40 years ago; and later reinforced on September 24, 1976 with promulgation of our Republican Constitution in 1976, Act 4 of 1976. In this recommitment to freedom, I stress political and religious freedom.

Political freedom leads to democracy and the rule of law. It provides a framework for implementing genuine—and I stress genuine—economic freedom

enabling people to create businesses, allowing for sustained growth and development, just distribution and so forth.

Religious freedom, on the other hand, allows for mutual understanding, tolerance and protection of all faiths, beliefs, creeds under the law and leading to genuine political freedom. I stress, again, genuine political freedom.

Mr. Vice-President, it is imperative that in our situation, we implement and practise genuine collaboration, cooperation and partnership, as these are indispensable in any social relationship which has the desirable goals of peace, justice, harmony, social cohesion, political stability and economic prosperity. Laudable and desirable as the achievement of developed country status 2020, and even as nebulous as the term may appear to be, it cannot be too strongly stressed that an economic advisory body be established to address and make recommendations on economic matters.

This body should comprise of representations from a wide cross-section of the national society. Matters referred should include wealth creation, use of natural resources, distribution, tax fiscal measures, investment, diversity of the economy and so forth; review of the public service and state agencies; diversity of agriculture; address questions of the less fortunate; short- and long-term plans to address poverty eradication.

In early May 2002, I was part of the Inter-Religious Organization of Trinidad and Tobago delegation which held discussions with the Minister in the Ministry of Finance on budget proposals for 2002/2003. These proposals were submitted, at his request, in an effort to guide the preparation of that budget which we have before us.

I must say that, even at that time, what emerged—because I do not think that has happened before—was an element of consultation, and I think at that time it was a very good step forward in establishing what we have today—\$20,000 million is plenty money and I do not think we had a budget like that ever before. Even at that time the Parliament was not sitting. Today we have the Parliament working and it is a manifestation of the recognition and adoption of law as a legitimate means of social control and interaction.

I must draw our attention to the documents that have been laid, and particularly, the Public Sector Investment Programme 2003, Public Sector Investment Programme, 2003, Tobago and the Social and Economic Policy Framework 2003—2005. Indications are that the PSIP and the Social and Economic Framework will find expression in a national development plan to the year 2020.

It seems that in the establishment of this flow of the PSIP coming into the Tobago programme, and the policy framework, there are elements that there should be some means of consultation. This, I think, is very important. The way the world is going today—and I think even if we were to draw back on that initial movement that was made by the Minister of Finance and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance—of having a relation with the population, should definitely be worked into this system that we see established here.

I would think that within the short space of time that followed—and we know that for the budgetary programme there was a very short period in order to meet the requirements of our Constitution and the law. Therefore, they may not have had the element of consultation deeper into it, but I would think that those initial movements are laudable and we should definitely continue to pursue that.

The world is moving that way. We have had 40 years, some people would say it is a mystical number as far as maturity is concerned and there is definitely need to participate. We recommend that this participation be done by collaboration, consultation, cooperation and partnerships. It may seem that these words are mooted around very often now, but as a people seeking to create a civilization we should definitely be in a position to give it genuine meaning.

I myself, in the different roles I have occupied, have had the fortune of meeting with people across the board. Moreso, as head of the IRO. The IRO is not a political but it does not see itself as partisan political. This, I think is an important path on our way. That way, I would think, will help many other organizations within our society to foster the building and creation of what we would like to see emerge in our beloved country, Trinidad and Tobago.

One of the other areas of establishment and allowing for participation is the establishment of a council including NGOs, CBOs and other civil society groups to address social problems even as the budget has highlighted, like crime, HIV/AIDS, the managing diversity and ethnicity, race and culture. No one can deny that, particularly we who are in the forefront, that there is tension—at least perceived—which has arisen not because of the mass of people, but because of selective groups of the people aspiring for leadership and matters such as this. This, I think, is an area in which we as a people or even as an individual have to be very careful when we think in terms of service; service at the highest level.

I belong, more or less, to what has been referred to as the spiritual or religious fraternity. We see service as transcending across the board. It is not only in our area or province, there are other areas in the society and we think of service being

the service to humanity in the name of God Almighty. This, again, I would like to reinforce within our belief system, our practice system.

That council should address education and training needs. Importantly, too, the establishment of a forum to discuss constitutional reform. Forty years have gone and for the last nine months or so I was an Independent Senator and we met with people across the board. Even then you felt that crying need to be part of it. I would not say our Constitution has not served in the past or our founding fathers have not established a frame upon which we can rest and move, but if there is need to overlook—if there is need to see—I think we should provide that mechanism to do so.

3.50 p.m.

These suggestions must be viewed in light of a society reaching out to its citizenry in a particular participative, collaborative manner, where cooperation and partnership would be genuinely put in place and allowed to work. I use the word, “genuinely” all along, because there is a high input within each one of us towards a sort of feeling of encompassing among ourselves.

We think in terms of moving, instead of going inwards, or centrifugal of moving outwards, reversing the process of going in a sort of centripetal way. That is, whereby, we move out and reach into our society involving all that we have—because every one of us has that potential and we can draw on that to build our society, be it through groups, or the individual way.

As we go forward in revolving a civilization of which we are the present heirs, the deepening process of involving the nation is imperative and we cannot afford to ignore, if we are to become a developed country by 2020. This is a worthy aim. What I find lacking though, within the documents that have been presented to us, is a sort of very cohesive linkage within the planning document because if we have the idea—and I think there is the capability within our society as far as our people are concerned—is to bring this idea through the leadership into a way in which there would be participation. Documentation is prepared and it becomes old, but it would allow a framework by which we can be guided and upon which others can build.

We were men and women before states made us citizens, and, as some would say, allowed for the dominance of materialistic sensual norm. The western society for the last 500 years has been pushing this at us and some of us may be so changed to the point that we are unable to recognize that. This should draw our attention towards tempering our institutions and this includes the Parliament. This

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. BRO. KHAN]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

we should do by strengthening a sense of recognition, a culture of fostering values would impact also on the non-material part of ourselves, a path that is indivisible, cannot be separated. I speak of our spiritual selves, our souls, our spirits, our consciences. These are nothing new, they are innate within ourselves. These are also enshrined in our Constitution and through our reliance in our various traditions and not only paying lip-service, but believing and putting into practice, this would serve us well. I recommend we pay heed.

There is much expectation from the much vaunted oil and gas exploration. We should ensure some element of intergenerational equity by setting aside a percentage of the cash flows realized from oil and gas income to be accessed only under certain conditions. This comes like a balloon and if we do not hold back some this means to say the natural resources which we have and from which one gets the impression, particularly from the grass root people there is a big grab for it by people in certain positions. There is need to put aside.

Re-computing of the benefits of those government pensioners should be done based on salaries now paid. All pensioners should be exempted from the payment of all taxes; income, land and building, water, electricity rates. It is not strange that some of us may have homes, and there are people who may have value but without a cash flow, and having to put out what little they have, they literally starve. It is in this respect that I think in terms of easing that burden.

With respect to those public servants—I do not think anything has been mentioned in the budget, I looked for it, it may be there, but there are some people because of the cut in their salary when it came to the computation of their pension it was worked at a rate which is no longer relevant because of the increase. I give credit to the payment of what was due to the civil servants, I myself being an old one but not benefiting under it. Some advance should be made as regards benefit because this might be a long period. We know at that upper age, the question is they might be waiting—they might just pass away—but this is a means of making sure that they have something from which to benefit.

Immediate meaningful programmes in prison reform, rehabilitative and redemptive work, especially to first time and newly released inmates.

These are my notes which I prepared before on what was said. I have had no consultation on this but I was indeed heartened when I heard it expressed by Sen. Dana Seetahal and some of the other hon. Senators on this side, and even on the other side. I would not dwell too much on it. I think the Minister of National Security made mention of the inhumane conditions under which prisoners are kept in jails.

There should be immediate effect for the phasing out of lead gasoline. This is a very dangerous gas. Our country has more motorcars, and possibly as high as any and as far as the ratio between people and cars. I think it is scientifically proven that lead coming from gasoline in other places has a negative effect on our people, particularly our young. I have been hearing many things about the East/West Corridor not being up to standard. This lead poisoning may have a bearing on it too.

There is need to update the policy and the national plans for physical land use. We have just heard much about Caroni (1975) Limited, and I can possibly touch on Caroni (1975) Limited too.

We look forward to decisions being mutually agreed to by all stakeholders. This obviously would fit in against what I have said earlier, that there should be collaboration, cooperation and partnerships.

Under agriculture; we should refocus on diversity in food security. We should give the highest priority to the National Parks and protected areas and wildlife management.

In some of our belief systems and in our traditions the earth is looked upon as something that is alive and if one were to reflect, one would see that there is an element, that if we divorce ourselves from the earth, we are on the way out. This has been happening, not only in our country but throughout the world.

I will just draw hon. Senators' attention to what one of our first-nation people said many years ago, that the ice was melting. From that statement we could understand what is taking place.

We should, as part of our machinery, give immediate effect to releases of funds to ensure staffing and fill posts in the forestry and environmental agencies. I must also mention education because if we do not take care of what we have in the area of the natural resources, God help us. If we do not take care of our children, especially those who are at school, in the area of education, God help us again.

I would like to see a reinvestment in the arts and culture. Recognize and empower our artists and our artistes and support the institutions. There must be a feeling of belonging and opportunity for empowerment by everyone in the country. We must recognize diversity as a blessing, and we must cater for all including our indigenous or first-nation people. As I said, in any relationship of culture, we must recognize our diversity and how this is managed. Whatever we

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. BRO. KHAN]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

do, we should not act in a negative way so that the source of our inspiration and spiritual guidance are dislocated. It is very easy to damage a people. Changing circumstances, I agree, require adaptation and that adaptation involves risks of losing the connection to the heart of the original insight of our culture. There must be no domination. Domination should not be an option which would lead to alienation and detention therein.

The necessary facilities, and I speak here of training facilities, should be available for diverse groups. No attempt should be made to belittle or deprecate or depreciate anyone on grounds of differences of culture or tradition.

As I mentioned before the empowerment in civil society, the capacity-building should be meaningful and immediate. There is need—if we are to go to 2020—for transfer and access to management skills and information technology; for example, project management and so forth.

Community services. There is a big pool of community services within the public sector, that is the government services. There should be a relationship and greater use among the NGOs in reaching out to the civil society especially to the dispossessed and less fortunate.

Gender. There should be no discrimination on gender for appointment, employment, wages/salaries. The Equal Opportunity Act should be widely advertised and laws put in place, if there is any lack or deficiency in these mechanism. Very often laws are put in place, but God help us, after that, that is it.

Education. Denominational schools have always contributed significantly. We feel that there should be continued collaboration and partnerships in the pursuit of education at all levels and their roles should be expanded.

With respect to pre-schools—and this is important. Very often because of the system, and because of social structures, there is a strong bias towards children who are in pre-schools from certain “depressed areas”, so to speak. Sometimes this may be linked with salaries/allowances where I understand there is a sort of ratio payment where the society may have to raise, but they definitely do not raise because of the level of the society. What we have taking place here is the attraction of those skills. Though teaching is a vocation, it is a commitment, we do not have that in what we refer to as the depressed areas.

Again, I would stress that in the area of education all those vacant posts should be filled expeditiously.

There should be some coordination among finance, education and the Teaching Service Commission.

The public service. Immediate steps should be taken to review the role of the public service and state agencies.

I alluded to earlier, as one of the major areas, the review of constitutional reform and within the public service—if we are to reach the year 2020—we know there are different mechanisms, the fantastic change in management and matters such as these, we should be brought in line. I myself was from the public service and I have spent all my working life in the public service. I know that there is a great pool of knowledge, perhaps, the biggest pool of knowledge, skills-bank that exists in our country. But it is the mobilization of that and how it could be put to use towards the year 2020. If we do not do that, we are just talking. It is important to look at that. I know there are plans within the public service but there is need for an overall view, a conceptual view perhaps, with the Constitution to overview and see the direction. Forty years have gone. We are ideally poised for that now with the leadership, the commitment we have. I met with a few of the Ministers and one could not help but feel—from all Ministers, across the board. We have a great pool of resource personnel on both sides.

We are ideally poised for that and if we miss those opportunities again, a next generation would be gone. There is need to foster those required skills, our conceptual skills, our technical skills, our human relation skills in governance of Trinidad and Tobago, and we must be prepared for a modern state leading to developed country status, 2020.

An important factor in the social interaction is the family. This has become almost like a cliché so to speak, but it is real. It has come under great strain on how we could mobilize. We heard earlier about the education system where there is a lack of the traditional family and that has been eroded for some time. We see a lessening of the development of the potential of our children among those traditional families. It was mentioned here earlier today. The government social agency should be properly reorganized and linked with the society, and linked obviously, with some of our traditional elements: the PTA, the community police, religious groups. There is need to speed up implementation of the value education programme within the Ministry of Education. It is important. Very often within the formal groups where religious groups are strong, we may find things of transference values are in place. There is a great pool that is not exposed to this sort of thing. This is where the school can come in, where we could devise a system of values in the education programmes.

I know there is a programme like this in the Ministry of Education at the moment where curricula are being revised. Time is not on our side and there is

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. BRO. KHAN]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

need to see how we could possibly build and put in more resources into that area to help speed up that process, the values education programme. Without faith base there are different things. The technical professional people could help in this way. This is an important factor within the family structure, to help.

Foreign affairs. We are involved in matters in the region internationally and otherwise. Historically, our foreign affairs department is the envy of, and not only within the Caribbean, but throughout the world. I think that we could become more involved in matters such as the United Nations Development Programme, Organization of American States, Africa, the Middle East. There may be need to mount other additional courses as the case may be, and there might be areas for this. I think that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs even as of now, I know they are making a dent in this area. We look forward to further widening that scope as our country being a leader in the West, do not mind we are small but there is obviously need that we can make an impact in this area. We talk about globalization. Diversity of the economy should be pursued aggressively. More initiatives in agriculture, downstream industries in oil and gas, dairy, tourism; the usual areas but it is the question of implementation. This I think is one of the negatives—we have not been able to motivate our people and possibly too as far as the economy is concerned at a wider level, at a macro level, maybe the model of which we have become appendages to, may be one that puts us into that downward spin and left us in that way.

When we think in terms of the efficiency of globalization but efficiency for whom? Benefit for whom? We may be fortunate at the moment in our oil and gas exploration because these are natural resources available to us. But when we think in terms of competing in the wider world, in the economy there could be problems. The poverty that we see persisting and for which so much has been written—we have heard earlier the question of the plantation economy; we have not been able to break that. We heard talk about our first Nobel Prize Laureate with regard to economics—I speak of Mr. Lewis, Mr. Demas; they have all gone to the great beyond; some of our great thinkers. They have left for us, but how far, at least a pool of conceptual banking, have we been able to draw from that? These are important aspects when we think in terms of the economy and moving into 2020.

Transportation. Immediate mass transportation along the East/West Corridor and the northwest communication systems are important aspects. The linkage between Trinidad and Tobago is an important aspect if we think of ourselves as people belonging to one nation, which we are. That linkage, that feeling of

separateness could be as wide as possible, if there is not that communication. I speak of the communication not only of the boat or the plane, but communication among us, that spiritual link that builds and very often we see there is so much need for development in that area.

I have touched on the question of Constitutional reform. We should immediately put in place mechanisms for wider national consultation on this reform. The question of moving forward from concept to idea to planning, and implementation of plan is a beautiful idea. These are very simple models with which I think all of us are familiar.

Overall, I wish to extend congratulations to the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, the Budget Division, the rest of the Ministry of Finance, and all other public officers who have worked on this very voluminous document.

As I have said before, because of the short time frame much that could have gone into it, is not there, but there is need for involvement of the people. If we do not go that way there is a general feeling at times of everybody being a second class citizen. How the political events went within recent time this could be an opportunity to break that cycle. God help us, if we do not meet that challenge because when we look down the road, if we pursue that path and unless we bring that element that is so crying a need for, all that we are doing here, the 2020, without that element of developing our soul, our spirit. These are ideas which, we are fortunate, as a people—we are a believing people, our Constitution enshrines it and there is much to go on. Our leadership, in and out, even our small cadre of people, our civil servants, our technocrats and what have you and even the motivations themselves that we are capable of mobilizing, I think could serve us well.

Again, let me extend my thanks for allowing me this opportunity to share and for being in this august Senate. May God Almighty bless us all.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, we are going to take the tea break now. This honourable Senate is suspended and we shall resume at 4.45 p.m.

4.20 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

4.45 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Ann Marie Manning): Mr. Vice-President, I, too, like my colleagues on both sides of me, I am presenting my maiden speech in this august Senate today. I congratulate you on

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. H. MANNING]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

your appointment as Vice-President of the honourable Senate; I congratulate hon. Senators on the other side and on my side, and I must say that I am impressed at your fairness and your firm manner in the way you have been conducting business today.

I take the opportunity now to support the Government's budget for the fiscal year 2003, which was presented by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the hon. Patrick Manning.

There is a well known biblical adage which says: Where there is no vision the people perish.

We on this side of the honourable Senate have a clear vision for the development of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. There is a vision for social development, for economic development, for moral, cultural and political development; a vision in which every citizen of every creed, of every ethnic group, the aged, the young, the mentally and physically challenged, would be afforded an opportunity to make a contribution, as well as reap rewards.

In his Budget presentation, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance captured, in some details, the vision that the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has for this beloved nation. It is a vision to which we, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, should be committed. Indeed, I urge everyone in this honourable Senate and outside this Senate, to commit himself or herself to fulfill this vision.

This budget is set within the vision of taking Trinidad and Tobago to developed country status in the shortest possible time and, certainly, by the year 2020. I wish to quote some excerpts from the budget presentation in order to highlight the spirit of this vision. I quote:

“The vision of the People's National Movement is rooted in upholding and advancing the human dignity in every individual, irrespective of race, colour, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, or social origin. Such dignity, Mr. Speaker, must be based on self-reliance and self-help, and the confidence in the ability of individuals to promote their own development, and that of their communities and the nation at large.

Trinidad and Tobago will be a society of creative thinkers, innovators, entrepreneurs engaged in a process of lifelong learning. All citizens will be given equal opportunity for personal growth, self-expression and active participation in their own development... In the society of 2020, poverty and unemployment will have been significantly reduced to minimal levels, if not

eliminated all together.

...citizens of Trinidad and Tobago will be enjoying a high quality of life based on the highest standards of modern human development...

The society will be cohesive and caring, with strong spiritual and ethical values and a deep sense of nationalism.... Crime and violence will not be tolerated.”

I have considered it both necessary and relevant to have highlighted these excerpts from the budget. The vision which the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance underscored, lies at the heart of the 2002—2003 budget proposals. In almost every aspect, Vision 2020: People...Our Priority speaks to the optimal development and management of our human resource. We cannot attain this vision unless our citizens have the capability, the capacity, the tools, the will and the attitude to take this nation forward to developed-country status by 2020.

As we all know, education is key to human resource development. Hon. Members on the other side have been saying this over and over the last two days. One must invest in one's human capital on a sustained basis if one is to attain the vision which has been so clearly enunciated. Our education system must prepare citizens who would enable this country to survive and thrive in the rapidly changing knowledge-based and technology-driven environment in which we exist, not only today, but through to 2020 and beyond.

Against this background, it is imperative that the transformation and modernization of the education system be deepened, intensified and accelerated. Our education system must be student centered, our education system must develop and produce creative and independent thinkers engaged in the process of lifelong learning. It must produce well-rounded students. Students must be equipped with skills, yes, but, most importantly, they must be caring and responsible individuals endowed with strong ethical and spiritual values, willing and able to contribute to an economy that is skills-based and knowledge-driven, but also be prepared to make Trinidad and Tobago a better place in which to live, a society in which there is unity in diversity, where there is peace and harmony.

Mr. Vice-President, I wish to assure you and other hon. Senators of this august Senate, and the nation at large, that the Ministry of Education recognizes that it must play a pivotal role in fulfilling this vision. It is to the Ministry of Education that in largest measure falls the responsibility of meeting the human resource requirements for achieving developed country status by 2020.

I shall outline some of the major achievements of my ministry over the last

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. H. MANNING]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

nine months, its plans for the next five years and the measures it intends to take this year, in order to achieve the vision underlying this Government's budget estimate for the fiscal year 2003. During my earlier tenure, from January to September 2002, the Ministry of Education has had to undertake programmes and initiatives that addressed the urgent and immediate needs of our schools and school personnel. I would identify major achievements.

When I was appointed as Minister of Education in January of this year, I was presented with several challenges at the ministry, and in the education sector. The fourth basic education programme jointly funded by the World Bank and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago was behind schedule. This programme entails the upgrading of the physical infrastructure, as well as the qualitated aspects of early childhood care and education centres, primary schools, and, to a lesser extent, secondary schools. At the beginning of this year, with only one year left of this six-year programme, there was a disbursement lag where approximately 72 per cent of the loan proceeds had been drawn down when it should have been 95 per cent.

Under the Secondary Education Modernization Programme known as SEMP, funded jointly by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank, several projects were similarly behind schedule. I have had therefore, to take immediate steps to redress the situation. I found a situation in which these programmes were not well managed and resources were not efficiently utilized. In this regard, I have taken a project management approach, setting up implementation teams and strict planning, monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that programmes were brought back on stream. Nevertheless, I will list some of the major achievements of the ministry over the period January to September 2002. They are:

1. The lag under the fourth basic education programme was substantially reduced resulting in the completion of seven primary schools and the substantial completion of two secondary schools. [*Desk thumping*]
2. The disbursement of funds for 29 round one and 99 round two school improvement was completed. [*Desk thumping*]
3. School repair programmes during July to August 2002, where 99 primary schools and 47 secondary schools were repaired at a cost of some \$38 million. Approximately 146 schools were repaired during this vacation period. [*Desk thumping*]

4. The school intervention strategies, as part of the safety and securities initiatives in schools, where perimeter fences were constructed in 15 secondary schools and contracts have been awarded and construction has started for the installation of security systems in five high-risk schools.

I must pause here to assure Sen. Prof. Deosoran, that no metal detectors would be installed in schools. [*Desk thumping*] Instead, we are going to place electronic cameras, alarm systems and monitors in these schools.

5. The in-school suspension programme was developed out of the understanding that many students who have difficulties with learning are unmotivated. They have behavioural problems and tend to be truant and would be able to show overall improvement if well planned, organized intervention is provided.

The in-school suspension students out-time programme provides a specific time-out period from routine schoolwork to address some of the needs and difficulties that the students face. It presents an alternative so that students would benefit from the programmes rather than be placed on suspension to return to school worse than when they left.

The programme introduced on a phased basis began in September 2002, when the new school term opened in ten schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Ten guidance officers and ten school social workers work in teams of twos in schools with students and address issues related to decision-making, anger management, conflict resolution, problem solving. A parent education programme is included in this approach.

Parents are invited into the schools to work with their children. In instances where parents are unavailable in the in-school activities, they are located at their homes or in the workplace.

Mr. Vice-President, there is another programme that I wish to draw to Sen. Prof. Deosaran's attention. It is called: Together We Light The Way, a programme which is based on a successful Canadian model. It involves a network of schools, businesses, and communities working together to create a safe, caring and learning community in partnership with parents, the business sector and the community leaders. The programme is being introduced in phases and feedback sessions on its progress are held at the end of every phase. Already, many principals and administrators have reported positive changes in their schools. They have noted that as a result of their involvement in the programme they have

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. H. MANNING]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

seen a decrease in students' suspension, a more respectful tone in the schools' environment and an increase in parental support of school activities. I wish to reiterate the commitment of the Ministry of Education to cementing the partnership among the home, the school and the community by pursuing the implementation of programmes of this nature.

All new interventions would be informed by the results of ongoing research into the causes of violence and indiscipline in our schools, for which we have engaged the collaboration of Sen. Prof. Deosaran and his institute at the University of the West Indies. We would continue this collaboration.

I move on to the professional development of teachers. A total of 82 principals and vice-principals and other senior school administrators benefited from management and leadership training over the last year, while 305 teachers were trained in beginning teacher's workshop.

6. A national consultation was hosted on the new curriculum to be introduced in the secondary schools constructed under SEMP.
7. Seven new syllabi were developed in keeping with the objective of modernizing the education system.
8. The school nutrition programme has been expanded significantly this year. The number of children who receive breakfast on a daily basis, has increased from 5,000 to 25,000 and, in addition, 92,000 children receive lunch. Over 800,000 free textbooks have been distributed to students of all primary schools, both public and private.
9. The \$1,000 book grant for secondary school students which was promised by the People's National Movement, was delivered to some 104,000 students. [*Desk thumping*]

Cycle two, the continuation programme for those who have not yet received these grants has already started.

10. Interviews are currently being held to fill the posts of heads of departments and deans in secondary schools.
11. Five hundred additional places have been bought at private secondary schools to accommodate A'level students who cannot be placed at government and government assisted schools.
12. Two hundred and twenty scholarships were given to students who were successful at this years' A'level examinations. This was an increase over the 100 scholarships that were provided last year.

In addition, after years of complaints by recipients of additional and further-additional national scholarships who chose to study abroad, that they be provided with some form of recognition and monetary value for the scholarship won, my administration, in September 2002, heeded the cries of these scholars and their parents.

I am pleased to inform this honourable Senate that with effect from September 2002, the recipients of additional and further-additional scholarships who are desirous of pursuing studies abroad would be paid scholarship funds equivalent to scholars attending the University of the West Indies. [*Desk thumping*] Such students would be required to sign an agreement contracting them to serve the Government for a period to be determined in accordance with the policy enunciated in the year 2000.

13. Music in schools initiatives has started. The steel pan would be introduced in 40 schools in the first instance. The aim is to introduce pan in every classroom in this country. During the vacation period a steel pan camp was held, and the Ministry of Education in conjunction with Pan Trinbago, guided tutors and young pannists to set standards while enjoying the pan. It is indeed another expansion of the steel pan industry.
14. This Government also approved another music initiative where schools would be encouraged to set up school orchestras with funding from the Ministry of Education. It is this initiative that the harmonium, the piano, the violin and other traditional instruments would be played in schools. [*Desk thumping*]
15. The de-shifting of schools is ongoing. The Marabella Senior Comprehensive and Marabella Junior Secondary Schools are to be de-shifted by January 2003. A committee has been established to ensure that the de-shifting is well thought out and implemented. This committee consists of staff of both schools, parents and members of the Ministry of Education. De-shifting would continue as more new schools come on board.

Construction of nine secondary schools would be completed by the end of this year and early 2003.

Mr. Vice-President, I cannot elaborate further on the achievements of the Ministry of Education over the last months because time does not permit. Moreover, I need to make reference to the Ministry's strategic plan, the

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. H. MANNING]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

formulation and development of which has occupied the ministry during much of my time. And, here, I want to pay tribute to the ministry's dedicated and competent staff who are sitting in the audience. [*Desk thumping*]

One of the first tasks which I spearheaded when I joined the Ministry of Education was the formulation of a strategic plan for the ministry. It addresses key issues that the ministry must confront, and the quantitative and qualitative measures which must be taken if the ministry is to serve as a catalyst in the process of modernization of the education system.

The plan identifies policies, programmes and initiatives which are pivotal to achieving our national development objectives in order to facilitate economic social development, and support the transformation agenda, set for the national economy by current and successive governments. In order to survive and thrive in the new world economy, it is imperative that we engage in revolutionary education reform. Equally imperative is the need for a rational, systematic approach to such reform. What is demanded is a strategic plan that would enable the Ministry of Education to guide, implement, monitor and to evaluate the transformation thrust and the several components comprising that reform thrust.

Mr. Vice-President, the vision of the Ministry of Education underlying the strategic plan is concurrent with Vision 2020: People...Our Priority. In the Ministry our vision is to be a pacesetter in the holistic development of the individual, through an education system which enables meaningful contribution within the global context. Therefore, the Ministry of Education has set itself four major strategic objectives as issues of top priority for the 2002—2006 period. These are:

- Sustainable policy development for the education sector;
- A continuous alignment of the strategic direction in the education system with objectives set for national development;
- Accessibility to educational opportunities for all; and
- Development of quality education for citizens at all levels.

It is in the context of our 2002—2006 strategic plan that measures to be undertaken by the Ministry of Education in the fiscal year 2003 have been formulated. Implementation of the strategic plan begins in 2002—2003 with measures which the budget allocations would support.

Specific Measures: In support of our main goal of supplying a labour force

geared to meeting the challenges of competing in a globalized economy, the ministry would continue in its efforts to develop Trinidad and Tobago's human capital. Our emphasis would be to provide for all children access with equity to quality education at all levels of the education system.

I will now elaborate on some of the more critical measures we intend to carry out.

Increase and improve access to educational opportunities. Over the 2003 fiscal year, the Ministry would undertake several activities in support of its stated goal of increasing and improving access to educational opportunities at all levels of the education system. These would include the early childhood level, the construction and outfitting of 43 early childhood care and education centres.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran and Sen. Seetahal, we on this side of the honourable Senate know that if we could intervene early in the life of our young people, as they grow older, they would be less at risk and the problems that have been identified would hopefully be reduced.

At the primary level under the World Bank, the fourth basic education programme, the following activities would be undertaken: the completion of five primary schools. During the 2003 fiscal year, a total of some \$90 million would be spent on these projects relating to education at the early childhood and primary levels.

At the secondary level: Construction of 12 secondary schools under the SEMP programme. Completion of one new secondary school under the World Bank fourth basic programme. Provision of financial assistance in the construction of four (4) denominational secondary schools. Purchase of secondary school places at sixth form level, and at SEA level at approved private secondary schools, and the purchase of other school places at Servol Life Centre and Servol Adolescent Development Centre.

Over the period measures to improve the physical environment at all levels of the education system would be implemented. These include the reconstruction, extension and upgrading of existing educational facilities under the School Construction and Repair Programme. The provision and replacement of furniture and equipment. The implementation of a phased programme for the technical upgrade and general rehabilitation of 101 secondary schools under SEMP. The programme would commence this year with a package of 20 schools and would focus on the science laboratories, multimedia resource areas, technology education studios and computer rooms within the schools.

Improvement of the physical facility at the Valsayn and Corinth Teachers' Training Colleges.

5.15 p.m.

To achieve and sustain quality in schools:

A quality education will be achieved through the following measures:

- Curricular reform;
- Rationalization of specialized craft;
- Introduction of more relevant curricular at all levels of the system;
- Continuous assessment;
- Development of the National Certificate of Secondary Education;
- Improving literacy levels;
- Professional development activities;
- Schools-Based Management;
- Computerization of primary schools.

I will now provide some details on these measures.

Curricula Reform:

In pursuit of the goal of achievement and sustenance of quality in schools, the Ministry will, over the next year, embark upon several initiatives in the area of curriculum improvement and these include:

- (1) Continuous revisions, development and updating of the primary and secondary curricula facilitated by:
 - The establishment of a national curriculum consultative committee. It is already in draft and will be placed before Cabinet in a short while.
 - The development and establishment of curriculum-writing teams;
 - The development and operationalization of national curriculum advisory subject committees.
- (2) Revision of teaching methodologies and the teacher training curricula through the implementation of revised teacher training curricula.

The curriculum reform is aimed at producing well-rounded citizens, who will be empowered to contribute meaningfully to a skill-based economy demanded by a fast-changing, knowledge-based and technology-driven global environment. The major strategy of the Ministry of Education would be to create mechanisms through which major stakeholders would participate in defining the needs to be met by the individual citizen and the nation at large.

Following identification of the human resource needs, which must be met if Trinidad and Tobago is to become a well-developed country by 2020, national subject curriculum advisory committees would be appointed, for example, a national science curriculum committee. These committees will have the technical responsibility of translating the national curriculum objectives and needs into instructional programmes. These instructional programmes or curriculum documents will then be distributed to major stakeholders for their comments.

Finally, the National Curriculum Advisory Council, comprising representatives or major stakeholders in the educational system, such as the Inter Religious Organization, Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA), the National Parent/Teachers Association of Trinidad and Tobago (NPTA), Associations of Principals, Student Bodies and Councils will validate the curricula developed for each area. This process will ensure that the curriculum for primary and secondary schools is relevant to the demands of a rapidly changing local, national and global environment.

The National Curriculum Advisory Council is envisaged as a permanent institution, which will be engaged in the process of continuous revision and evaluation of the primary and secondary school curriculum. Concomitant with curriculum development activities, will be a continuous programme of professional development, aimed at providing teachers with the necessary tools to deliver these curricula more effectively and efficiently. For example, it is planned to make greater use of educational technology, particularly information technology, in the delivery of the curriculum.

Next, we have the enhancement of the social studies and science curriculum at the primary school level. Then we come to professional development.

In the drive to achieve quality in schools, the following professional development activities will be organized:

The establishment of a professional development institute for teaching and learning;

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. H. MANNING]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

The development of a comprehensive training plan for teachers and teacher educators;

Training of personnel in 40 schools in action research to facilitate school-based professional development activities;

An incentive programme for teachers involving recognition of industrious teachers;

The continuation of the Bachelor of Education Programme for vice-principals and senior teachers. Already, approximately 90 teachers per year are trained in this two-year programme.

School-Based Management:

The school-based management programme under the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP) institutional strengthening component will come to fruition over the next year. Policy guidelines and criteria for accepting and evaluating school-based activities will be developed. In addition, training programmes targeting school supervisors, principals and teachers in the area of planning, programming and implementation of school-based projects will be developed and implemented.

These measures will be supported through the provision of additional staff. In this regard, the posts of heads of departments and deans at the 133 secondary schools—and that is all the secondary schools in this country—will be filled.

During this period, local school boards will continue to be appointed and a training programme for school board members will be undertaken. The creation of local school boards is an essential part of this Ministry's efforts to ensure accountability at all levels of the system. To date nine local school boards have been installed. We will continue this process.

The Provision of Student Support Services:

In order to ensure that students are able to benefit from the increased educational opportunities such as universal secondary education, social interventions are necessary. The Ministry of Education will continue to provide and expand student support services in the following areas:

The provision of school meals, transportation and textbooks. Of note is the introduction of the textbook rental scheme.

The provision of school security;

Infrastructure works (such as guard booth);

School intervention strategies.

Provision of School Meals, Transportation and Textbooks:

The Ministry of Education will continue the expanded breakfast programme providing 25,000 breakfasts to our nation's children on a daily basis. However, resources permitting, our goal is to provide full-scale breakfast programme for all students in all schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The school lunch programme will also be continued. However, it is important to note that it is the intention of the Ministry to reform the entire School Nutrition Programme through a cafeteria system that would provide meals for all our children. The new company responsible for school nutrition has been mandated to pursue this target.

The school transportation service in rural and other areas where transportation access is difficult will be expanded through maxi-taxi and bus services.

There will be free visual and aural testing for students at the primary level. Where necessary, hearing aids and spectacles will be provided. Both the Ministries of Health and Education and Social Services will work on this initiative.

Secondary school students will be facilitated through a textbook rental programme started this year.

Provision of School Security and Infrastructure Works: Mr. Vice-President, we must provide a safe and secure learning environment for our students. In this regard, security services will be provided at the 82 primary schools which comprise the fifth phase of schools designated "high risk". In addition, the number of hours of the security service at 25 schools will be increased from 16 to 24 hours.

Continuation of supporting infrastructure works at the 57 schools in Phase IV, as well as at the 82 schools referred to earlier, will be carried out.

At the secondary level, infrastructure works to support security personnel at the 10 secondary schools designated "high risk" will also be carried out.

A major focus of the Ministry of Education is the reduction of violence and indiscipline in schools and the creation of a culture of peace. In this regard, provision will continue to be made for the effective component of the school intervention strategies and these will include the expansion of guidance and counselling services facilitated through the full operationalization of a regional

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. H. MANNING]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

diagnostic/prescriptive service and the establishment of an in-school and out-of-school suspension programme.

The continuation of the following programmes will also take place:

Changing the culture of the classroom;

Mock trials, which would now be decentralized and taken from school to school;

School and classroom enhancement programmes;

The establishment and dissemination of a national code of conduct for schools;

Establishment of student representative councils in all secondary schools;

Introduction of homework and after-school centres;

“Together We Light The Way” intervention programme and expansion of that programme;

Training of educators in conflict resolution in schools;

Expansion of programmes in self-esteem, mentoring and conflict resolution;

Behavioural modification intervention in selected schools.

In order to prepare the nation's citizens for the challenges of living in a global village, those responsible for education must themselves be fully equipped to function in this millennium. With this in mind, the Ministry of Education intends to initiate and/or continue several professional/staff programmes over the next year for personnel within the Ministry, as well as in the schools.

The first programme involves the provision of in-service training to teachers in all subject areas at all levels of the education system. This will be facilitated by the establishment of a teacher development institute, revision of teaching methodologies and development of training programmes for targeted teachers.

The second programme of training relates to the upgrading of the skills of managers and administrators through the provision of tertiary level courses at the University of the West Indies and through intense in-service training.

Mr. Vice-President, over the coming year, the Ministry of Education will continue to pursue opportunities for financial and technical co-assistance and intellectual co-operation afforded it by local, regional and international agencies. The Ministry of Education will seek to take advantage of any technical co-

operation opportunities, which will provide support for the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan 2002—2006.

I have sought, in my contribution to this debate, to indicate the Ministry's response to the challenge of Vision 2020: People...Our Priority. I am confident that through collaboration and with the full co-operation and total commitment of all those who are involved in the business of education, which is everybody's business, we can make that vision a reality.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Minister of Education on her maiden speech. I also extend congratulations to Sen. Bro. Noble Khan, who made his contribution earlier.

Sen. Arnim Smith: Mr. Vice-President, I, too, congratulate you on your position as Vice-President of this honourable Senate. This is also my maiden speech and I would have preferred to start on a different note, but I must say that I am disappointed in the Attorney General for her remarks to Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan this morning about being a freedom fighter, going to the hills, her sister getting killed and so forth.

That happened 32 years ago to a girl, who was 17 years at that time. She left these shores, studied, got her doctorate and came back to this country to make a positive contribution through the democratic process of politics in this country and she is still being condemned.

The people on the other side are talking about prison reform and rehabilitation and about no one being left behind, but it clearly shows that those inmates that they want to reform and rehabilitate will never be forgiven. We must forgive people. We cannot hold a grudge against someone for 32 years, when that person has shown that he or she is now prepared to be a part of the democratic process. [*Desk thumping*]

That action of Dr. Kernahan was during the 1970s when the whole country was involved in the Black Power Movement; not only this country, but also the Caribbean. People were rising up against governments and, whether it was right or wrong, it was the trend. Many young people—she was 17 years—got involved. I think that somebody like the hon. Attorney General should have done better than that.

Nonetheless, I move on to my specific contribution, which is in the field of social services and social development. PNM's budget for social development,

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. SMITH]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

which speaks about transformation development centres, Youth Training Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP), training on the job, hampers and all these things, has clearly missed the boat. They do not understand the social problem in this country. They are speaking about hampers being raised from \$150 to \$200 and from three months to six months. They are giving people a \$200 hamper for six months, but they have to live for a year. That is \$3.25 a day, which cannot even buy sliced bread—and that is for a family.

The transformation centre is a different name for a soup kitchen and handouts. I know they do not like to hear that. That will do no good to the citizens of this country. What is needed, if we are talking about social development, is giving back the minds of the people who have lost their minds.

One of the worst crimes that any government can commit against people of a country is to make them cowards not to try to develop themselves. That was the policy of the PNM in the 1960s, the 1970s, and still is. They make people believe that they cannot get out of the situation they are in—that it is best for them. If they try to come out of that, they would fail and end up in a worse situation, so that you know what you have, you do not know what you will get, and half a loaf is better than none. This is what they instill in people's minds, particularly the underprivileged and people in the depressed areas. They have the people waiting for a golden egg to drop in their laps some day and that egg never drops.

What happened was that the generation of the 1950s and 1960s grew up in the same house, depending on the same handouts, afraid to take chances. The children became adults, had children in the same house, so there are now 8, 10, and 12 people living in the house, and the grandchildren are between the ages of 18 and 25. That is the generation that is running rampant, terrorizing this country with guns in their hands because they grew up seeing their parents and grandparents being fooled, sitting, waiting and suffering quietly and they are not prepared to suffer. That is the fruit of the seeds the PNM planted that we are reaping today.

If he wants to talk about social development, let us tackle it that way. Let us give the people back their minds. Let us go into those communities and deal with the people in a very serious way. I am not saying that the plans for social development in the budget are not good, but the people cannot absorb those plans in the state of mind they are in, so the timing is wrong. They must deal with the people's minds first.

People are turning “junkies” every day out of frustration. They are becoming vagrants on the streets and those who are not prepared to lose their minds as yet, but they are hopeless, take up the gun. I want to draw some examples.

I was born “behind the bridge”, and grew up in John John, one of the most deprived areas. In 1956, I was a boy when Dr. Williams came back to Trinidad and Port of Spain South, which included John John was his constituency. As a boy, I heard them say that this “Messiah” came to save the country; he was the sixth brightest man in the world and so forth. He was coming to John John, so I went to see him. He was walking like Moses—lines of people behind him.

When he watched the condition the people lived in, he told them that his study room in England was bigger than where they lived and where they lived was not suited for cockroaches and rats. PNM came into power, he became the Prime Minister and that became his constituency, but he never used to come back. He never used to campaign in that constituency. He had people campaigning for him and winning the seat very easily.

The year 1976 was the year of the ULF. It was after the “No Vote” campaign in 1971. Young people's minds started to change and there was an area in St. Joseph Road, the “plannings” facing the Riverside Plaza, where the young people got involved with the ULF. They began supporting the ULF and Dr. Williams found out through his people on the ground and he decided to have a meeting there during his campaign.

While addressing the people, a guy with whom I grew up, who is now deceased—his name was Errol François—turned to him from the crowd and said: “In 1956, you come here and told us where we were living was not suited for cockroaches and rats. This is 1976—twenty years after you come back and we are living under the same condition.” Dr. Williams’ response was: “Take that to your newspaper friends.” That was the arrogance of the PNM then and it is the arrogance of the PNM now. They refuse to understand the people.

The worse crime any government could commit in any part of the world is to build houses on the Beetham for people to live. That Beetham was the dump. Where the people are crossing the road to go in the dump now, the dump was there. I can tell you. I grew up there. I used to go there and hustle like those people are doing now—pelt the corbeaux to eat before the corbeaux. When the Yankees were on the base here and threw away cheese, sausage and foodstuff and the corbeaux flying to eat, we would pelt the corbeaux and get it before them, “buss” the coconut to eat out the jelly. That is the life those people are living. I used to do that. I know that.

I used to scrape a hog in the abattoir with a knife—take off every grain of hair for 25 cents. That is what these people are condemned to. When they build houses

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. SMITH]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

there for people to live, they have condemned them to death. Survival is all they know until they die.

They cannot apply for a job and say, “Beetham Gardens”. They would not get it. The prestige school is out, so they condemn them to cross the highway and go to the dump to hustle. They are so wicked, they have not even put a walkover, so they have to “bob and weave” between cars to get “lick down” and lose their lives. They go with their children—holding their hands and crossing. We see it. [Interruption] There is no walkover. [Interruption] After six years? We are talking about after 46 years.

Mr. Vice-President, I am making my maiden speech and I beg your protection, please.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is the practice of this Senate that Senators making their maiden speech should be permitted to do so uninterrupted.

Sen. A. Smith: They are condemned to death. I will tell you an experience I had. I was going west on that Beetham Highway, a couple years ago, and a gentleman was traveling east. It was about 5.00 o'clock in the evening and he ran off the road into a lamp pole, so there were brakes and a “bam”. As that car crashed, the people in those houses ran out like vultures to the car. The man was behind the wheel bleeding while they were ripping off watch, chain; pushing their hands in his pocket and ripping off his cassette. Do you know why? Because they are condemned to death and they do not care who dies. This is the only part of the country where you will find that.

Senators know well that if they get a flat there, they must ride on their rims until they reach somewhere safe. If they are in a traffic jam there, they should turn up their glass and press the buttons. Trucks carrying goods: they do not care. While people are watching, they will take the goods off. That is what we create.

Do you know this Government’s response to that? At 2.00 o'clock on a Saturday morning, they would send in 10 bus loads of police—300 policemen—cordon off the area and search every household—a set of wanted criminals there.

I am not saying what the people are doing is right, but that response is wrong. What they did was build nests for crime so that when a fellow lives in Point Fortin, Mayaro, or Sangre Grande and he commits one petty crime there and the police wants him, he leaves and comes to the Beetham to hide. What is needed is that this Government, if they are serious about social development, no amount of money should be too much for them to spend on these people because, in spite of that, they are loyal to them.

Last year, I was watching Morning Edition and their representative, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant was on the programme. When they asked what his Government had done for those people, do you know what he identified? He said they built houses on the dump for them—those were old shacks before—and they gave it a good name, Beetham Gardens. That heartless “imps”! That is why I can see his political leader’s reason for saying he is not fit for his Cabinet. That man identified that as an achievement—that heartless man.

What is needed is to flatten every house there, put warehouses and industries and get a piece of land and build houses for these people; not housing for all and these people are left out, because they are not house-padding with them. So, they are going in areas where they can house-pad and the people who really want a life they are not giving them. Do not tell me they do not want to move. A leader must lead the people out of bondage. Get them out and develop there so that citizens here could drive there safely, not in fear of their car breaking down. That is what is needed, if we are talking about social development.

I turn to Laventille and John John. I am calling these areas because these areas are the strongest supporters of this present regime. They have supported this regime for 46 years. In 1986, when the country swung 33-3, they won the two seats. What brought back the PNM, was when Morris Marshal started to fight back, not Patrick Manning, with the Laventille seats. That is what brought them back today, yet there is a budget of \$20 billion and they have not catered for them. I am saying that \$2 million out of that \$20 billion is not too much to give to those people.

In the ghettos, they try to improve their condition. They do a little expansion here and there. Some people build a little concrete house, but to get to the house are tracks and alleys. When rain falls, they slip and fall. People who have a little injury cannot come out. It is a haven for crime: men are in the alley selling drugs, where they can hide their guns and drugs from the police. Get into there. Buy the houses from the people, flatten them, put proper infrastructure—roads, light, water, sewer. In this age, those people are still using outhouses, and bathing at standpipes.

Whenever we talk about building houses there, we talk about “planning”. I am using the word my good friend used. I know the “planning” very well. The Nelson and Duncan Streets “Plannings” that he talked about, in 1964, I opened a steelband called Blue Diamonds on Nelson Street. In 1979, I opened a steelband named Jewel 22 on Duncan Street. I know the “planning”. I am a “planning” man. I can tell you about the “planning”.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. SMITH]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

He boasted about building “plannings”, and the refurbishing and painting of them. The rooms in the “planning” is a small cell like the jail. They are teaching them to make jail before they go in. It is a sweatbox, so 7.00 o'clock in the evening, when children reach the age of 13 and 14 years, they no longer stay inside; it is too small, plenty of them in the house, so they come outside. Where they come out in front their houses to lime, it is the block; the police make a raid, if they do not run, they get locked up.

So, one year after, if it is a girl, she gets pregnant; if it is a boy, he joins a gang or becomes a junkie. This is what we provide for them. No amount of training they would take in. That is for the few, not the many. If we want to deal with the many, we must deal with this social problem in a serious way. Go into John John. Go into Laventille, develop the communities; give them proper housing, not like what they were given in Maloney. Give them like Malabar, lower Barataria, Diamond Vale. Bring them back. [*Interruption*] We are talking about soft loans, not self-help. Any time they are dealing with the poor, they say self-help. They have to help themselves. The Prime Minister said like the Rock City model. In that model the people put up money, and they put up money. As they tell you about self-help, it is to have a cake sale, barbecue, raffle, bingo for 5 years and you now raise \$5,000. We are not talking about self-help, we are talking about low-cost housing. So that these people, when they bring them back, with a soft loan and a mortgage, they can build their walls, their lawns, “mind” their pets and their children will have a mind that society wants them. They will then be able to absorb all these fancy programmes and get better jobs.

Sen. Yuille-Williams: Just one correction in terms of Rock City, I will probably talk about it later, but it probably cost us \$1.5 million to work at Rock City. We really did not have to put it. Thank you very much.

Sen. A. Smith: I saw the movie, *Knock on Any Door*, with Humphrey Bogart but these people cannot knock on any door. They must provide a system where they can knock on any door. In the murder trial of Mickey Rooney, Humphrey Bogart pointed to the jurors and said, “You and you, society is as guilty as Mickey Rooney”; and they are as guilty as Mickey Rooney. Do you know what happened? Mickey Rooney adopted the styling, when society closed the door on him, of “live fast, die young, make a pretty corpse”.

That is the generation we are dealing with today. We must open the door for them. It is a missing generation we have to find and if we do not find them, they will find us in our private functions, in our cars, in our business places, in our homes; wherever we go they are going to find us. So stop this “mamaguy” which

you gave their parents in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and want to give them now and tell them about transformation centre, YTEPP and soup kitchen. They do not want that. They want to wear brands. As you give them those petty things, they take up the gun and go down the road. We have to get the gun out of their hands. We have to find them by offering them a decent standard of living. Do not let them live like rats and cockroaches according to Dr. Williams. Sadly, he died and left them the same way and they are going down the road to leave them the same way again.

It is already frightening for us to live in this society and it could only get worse if we take that social approach we are talking about. I am not saying it is not good, but fix this first, then you can offer them training on the job, YTEPP and all that you have to offer them and we would get a better society. We have to deal with their minds and stop fooling ourselves and talking about six years the highway was not built and those kinds of things. That is arrogance. We have to stop that arrogance. We have to see it in the real world.

Mr. Vice-President, I came out, thanks to the steelband movement. I still have friends I used to hustle with on the dump. Their life may have improved, but not much. I go into those areas and help them. There are men I used to work the dump with who were hanged or who police killed. Some of them still cannot stop making jail. Some of them have to run away. That is the reality of it.

I know what I am talking about because the first steelband I was involved in as a steelbandsman, over 40 years ago, in John John, was Carib Tokyo Steelband. Although I do not live there, I am the manager of that band. I go there two or three nights a week. I am on the ground with the people. I know what I am saying.

Clifton Street in Port of Spain South, I constructed a boxing gym there for the underprivileged out of my pocket—plenty money. People go there free. I take no money from anybody. This year one of the young guys off that block went to Carifta Games and won the title, Novice Fighter, at the games. Another one represented Trinidad and Tobago at the recent Commonwealth Games. He lost in the first round, but this is what you do to get to these people, to try to pull them out; not mamaguy them and say six years and you did not build the walkover. That is arrogance.

I recommend that the representative for Laventille East/Morvant, Laventille West and Port of Spain South be put in the Ministry of Social Development under my goodly lady and let them see about developing their communities.

I thank you.

Mr. Vice-President: Thank you Sen. Smith and compliments on your maiden speech.

Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie: Mr. Vice-President, let me thank you very sincerely for allowing me to make a contribution to this budget debate. I pay tribute to you for your elevation to the position of Vice-President of the Senate and congratulate you on your fine performance so far.

I know, Sir, that with a parliamentary staff as the one we have, you dare not go wrong. They are helpful, knowledgeable, efficient, caring and loving, so let me pay tribute to the parliamentary staff for putting, not only you at ease, but those in this Senate who are very new. Again, I say thanks to the parliamentary staff.

I would like also to pay tribute to the public servants, who I know would have been the people behind the preparation of the budget for the hon. Minister of Finance. They have been hardworking. I know, from my experience in the public service, they would have been working long, unholy hours, so I want to pay special tribute to them this evening. Let me say thank you again.

When I looked at the document as presented by the hon. Minister and I saw, probably in the preparation, a sort of summary at the end, I said, I am sure that women assisted in putting this document together—meticulous, pulling together and very, very good indeed. Let me again say congratulations to them.

I feel very heartened, Mr. Vice-President, by the presence of the public servants at the sessions we have been having. I think, honestly, that they will be the implementers of the provisions we have in the budget. If they are here to hear how people feel and what people think about the budget, I think they have a direction they could follow. I say thanks to those heads of divisions who have been here and for the Ministers for giving them the time off.

Unlike my dear friend—I like to say my “Sugar Plum Cocotte”—Sen. Mark, who lamented the fact that the Minister of Finance was not here to present his budget, I would have been very disturbed if, having someone as efficient and competent as Sen. The Hon. Enill, the hon. Minister of Finance, who is also the Prime Minister, could add more to what we have that is good. Unlike my friend, I am happy that he did not set foot here to present a budget that our good senatorial colleague so very well presented.

Mr. Vice-President, you know for a time I always wondered how we have so many security personnel around us, but when I saw my dear friend, Sen. Arnim Smith, asking for protection from you for meagrely, Sen. D. Montano, I said: Well, yes. Sen. Smith, I want to thank you.

To be a little more serious, I want to start on a very, very bad note when it comes to the budget. A year or two ago, whenever I left this place and walked across to Woodford Square and came back in, I was very, very angry when I looked at the top of this building to see a big yellow tarpaulin. When I heard about the budget debate, I said I would look in the statement to see how much money would have been given for the restoration of this Red House—our home. Believe me, I am so disappointed that I hope when Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith gets up he will tell me that this \$10 million is just to start and that in the next Appropriation Bill or Supplementary Bill, we will hear about more money.

Mr. Vice-President, this place is a disgrace and I think that if I were one of the public servants working here, I would have protested the conditions under which I was working. We have been in this place and we have seen the Senate having to curtail its session because of leaking and flooding in the Hansard office. I beg the Government to tell us that we are going to have more money. We want to know that the repairs will continue, to stop the leaks. I am depending on the hon. Minister to say something about it. [*Interruption*] Thank you very much, Sir. That is what I like to hear.

I am happy whenever we do not have too much detail in the budget. If there is too much detail, it means that the government of the day would have come here with its mind made up on the methodology. So, all the little suggestions from Sen. Smith and Sen. Prof. Deosaran and the other people who have made suggestions, they could not take on board at all because their minds would have been made up on what they would do and how they would do it. I am happy and it is in this vein that I would say that we want to look at the methodology of how some things could be done.

Firstly, we are going to look for the performance percentage. People like to refer to me as “Madam Implementation”. I always say that we have figures and so forth and mid year they come back with something and we are told we could not do this because of that and when we look at the performance percentage—I remember one year it was something like 60 per cent, then it went to 65, budgeting money and putting money in places where we cannot begin to do the project. I am looking for a high implementation percentage.

Let me just look at the fiscal measures very quickly because my colleagues have done so well with very many aspects of the budget. I am on page 9 of the one delivered by the hon. Minister of Finance.

I like what has been said on agriculture. I am suggesting that we be proactive in the division of parcels of state land that we are going to give to people. We announce these measures and when the people are looking forward to it, we begin to say that we have no surveyor, we cannot cut up the land, the deed is taking six months to prepare and, by the time the thing is done, we know what we are going to do, start to cut up the land in plots, get the deeds ready to put in the little fine points, invite applications so that we hit the ground running.

Secondly, I would like to know that, going into agriculture, we would get the same kind of incentives as we are going to get in the tourism sector—loans, interest on loans, incentives for vehicles and all that. At this point, I ask the Government to stop the advantage taken of people whose lands have been used, some acquired, some not formally acquired and yet the people have not been compensated.

I go to page 14 and I said it is very nice about these guesthouses coming out of your homes. We did a survey in Tobago. This was an area people liked and asked for, but I sound a warning to look out for the smart people who are adding on a room for their grandchildren and say it is a room for this and that.

I come to the social sector on page 17. Unlike Sen. Smith, I have a favourite saying, “Let us don’t try to mop the sea”. In other words, let us not try to correct a situation, at this point, and we are still feeding the problems. This is what happens. We try to solve the problem of the present situation, but we are feeding the problem because we are not stopping the rivers from flowing into the sea at the source. Let us try to do that. While you rescue, stop the flow.

I commend the recommendation that I heard from Sen. The Hon. Manning about the pre-school. At that early stage, trained teachers can detect little seeds of deviance in those little children and they can be corrected. You will see the children who do not want to share. You will see the children who are very, very violent; those who do not like to cooperate, and that can be corrected at that stage. So, I compliment the hon. Minister of Education on the emphasis on preschool.

Let me pay tribute to the hon. Minister of Education. Her contribution was excellent. She was very lucid and very soothing. Thank you very much.

We have to cut off the supply because, as Sen. Smith was saying, we will have a cycle. If you trace it in some families, you will find a family of “bad Johns”, a family of illiterate people and it goes from generation to generation. This is where, according to some of our colleagues, we have to involve the community groups who will pick up these trends in some people and try to stop what is happening.

This comes back to Sen. Seetahal's absentee parents and orphaned children because of parents who died from AIDS and we have to practise a system of positive discrimination. I have no qualms of conscience in saying that. We have had children at risk. I know one of the Permanent Secretaries in the Ministry of Education as I was on a little team with her some years ago and we tried to identify children at risk. We positively discriminated for those children. When we had training programmes, we said that first priority was for those children, so that they would benefit from what is offered and try to change their situation. Let us make strong use of our NGOs.

I understand what Sen. Smith was saying, but I am saying that we have to train the people. While training them we have to have them comfortable. It is a situation of earning and learning. This is the problem we have. We would devise so many programmes: whether they are for adolescent mothers, or people with no skills, we will take them and train them. While training they have no money for transport, they have no food, they cannot buy deodorant, they cannot do anything. We have to give them a stipend while we are training them. We have to set up systems where they can leave their children. Why is URP only confined to roads, bridges and drains? We can have URP centres where we pay people who are unemployed but qualified to keep the children while the mothers are training. Do things that will help the mothers to be free. We can have day-care URP. We can have agriculture URP. We had a system where a man was having young people doing garden. He said, "But the boys and dem wouldn't so and so". I said, "What boys and dem? How dey getting down to the place to do the gardening? You are not giving them the stipend and it takes six weeks before they could sell a head of lettuce." While they are planting and so on, you have to upkeep them financially, otherwise they will have no money; they will not wet the plants and they will see nothing.

6.15 p.m.

Apart from that, after you have trained them, you cannot wean them too early. Some of us, as soon as "de six months finish" and the young people are finished training, we let them go. They cannot do anything. You have to maintain them for a length of time until they can stand on their feet. That is not wasting money and that is not "handout". That is being realistic about a situation. I want to advise—I am using the wrong word again. I suggest that we look at this type of methodology.

I say again, Mr. Vice-President, I know Sen. Baksh did something with women in URP and they trained and learned to do all sorts of things and after that,

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. DR. MC KENZIE]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

that was it. Let me just give you an example. If you take some young ladies, as Sen. Smith is saying, from the Beetham to a community centre and train them to make sweets or whatever have you, and they have graduated so that they could make sweets, “Dey have any place home to make sweets? They doh even have a stove. They doh have running water.” They could do it well because “you had them in a centre learning.”

“Why you doh make the centre a production centre?” Make the centre a production centre so every day they come to work in their centre, they put their baby in the day care next door where you have a person paid under the URP to see about their children and they are producing something. You have to make them into production and sales centres and a sort of multi-purpose centre. Some people I know will carry their thing and say—train them to put in zips. “You know how many of all yuh have skirt and pants home with no zip? The zip spoil!” If you teach them to do little things like that—some of them are braiding hair; some of them are “pressing clothes”. Man, we have to get serious!

I am on page 20 and I like the situation about the hearing aids, et cetera, and I know that at times we do not have the medical personnel in the public sector to do it. I say use the private doctors if the need arises. I talked about the marketable skills. Try to teach the people the skills that would enable them to earn. “Nobody en buying no flowers from them. Dey going and buy artificial flowers. If you teaching them that, that must be just for development.” That must be just for their aesthetics.

I like page 22, the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme. I think you can extend it to nursery care to teach them not only to care for old people but also to keep children. Some of them would be glad to do that.

I talked about the agriculture. I think they need to be given a stipend while they do that and I also say that you must continue to monitor them. “Just as how you pay a URP supervisor to watch people cutlass road and they going home 10 o’clock, do this.” Pay the people. That is not wasting money.

I come to page 23 and I say I agree totally with the Minister of Education—homework centres in every community. There are children who do not have the facility, there are children who do not have the supervision and there are children who are on their own. If you provide something for them, they get a little sweet bread and a slice of cake from the village council or the women’s group or the youth group or the church group, they are certainly going to be happy to go there and do their homework supervised. The same young people who have three

subjects and so on and who are there with no employment, this is a form that you can use. Let the village councils and community groups do this.

Page 25. “Together we light the way”, I can talk about it. My PTA has taken it on board and we see the results. It is marvellous. It is fantastic. The music in schools, this has been ongoing. We have had this under the last administration and I know that former Member of Parliament, Dr. Morgan Job, started this in the schools and in certain places in Tobago. I see where the present administration has put the money again in the budget to do it. I am heartened and I tell the hon. Minister of Education that this caused a number of our students to take part in the music festival in these areas that they had never been doing before, so it shows that this is an area that you should really continue.

I am on page 26, dollar for dollar. I have read that dollar for dollar will continue until an alternative plan is taken.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Mr. Vice-President, I could listen to Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie for another 15 hours but I will only ask that, in accordance with Standing Order 9 subsection (8), that the Senate continue to sit until 8.00 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL (BUDGET)

[SECOND DAY]

Sen. Dr. E. Mc Kenzie: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. I want to make a case for Tobago students coming to Trinidad at institutions that we do not provide the service for them in Tobago. In the last budget debate when I was here, I really made a request of the Hon. Minister of Finance then that special consideration be given to the Tobago students in the area of paying for accommodation. They come to Trinidad, they have to spend, they are away from home, already disadvantaged—because “we doh be hungry home, yuh know. Once you home there is something to eat.” When you come to Trinidad you have to find accommodation and pay expensive accommodation away from home. I think dollar for dollar should be for Trinidad, dollar for dollar-fifty should be for us. So look at it, Mr. Junior Minister of Finance, and see what could be done.

University of Science and Technology, I know that my colleague, Prof. Ramchand, will deal with that.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. DR. MC KENZIE]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

I am on page 27 and we are looking at health care, et cetera, and I am sure that Sen. Dr. David Quamina will deal more with that but I want to talk about it from the school health perspective. I say, let us employ school health educators for primary and secondary schools. Even if we have two for Tobago—one for primary schools, one for secondary schools—they could go around and educate our children so that we start a preventative course of health. I think that if we do this—because children are people who could really, really pressure parents. You just have to remember the cholera thing that we had, how the children went home and the parents could not even walk and swing their arms without washing them. The children were on the ball. So I suggest that we have school health educators specifically assigned to schools so that they will go into schools and teach the children how to eat well, how to do this, how to exercise, that type of thing, rather than we just leave them like that.

I am on page 28. Thanks again to the Hon. Minister of Finance for the VAT-free medication and free prostate and cataract treatment, et cetera. I want to put in another plug for non-VAT, not only on medication but also on some of the things that our senior citizens use when they get to a certain age and to a certain stage of health and I am talking from my own experience. When I come to Trinidad there is a little old lady who asks me to buy certain things for her. I go to A.A. Laquis and buy the things and they have VAT charge on them and I study, “She is a pensioner. She is in a wheelchair” and I argue with them about the VAT and I said probably this is the place. I am talking about things like urinary bags. They have to pay VAT on these items and I am asking the ladies on our side to put in a plug.

Dialysis machines and so on, excellent—train the people. Set up the facilities. You know, Mr. Vice-President, it is now that we are ready to do it and sometimes we start to advertise two, three or four years after and then we do not have the people in place. Please let us do that.

I like Government’s policies on housing. There are different forms that the thing could take—a loan, a what have you—and with some of these small loans, people may feel that they cannot do anything with them, but with the kind of “len’ han’” where “you casting de floor”, people will come and help you; you “raising de roof”, people will come and help you—let us try to encourage that. I talked about breaking the cycle in the family or the community of generations using the same thing.

I was pleased to hear the Hon. Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation talk about the use of technology, so I say fine. For the prisoners in their rehabilitation, train them, rehabilitate them and encourage businesses to give

them jobs by giving them an incentive. If you hire so many ex-prisoners, you get something so that you will encourage them to employ them as long as they are trained.

Mr. Vice-President, when I looked at the intention to bring rules about corruption, I went to a Tobago saying and I said that is all I would say and leave it there. "Robber pocket nuh ha no bottom." Thank you very much for that.

I go now to page 34 and I say the incentives for arts, culture and entertainment are very good, but I want to make a plug. Mr. Vice-President, you have been in this area of life all your life and I am sure you will be able to identify with what I am going to say. It is all well and good to give an incentive for people who sponsor but I want to encourage the Government to encourage the employers, whether private or government, to give time off with pay to the people who participate to train and to play, whether it is playing football or so, because many times the young people "doh" want to go to train because the boss will dock their pay. They "doh" want to go to train because they "wouldn" get the time off, and the money is important.

So set up some sort of incentive where, probably if they allow the people, they would be reimbursed or something, some sort of incentive, or this cost for time off, the opportunity cost that the business will suffer, make it probably a tax deduction. That is just a suggestion. I am sure that your people would have something better to say.

Yes, I say computerize the public service; too much paperwork and old files; archaic rules, channels of communication and because of this, according to my mother, you have a set of "come-round go-round".

Mr. Vice-President, I continue. I am on page 40 talking about Tobago and the flawed Act 40 of 1996. I hope that for the next Tobago House of Assembly elections a new Act would be in force. In other words, I expect that by that time we would be probably operating with a new Constitution. From the budget, I am happy to see that this Government has the confidence in our people in the Assembly to give them the privilege and the opportunity to borrow. [*Desk thumping*] This is something for which I know the Assembly has been clamouring for a number of years and I am happy that this year the Assembly has been given the power to borrow. I make a plea that between now and the time when we will have a new Tobago House of Assembly Act, that the Assembly be given the power to collect business taxes for businesses operating in Tobago, especially our banks and our insurance companies.

Mr. Vice-President, I am so happy about the airport. You know, when I land in Tobago and British Airways and the next flight from abroad are on the ground, I “cyar” pass through the terminal building. “They making me pass through a gate like a jail. Dey open a big gate and say ‘You all have to pass there because we cyar mix up.’ Well, the last time I say, ‘If all yuh only doh let us pass through there, all yuh ha to lock me up.’ We were able to pass through. Please, please, please.

Mr. Vice-President, I see where we are going to purchase a ferry for the inter-island sea route. I want to suggest again that the Government consult with the people who use the ferry service. Consult with the vendors and so on who use the boat every week, so many times per week, so that you will know what to buy. I remember, Mr. Vice-President, and you would too—I know you cannot agree with me but you would remember—when some brave person from Trinidad ran a fast boat service between Trinidad and Tobago, the Condor. Our people who knew the waters between Trinidad and Tobago forecast, “Eastlyn, if dah boat sail after six months, is God make it.” In less than six months, “de service stop”. I “doh” know what became of this boat and the service. It is no more. I would suggest to the Government, consult with the people and so on before you take this on.

There are a few small points that I want to make, Mr. Vice-President. I have heard the Hon. Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation talk about the white-collar crime and so on, what could happen. I support what he has said on violent crimes and the policies to counteract because of the advanced technological strength of the bandits. They are using high-class technology, so look at it. I was glad when I heard him talk about the computerized Emergency 911 system that would link-up. I think this is a step in the right direction. I would suggest, Mr. Vice-President, that the Government think of efforts by businessmen to minimize crime. Probably they could look at a tax break or something for when they introduce things in the business like video cameras and things like that and see what they could do.

When I look at white-collar crime, Mr. Vice-President, I think at times some people are intent on being corrupt, but I think there are people who do not know the rules and financial regulations of the public service and that happens when we put people who have operated in the private sector for a long time and who know absolutely nothing about the financial rules and regulations that operate in the public sector and we throw them there and I think we do not sufficiently train them. They do not know the financial rules and regulations and I think this is something that you ought to look at.

As was mentioned earlier, I think that you need to overhaul the tenders board situation in little institutions. I am not talking about the Central Tenders Board because my understanding is that some of these state agencies have their own tenders board and at times their actions nullify the actions of the Central Tenders Board or they disregard them totally. I say that we should look at that.

Mr. Vice-President, I do not know if I do not understand well but I want to understand. Does Cabinet have the power to reduce the airfare? I am not sure you have any legal power to do that. “Ent dey have to go to some airport licensing somebody to ask for permission to reduce the airfare?” Even if you are going to subsidize the airfare, this is something that you have to work out—at what cost to whom, who gets it and so on. So I need some clarification on that. Who gave the Minister of Finance power to cut airfare? I do not know. Probably. You should know. So, I am asking that we look at that.

Mr. Vice-President, finally I want to wind-up. I think that Tobago’s portion of the budget has been fair. I say this not only because of the amount of money that has been given but also because of the expenses of ministries operating in Tobago that they have earmarked to be spent in Tobago. I think that, when you add these allocations up, Tobago would have gotten a substantial part, but more so, I am happy because of the privileges that would have been given to the THA to borrow on its own within the normal parameters. I think so and I think that the door has not been closed for more money because I see that, just last year, Tobago’s allocation was increased by something like \$80 million or \$90 million and I am sure that we are going to do better than that.

I am looking forward to the reform of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago as a matter of urgency. I am looking towards the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago within the unitary state to be sorted out when a new Act is introduced.

So, Mr. Vice-President, I think I have said what I intended to say. I again congratulate the Government on its budget. I specifically congratulate the Hon. Minister of Education and the Community Development and Social Welfare Division. I warn them. The eyes of the public will be on you because we think that to bring this country to the stage of development that is envisaged, “Vision 2020: People, Our Priority”, if we do not sort out our educational problems and our social problems through a really progressive and well-thought-out method, we are not going to succeed. Crime will continue to increase and all other social ills will go unchecked.

So I say, Mr. Vice-President, we are all in this together. I want the Government to understand that when we come to this stage and to this place, we

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. DR. MC KENZIE]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

view our contribution, especially from the Independent Benches—we not fighting elections, we “doh belong to no party. You doh have to be afraid of us.” When we give an idea or a suggestion, it is because we are genuinely interested in the development of this country. [*Desk thumping*] We have to live here. So even if we criticize you, it is not to criticize you because we do not like you or we “doh” like the Government or we want to bring down the Government, it is because we realize that we are as responsible as everybody else for the development of this country and we want you to trust us. We want you to feel free to talk with us and to consult with us and I am sure that together we can make this country the type of country in which all of us would feel comfortable to live. I am sure that we would feel happy to be part of the process of development in whatever small measure that we are asked to serve.

So, Mr. Vice-President, I say to our colleagues—all of us—this has nothing to do with PNM and UNC. I could not even care less about who is on whose side or who is on the other side. We care about the people of this beloved country and we want to see things work so that all of us will feel safe in this country and would feel that our brothers and sisters are progressing to such a stage that there is contentment and happiness and joy as we tread this land. So I say to you, have no fear of us. We are part of the solution. We are happy to be in this place where the eyes of the public are on us and they are going to look forward to the entire Parliament, the House of Representatives and the Senate, assisting in solving the problems of this nation and driving the process of development forward.

Mr. Vice-President, I say to you and to all the people who have given me ideas for my contribution—because I was able to consult with a few people to get their ideas as to what they are thinking. Last year I was not able to do that and “Tantan” wrote me. This year I was able to do this so “Tantan” was able to tell me and that is why I am able to say it openly. So thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President, and I say, let us forge the world together for the development of our children, of our nation, of ourselves. God bless. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Mr. Vice-President, I, too, would wish to extend my congratulations to you and certainly to the other Members of this Senate on your various appointments to and in this honourable Senate. It is my hope, Mr. Vice-President, that, as we proceed with the business of this Senate, we all strive to show mutual respect for each other and so conduct our affairs that we can hold onto the esteem that we hope the people we attempt to serve would have for the offices we hold.

For myself, I consider it an honour to be afforded the opportunity to serve my country in the capacity of Senator and as the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment. In these positions, I intend to work closely with all stakeholders because I see myself as having a constituency called Trinidad and Tobago, while not releasing my residence in Tobago. I want to be available, Mr. Vice-President, to serve all the people and certainly through all the various organizations which the people have set up and in which they paid the various people and certainly those who are not paid. I take the advice and warning of the senior lady of this Senate, Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie.

Mr. Vice-President, I compliment the Minister in the Ministry of Finance on the introduction of the budget in this Senate. It is my view, and we have heard the view of a number of people, that this is indeed an excellent budget. The budget is underpinned by a vision, which is now familiar to all of us, making Trinidad and Tobago a developed country by the year 2020, making people our priority. I believe that this budget is a tangible manifestation of this administration's commitment to fostering continuous improvements in the quality of life of all our citizens. This instrument places on the table the fact that, as a fundamental tenet of governance of this administration, improvements in the quality of life of the people must be the strategic focus of the country's development strategy. I am sure that this noble ideal is one with which all citizens can associate.

Critical in deriving and moving the strategy is the question of consolidating the gains and the achievements made by the last PNM administration ending on October 07, 2002. We have heard allusions to the contrary here today and yesterday but a lot has been achieved over that period, and if we want evidence we would have heard the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation and we have heard the Minister of Education as we have heard the other ministers over the last two days. The concern that comes out is expressed as a concept of what is the implementation ratio, what is the possibility that we could implement this budget. I think the evidence suggests that this Government will work for the people and will implement the measures in this budget even if it is to the chagrin of some people who may not wish us success. I believe that when I have listened to them carefully, underlying the little barbs is a fundamental view that success will mark the five years of this Government, which starts with the implementation of this one-year programme.

It is therefore easy to join the chorus of support which has increasingly been heard throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago for this budget. This support has come from all segments of our society. It has transcended

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. R. DUMAS]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

political, ethnic, religious, class and other supposedly divisive barriers that could normally serve to divide us as a people and as a nation. Of course we have heard special pleadings. As the nation goes about its business, one would expect to hear people plead their various cases. It is therefore understandable that from the other side—by this I mean directly the Opposition—we could hear some dissonant ideological explosions, because I am sitting here and trying to understand the pleadings.

How can we on one hand have a situation where people are arguing that the drive to create jobs is dismissible by suggesting 30,000 jobs, 50,000 jobs, dismissible; but then we can have a situation where an individual representing, sometimes it is 29,000 jobs, sometimes it is 300,000 jobs—I do not want to impute improper motives, but we could have a situation which, if we look at it in the broadest possible way and take it in a colloquial sense, we can see a party which is paying its rent to a union introducing into the Senate and manipulating in the Senate to make sure that those special pleadings are heard. Then we can turn around and hear that there are other special pleadings being made that do not seem to jell with the pleadings that are coming from that individual from a more permanent member of the team.

When that member suggests that you want to remove people from Beetham Estate, and you want to make sure that there is room for development and comfortable housing and proper utilities, et cetera, and I attempt to reconcile that with another special pleading from that side which suggests that not one piece of the land that is held by Caroni (1975) Limited should be made available for housing purposes, where the people may very well come from the same estate that we want to destroy and to redistribute the people across the country, how can we reconcile that in our ideology? No wonder we had a problem in trying to run the country.

Mr. Vice-President, the response of the population to the budget and the pleasure that is walking through the country can be explained in terms of two factors. First, there is a general recognition by the national community that the budget is a caring instrument of governance; one which should provide for a degree of social justice and one which promotes greater social cohesion among the different elements that make up the society and it has, as a fundamental drive, to fix and attempt to fix the most debilitating thing that faces the nation, the extent to which we have the poor with us.

I heard the senior Senator disparage the figures given by the Prime Minister when he suggested that just about 40 per cent of our population faces the reality

of poverty. Then he alluded to the fact that a document prepared under the tenure of the last administration, I mean the administration before the immediate last, suggested that poverty in Trinidad and Tobago could be put at 21 per cent. Mr. Vice-President, the smudging and fudging of public data is something with which all good students are familiar. We are suggesting that while there is growth in the economy, while there is prosperity in Trinidad and Tobago, this growth and prosperity are occurring simultaneously and in the face of growing and widening and deepening poverty.

This poverty is real. When people are denied access to food, they are poor. When people have problems in accessing education, they are poor. When people have problems with accessing public utilities, they are poor. When people have problems accessing the flow of goods and services from our natural environment, they are poor. When people have problems with accessing justice, they are poor. When people have problems being denied access to housing, they are poor. That would describe the condition of more than 40 per cent of our population. When we come, therefore, and put measures to deal with our perception of poverty and our definition of poverty, we are dealing with real problems.

Thankfully, Mr. Vice-President, there is widespread confidence in the general population that this Government is fully committed to the implementation of the policies, programmes and projects contained in this budget. Members of this honourable Senate and the population in general know that this administration can and will deliver. When we say that people are our priority, we know that this is not a game. We are using the slogan as the basis of governance. It is the drive of the Government. It is the mandate of each ministry and every minister. It informs the mission and vision of every national agency. It informs the strategy of each national agency and it is the task of every public worker.

It is in this context that when we come to ensure that there is a drive to fulfil the Constitution of this country, to make sure that we educate our people, that we support the indigent, that we provide development support for those who are desirous and working towards this, that people can count on us as we move to those two quotations which the Minister of Education so ably reminded us constitute the introduction to this great document, this great instrument which we bring, some people have the audacity to suggest that we are supporting dependency, and simultaneously from the same Bench and from the same group which those people represent, we are being told that we are not doing enough. It is a contradiction that is not tenable.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. R. DUMAS]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

Luckily, we are given some comfort and we are given some assistance from the Independent Bench as they bring the collective wisdom to bear on the problem and certainly the good will for the people of Trinidad and Tobago to bear on the problems. It is this, Mr. Vice-President, that allows us, allows me, to understand that the role that has been placed on my, I am certain, inadequate shoulders without that help, that we in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment will play a positive role in transforming the 2020 vision of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the People's National Movement, the Hon. Prime Minister and every other minister of the Cabinet into a reality by fostering improvements in the quality of life of all our citizens.

In this regard, it is to be noted that the impact of water, electricity, postal services and the flow of services enjoyed by the population from the environment is virtually all pervasive and exert important influences on the lives of all our citizens. It is a humbling task, Mr. Vice-President. In recognition of what it would have meant to carry this load, I wish to commend my predecessor and colleague, Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph, and the staff of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and all the state agencies now assigned to this ministry within the portfolio to which I have been assigned, for the solid foundation which was laid over the last nine months. I wish to assure that the head start given would not be squandered but that there will be a consolidation of the gains made over those last few months.

It is in light of this, Mr. Vice-President, that I have some serious problems with what I call and have been calling for the last two days the Rip Van Winkle syndrome that seemed to have afflicted the other side. One would almost believe that these people were asleep and have now awoken to find that there is a PNM Government in office and that the policy programmes and the public initiatives that are being set up here were not preceded by six years of a UNC/NAR and a UNC administration. Sen. Wade Mark, Sen. Dr. Kernahan, Caroni, agricultural policy—they were asleep, certainly. Housing? I suggest that only an affliction of the Rip Van Winkle syndrome could explain what has happened.

I want to respond to one of the things which fall under the portfolio of the public utilities. Some allegations were made about WASA and the suggestion was made that this was the form of some avenue. I would like to take the opportunity to ensure that Sen. Martin Joseph continues to carry a clean name. Now, we understand the vituperation against the Senator. It is the job of the enemy to try to kill the generals of the next army and therefore we understand why they would want to attack Sen. Martin Joseph. However, for the information of the Senate, to

make sure the record is set clear, WASA, as every other public utility, is a statutory body. It has a board, there is an executive management and there are managers.

In February 2001 the WASA board—I think that was before Sen. Martin Joseph was Minister Martin Joseph in public utilities—took the decision to sell to the occupiers—February 2001—took the decision to sell to occupiers those quarters. To attempt to clean up the name also of the CEO, Grimes, the CEO was not Grimes. The CEO was another man named Kanhai—16 of them together. So the question of sale of those houses and the arrangements went on. I want to suggest to you also that the final decision was also taken in the face of representation by the WASA senior management association and representation by the PSA as to what should be the features. As a good union officer, Mr. Indarsingh would agree that if the workers give up value they should receive value in return, and the rights of relinquishing the employees' occupier's right to claim personal investment expenses were given up in return for that 20 per cent. The board took that decision and not Martin Joseph, Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment. I hope we can put to rest the attempt to besmirch the goodly Senator's name with that allegation.

Mr. Vice-President, my responsibility, and I hope I have time, is to try to highlight some of the major achievements during the last nine months of that ministry, to share with the national community some of the aims and objectives of the ministry for the current fiscal year, to articulate the strategies by which this ministry will contribute towards the realization of 2020, the perfect vision, and of course, being Tobagonian, to convey some of Tobago's views on this forward looking vision because, unlike some people's argument, some of us walk, are born with and carry the people wherever we go because we are fully a part of the people to which we belong.

In the context of the utilities, Mr. Vice-President, the vision of the Government is that all citizens are provided with adequate, reliable and affordable utility services. These objectives must be carried out in an environment in which there is an explosion of technology, a rise of competition, liberalization and privatization enforced by international organizations, scarce resources and, of course, growing international competitiveness. These are challenges which we as a country must successfully confront, but I am confident that this is what we will do.

As a first step, Mr. Vice-President, the PNM administration, on assumption of office in December 2001, conceptualized the National Social Development Programme. This programme was intended to adjust the problem of underprovision of water and electricity to several areas in the country and the

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. R. DUMAS]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

work was to be done by WASA and T&TEC, extending access to citizens in these two critical utilities. The Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, in collaboration with the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs, and through the agency of the Solid Waste Management Company Limited, are undertaking programme implementation. The execution agencies include WASA, T&TEC and a number of other government-based agencies.

The Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission is one area in the public utilities. Structural problems exist at T&TEC. The last PNM administration appointed an energy subcommittee of the Cabinet to devise strategies to resolve all the outstanding issues pertaining to the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission as its mandate. The committee is expected to submit its report shortly but it is not as if nothing was done in that time. T&TEC continued to provide citizens with adequate, reliable and affordable electricity service and in that way the following major projects were completed during 2002. In the interest of time I will mention two—establishment of a service centre facility at Couva, and continuation of the accelerated pole replacement programme under which 4,827 poles were replaced during that period.

The programme of T&TEC continues and some of the activities that T&TEC is expected to explore and continue over the next period is the establishment of a central warehousing facility at Dow Village, California; construction of a 33-kilowatt substation to introduce a 33-kilowatt distribution system in the down town Port of Spain area, and I could continue. Over the medium-term the operations of T&TEC would be driven by the following strategic goals:

- increasing the capacity of the transmission system in all geographical areas of the country;
- extension of the distribution network to supply an additional 10,000 households annually over the next three years;

If we build the houses we must supply them with electricity.

- introduction of work order and digital mapping systems to reduce customer outage times;
- establishment of renewable energy systems in isolated areas;
- introduction of remote meter reading for larger industrial customers;
- improvement in customer service; and
- mitigation of negative environmental impacts from transmission and distribution operations.

The Electrical Inspectorate is also in the process of undergoing fundamental restructuring. Consideration is being given to a proposal to separate the regulatory function from the inspection function. Under this arrangement, it is proposed that a system be developed for the licensing of inspectors who would operate as private contractors.

WASA, Mr. Vice-President: the records of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment show that when the PNM administration assumed office in December of 2001, only 14 per cent of the population was in receipt of a continuous supply of water, that is, 24 hours a day 7 days a week; an indicator of massive failure on the part of the last administration, an indicator that assured that they lost the election. There was no need for the PNM to steal it. There has, however, been a tremendous improvement in the water supply situation in the country over the last nine months. This situation was due largely as a result of the implementation of the National Social Development Programme to which I have already alluded.

Some of the major accomplishments of WASA during the last nine months are, and there was a request to look at what was the PNM's labour record:

- The resolution of several human resource issues, including withdrawal of a gag order that was won by the UNC Minister of Labour and Co-operatives, preventing WASA workers from carrying out industrial relations activities. I do not know if the goodly labour men on that side remember that happening;
- Re-establishment of planning processes and the development of a planning framework joint Cabinet subcommittee on energy. The committee is expected to report shortly.

During the current fiscal year while we await that report, the major activities to be undertaken by WASA include:

- upgrading of the water distribution system;
- pipeline replacement and extension;
- rehabilitation of wells and upgrading and adoption of 10 private waste water treatment plants;
- there will also be a continuation of the Hardship Relief Programme which is directed at providing relief to old age pensioners and persons receiving social assistance.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. R. DUMAS]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

Over the medium term we expect a shift in the strategic focus of WASA in two important areas. Firstly, increased emphasis will be placed on the wastewater system. In this regard, there will be an intensification of efforts to stem the tide of deterioration that has been occurring in the wastewater sector over several years. These efforts will be coordinated within the framework of a national wastewater policy, which is being developed by the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. Additionally, WASA would embark on a phased implementation of upgrading and adoption of a significant number of private wastewater treatment plants. We cannot continue to allow the seas around our islands to be used as bottomless sinks.

With respect to potable water, increased emphasis will be placed on demand side management strategies as opposed to current emphasis on the supply side. Supply side management involves increased water demand by providing more water. The supply of water is not limitless. Demand side management is based on the premise that water saved is water won. The strategy entails reducing water consumption in specific areas and using the saved water to meet the increased demand. In this regard, special emphasis will be placed on the reduction of physical leakage of water from pipelines which is presently estimated at 44 per cent of the water won—other measures having to do with the way we each personally, commercially and industrially use water.

The proper management of our water resources is integral to efforts to ensure water security for all our citizens. To adequately satisfy the growing demand for water by various users, we must have a draft integrated water resource management policy prepared in a national framework. In keeping with this, this administration's commitment is to fostering dialogue with all key stakeholders to ensure that this draft policy meets the requirements of the nation, including entering into full public consultation on the issue.

Postal services—Mr. Vice-President, the postal sector is being reformed with the assistance of a loan from the World Bank. This reform is aimed at ensuring that this sector is able to play its role and to carry on that role in a sustainable manner by ensuring an adequate structure. The reform process is guided by a Delegated Management Arrangement (DMA) between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Transcend Worldwide Limited. This DMA is intended to serve as the basis for a long-term arrangement, which would underpin and drive the continued development of postal services throughout Trinidad and Tobago. This administration will ensure that that DMA is kept under review and is strategically appropriate.

The Trinidad and Tobago Forest Products Company Limited, Tanteak. Tanteak's operations have been discontinued since July 2001. This was pursuant to a Cabinet decision in April 2001 to transfer the assets of the company to a joint venture company with CL Financial Limited. These arrangements fell through. The PNM administration, in line with our determination to ensure the widest possible participation in the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, and to ensure that the benefits of the development of this economy are equitably shared by all citizens, has taken a decision to sell the company to a consortium of the unions that represent past employees of Tanteak. Senator? I wish to assure the population that the ministry will continue to play an important role in ensuring that the assets of Tanteak are appropriately utilized to the benefit of all stakeholders in this country.

The Regulated Industries Commission, Mr. Vice-President, is an economic regulator with a primary mandate to regulate public utility services provided under monopolistic conditions. That is, the supply and distribution of electricity, the supply and distribution of water, the provision of sewerage and wastewater services and the provision of telecommunication services. The organizations that provide these services must be licensed to operate. Emphasis will be placed on ensuring that the IRC becomes fully operational in the shortest possible time frame. A consultation approach for the IRC is what is predetermined.

The environment, Mr. Vice-President. Sustainable development can only be attained by pursuing a development strategy that meets the interrelated social, economic, technological and environmental requirements. The environmental problems of today can no longer be treated in isolation. They are inextricably linked to social demands, demographic issues, negative values and attitudes to the environment, counterposed against excessive and wasteful consumption patterns which negatively impact on longer term sustainable use of the country's scarce resources.

Mr. Vice-President, you would not be happy to know that Trinidad and Tobago has a score of 40.1 on the environmental sustainable index, or the ESI, and ranks 142nd of 191 countries ranked. This is an instrument that provides a systematic cross-national environmental comparison of the way we treat our environment. It comprises 20 indicators in five categories. By all measures, we are badly off on how we handle our environment. It is against this background that this administration will accord priority for the promotion of greater harmonization between our policies to ensure that environmental concerns are taken properly into account in all decisions involving the allocation of resources.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. R. DUMAS]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

Our approach will be predicated on two important pillars, a preventative rather than a remedial approach. Sustainability of our environment will be at the core of this preventative approach; and secondly, the polluter pays principle. It is not enough that those who pollute pass on the cost to the rest of the society.

In keeping with this approach, the following would be given priority:

- the strengthening of institutional arrangements for the conduct of environmental impact assessments and management of environmental problems;
- intensification of public education and awareness initiatives;
- strengthening of the legal and regulatory framework for environmental management, including lowering the levels of greenhouse gas and other emissions;
- strengthening of the enforcement function and capacity and a wider involvement of the civil society and community leaderships into the mainstream of the management of environmental issues.

7.15 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, increased emphasis will also be placed on the green issues. In this regard, the Government proposes to work in close collaboration with the various elements of civil society: the private sector, NGOs and community-based organizations. To this end, structured co-partnership arrangements will be developed to facilitate the meaningful participation of these organizations. Emphasis will also be placed on capacity building to better position these organizations to realize the full potential. The rich biodiversity of the country is recognized and this is intended to be preserved. The resources that are being continually threatened through their deforestation, industrial and domestic pollution and overharvesting must be preserved.

Mr. Vice-President, in this regard, and within the coming fiscal year, two pieces of legislation, the National Parks and Other Protected Areas Bill and the Conservation of Wildlife Bill will be brought before this honourable Senate which will seek to establish a systematic programme for the conservation and protection of our rich biological resources.

I would just like to acknowledge the advice of Sen. Brother Noble Khan. This programme is in keeping with the provisions of both the Environmental Management Act and the National Environmental Policy and will entail the

establishment of a National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Authority and three modern national parks at Maracas and Matura in Trinidad and Mainridge in Tobago.

Further, quantitative and qualitative mechanisms and systems for measurement and monitoring shall be designed and implemented. The development of this system will empower communities to take responsibility for preserving the country's rich biodiversity as a key feature of the system. There will be a focus on community co-management which will increase the involvement of NGOs and CBOs in the management of our natural resources. At the base of all of this must come community education, and that is a fundamental plank of this programme.

The ministry will monitor the water pollution rules and the water pollution regulations which have been brought before this honourable Senate but for which the time—the Parliament was dissolved before the period—for negative resolution had expired.

In fiscal 2003 the Institute of Marine Affairs will continue investigation on various land-based sources of pollutants of the Caroni River Basin and the Environmental Management Authority will take a water use designation and classification for North Oropouche and Caroni River Basins in Trinidad and the Courland River Basin in Tobago. These initiatives are intended to increase our current knowledge on the water quality of these important river basins and thereby enhance the policies and programmes for managing these important areas.

The problem of air pollution, Mr. Vice-President, is being addressed through the strengthening of the legislative framework and a programme to reduce toxic emissions from industries and motor vehicles. Within the coming fiscal year, efforts will be increased by enacting draft air pollution rules which will significantly contribute to the reduction of the emission of pollutants into the atmosphere. In addition to this, steps will be taken to facilitate the implementation of a strategy for the phase-out of the use of leaded gasoline by 2005. A cooperative managed approach involving major stakeholders is being adopted in this venture.

Solid waste management has experienced significant growth in these last two decades as a result of the increase in population, industrial expansion, urbanization and change in lifestyles, but there are serious deficiencies in institutional development, enforcement capabilities and infrastructural facilities, coupled with a lot of environmentally irresponsible behaviour among large

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. R. DUMAS]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

segments of the population. There is, therefore, a lag in institutional capacity, thus significant quantities of solid waste are not being disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.

In an attempt to address this deficiency, the Ministry is currently taking steps to put in place a National Solid Waste Management System to deal with the issues. In addition, a draft Beverage Containers Bill is in the process of being finalized with a view to having it laid in Parliament as soon as possible. This legislation seeks to address the problem of disposal of beverage containers, which is one of the major sources of solid waste generated in the country and a serious danger to significant marine wildlife.

Mr. Vice-President, the introduction of the Green Fund was intended as a major vehicle to allow for the greater involvement of civil society, in particular, NGOs and community groups in supporting the Government's effort to ensure the sustainable management of the environment.

During the last months, the Ministry has been working in close collaboration with the Treasury Division of the Ministry of Finance to establish an appropriate financial management framework for ensuring that these public funds are managed in strict adherence to Government's financial regulations. Such a system is now in place. Additionally, Cabinet has sought the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme to operationalize the fund. Mr. Vice-President, the Government will soon declare how the fund is to be managed and under what mechanisms.

There are a number of international agreements that this country has signed to ensure a system of international environmental governance. The Ministry will continue to be the focal point for administering, managing and complying with those agreements.

Mr. Vice-President, I would just like to crave your indulgence to turn a little eye home, and by home I mean the little corner where I live. I want to say that, because you see sometimes we forget. Sometimes we forget our own pain, as the UNC will recognize.

I wish to share this with this Senate, and with you, Mr. Vice-President. The people of Tobago have been given the assurance that this PNM administration is deeply committed to ensuring that citizens of Trinidad and Tobago living in Tobago have an equitable share in the benefits of development occurring throughout the country.

In keeping with this policy commitment, the Tobago House of Assembly has been allocated \$742.9 million for this fiscal year; \$638.8 million for recurring

expenditure and \$104.1 million for capital expenditure. Additionally, a specific Public Sector Investment Programme has been prepared for Trinidad and Tobago. I would not want to walk in the areas in which the goodly Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie went, but I would just like to indicate that these developments clearly indicate that this PNM administration has adopted and identified with the needs of Tobago for the development to be pushed.

Among the major projects earmarked for Tobago are projects included in the funding development of \$104 million against a national PSIP of \$900 million. I am suggesting that when one takes the benefits to be coming out of a new library, new health centres, the construction of the Scarborough Hospital and other issues, we are talking about a significant understanding of what is needed in Tobago today.

An analysis of the arrangements for financing Tobago's development has been proffered somewhere else and reported in the newspapers, and this analysis rests on a specific ruling that was made some time in the past after an invocation of this measure in the Tobago House of Assembly Act called the Dispute Resolution Committee:

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Members, the Senator's speaking time has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: My thanks to you, Mr. Vice-President and other Members of the Senate.

This analysis has been reported, but what the analysis fails to say is it is an invocation of the Dispute Resolution Committee, but this was an invocation by the NAR, when the NAR was processing arrangements made by the government partners in what was then a UNC/NAR government. I want to place in contrast, as the rest of Tobago has placed in contrast, that the PNM style of financing development from the national allocation means that we do not need to look at that Dispute Resolution Committee.

When one looks at the allocations in the budget, as Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie said, the opportunity for Tobago to contribute to national public policy, in particular, the concern of a development plan for Tobago, that finds joint expression from Tobagonians and Trinidadians, representatives of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Tobago House of Assembly.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. R. DUMAS]

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

When one draws attention to the fact that the ferry is to be bought, that the airport is to be built, that the hospital in Scarborough is to be built, that in tourism, which is our major industry, there is an allocation of \$350 million for financing which, of course, about 25 per cent of that will be spent in Tobago. An AIDS allocation of \$500 million of which one could estimate some portion of it. A wastewater treatment plant which will turn around what is happening in Tobago now with the pollution and, of course, we heard about a police station from the Minister of National Security.

With these allocations and arrangements, Tobago has no need to invoke a dispute resolution committee, as is present in the Act. This process and its prevarication have been made irrelevant by the allocations and commitment of the PNM Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

For the first time in 24 years we can look at Trinidad and Tobago working as one in the development of Trinidad and Tobago, using all the institutions for national development. That is the base on which I stand. Further, we have the commitment of the Minister of Finance to facilitate appropriate financing arrangements for the funding of critical development projects.

Mr. Vice-President, one significant challenge the Government and the Tobago House of Assembly has is to deal with Tobago and its environment. The environment of Tobago is under severe stress. Many of the island's prime assets are under threat of destruction from pollution and overloading of the carrying capacity of the various ecosystems. The situation is particularly serious in the south-west part of the island where the tourism industry, the mainstay of the island's economy, is mainly located.

Of particular concern is the impact of land-based sources of marine pollution which is destroying the pristine marine ecosystem which was once in that nature, in the Bucco Reef and other marine parts and coastal areas. The problem of the leaching of sewerage in our rivers and streams, which eventually ends up in the coastal waters is well known. For years representations have been made.

In order to address this problem, the Government has initiated discussion with the Inter-American Development Bank for a possible loan operation directed at addressing this problem in a comprehensive manner. The Water and Sewerage Authority will give priority to the wastewater needs of this region.

The issue of the terrestrial park system is also being addressed. Additionally, in order to allow for greater effectiveness of WASA, T&TEC and TTPost in Tobago, these entities have been requested to appoint regional directors in the sister isle

with full responsibility for the operation of these companies in Tobago and cooperation and coordination with the Tobago House of Assembly

Mr. Vice-President, I once again draw the attention of the national community to this administration's commitment to the provision of adequate, reliable and affordable utility services and the sustainable development of the national environment and the commitment to working with the national community in the realization of these objectives and the Vision 2020 of this Government and people. Trinidad and Tobago working as one for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Wednesday, October 30, 2002 at 10.00 a.m. and to indicate that we will carry the debate to its conclusion.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.30 p.m.