

SENATE*Wednesday, October 30, 2002*

The Senate met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**MOBILE PHONES**

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, just before we proceed I would like to make a request that all mobile phones should be kept turned off please.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[Third Day]

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

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Sen. Christine Kangaloo: Mr. Vice-President, when 2002 draws to a close, the economy of Trinidad and Tobago would have boasted nine years of uninterrupted economic growth; that that will be so is legitimate cause for congratulations to those deserving of it: The successive governments of the PNM, for the difficult, but forward thinking structural adjustment measures we introduced in the 1980s and maintained in the 1990s, to nurse an ailing economy back to health. In 2002, the country is, at last, reaping the benefits of its past sacrifices.

By the close of 2002, several critical indicators will attest to the resurgence of the domestic economy. Real growth will have measured 2.7 per cent; job creation will have continued its upward trend since December 2001 and the unemployment rate would have fallen to 10 per cent, an unprecedented figure in modern times. Foreign direct investment, particularly in the energy sector, will have remained buoyant, enhancing the country's ability to finance its balance of payment. Gross official foreign reserves will have reached more than US \$2 billion, an amount sufficient to provide over six months of import cover. The exchange rate will have been realistic, stable and competitive. Interest rates will have continued to fall in response to an easing in monetary conditions and the external debt will have remained sustainable at 16 per cent of GDP.

To the casual observer, the country's economy would seem to be sailing smoothly on. While these are important economic indicators that will make any developing nation proud, the fact will remain, however, that at the close of 2002, there will be other more disturbing indicators which will call this country to collective shame. Chief among such indicators, is the fact that although this country boasts of nine years of steady economic growth on the one hand, on the other, as much as 40 per cent of the country's population, in some areas, live below the poverty line. Having gained by leaps and bounds in some areas, we have clearly been moving backward in others.

As the 1995 World Bank report on poverty in Trinidad and Tobago makes clear, this backward movement was largely concentrated in the period during which those who now sit in the Opposition Benches held the reins of power. What the present poverty figures mean, Sir, is that, while public officials were gorging themselves at the public trough between 1995—2001, for the same period, up to 40 per cent of the people in this country were unable to put the simplest of meal on their tables. To these people, the theme of the UNC's final budget, "Leaving No One Behind", must have seemed nothing but a cruel thought.

Nor is that where the cruelty of those opposed to us ends; that is merely its beginning, because having spent six years pushing up to 40 per cent of our people below the poverty line, they are now straining every sinew to prevent this PNM Government from pulling them up and above it. [*Desk thumping*] And whether it is out of ill will or ignorance, they have come to this honourable Chamber with the lone objective of twisting this administration's much needed and enlightened social development agenda, into the dark demon of a dependency syndrome, but as we will see, nothing could be further from the truth.

In order for the 40 per cent of the population who now live below the poverty line to rise above it, they must be included in the economic endeavours of the society, as well as in its economic reward. There is no mystery in that, as all of Trinidad and Tobago knows by now, this administration's vision is to do precisely that. As we explained in our Social and Economic Policy Framework October 2002, this Government's major policy objective is to make Trinidad and Tobago a developed nation by the year 2020. By this we mean, that by 2020 Trinidad and Tobago must take its place on the international stage as a fully developed nation in every sense. Not only in terms of the strength and resilience of its economy, but in the level of its human development as well. Developed country status calls for the balanced and systematic development of all our national resources, chief among them, our people. That is where we want to go. What we envision is a Trinidad and Tobago in which economic growth will be inclusive of and socially

responsive to all segments of the society. It will be based on full participation of the population in the economy. It will promote wealth creation among all income groups.

In order to get there, an integrated and holistic array of social intervention and developmental policies must first be implemented, to bring the 40 per cent of our people living below the poverty line into the economic mainstream. These policies must be designed, not only to create opportunities for advancement in what is termed the formal and traditional sectors of the economy, like in the public services, the banking industry and the industrial sector, they must also be designed to create opportunities for self-improvement and economic advancement at the peripheries of the economy as well; that is to say, in the informal or nontraditional sectors of economic activity, such as those involved in home-based activities, the artisans and craftsmen, people whom Sen. Mark, with the contempt for the small man that was the hallmark of the UNC regime, saw it fit to deride as “hustlers and loafers”.

For these policies to be effective they must concentrate, not only on moving the dispossessed into and across economic sectors, they must also, in appropriate cases, meet the people where they are. We would have thought that the imperative of social inclusion in the country’s economic development would be as obvious as it is irresistible. We can never hope to achieve developed nation status if we exclude 40 per cent of our people, first from contributing to and then from participating in the country’s wealth. We can never hope to be a developed country if the current levels of inequality between the rich and the destitute continue to widen; and we will never achieve sustainable development in Trinidad and Tobago if we continue to blind ourselves to the suffering and plight of the vulnerable sectors of our society, by turning up our windows when we encounter destitute families at traffic lights or by turning our faces and picking our way around those lying helplessly on the streets of our nation’s capital.

To us, as caretakers of a nation as rich as we are in natural and human resources, the question of economic inclusion of the dispossessed is one of the greatest moral challenges of governance. Unlike those whom we have replaced in government, morality lies at the heart of all we do. [*Desk thumping*]

We are not surprised that those opposed to us, have, in this debate, eschewed the moral imperative to social inclusion, for them to have done otherwise would have been too much for them, calling, as it would have, for them to embrace concepts of propriety in the conduct of their affairs with which they have shown, time and time again, they are not familiar. So it has been no surprise to us that

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those on the other side have spent all of their time in this Chamber expressing their discomfort and unease at the PNM Government's social intervention programmes, built, as they are, on the fundamental concept of morality in governance.

Perhaps, if we put the question of social development in a different way, one with which they are more likely to be familiar, that is to say, in terms of narrow self-interest, they might, at last, get the point. Let us, therefore, for their benefit, explain that quite apart from the moral imperatives involved in eliminating poverty and in bringing the dispossessed more and more into the economic mainstream, it is equally clear that the elimination of poverty and the promotion of inclusionary economic development, also serve a narrow economic self-interest.

If we do not make considerable headway to reduce inequality and increase widespread economic participation among the population, it will lead to growing social disintegration, escalating antisocial behaviour, including kidnapping, environmental degradation, disease and natural disasters such as floods and landslides, as more and more of our displaced citizens are pushed deeper and deeper into economic despair and bring increased pressure to bear on our natural resources. It will be the failure of those in governance to do so and not the rationalization of Caroni (1975) Limited that will lead to complete social collapse and to the bloodshed that those on the other side seem, by their irresponsible language in the House, to be courting in the society of late. Trinidad and Tobago, therefore, has a clear self-interest that will, in turn, only enhance its economic prosperity in working together systemically to promote the integration of the socially displaced into the fabric of the economy.

Now that the PNM Government has assumed office for five years, the country, at last, has a government, not only with the skills and know-how to do so, but with the political will that has been lacking in that regard for six years. Mr. Vice-President, the main flaw in the opposition they have expressed to our social intervention programmes is their implicit reliance on the discredited and outdated theory of the unmitigated free market approach to economic development. That argument posits that any institutional interventions into the economy, which are not based on the concept of raw competition such as public programmes of social protection, are retrograde and are anathema to economic development.

According to that theory, market force should be freed up, at all cost, and without government intervention, so as to promote maximum economic growth, because this will bake a bigger cake of national wealth and that there will be more

to trickle down to all, including the socially disadvantaged; but the reality has belied that theory.

Since the 1970s, the empirical evidence has been overwhelming that so-called trickle down effect rarely, if ever, occurs. The wealth that is extracted from this approach stays at the top, while those at the bottom rungs of the economic ladder fall deeper and deeper into destitution. It, therefore, becomes the government's responsibility to formulate and implement policy to ensure that the wealth generated is spread equitably among the society. The critical importance of an aggressive social intervention policy in ensuring balanced and equitable social development, is not, as the Opposition would have us believe, an invention of the PNM Government. Such a strategy is reflective of internationally driven approaches to economic development.

Had those on the other side done the proper investigations, instead of coming to this Chamber with obstruction and obfuscation as their sole agenda, they would, no doubt, have discovered the movement away from the unmitigated free model of economic development and towards a more balanced developmental model which became a feature of international approaches to economic development in the 1990s. Indeed, at the United Kingdom's World Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1995, participating States adopted as one of their developmental goals, the expansion of the social intervention share of their national budgets to as high as 20 per cent of the overall expenditure.

When, therefore, those on the other side criticize us for expanding our expenditure on social protection programmes, as we have proposed in this budget, and argue that in doing so we are turning back the hands of the development clock, that can only be out of their abject ignorance. When in such ignorance they derisively refer to these programmes as "handouts" and "soup kitchens", they betray the fact that they lack either the intelligence or the inclination to analyze and understand these programmes and parade their complete unfamiliarity with modern approaches to economic development. [*Desk thumping*] By behaving as they have throughout this debate, they show that it is they, not us, who are caught in an intellectual time warp. [*Desk thumping*]

What all, but the UNC, have accepted and what this administration's budget statement provides, is a mixed approach to the question of social development and an appreciation singularly lacking from the UNC during its term in office, that economic growth does not equate to economic development. [*Desk thumping*] They do not seem to understand that more does not necessarily mean better. If

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they had understood that, Sir, they would not have acted as irresponsibly as they did in jeopardizing this country's education system—a critical engine of social development, by attempting to herd our nation's children, like cattle, into all sorts of improbable ranches they passed off as schools.

To the country's relief, what this administration has provided in its budget presentation, is a developmental prototype sensitive to the requirements, on the one hand, of encouraging economic growth while, on the other hand, being careful to ensure equitable social participation at all levels of economic development.

Those speakers on this side who have already gone before me, have explained various aspects of this Government's plan to promote economic growth; in so doing, they have set out, in large measure, this administration's macro economic and fiscal management policies; its monetary and financial sector savings and investment policies and its external sector developmental policies. Cumulatively, these initiatives will ensure that the engine of economic growth continues to take over.

At the same time, and consistent with modern approaches to sustainable economic development, such growth is to be supplemented by this administration's new and dynamic social policy agenda, driven by the Social Services Delivery Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister. As I have sought to explain, this administration's social policy agenda aims at ensuring that the disadvantaged in our society are not only brought into the economic mainstream, but are thereafter empowered to contribute meaningfully towards overall economic growth.

Contrary to the propaganda that is being spread about them, this Government's social development initiatives are not about dependence and sterile soup kitchens. Rather, these programmes are aimed at the immediate elimination and improvement of the condition of our financially challenged citizens who find themselves in situations of social or economic crisis; the empowerment of such individuals to contribute to meaningful economic activity; the protection of such individuals and other vulnerable groups in our society from exposure to the debilitating effects of global financial fallout and the improvement in the coordination of social intervention programmes with a view to their increased decentralization.

Let us briefly examine some of these programmes and put to rest, once and for all, all of this Opposition nonsense about dependency. Let us explain for their benefit and for the national community's, the difference between a handout and a

hand up. Nowhere is this administration's emphasis on developmental intervention more clearly demonstrated than in the revolution that we have effected to the Public Assistance Programme. Once regarded as a limited welfare scheme, the Public Assistance Programme has now been significantly expanded and its focus altered to provide for the graduation of its beneficiaries into more acceptable means of earning income.

Previously, Mr. Vice-President, the programme revolved around two grants: The public assistance and disability grants. This generally meant that only persons with disabilities benefit from the programme to the exclusion of other persons in equally, if not more, necessitous circumstances. For this reason the public assistance and disability assistance grants will be replaced by term benefits and fixed benefit grants, which will provide for wider and more effective coverage for a greater cross section of the disadvantaged. Fixed benefits will represent a variety of single payments intended to meet specific needs, which will all be classified as urgent temporary assistance payments. These urgent temporary assistance payments will include payments in relation to house repairs necessitated through damage by natural disasters, household articles, medical equipment, burial assistance, pharmaceuticals, clothing, education, dietary grants and payments for children with disabilities.

In the case of each of these grants, this administration has arranged for increases so as to bring them more in line with current poverty line measurements. But it is not a case of simply raising the limits, in order to qualify for these grants, the applicants will now be subject to a means test and rates of payment will be determined in relation to changes in the cost of living. It will no longer be a case of all persons qualifying for and being paid the same grants, rather, a more progressive and selective approach, one which reflects the developmental element and which focuses on individual needs in differing situations, will now apply under the programme.

In order to effect this developmental transformation, the Government proposes to establish a special unit to be known as the Empowerment Unit. This unit will be established within the Office of the Prime Minister and will be responsible for identifying, screening, referring and monitoring participants in the programme for rehabilitation and further development. What this means is that instead of simply coming in at one end of the programme and coming out the other, participants will now be assessed by the Empowerment Unit and referred for participation in another of this Government's developmental programmes, to be trained and tooled for eventual engagement in meaningful, longer-term and productive endeavours. By the stroke of the Empowerment Unit the Public Assistance

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Programme will, therefore, be completely transformed into an engine of sustainable and long-term human development.

Consistent with the developmental and transformational emphasis in its social programmes, this administration has also budgeted some \$22.7 million for its Social Help and Rehabilitation Efforts Programme; a social development programme in which the PNM Government takes great pride.

At its outset, the Social Help and Rehabilitation Efforts Programme was designed to cater for increased self-proficiency through the provision, not only of short-term relief for the needy via the distribution of food and the provision of housing and shelter for the dislocated, but also through the provision of training and education which will drive its participants to become self-sustainable over the long-term. In this regard, the programme differs dramatically from its predecessor, the ECHO Programme (Each Community Helping Out) which was restructured in 1992 to give birth to the SHARE Programme.

The ECHO Programme was primarily a food hamper distribution programme, but consistent with its commitment to develop social policies aimed at equipping the disadvantaged to contribute to overall economic growth, the ECHO Programme was converted to the SHARE Programme in 1993. Today, the SHARE Programme provides skills training for its participants in a variety of micro entrepreneurship endeavours, including agricultural projects such as sheep rearing, grow-box propagation and open land propagation. Training is also provided in the areas of food services, garment construction, landscaping and domestic services. Over the short-term, the programme will create a network of partnerships to facilitate the provision of further training and resources. Over the long-term, its goal is to assist in alleviating poverty and increasing the number of empowered recipients by 30 per cent by December 2005.

As a further indication of this administration's commitment to transformational development through its social intervention strategies, the Government has committed to the establishment of a micro-enterprise loan facility. This facility will allow for the provision of financial grants, particularly to those in the informal sectors of the economy for the establishment of income-generating, self-supporting projects. By this mechanism, communities will be empowered in micro-finance endeavours and individual circumstance bettered.

It is anybody's guess, on what basis it is that those opposed to us choose, in the face of these developmental approaches in our social programmes, to perversely maintain that this administration's social programmes are designed to foster a dependency syndrome. As anyone who has eyes to see, can see, Sen.

Mark's suggestion that these policies hold little hope for transformation of the economy, is as flawed as it is partisan.

While poverty is a pervasive and debilitating social ill that challenges nations and excludes individuals from active participation in the economies throughout the world, so too do the harmful effects of substance abuse. Sadly, Trinidad and Tobago is also victim to this scourge. Drug abuse and drug addiction not only shorten and destroy the individual's economic livelihood and deprive him of participating in mainstream economic activity, they also promote money laundering and other forms of financial aberrations, which result in overall economic distortions.

It has long been recognized that the more effective means of blunting the drug epidemic is to target the demand side, that is to say, those who use as opposed to those who supply illicit drugs. Under the Office of the Prime Minister, the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme (NADAPP) will continue to play a coordinating role in giving effect to Government's drug abuse prevention initiatives as well as in fostering and facilitating the efforts of non-governmental organizations involved in the struggle to rid the nation of drug abuse.

If there are reasons that those in Opposition do not wish to see the back of the drug trade in Trinidad and Tobago and to see it fit to criticize this initiative, we on this side will certainly like to hear them. In the meantime, this administration is proud to report that in the 2001/2002 fiscal year, NADAPP continued to make strides in workplace and community prevention of drug abuse and through educational and financial assistance programmes, including the funding of a youth prevention projection in the Laventille/Beetham Estate area. NADAPP also continues to provide support to and facilitates outreach activities through community information centres at Toco, Laventille and Scarborough. For the same period, NADAPP also continued to provide ongoing financial and technical support to NGOs working to address drug abuse problems.

In July 2002, Cabinet agreed that NADAPP will expand its sphere of operations by participating in a drug abuse and surveillance systems project, the main objective of which is to strengthen and improve systems in data gathering with respect to drug demand reduction in Caribbean countries. This project will start before the end of 2002. If there is a reason why the Opposition feels that NADAPP should not be involved in such a project, we on this side would certainly like to know.

In 2003 NADAPP will intensify its drive to eliminate the drug abuse problem in Trinidad and Tobago by mounting a mass media campaign which will entail the

development and dissemination of appropriate cultural, gender-sensitive anti-drug messages via the electronic and print media. The aim of such a campaign will be to prevent and reduce the incidents of the use and abuse of licit and illicit drugs, primarily among teenagers. In 2003 as well, through NADAPP, the Government will establish a street-based drop-in centre which will be a non-residential walk-in facility providing early intervention and prevention services together with advice, counselling and support in the area of drug abuse.

In addition to these NADAPP initiatives, over the last few months, work has continued on several critical construction projects which are indispensable to effectively combating the drug menace in Trinidad and Tobago. Included among these is the ongoing work on the expansion of the Caura Substance Abuse Rehabilitation and Treatment Centre. Work will continue during 2002—2003 with respect to the refurbishment of wards two, four and eight of this centre.

In addition, Mr. Vice-President, the Piparo Empowerment Centre has been established and is geared towards the full recovery of addicts via a scope of programmes ranging from agricultural skills acquisition to higher vocational skills acquisition. The main residence and accompanying infrastructure have been completed and the programme is, at present, in operation. Several of the participants have been exposed to training in baking, craft, micro-entrepreneurship conducted by YTEPP. Training in woodworking will start in the next few months. Phase three of this project, which is the construction of a multi-purpose hall, will begin in the year 2002/2003.

Through NADAPP and its other drug abuse prevention initiatives, this Government has been demonstrating commitment to rehabilitating the socially disposed so that they can be returned to meaningful participation in economic activity and contribute to the national, as well as to their own, economic advancement. The questions which arise are: What about the work of NADAPP that those on the other side have committed themselves to objecting to it and why that might be so?

Conscious of the need to ensure that no group in the society is excluded from participating in meaningful economic activity, this Government, in addition to the initiatives previously outlined, has also established a Social Displacement Unit within the Office of the Prime Minister to target and rehabilitate the homeless via a series of integrated developmental programmes. These programmes include the Independent Living Programme which will assist persons who are homeless although employed. The target group of this programme generally comprises highly demotivated persons who are, therefore, encouraged to undergo a 10-

session Behaviour Modification Programme. Participants who complete the programme are given a start-up incentive in the way of a food hamper and rental assistance in the sum of \$200 per month, but only for a maximum of nine months. The fixing of a limited period over which the grant will be made available, reduces the risk of a dependency syndrome developing.

As part of the Social Displacement Unit, there is also the Drug Rehabilitation Programme which is geared towards homeless persons who are drug addicts and for that reason generally tend to be unemployed. This unit monitors the detoxification aspects of individual's rehabilitation before sourcing meaningful employment for affected individuals. Where is the dependency syndrome in this drug rehabilitation programme?

Far from creating dependency, these programmes promote independent, meaningful living. In recognition of this fact and in an effort to upgrade the drug rehabilitation programme initiative, Cabinet recently agreed to the acquisition of property at Laventille to construct a new assessment centre and temporary shelter that will allow the unit to fully execute this mandate.

Mr. Vice-President, these programmes are just some of a host of interrelated social intervention programmes to which this administration is committed in an effort to ensure that as we progress along the path to "Vision 2020", people remain our priority and the Government does what is right by those who find themselves below the poverty line and otherwise unable to participate meaningfully in the country's economic development.

To address Sen. Prof. Deosaran's legitimate concern about promoting the importance of the family, we on this side will like to point out that the National Family Services Division, which falls under the Social Services Delivery Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister has, as one of its critical accountabilities, the promotion of family values and, consequently, social harmony. Among the programmes launched this year, were the Family First Project, the Salutations of Families Programme and the Conscious Parenting Programme which focuses on critical issues in parenting and family life.

We listened with concern to Sen. Seetahal's tale of the overcrowding of the nation's industrial schools and orphanages. We are relieved to be able to report that in fiscal 2002 the sum of \$8 million was spent on Phase II works at the St. Michael's School for Boys as follows:

- i The construction of new trade shops;
- ii The refurbishment of two existing trade shops; and

iii Construction of a laundry and a basketball court.

A further sum of \$2.5 million has been provided to complete the upgrade of that school. Moneys have also been allocated in this fiscal year for the St. Mary's Children Home kitchen and the reconstruction of the St. Jude's wing. It is our hope that these initiatives will go some way to alleviating the worrisome problem. At the same time, we acknowledge that there is much more to do. In this regard, we give Sen. Seethal and the national community the assurance that we will do all that is necessary to urgently deal with the problem.

What emerges from all these programmes is a clear picture of a government which understands the mandate of strong economic growth and balanced social development. In their commitment to be as obstructionist as possible, those on the Opposition Benches have conveniently forgotten their declared commitment to similar policies in their last budget. Feigning selective amnesia, they have come to this Chamber in the hope of persuading themselves and then the nation that their own stated social agenda objectives in their September 2001 budget, which objectives they have outrageously betrayed, but which objectives they now see the PNM Government successfully implementing, are handouts and amount to nothing more than sterile soup kitchens.

From where we sit, their opposition to the introduction of our social policy programmes is as hypocritical as their basis for doing so is transparent. It is with pride in this Government's unswerving commitment to alleviating the plight of the poor and to including them in meaningful economic pursuits and with disappointment, but hardly with surprise, in the obstructionist posture adopted by an Opposition desperate for any kind of national attention, no matter how negative, that I rise at once to defend and to commend this budget presentation.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you.

Sen. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Vice-President, let me, like others in this honourable Senate, congratulate you on your appointment as Vice-President of this august Chamber.

Before I proceed with my contribution to this budget debate, I would like to place on the record of this honourable Senate my views on the comments made by the hon. Attorney General in her contribution yesterday.

Yesterday, we witnessed in this honourable Chamber a scathing attack by the Attorney General on persons appointed as Senators by the Leader of the Opposition. One attack was made on a Senator who was not present and who was, unfortunately, unable to defend herself, Sen. Dr. Kernahan. The contribution of

the Attorney General was nothing short of an unjustified attack that was wholly improper and inappropriate for one such as herself who holds high office.

The Attorney General ought to be aware that her appointment does not make her the Attorney General of the PNM or the legal advocate of the PNM; thus, she is at all times supposed to be above the politics and represent fairly all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senators: Then do not call us terrorists!

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Therefore, whatever bias or favour she may have for the party that she represents, must be put aside so that she can conduct herself in a manner befitting of the office that she holds. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark: Shame! Shame!

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: It is not for the Attorney General to issue threats or warn persons of impending charges, otherwise, by those utterances, she brings into disrepute and suspicion the various state agencies that are supposed to be independent in the exercise of their functions. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark: That is a fact.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: There is no onus on these agencies to give a blow-by-blow account of their activities and investigations to the Attorney General, because if they did the independence of their respective offices would be seriously compromised.

Sen. Mark: Reckless behaviour!

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: The Attorney General in her contribution yesterday, ought to have dealt with issues that were relevant and within the scope of her knowledge. Instead, she created disappointment with her unwarranted approach of pointing fingers. The Attorney General ought to have advised the nation on the following:

- i How long must we wait before the implementation of the Equal Opportunities Act? [*Desk thumping*]
- ii When does she intend to review and revise existing laws that deal with criminal prosecution, detection and prevention? These are laws that are presently on the books that require amendment if they are to be effective; for example, the Administration of Justice Act 1996 which gives the State the right to appeal in criminal matters, but the Court of Appeal held that the provisions were unconstitutional because they were not passed with the requisite special majority.

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- iii. What is the Attorney General doing about the continued exodus of state counsel in the various departments within her ministry? The UNC offered temporary relief for the situation by increasing the remuneration packages of state counsels and by offering better terms and conditions. It is left for the Attorney General to make an effective attempt at addressing this problem.
- iv. What measures does she intend to implement to deal with the state magistracy, a problem highlighted by the honourable Chief Justice in his address at the opening of the law term 2002?
- v. Why does she insist on acting as judge, jury and executioner on matters that are presently before the court and/or the subject of commissions of enquiry?
- vi. Has the Attorney General examined the Bail Act recently, so that she can apprise herself of the problems with the Act?

I must admit, that after hearing the hon. Attorney General in her contribution yesterday, I am convinced that we have a lot to worry about—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senators: You really have a lot to worry about! [*Desk thumping*]
[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:—in her performance as the person responsible for the administration of legal affairs in Trinidad and Tobago.

Based on the reckless behaviour of the hon. Attorney General, it is my view that the Senator owes this honourable Senate an apology. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Vice-President, I will now move to my contribution to this budget debate. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Something you are more familiar with.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: My contribution is informed by a comparative analysis of the policy frameworks developed by the current administration and the prior UNC administration. It is very important for us to understand the significance of this year's budget on our policy agenda and, in so doing, the impact on realizing the vision set out for our beloved nation, Trinidad and Tobago.

First of all, I want to turn to the vision set out by the budget statement as enunciated by the hon. Minister of Finance on October 21. In the absence of a concise statement of "Vision 2020", I perused the first three pages in an attempt to get a full appreciation of where we want to be in 20 years. I want to add that for

us to start with the vision of setting a globally competitive economy, this vision must be realizable, as it is often said that a vision without action is dreaming and action without vision is merely passing time.

So in perusing this document in the first three or four pages, I came up with a couple of the buzzwords that we heard from the other side. These were my findings: Yes we want to be a knowledge-based society; we want to attain a globally competitive economy, a technology-driven economy, diversified; we want full employment in order to eradicate poverty; growing prosperity, a secure life and a higher standard of living for all our citizens. But if I go to what the UNC's had last year—if I could just remind this honourable Senate—and read from last year's budget statement of September 14 2001, Vision 2010:

“One People, One Nation, Leaving No One Behind”

This shared vision is for this country to become a knowledge-based society with a globally competitive, technologically-driven and diversified economy that will sustain full employment, equal opportunity, growing prosperity, a secure life and a higher standard of living for all our citizens.”

That was enunciated by the former Minister of Finance, Mr. Gerald Yetming.

Mr. Vice-President, if I take “Vision 2020”—I have no problems with it, because it seems as though all that has happened is that the PNM has used this vision as their vision in going forward for the next 20 years—but I just want to point out one subtle difference and, that is, the timing. The vision as enunciated by the former Minister of Finance dealt with a time frame of 10 years, of becoming a first-world nation by 2010. In comparison, this current administration is dealing with a time frame of 20 years; 2020.

We must remember that we are dealing with a very dynamic global economy, with increasing competitiveness and a highly integrated economy. Within 20 years, all our ideas can become so obsolete. There can be the possibility of new emerging markets and economies. In this context, is where we have to deal with how we set out to attain this vision in 20 years. I want to make a humble appeal to the other side that, possibly, they may need to review their time frame in realizing this vision.

Before I proceed, I want to make one comment: My contribution, like all those on this side of the Senate, for the record, is keenly interested in the performance of our economy and the challenges that we face. We are fully aware that with the continuing pace of globalization, a very dynamic environment and technological advancement, the competitive challenge that faces us becomes more

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challenging every day. In so doing, I would like my contribution to be considered in that context.

In analyzing the budget, my overview is that the main objective is to provide the framework for the distribution of the fruits of production without expanding the production capacity of the economy or what I like to refer to as the revenue-earning capacity of this economy; an expansion that is crucial to the sustainability of the high level of consumption established by the budget for fiscal year 2002/2003. In so doing, I want to very quickly outline the economic performance, in order to put into context the development path that we are charting. Let me very quickly provide some economic background that would probably help all of us.

This country has completed first generation reform, inclusive of addressing issues on external deficit, domestic deficit and inefficient state enterprises. I quote directly from the Central Bank Report of 2001:

“The economy’s solid performance was marked by fiscal and balance of payments surpluses and continued stability of the exchange rate in the context of rising external reserves.”

Mr. Vice-President, this statement was further reinforced in Appendix II of Review of the Economy. In that appendix we will note the GDP growth over the past five years 1996—1997, 2.7 per cent; 1997—1998, 7.8 per cent; 1998—1999, 4.4 per cent; 1999—2000, 6.1 per cent; 2000—2001, 3.3 per cent; 2001—2002, 2.7 per cent; gross international reserves, 1993, \$446 million; 1995, \$652 million; 1999, \$1.39 billion; 2001, \$2.456 billion; external debt as a percentage of GDP, 1993, 30.6 per cent; 1995, 20.2 per cent; 1997, 15.4 per cent; 1997, 8 per cent; 2001, 3.5 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, Government’s external debt service obligation also decreased by 41 per cent with \$1.2 billion, primarily due to the repayment of a US \$125 million Euro bond during the fiscal year of 2001. The IMF report of July 6, 2001 says that it was greatly impressed with economic development of Trinidad and Tobago in the past two years; that the UNC government brought the economy onto a more stable and healthy path, in terms of robust growth, job creation, low inflation, balanced fiscal and external trade accounts and poverty reduction. The report also commended the UNC for the strong track record of economic performance in recent years. [*Desk thumping*]

I now quote directly from the current Central Bank Governor, from a speech he delivered at the South Chamber of Commerce. He said evident from that:

“our external debt at around 18 per cent of GDP, is low and our external debt service at 4—5 per cent of export of goods and services, is very manageable; inflation is under control...”

Four to 5 per cent. This is in line with our major trading partners:

“...a stable, credible exchange rate regime;

And a strong level of international reserves. Economic imbalances, particularly in the public finances and external accounts, have been significantly reduced. These are the words of the current Central Bank Governor—unemployment rate low, 10.7 per cent; and a non-oil export sector which can be characterized as:

“...vibrant, competitive and adaptable.”

However, Mr. Vice-President, Trinidad and Tobago, after getting its economic fundamentals correct, is now standing at the portal of a second-generation reform, critical to Trinidad and Tobago attaining first-world status. Second-generation reform entails institutional strengthening, the establishment of the regulatory frameworks, sound financial systems, inclusive of the banking and non-banking sectors, the widening and deepening of the capital markets and institutional changes required to change the mode of delivery to facilitate the private provision of public goods, that is, the increase in private sector participation with the public sector being a facilitator.

Against this backdrop, I ask a question that is crucial, at this point, in the development of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago: Has the current administration capitalized on the strong economic fundamentals in place and demonstrated its readiness to launch second-generation reform, which is vital to us attaining first-world nation status? I ask this because when you compare the policy framework put out by the former administration and the one by the current administration you see several similarities. The policy agenda is the same, but how are they delivering on this policy agenda?

I first turn to this year’s budget statement which, in my view, places the economic fundamentals underpinning the strong economic performance of this country, at risk. Budget Financing: Fiscal year 2002/2003, projected total expenditure of \$19,764 billion, approximately \$20 billion; total revenue of \$15.8 billion; financing of \$4.1 billion and a deficit of \$214 million. Included in this expenditure is a mere \$880 million for capital expenditure. That is almost close to 0.4 per cent of the total expenditure. Based on a comparative analysis of the revised estimates for the fiscal year 2001/2002 and the projected estimates for

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fiscal year 2002/2003, it is my humble view that several of the revenue streams are under threat, with little or no room for curtailing of expenditure in the event of not realizing the projected revenue streams.

11.00 a.m.

Take for example, we talk about reduction of income tax for the first \$50,000 from 28 to 25 per cent, but yet we estimate an increase in PAYE of almost \$23 million, an increase from \$2.67 billion to \$2.69 billion; corporation tax estimated to increase by \$261,134,000; that is an increase from \$1.43 billion to \$1.69.

Corporation tax was reduced from 35 to 30 per cent, oil companies estimates increased by \$849 million, but yet we are looking at a budgeted figure for oil revenue at \$22.00 a barrel. We almost had an average of \$26.00 a barrel over the last fiscal year and, do not forget the capital allowances which we ended up with less than projected in terms of tax revenues because of the write-offs by the oil-producing companies due to increased exploration activity. VAT is estimated to increase by \$98 million, and yet we have removed VAT from all our medications.

Therefore, Mr. Vice-President, I humbly submit that there is a very high probability that we are looking at a higher budget deficit, since the realization of this \$15 billion in revenue is under threat, and in light of the low capital expenditure, where in most cases governments tend to attack the capital expenditure not realizing the projected revenues. I wonder what would be the outcome after this fiscal year. A comparison of the last five years of capital expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure?

Sen. King alluded to the fact that this year there is a very low amount allocated for capital expenditure and she does not share the myopic view that capital expenditure spells development. I want to humbly submit that that is the only place that we would find any money going towards developing the production capacity of our economy. If I go back and take a quick look at what has happened from 1998 to now; out of a total expenditure, including current and capital expenditure 1998, \$10.399 billion in expenditure. We talked about actually providing \$859 million in capital expenditure. Compare that with this year's budget with a total expenditure of \$20,850,000,000 in capital expenditure.

In 1999, a total of \$11 billion or close to that, and what we are talking about is \$527. The story goes on and on like that, that our capital expenditure this year serves to prove the point that this year, there are very low allocations for our capital expenditure programmes and, therefore, in summary serious shortcomings.

How are we going to fund the high probability of our deficits? Are we going

to be using external borrowings to fund recurrent expenditure and consumption? Does this not place the macroeconomic fundamentals at risk? Is this not a retrograde step? The less than proportionate allocation to capital goods impacts on the country's future capacity to sustain economic and social development, the same social development programme about which the previous Senator spoke. Financing this deficit, the demand for money by Government to fund this budget deficit would push interest rates to higher levels. We must consider the impact on investments in the manufacturing sector and small and micro enterprises and, yes Sen. Enill, I know you are going to tell me that you are trying to improve on the bond market to reduce the interest cost. The high cost of financing may negatively impact our ability to remain competitive in the international market. What I am saying, we cannot put the cart before the horse.

Nowhere in this budget presentation have we seen the role of the private sector, or have we identified an increasing role for the private sector, which is critical to second-generation reform. Sen. King alluded to this. What are the challenges facing the private sector? Increase in oil and gas sector in itself will do little to solve the unemployment problem. What is critical, is how the energy sector interacts with the rest of the economy. We need therefore, to expand the frontiers of an increased local participation in our energy sector. Our local private sector needs to find ways to participate. In this round, the challenge is for our private sector to be equal partners in the development of our energy resources; only in this way can we find the meaningful linkages that we talk about in the energy sector and the non-energy sectors. We cannot continue to say that we are limiting our private sector to small investors and the individuals participating in service industries only.

This is reinforced by the current Central Bank Governor in his speech at the South Chamber of Industry. I took this off the Net.

Large entrepreneurs and companies must get involved in joint ventures with international corporations. Domestic capital market must go to the point to support deepening of private sector participation in large-scale enterprises.

Our manufacturing sector has outgrown CARICOM and need to compete and hold their own in the broader FDA. New service industries made possible by the technological revolution and the concentrated educational trust. Although the energy sector expanded by 2.6 per cent, it is important however to know that non-energy sectors contracted by 0.6 per cent. This is in accordance with the Central Bank Report of September 2002. A significant contributor to this contraction is the manufacturing sector. Manufacturing

production dropped by 14.1 per cent, and some of this may be as a result of the adverse international, regional economic developments which are the major factors contributing to the decline of activity in the non-energy sectors.

Probably the political uncertainty could have caused some hesitancy among local businesses to embark on new projects, but the manufacturing sector is targeted to play a keen role in the thrust towards diversifying a resilient economic base removal, but yet still in this budget presentation, we see the removal of the export allowance which serves only to compound the weaker performance of this sector.

Whereas, I expect this is in response to international pressures from the World Trade Organization, it begs the question whether it was an appropriate step in light of the foregoing.

Mr. Vice-President, it is okay for us to say that a previous Minister—Sen. D. Montano, I think was the one who alluded to it—said that the export allowance must go, but in the dynamic environment that we are in, we must respond to the changes. At this point in time, given the weakening of our manufacturing sector, and in light of the adversities over the last year, should we have reconsidered the removal of this export allowance? Should we not have approached the situation in terms of negotiating an extension on the removal of this export allowance? Or secondly, could we not have reduced this effective tax rate by the introduction of other incentives? Therefore, I say this is why when we deal with our policy agenda, we must consider it in the dynamic environment which we must be able to respond to appropriately.

Therefore, could there have been provision for additional incentives to replace this export allowance? Could there have been an initial allowance claim, a removal of VAT on imported raw material, or business levy? Delay in issuing VAT refunds or whatever? It is anticipated that there would be further contraction in this sector in the absence of appropriate fiscal incentives.

I now go to financial sector reform. The government, during the period 1995—2000, had initiated a project to consolidate the supervision of financial institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. The services of the international consulting firm of Lorry & Savage Company was contracted, the contract came to an end in 2002, to date we are still far from the integration unit. The benefits of the consolidation of supervision of financial institutions include improved risk management, strengthening of corporate governance, increasing safety and soundness of our financial system, stronger regulatory environment, and a more developed financial system.

Now I know the hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Patrick Manning, and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. Enill, both alluded to this report and as to the integration of the supervision function by the Central Bank with the integration of the Supervisor of Insurance, et cetera. I bring to this humble Senate, that we need to accelerate these programmes because if we are going to talk about increased private sector participation, how else would we be able to achieve that without the deepening and widening of our capital markets? We need to build confidence; we need to create confidence in the minds of our investors who are prepared to invest in bonds and securities in the energy sector. We need to develop legislation that would attract more companies' greater participation.

We talked about Trinidad and Tobago becoming, or we had started the process to make this country the financial centre of the region. As cited, there is critical need to address the measures to widen and deepen participation in the financial sector, but yet we see no acceleration on this programme. We must address this sector in the context of a competitive framework in view of making Trinidad and Tobago the most competitive in the region. Corporate entities will have increased access to funding, investors can have access to additional securities with multiple variations designed to meet the individual needs, but all of this leads to us having more confidence, more openness, and transparency in our financial sector and this can only be done through legislation and regulation. I am sure Sen. Enill would agree with that.

However, I want to suggest that in achieving these objectives for the financial sector that we must bring together the Institute of Chartered Accountants, a society of investment professionals, the legal fraternity, banking, government, regulatory bodies, relevant parties to make Trinidad and Tobago the premium financial sector in the Association of Caribbean States. The agency of this move? In light of the forthcoming boom in the private sector, participation in terms of homeownership is important, and due to the high risk, deepening and widening of the capital market would facilitate the high risk. This would assist more joint ventures with foreign financing of debt and local equity participation.

I now move to the Science and Technology and Information, Communication Technology all under one umbrella. Let us take a look at technology transfer in a global economy, and probably one of the things that I should do—and I do not want to deliver a discourse in technology—is unbundle the knowledge economy. The principal systems are primary, secondary and tertiary education. The technology systems include the institutions that access, adapt, and develop new methods. We can talk about the auxiliary type components which are institutions that support on-the-job training, but when we talk about a country—and this is a

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recent World Bank study that talks about the three progressive stages in a country's technological evolution.

We can talk about the adoption stage, in which case there are low levels of skilled labour and market competition and few innovation related institutions such as universities and research centres. By no means am I suggesting that we are at this stage.

The second stage, which is the adaptation stage, they advise to meet these needs by providing centres to private providers of advanced education whilst sustaining state investment in primary and secondary schooling. They should also promote foreign direct investment; strengthen their information and communication technology sector; implement credible, patent protection policies; establish competitive funding for private research and development; and have better links between universities, think tanks and firms. I humbly suggest that we are at the second stage.

Just to tell us where we should be going, and that is the third stage, the creation stage. This is where we talk about adapting technologies and reselling resulting products at a lower cost than our competitors, but in which we face many challenges from low-wage markets in the creation of these new products. I think we are at the adaptation stage, but poised to take off to move to the third stage.

If I just take a quick look at the relationship between education and technology, we talk about the virtuous cycle. What is that? The virtuous cycle is when we talk about the policies of improving access to new technologies and policies that upgrade skills and are likely to be mutually reinforcing, creating that virtuous cycle whereby new technologies stimulate the acquisition of more skills and more educated workforce, which in turn encourages entrepreneurs to use technologies of more recent vintage. This is where we now talk about the technology skills complementarity; we expand our skill base in line with our technological process.

If we go about just expanding our skills base educating, all we would do is promote the brain drain and if we expand our skills base and our technologies without a market for it, or for the youths without expanding the education side, the skill side, we will end up with a serious skills technology mismatch, and that serves to widen the productivity gap between more developed countries and less developed countries. That is why when they talk about this virtuous cycle, they use it to close that productivity gap.

On this basis therefore, when I talk about the policy agenda, our policies are

geared to reducing technology skills mismatch, and these policies tend to improve the complementarities between skills and technology. This is why when you look at the Medium Term Policy Framework under the United National Congress, it is spelt out and I have no doubt that under this current administration, the same policy framework has been adopted. I want to explain this is why you should not look at aborting the Science and Technology Park.

Sen. D. Montano, I am not sure whether your predecessor misguided you, but the reasons for the technology park were one, it is futuristic. Secondly it was the vehicle for that technology transfer, the new generation of industries that would be technology intensive. So you have both going at the same time; one stimulating the development on the other side, so as we build skills, we build technology, as we build technology, we build demand for the skills. That Science and Technology Park—and I have no problem with the light industrial manufacturing that you have designed for the same area—but instead it would defeat the objective of the technology policy agenda.

The job creation in the first 10 years was estimated at 5,000—9,700, 10,000—20,000 indirect jobs. It would have had that strengthened relationship with institutions of learning foreign and local, a focus on technology innovation, foreign direct investment in high-technology fields, and linkages with other sectors of the economy. This is critical to realizing the vision of becoming an intelligent nation. The Science and Technology Park fits in with maximizing at adaptation stage and acting as a catalyst for the movement to the third phase, the creation stage. Instead, what we hear about under this administration is the University of Trinidad and Tobago. God alone knows. The genesis of this idea is mind- boggling.

In today's world we talk about networking of universities, building core institutions, networking them into the global framework, building alliances with foreign universities to facilitate the onslaught of the intellectual capital to bear on our problems. I am a former lecturer at the university and from my own experience; I appreciate some of the comments made by Sen. King in terms of the publish or perish system and the need for change at the university and in evolutionary thinking. However, with meaningful linkages et cetera, we can deal with.

It is mind-boggling to me that we should ignore the substantial investments by prior governments in the development of the University of the West Indies with the specific focus of developing those same meaningful linkages with the industrial and development sectors of this economy. I therefore fail to understand why the current administration does not consider it prudent to seek dialogue with

the University of the West Indies in terms of deliverables required to facilitate its policy objectives, whether technological, or in realizing its human intellectual capital.

You cannot tell me at this point in time—It is difficult to comprehend why instead of dealing with the steps to build networking framework for the University of the West Indies, expand and be able to get all the resources to improve the production of tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago from 8,000—20,000 over a period of time, we must consider setting up a Trinidad and Tobago University which requires a tremendous amount of resources for a small economy of Trinidad and Tobago which would lead to no more than duplication when we can talk about accreditation. Do you have any idea when we talk of accreditation what that requires?

Mr. Vice-President, the staffing requirements at the University of the West Indies in order to maintain its accreditation, have seen the problems recently and I refer to the department of electrical engineering. The high standards that we must continue to maintain, the continuous quality improvement programmes, these are costly programmes which require tremendous amount of resources. How can you think about duplicating these resources? Instead what we must be thinking about is how to better deplore these resources, improve the efficiencies, and therefore, it is mind-boggling to me why we cannot dialogue with the University of the West Indies in terms of improving its delivery in meeting the Government's policy objective.

I turn to Intellectual Property Rights and the issues of—and I am sorry the hon. Attorney General is not here so I would probably leave it for another time. The Intellectual Property Rights are very important to us. Are we aware that there are times when the northern countries, the more developed countries actually would be prepared to develop countries that are more appropriate to the south if we have proper intellectual property rights, or a properly staffed intellectual property office? Furthermore, can you imagine in this same imminent energy boom about which we speak, the same energy sector companies required to invest would require this protection? And I have not seen very much on the establishment of this Intellectual Property Right facility.

I want to turn to the role of the private sector again because I think the private sector is integral to us moving on to the second level of our economy. We talk about becoming a financial services centre, a legal service centre, technologically based service centre, export of services, but there is zero rating only on these services that are physically performed outside of Trinidad and Tobago and supplied to a recipient who is not a resident of Trinidad and Tobago. This is what is stated in the budget statement and, yes, you have probably heard many comments on this, but I still fail to understand why is it for us to be able to

respond to a loophole means that we must now add 15 per cent tax on the export of our services. Would that not make us less competitive, or 15 per cent less competitive? We are now trying to develop this sector, we are trying to invest in technology education. At the onset are we not in the first instance killing this sector? I think there is need for further incentive. I would not have imagined that you would have added on 15 per cent, and I refer to the services like the transcription services in Tobago. Every intellectual based capital export falls into this area whether it is the financial centre about which we are talking, or becoming the technology hub of the Caribbean, all of these services will become 15 per cent less competitive than our international competitors. This is in conflict with our stated policy objective.

We want to aspire to become offshore software design and development centre, offshore data processing. I know you may say a solution might be the free zone status; probably that is what you need to look at, but compare this with the bureaucratic process required for the free zone status. I would like to compare this well with the practice in the United Kingdom and other countries like India which encourage consultancy, the export of financial and technology-based services. How then are you developing, or attempting to develop the export of services based on intellectual capital when they are taxed from the outset?

Mr. Vice-President, I would like now to turn to the issue of governance and impact on the public sector reform. We all know as a matter of fact in this new, global economy, and in emerging economies that weak governance is increasingly seen to be at the heart of economic development. The critical challenge is to look at the forces that shape public sector performance and develop strategies that would support public sector reform in the context of a comprehensive development framework.

The Central Bank Governor had alluded to the issue of public and private sector reform. We need a framework that establishes well-functioning, accountable, core public sector; a well-functioning legal system; mechanisms that promote citizens, the voice participation; mechanisms that promote competition; market competition among public agencies; decentralization so that local residents have a greater voice in decisions that affect their lives; an integrated approach in helping the country combat corruption; realizing the potential of E-governance, and in that way making the public sector more efficient. Promoting partnerships through Government Trust Funds, better access to timely, affordable and just dispute-resolution services.

How do we deal with this? You know, there is nothing wrong in terms of government's accountability, probity and transparency. The UNC had talked about

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it on several occasions. Under the UNC administration, the measures to combat corruption was the Freedom of Information Act, the Integrity in Public Life Act, Constitution (Amdt.) and the Parliamentary Committee Act—I think this was alluded to—the Judicial Review Act, and the Equal Opportunity Act. The UNC laid the Prevention of Corruption Bill 2001, and I hope the Attorney General takes note that the significance of this Bill must be underscored with specific reference to the international investors. Because if we want to promote an investor-friendly—

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. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I just wanted to reiterate the point of the Prevention of Corruption Bill, 2001, and the significance for international investors. That Bill sought to put in place more effective measures for dealing with corruption both in the public and private spheres. It establishes a permanent anti-corruption commission with powers never before given to any commission of enquiry. This is how you deal with corruption, Mr. Vice-President, not commissions of enquiry that serve to malign, and character assassinations, and witch hunts, a waste of public resources. Think of the impact. I want this honourable Senate to think of the impact on foreign investors if every time we can set up a commission of enquiry which becomes a witch-hunt and maligns people. Can you imagine an investor in this age of technology and communication where you put on CNN and it is in your living room? Do you think they would add on the cost of doing business in Trinidad and Tobago if this is the way we behave? Instead, I want to suggest that there is a better way to deal with corruption and this is how we deal with it. I hope the Attorney General takes note.

The Ministry of Public Administration and Compliance—the UNC administration had proposed a Ministry of Public Administration, you can call it any other name you know. Like everything else; the UNC has developed, the PNM adopts and changes the name of it and so on, but we have no problem. You can change the name, that is all right. The Ministry would deal proactively with the initiation of the legal and policy framework for ensuring transparency and good governance. I say this in the context, Sen. Enill, of being more open, being more transparent, so that we can build confidence in our financial sector and all the other sectors that we are about of the economy. It would also be responsible for

defining the policy and strengthening the legal framework for ensuring compliance with policies and ideals of transparency, accountability, fairness, poverty and management and disbursement of public funds. This I humbly submit, is very important to us moving to what we call that second generation, or moving this economy to the second level.

I have left the energy sector for last because all the foregoing impact on this sector, especially in light of the role of the private sector, the role of the financial sector, technology, the role of the services sector, manufacturing, et cetera. I just want to remind the honourable Senate of the gas reserve audit that was included last year which formed the basis of the natural gas master plan, but yet as we look at the budget statement this year, nowhere does the budget espouse the findings of this master plan. I am almost certain the reasons given would be probably they did not have time to look at the gas master plan. I am not sure. However, all I see we are talking about are the few upstream operators, revising the tax regime. Please be reminded that the majority of the upstream operators operate under the production sharing contracts, which tax liability is borne by the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

I have heard nothing about the diversification, yet we speak about diversification. How are we going to diversify this gas base energy sector? How are we going to improve? I hear about the GTL plant and I hear about the ethylene plant, but this is not enough because if we want to stimulate activity, there must be a holistic approach and I am almost certain that the gas master plan speaks to this issue of diversification. It speaks about a proper gas utilization policy and a gas pricing policy, all again because we want to talk about transparency in the energy sector. All I have heard is about the direct sale of natural gas to consumers, and removing the National Gas Company out of the loop.

The National Gas Company played the role as the de facto regulator in this industry. In the absence of the National Gas Company, there is need for a proper regulatory framework to ensure transparency. What is the gas pricing policy that is going to be used? What is the gas utilization policy that would be required in order to ensure that diversification, and that we are insulated from the external shocks in commodity prices? We talk about LNG, but we continue to go downstream with the LNG. So there must be added investments in other gas-based projects to ensure that there is that diversification.

I cannot finish my contribution without commenting on the Social Sector Programme which the last speaker, Sen. Kangaloo, went on and on about. I just want to humbly submit that by doing some calculations—at which Sen. Enill may

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want to look—the allocation in the budget is much less than one per cent of GDP, I think. If that is compared with prior programmes, it was about 1.5 per cent and yet, that current allocation only addresses a small portion of the poverty alleviation problem. What is required is social capital instead of the social safety net, and someone spoke about those issues. I do not want to repeat it.

An innovative created social programme. I want to agree with my colleague, Sen. Smith, that this is how we deal with the social issues in this country, that we give people a future, and how do we develop that future for them? Instead of giving them fish, we want to teach them how to fish.

In summary, the structure of the fiscal plan of 2002/2003 does not hold for sustainable, economic and social development. The proposed spending mix in 2002/2003 provides for less than proportionate allocation of capital goods. This can only lead to the decline of the economic fortunes built up over the past few years. New allocations do not support the second-generation reform. The budget characterizes a thinking pattern that the country moved away from the latter part of the 1980s. Sen. Kangaloo may want to take note of that.

It is incumbent, on the current administration, to ensure that the macroeconomic fundamentals are once more firmly anchored. It is also incumbent on the current administration to realize the maximum potential, and in so doing embark on second-generation reform in order that Trinidad and Tobago is equipped to meet the challenges of the global economy.

Mr. Vice-President, before I end, I would just like to leave one thing in the minds of my colleagues on the opposite side. Let us, in every attempt as we move forward, try to maximize the potential of this economy in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are all part of this economy and we all want to see Trinidad and Tobago progress. I humbly submit that we can become a First World nation by 2010 with an aggressive policy agenda.

I heard about Caroni (1975) Limited, when I listened to Hon. Rahael; that is not how we deal with it. If you deal with transparency as I dealt with it here, that will take care of all the unanswered questions, and it does not mean that when you give growth to one side, or that because I give out VSEP, that will continue to stimulate growth in the sector. It does not augur with the economic fundamentals.

I just want to end by saying, Mr. Vice-President, let us not kill the goose that laid the golden egg.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I wish to sincerely compliment Sen.

Seepersad-Bachan on her maiden contribution. Congratulations!

Sen. Dr. David Quamina: Mr. Vice-President, let me start by extending to you our heartiest congratulations on your appointment in the Senate. You have done very well and I hope you continue to do well until you take your leave from us.

We have listened over the last two and a half days to a wide spectrum of debate on the budget. It now falls to the few of us who remain to bring this debate to a close, and I intend to focus my intention on the health of the country rather than all the other things that the Senators before me have been speaking about and of which I know very little.

Health is a very important matter in any country. As the Government drives towards improvement of the human workforce and, in discussing health today, I am going to choose three things, and may I say I am going to be speaking very briefly, not at length as my predecessors did.

The three things about which I shall speak are: Cancer, heart disease, and HIV/AIDS. Now, we all know about cancer. I think there is hardly anyone here who has not been touched by a death or illness in the family because of cancer. Cancer can affect the skin, the bowels, and it can be very destructive.

Heart disease is equally a destructive condition. I am sure we all know many people who have had heart surgery and they are doing quite well. We all know many people who failed to do heart surgery and perhaps they are not doing quite as well.

What do we do with a patient who has cancer? The patient probably turns up at the clinic or in the hospital suffering from a problem about which he or she does not know. The patient is examined and cancer is identified. How do we treat that patient? We either resort to surgery if we think it is correct to do that, or we send him/her to radiotherapy if we think that is the better mode of treatment.

In Port of Spain, we send our patients with cancer to the St. James Infirmary if they are to have treatment for this and, quite often, the treatment for cancer there is very effective and efficient. But I do not have to tell anyone here that the St. James Infirmary is not an appropriate place for treating people with cancer, and that much better accommodation should be provided for people who have cancer. But they do go to St. James Infirmary and several of them survive long enough to see their grandchildren.

There is another hospital in Port of Spain which is the St. Ann's Hospital and people go there because there is some aberration in their thinking. Some of them stay indefinitely, some of them are treated and leave the hospital, but St. Ann's

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again, is not an appropriate place for treating patients with problems. We need to do something about St. Ann's, we need to do something about St. James and we need to do something about the Port of Spain General Hospital, half of which is closed because it is not habitable.

Now, what is the problem with all these hospitals? They have been in existence for a considerable while, they have been renovated and re-renovated and still they do not serve the purpose. Some of the buildings are very old and, as I say, at Port of Spain, some of them are not being occupied at the present time. Equipment is very few and far between, and when they do not work, we have to wait an interminable time to have them replaced.

If there are drugs for a few weeks and they are used up, you have to wait an interminable time to have them replaced, and when I speak about drugs here I mean treatment drugs, not the drugs that are taken on the wayside.

Mental illness is a very serious problem, cancer is a very serious problem, and HIV/AIDS on which I have touched is even more serious than the other two because so far, we are unable to cure this condition. So far, we can extend life by giving medicaments which are unable to cure the conditions of HIV/AIDS by any means that we know.

The people would come to hospitals for treatment of a condition and they probably come for small operations, or they may come for much more serious problems like a fractured pelvis, or a broken leg, or some such thing. If they are lucky, they would be dealt with immediately. If they are not lucky as many of us are, they would have to wait. Why do they have to wait? They have to wait because we have lost so many of our nurses; we have lost our nurses to America, to the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Sometimes, as I say, they are lucky and get treatment in good time.

The staff problem at the hospitals in Trinidad and Tobago is a very serious one. I think we are probably down to about a third of what the establishment ought to be in terms of nurses and probably a little better as far as doctors are concerned. We must remember when one goes to a hospital, it might not be an adult, it might be a child in distress and a child in distress has a problem long after the distress is solved. It might be an older child who needs perhaps, maternal care, it might be a child in school whose parents cannot be found and a teacher takes that child to the hospital, and the hospital deals with the child. Where is the mother of the child? The question is asked, and the answer is left unanswered. The answer would have to work itself out.

Now I touched on these three things and I want to reflect on what I have been hearing over the past several days. We have spoken at length about education, national security, and agriculture. We have had discussions about sugar, and we have had discussions about oil. We are building houses, but what about some of our major institutions in Trinidad?

What are we doing, for instance, about Queen's Royal College? I see mention was made this year about something being done to Queen's Royal College which has been neglected for a considerable time and needs to be looked at. Queen's Royal College is broken down, the rails are gone in places, the floor is out. If you are not careful, you would fall. We must do something about these higher institutions of learning in Trinidad or else we would get into trouble.

Tobago seems to be doing much better than most of these places. I gather that Tobago has got \$742.9 million for the year, that a new airport is being considered for Tobago, and I gather we are considering reducing travel from \$300 to \$200 per passenger and a ferry might be instituted. These are all things that should be done, and these are all things that we look forward to being done.

We heard many things about lands, we heard about problems in agriculture, pre-school, we heard about teachers, some comfortable, others uncomfortable; we heard about mothers and their problems. All of these are subjects that must be looked at in detail and not just looked at as things on which we touch.

We have schools with children who cannot hear; some have hearing aids, and some have none. Just this year we have begun to supply these children with hearing aids, and we hope that in time they will be able to use their ears to hear what is being said to them, but this is not all that is necessary for children. They need health care, they need, as I said, communication between the two islands, they need to be protected from violent crimes, and they need to have family protection.

Tobago's position in the budget is quite fair and I understand that Tobago even has the possibility of borrowing money to implement some of its projects. Let us do a complete overview of what is needed for Tobago over the next year. People do not like to wait long for medical services, they like to be treated as soon as possible, and what I present here today in brief, is that I would like some urgency to be put in the health services of this country so that people might feel comfortable.

Thank you very much.

Sen. Pundit Maniedeo Persad: *Seeya Raam May Say Jag Jaani Karoo*

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. PUNDIT PERSAD]

Wednesday, October 30, 2002

Pranam Jori Jug Paani. Mr. Vice-President, as I stand in this honourable Senate for the first time, I address you in the language of my tradition with a verse from the Ramayan in which, with all humility, I recognize the spark of divinity, the presence of God within all.

My greetings to you, Sir, and all the hon. Senators for prosperity, happiness and good health as we deliberate on issues for the ultimate betterment of our beloved Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Wade Mark, in his contribution, described the Government as wielding power without compassion, and suggested that the budget proposals would have the effect of creating a nation of hustlers and loafers. Such a description, in my view, is unfortunate and inaccurate.

It was Samuel Johnson who had said; “The future is bought with the present.” What we do today directly affects our future prospects. The decisions we make now would affect the lives of all our citizens.

Mr. Vice-President, our society has just come out of a keenly contested and, if I may say so, a bruising election campaign in which, in my view, our resolve for peaceful interaction was placed under test. As a people, we have done well to demonstrate our sense of responsibility and our love and commitment to peace and harmony.

12.00 noon

But the election is over. The People's National Movement has won. [*Desk thumping*] We have formed the Government and we are now addressing ourselves to the business of governance for the good of all the people of our republic. [*Desk thumping*] As we look at the current situation it is clear—and I use Sen. Wade Mark's 21 per cent of the population figure; although as my colleague, Sen. Kangaloo, indicates it is over 40 per cent. Be that as it may, at least 250,000 of our citizens are living below the poverty line. Recognizing this, the budget proposals are very strong in the area of social intervention in order to alleviate suffering and hardship. Yet criticism is levied at the social programmes, saying that they are handouts that will only increase and/or perpetuate dependency.

I do not know how many of us really have come face to face with poverty, pain, hopelessness and hunger, or have perhaps experienced it for ourselves. There is the maxim that says: “You can't think rationally on an empty stomach.” I dare say, some cannot do it on a full one either. [*Laughter*]

I want to quote from a maxim spoken over 2,400 years ago by the philosopher, a political commentator, known as Charnukea. He wrote in Sanskrit. I quote in Sanskrit and then I shall translate.

[Senator quotes in Sanskrit]

There is no enemy equal to hunger. Poverty is a great enemy to human happiness. It destroys liberty and it makes the practice of some virtues impractical and others extremely difficult.

Mahatma Gandhi, that outstanding visionary leader of India, in his pronouncements has suggested the following test when making decisions in the national interest. He suggests that we should: "Think of the face of the most resourceless person you know, who is weak, underprivileged, unskilled and in need of help in society. Then ask yourself, of what good will be the course of action I am contemplating to this person?"

I submit that our budget proposals by its emphasis on social programmes recognize the need to place people first, to provide as best as possible over a quarter million of our citizens the facility to lead lives of dignity as we provide direct and immediate relief. In addition, priority has been placed on education and training to assist in breaking the cycle of poverty.

It escapes my comprehension totally, therefore, how the hon. Senator could describe the Government as wielding power without compassion. In particular, the Social Help and Rehabilitation Effort programme as has been indicated, will distribute 15,000 food hampers monthly with each eligible household receiving the hamper for six months. The sum of \$23 million has been allocated for this programme.

The transformation and development centres is another initiative intended to allow citizens to acquire tools for self-development. The public assistance grant to needy individuals and families has been increased. Under this programme we have also allocated \$2 million for temporary grants to persons who have suffered from some type of natural disaster. Just yesterday in the newspapers again, we saw where families lost their homes due to fire. The additional cost of restructuring the public assistance programme is \$94 million. It is clear to my mind that the social programmes are, in fact, geared to meeting the needs of our citizens who require the assistance.

Turning now to youth. We must recognize that one of the most vulnerable groups in our society is, in fact, our youth. As I alluded to earlier, the future is purchased by the present. How we deal with our youth, our children, directly affects the future of our nation.

I wish to share with you a perspective on children from Hindu philosophy. The birth of a child is not just a gift from God, but rather, in this philosophy the

child is viewed as an embodiment of God. As such, the greatest respect, love and sacrifice is to be made to secure the future well-being of the child. With such a perspective, our goal is for every child being born in our country to be greeted with the best facilities and reception and to provide our children with the best educational opportunities that we can.

With this in mind, I wish to highlight some of the initiatives for children taken by the hon. Minister of Education which were included in her contribution, in particular, the expansion of the School Nutrition Programme. It is envisaged that 25,000 meals will be provided at breakfast and 92,000 meals at lunch with care being taken not to transgress on the religious sensitivities and dietary constraints of any section of our population.

The School Transportation Programme; provision of textbooks to primary students; book grants to secondary students this year, and from next year the textbook rental programme, with a scholarship programme for needy students to be also introduced, all these measures are aimed at nurturing our children.

When we look at the probabilities for youth the following programmes are being offered:

- The Caring, Happiness, Organization, Ideals, Communication, Education, Self-Awareness (CHOICES) Programme for adolescent mothers to provide services to pregnant teens and young mothers, a total of \$4.2 million allocated to this programme;
- the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) provides training and employment opportunities, a total of \$11 million has been allocated for this programme;
- the Export Centres Programme will target single heads of households with children, unskilled children and community-based organizations;
- the Civilian Conservation Corps will provide temporary employment for youths aged 18 to 25, a total of \$25 million has been allocated to this programme;
- On-the-Job Training Programme will provide pre-employment training to young adults aged 16—30. Over the next year 10,000 persons will benefit at a cost of \$18 million;
- The Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP) for adolescents 17 to 23, the sum of \$3 million is allocated for this programme.

In the field of agriculture, a sector which has been in decline, we are focusing on encouraging our youth to explore and gain first-hand knowledge of farming. Participants will be provided with a daily stipend over a six-week period with a total of \$33.5 million being allocated to this programme. This exposure, it is envisaged, will show the youth the potential for growth in the agricultural sector.

These are some of the measures by which we propose to deal with the developmental needs of our youth and empower them to self-development and self-sufficiency.

Turning my attention now to the elderly in society, it should be noted that how we treat our elderly can be viewed as an indication of the state of our society. Our elders are to be loved, respected, adored and treated with dignity. [*Desk thumping*] In that regard, it should be noted that we have increased pensions to \$1,000 monthly and will be providing free medication for the elderly and the poor and will remove customs duty and VAT on medication, amongst others.

Our society, as we know, is a multicultural one with people of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds all living here. I wish to highlight an initiative of the Minister of Education where in the nation's schools we shall be enhancing learning and creativity using music, while recognizing our cultural diversity. It was the hon. Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran who raised the issue of deviant behaviour in our school children and this programme, I submit, will impact positively.

I wish to quote from the Ministry of Education's project proposal entitled *Enhancing Learning and Creativity with Music*. It states:

“Within recent times, a great deal of research has been conducted on the effects of music on humans. Results show that music affects the emotions, the respiratory system, the heart rate, the posture and the mental images of the listener. These effects can greatly alter a person's composite mood, state and physiology. Music works marvelously to energize, align groups, induce relaxation, re-stimulate prior experiences and develop rapport.

Playing an instrument, or participating in a music programme in school...has been shown to have broadly positive effects on learning, motivation and behaviour. Research has shown, for example, that:

- Primary school children who receive daily music instruction had fewer absences than students who didn't;
- Courses in Music, as well as in Art and Drama, positively influenced the decisions of High School students in the United States not to drop out of school;”

It states further:

“Music has the ability to:

- Embed learning faster;
- Provide relaxation after stress or discouragement;
- ...encourage bonding;
- Stimulate the right brain hemisphere; and
- Increase attentiveness and concentration.”

It is said:

“...musical intelligence influenced emotional, spiritual and cultural development more than the other intelligences. Music helps structure students’ thinking and working by assisting them in learning mathematics, language and spatial skills.

It is in this context that this proposal is being implemented. Given the increasing incidences of school violence and a general...restlessness evident in many of our nation’s schoolchildren...”

Now this programme intends to provide students with a variety of experiences that help to develop their musical responsiveness, their understanding of music and assist them in acquiring some musical skills. It provides opportunities for students to participate in practical, non-practical and listening activities, including vocal and instrumental performance. It is intended to improve students’ development of higher order thinking skills, including analysis, synthesis, and creativity and it will improve students’ concentration, memory and retention, as well as lengthen their attention spans.

The programme has two elements which will be implemented on a phased basis. There will be the pan in the classroom project in which steel pans and percussion instruments will be supplied to schools on a phased basis into, firstly, those schools that have met the criteria for selection, which include a declared interest in participating in the programme. There is a coordinating committee comprising representatives of Pan Trinbago, Pan in the Schools Coordinating Committee, TTUTA representative, ministry representatives, teacher educators and pan tuners.

The second element of this music initiative is as follows: The Ministry will provide each school in the programme with a grant of \$20,000 to purchase instruments to create an orchestra. Instruments include the harmonium, tabla,

dholak, dhantals, tassa, jhalls, synthesized keyboards, acoustic guitars, flutes, clarinets, recorders, saxophones, among others.

The introduction of some of these instruments was suggested by the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha and they must be commended for this. This again demonstrates our Government's intent to introduce programmes for the benefit of all. [*Desk thumping*] Again, a selection criteria is in place which will include a declared interest by the school's administration to participate.

In addition, another \$5,000 to buy books, tapes et cetera, will be given to the school, and a fund to help provide music teachers to assist in delivering the music curriculum will be set up. It is envisaged that the programme will be implemented in 100 schools for the year.

This proposal, in my view, also has the potential to engender through music, greater appreciation of our different cultural streams. In this regard, there are those who may view with skepticism and unease, people who are different on the basis of race, culture and religion. I wish to remind all our citizens, in Sanskrit there is a wonderful quotation "Vaasudhaiva Kutumba Kam", which means, the world is one family.

This arises from the principle on which I started, that within each of us, regardless of the external visible differences that we see, is the spark of divinity and we are thereby related to each other.

For those who may have an inclination to create division and who may be finding it hard to accept diversity, I offer the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi where he says:

"The fragrances of all cultures will be allowed to enter my home. I will savor and appreciate them all, but none will sweep me off my feet."

Our unique cultural diversity must be celebrated and nurtured as it enriches our country.

As our Government moves to implement the programmes for the benefit of all our citizens, I want to suggest to all sections of the population that as a people, we need to become more proactive and to work hand in hand as we strive to achieve prosperity. Any section that chooses not to avail itself of opportunities presented to all citizens will be making a choice not in the best interest of themselves or society.

In conclusion, I wish to restate, the future is bought by the present. The time is now. We have in our country an abundance of resources and a talented people

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. PUNDIT PERSAD]

Wednesday, October 30, 2002

whose major challenge, in my view, is to manage our diversity. Trinidad and Tobago can be a paradise; God's own country, as some say. Our task, as a people, is to continue the process of nation-building as we move to realize Vision 2020.

Our mission starts, or it continues, today. In parting, I wish to share with all hon. Senators of this House, the profound thoughts of Swami Vivekanand. In addressing the need for positive action he says to all of us:

“If not now, when?

If not here, where?

If not us, who?”

I thank you, Mr. Vice President. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, once again I rise to congratulate another maiden speaker, Sen. Pundit Maniedeo Persad. [*Desk thumping*]

We shall take the lunch break now. The Senate is therefore suspended for one hour. We shall resume at 1.20 p.m.

12.20 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.20 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. Parvatee Anmolsingh-Mahabir: Mr. Vice-President, I rise to make my contribution to the debate on the document before us, Vision 2020: People, Our Priority.

Before proceeding, permit me to join my colleagues who have conveyed their compliments to you on your appointment as Vice-President of our august body, and embrace this opportunity to wish you every success as you conduct our proceedings in keeping with the time-honoured principles and traditions of our polity.

May I also extend my sincere felicitations to my senatorial colleagues who sit with me on this side of the Chamber, and to all those who occupy their seats reflective of their respective party representations, but who, I am sure, are determined, like myself, to protect and promote the interest and well-being of our cherished democracy which we hold in trust for our children and for generations yet unborn.

For most of human history mankind has sought Utopia. From Plato to St. Thomas More, from St. Augustine to Marx, not forgetting Kautilya's well-ordered society and state, in his famous Artha Sastra.

World civilization so far has never achieved this Utopia, not even the United States or the Scandinavian countries which came closest to it in the form of the welfare state. It remains as elusive as the Holy Grail in the Camelot legend.

I chose the analogy of Utopia because that seems to me to be the goal of the 2002/2003 budget. The Minister of Finance has sketched his version of Utopia, culminating in a developed country status by the year 2020; a wholly laudable and praiseworthy goal. The critical question is whether the means of achieving Utopia are practicable and realistic. If they are not, the noble knight of the round table, Sir Galahad, may be transformed into a deluded Don Quixote tilting at imaginary windmills.

This budget, long on rhetoric, pregnant with idealism, devoid of realism and saturated with the jargon of the social scientists, fails to provide concrete guide or a road map as to how we are going to attain this state of grace.

The questions I would like to raise are: Where will the revenues come from to support these programmes in this fiscal year, as well as in the subsequent years? Are we going to embark on substantial borrowings to exacerbate our debt servicing of some \$6 billion in this fiscal year? Do we have the systems and human resources in place to deliver what has been promised?

At the end of the day we must be closer to Utopia, otherwise there will be a disillusioned, disappointed and dissatisfied population. Their dream of a better world would have dissipated in foam.

Let us examine two aspects of the budget: Education and Culture. The rest I will deal with in the course of the legislative life of this Chamber.

Yesterday, the hon. Minister of Education in her contribution in this august House eloquently outlined measures to improve the education system. They are indeed laudable. Some of these major initiatives stated were:

- (1) The increase in the number of early childhood care and education centres.
- (2) Improvement in the physical facilities.
- (3) Improvement in the governance and management of schools.
- (4) Free visual and hearing testing.
- (5) Modernization of the secondary school curriculum to make it relevant and appropriate to the needs of the individual and the global environment of the 21st Century.
- (6) The de-shifting of the junior secondary schools.

One is heartened by the proposal to improve the physical facilities in many of our schools. It reflects a consciousness of the dilapidated conditions therein, despite the enormous sums that have been expended over the years by both state and the denominational bodies. It is heartening to know that the Government will improve the governance and management of schools. It reflects an awareness of the crises which have confronted the principals of schools. I am sure we all recall the two most recent spectacles of what transpired at the Arima Senior Comprehensive School and ASJA Girls College. Let us not have a repeat of those incidents.

The hon. Minister, however, must be commended for her initiative in attempting to deal with the root causes of indiscipline and the lack of control in our schools. The moral and ethical values would be channelled, I hope, through the content of our educational system and it needs to be clarified, specified and internalized at all levels of our society.

A holistic approach to the curriculum is admirable, but if every single group adds something new to it and it is included in the curriculum, students may very well have to attend schools 10 days per week and suffer from information overload.

The de-shifting of junior secondary schools is long overdue. We are all too familiar with the attendant ills of that system. If and when this feat is achieved, I can almost hear the collective sigh of relief from all stakeholders, especially the parents.

This budget also addresses the issue of tertiary education by expostulating the wholly laudable objective of "providing affordable education at the tertiary level; that no student is denied a university education based simply on the inability to pay." This is social welfare at its best! Progressive thinking! I applaud and endorse the old system of bursaries which went into administrative limbo, but is being resurrected.

The old Napoleonic code of careers open to talent will be facilitated through the financial munificence of the State. I hope, however, that appropriate mechanisms will be put in place to ensure transparency in the selection process, and rules and regulations outlined so that the beneficiaries of such largesse will reciprocate by displaying loyalty and devotion to our country by staying here and making their contribution to its growth and development. Of course, only time will tell.

The Government has provided \$2 billion in its budget for educational development, with very noble intentions. Never before in the history of education

in this country has so much been allocated to education. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago stands out as a beacon, as a shining example, which other developing countries can do well to emulate.

I congratulate the Government on its budget presentation, on its vision, on its conceptualization, even though many questions abound with respect to the methodology, for translating theory into empiricism. I am inhaling, waiting to exhale, when the time comes for the Government to translate its vision into reality and to be able to sustain the applause which I have begun today, if they could successfully attain the lofty and noble ideals of budget 2002.

Before taking my seat, I would like to share my thoughts with the august Chamber on the aspects of the budget that deal with arts, culture and entertainment, aspects of our society's development that, like education, is equally dear to my heart.

I am delighted to learn that at last we are going to have a national strategic plan for culture, with widespread stakeholder ownership. I agree wholeheartedly with the view that we need to develop the cultural infrastructure and expand the opportunities for our artists and entrepreneurs, to develop and market their talent; all laudable objectives. I agree there should be facilities for the performing arts. I disagree, however, that there should be an Academy for the performing arts.

Why single out only the performing arts for special mention? Culture does not only embrace the performing arts. It is multifaceted with various permutations and combinations which incorporate the performing arts.

I, therefore, wish to propose that there should be an all-embracing centre for arts and culture, an expansive building with sufficient facilities to cater for all branches of the arts. Whereas the Princes Building may be ideally located, such a structure would of necessity have to occupy the entire area.

In this regard, the likely problems which could ensue with traffic management, parking and related activities, particularly if activities are taking place in the savannah simultaneously, could produce the ultimate traffic gridlock. In an emergency a crisis could very well ensue.

If people are our priority, the people in the rural areas must not be neglected. They too must be allowed to develop to their maximum potential. In view of the fact that Port of Spain has the arena theatre of Queen's Park Savannah, the Jean Pierre Complex, the Central Bank Auditorium and the newly refurbished Queen's Hall, while in San Fernando the Naparima Bowl will be renovated and improved, there appears to be nothing for the East or Central in respect of the performing

arts. Consideration, therefore, should be given for the performing arts to be located in the East or in Central.

I commend the concepts of the Best Village competition, although I think it could withstand some refurbishment. The community council programmes are a delightfully novel idea, almost akin to the flowering of culture through similar medium in the towns and villages of medieval Europe and ancient Sumerian culture. It would certainly give a new lease to village life and make greater use of our community centres. Quite apart from taking some of the drudgery out of everyday living, it could be the avenue for identifying and marshalling the cultural talent of our people.

I note that particular attention is being paid to the development of our national instrument, the steel pan. I endorse the proposal. I trust Pan Trinbago will be brought fully on board with the appropriate ministries, particularly when it comes to the introduction of pan in school. At last, the concept of introducing pan in school through the medium of free choice has reached the level of policy implementation. What is even more noteworthy, and the Government ought to be fully complimented for this, is the democratization of the process by introducing other musical instruments reflective of our multi-ethnic society.

The introduction of the harmonium is a step in the right direction. There is absolutely no doubt that this is one of the surest routes to create inter-ethnic harmony and the highway to cultural cross-fertilization to produce the quintessential Trinidadian in a blend of many cultures. It is said, "If music be the food of love, play on."

The issue of pan as against harmonium to be introduced in the schools has been raging for quite some time. The position of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha was articulated as far back as 1994. An article in the *Express* newspaper of July 6, 1994 states, and I quote:

"The pan is definitely a percussion instrument. It is an attempt to formulate notes of the temperate scale. It cannot play the subtle struties so basic and essential to Indian music..."

The society needs to facilitate the free, creative growth and expression of its citizens. We need freedom to choose which instruments our children should learn music on. The music of the Indian Trinbagonian has its basis in our scriptures. It emanates from the primal sound AUM. Those who criticized the use of the harmonium as a means of learning Indian music should listen carefully to its use in the singing of Indian songs.

As citizens of Trinidad and Tobago we must all enjoy the legacies of the varying races that inherit this beautiful land. Each has its contribution to make."

The case has been made years ago, the Government has finally listened. Let us move on, and let us not only stay with the harmonium. We have an indigenous instrument, the tassa. Let us look forward to that being introduced in the schools as well.

However, since our society is a plural and multicultural one and this is the only land we can truly call our own, I would be equally delighted to see those of us of Middle Eastern, Chinese, Portuguese and European extraction all making their cultural contribution to the ethnic tapestry which is Trinidad and Tobago.

In closing, Mr. Vice-President, national development can only take place if all groups in the society feel that they are part of it. The critical element is to pull all those groups together in pursuit of a national programme of development, to eliminate what the present Leader of the Opposition referred to many years ago as "alienation". We want unity in diversity, but we can also have diversity in unity, where our citizens can blossom to their fullest potential.

I thank you, Mr. Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, let me take the opportunity to congratulate the Senator on her maiden contribution in the Senate. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Community Development and Gender Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams): Mr. Vice-President, may I add my sincerest congratulations to you on attaining such high office and the professional manner in which you have executed that office so far.

Let me also compliment all those who have joined us in the Senate and especially those who made their maiden speeches this evening. I thought that we have had an excellent debate so far.

I stand here a little surprised at having been asked to speak at this time, because we have been following an order so nicely today, but it seems that the cat and the mouse have started to play at this hour, and recognizing that we all would want to go, I decided well, let us make our contribution. Because, as you know, we have also had a lot to say and so much has been said—and my colleague has just reminded me that we are not afraid to talk or afraid to have anybody rebut what we say.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. J. YUILLE-WILLIAMS]

Wednesday, October 30, 2002

This evening I just want to look at two areas which arose during the debate. One is the surprise that has been articulated here by the Opposition, that they had lost the election, or that we stole the election. I have to tell you, I could not believe it, that coming to this Chamber to discuss this budget, I was going to hear that we stole the election.

The Opposition had complete faith in the Elections and Boundaries Commission. We were the ones on this side complaining about the procedures involved. How come, then, at this time, they have now thrown their bosom friends to the wolves and are complaining that we stole the election? Do they no longer have confidence in the Elections and Boundaries Commission? Or is it a convenient way, when you win, or when you draw, you think, yes, they work for you, and when you lose, you say that they do not work for you?

Let me tell you something. I sat here—and I am sorry my good friend, Sen. Wade Mark is not here. He is an old warrior. He is someone who tells me he can stand up to all the challenges, but during this budget I saw him hurting. He was really pained and I still wondered why. Not only Sen. Mark. I was in the other place last week and I saw what somebody said, a wounded stag, and I said to myself, why so much pain; why so much hurt. When you go into a battle, you are winner or loser.

I remembered some time ago, earlier this year when we were reviewing the Crowne Plaza accord, some people were very bitter at the meeting. When we said, let us get together and share power, we got a hasty retort which says, "You think we do not know what is power and patronage?" I have never forgotten those words.

I said to myself as I listened to the debate, that is the reason. Having lost power and patronage, that is why some people are so hurt. But for those of us who do not see it as power and see it as service, when we sit on that side, we continue to work. [*Desk thumping*]

This morning we got a third reason why people were hurting; why people were sad; why people were pained. The hon. Senator, in her maiden speech, told us that they had a lot to worry about. That is some cause for pain. Because after the Hon. Attorney General made her contribution, some people never slept last night. Whoever wrote the words, clearly that came from the heart, and clearly if I sat on that Front Bench, some of us would certainly have a lot to worry about at this time. But you have friends on the other side, I hope.

Therefore, we have come through this debate with a number of people who have certainly been very uncomfortable in the Parliament for the last three days,

but it has taken them a long time. For the last nine months we have been out there, and we were there working with people.

1.50 p.m.

You ask yourselves why you lost the elections? Ask yourselves what you did for nine months. I dare say that would be for the next five years when this Parliament reconvenes, it will be herein and only the Back Bench. We will work. I hope you understand what I mean.

Last week Friday, while debate was ending in the other place and the hon. Prime Minister was there, I was in central Trinidad at a party group meeting. I inducted 60 members into a party group. There were 150 persons present. I can show you another membership form where those people joined in March, April and May. They joined when they had a chance to decide, when it was 18–18. They chose to join the party. That is why I can confidently tell you that if we continue the work we have been doing, five years from now, there will be no more of you on that side. We were working for nine months with the people. My colleagues demonstrated through all the programmes how to work successfully with people. The people we worked with believed in what we were doing. They took us into their confidence. We delivered.

This morning, I was taken back when the hon. Senator, I am sorry to refer to it, in her maiden speech, tried to chastise the hon. Attorney General for some comments she made concerning one of her colleagues. When those comments were made yesterday, I was hurt. I told a Senator on that side the same thing. I will read the comment from Sen. Dr. Kernahan.

“We conducted an election in this country that really frightened me because I felt we had crossed an invisible line, whereby the people of this country were obliged to conduct an election under threats of fear and terrorism in this country; where the Government of the day had an open alliance with self-confessed terrorists in this country.”

Mr. Vice-President, I am the Minister of Community Development and Gender Affairs. My business is to look after all the people and communities on behalf of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago. My business is to ensure that I can help them to improve the quality of their lives. My business is to ensure that if at any time we see groups or perceived self-confessed terrorists who probably display anti-social behaviour, to assist them to cross the line to get within the main stream of things. That is my business! I have officers in the ministry who are paid to assist. I compliment the officers of the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs for the work that they have been

doing over the years. They have gone out there, fearlessly, to ensure that who you call self-confessed terrorists are in the mainstream of things and we give them their due and what is necessary. When I heard Sen. Dr. Kernahan stand and I know that our budget dealt with social programmes and development, looking at her past experiences, I did not condemn her for it and I am not condemning her—somewhere along the line she felt that there was another way she preferred to express herself and she did just that. Therefore, probably some of the characteristics she exhibited then, are some of the same characteristics that this perceived self-confessed terrorist group that she is referring to, exhibits now. I could not believe that she had made a swing straight from the right to the left and had now turned her back on this group. I thought that when she stood there, she was going to give us some advice. That is where I thought she would come from. Not sit there and criticize the Government for assisting all groups in the society. They talk about equity and social justice.

When the hon. Attorney General spoke about it, people were dissatisfied. She should not have said that. When you do that you have now alienated yourself and you are gone on one side. We are now looking at all groups. I compliment Sen. Arnim Smith and I will tell you why. It is not that I like this strategy he would use, but the fact is he was there on that side and he knew the people and that they needed him. He stood by them. I am sure, Sen. Smith—forgetting political loyalty, stay with them, I am not asking you to change—that you are of the commitment that as we continue to work with all the groups, you will be there to make an intervention on behalf of the people you represented here yesterday, in this Parliament. He knows and he has seen us working with the people in the area. The people we work with are real people who are committed. They tell us that they want to change; give them certain things and how they wish to help.

Could I turn my back on those people because you feel they are self-perceived terrorists? I would be failing in my duty to Trinidad and Tobago. I will not. We will continue to ensure that when the rain falls, it would fall on everybody. I am quite sure that I will get some help from that side. It might not be the person that I think should be leading, but there are others who are committed to the work that we have to do.

I have gone to the same area, Carib Tokyo panyard that Sen. Smith talked about. He knows that his leaders are drawing the plans to put a new design for that area. Part of it is to encourage economic activity in the area. It is a two-storeyed building. It is in the heart of the same area where she thinks there are some self-perceived terrorists. They are constructing a building there now and have offered it for rent to the Community Development Division to hold classes.

At the back of that area, there is a playground which the ministry funded. There is a park at the top. There are bathroom facilities with which we have decided to work. When they ask me why they lost the election, that is why. It is because they do not see people out there as real people. They see them as self-confessed terrorists, but we see them as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago with whom we must work. As long as we continue to see that, we will win every election. I tell you that.

I felt the pain that he felt when he talked about the houses in which those people live. Those houses were built many years ago for one family. There are second and third generations in the houses so they have become too small. People do not like to leave again. While walking there, I asked them and they said that they have to come out on the block and sit on the wall, lime and get involved in gambling. I asked them: What could we do? They said to put lights in the courts, so that at nights they would have a longer time to play.

During 1991–1995, we recognized the problems in housing. We cannot break them down, but we can build more. There was a fire in Laventille that destroyed about 13 houses. I was the Minister of Community Development and the ministry responded. We put some of the people in the Spree Simon building and took some to Maloney. They told us that they did not wish to go to those areas, they wanted to be back in Laventille. We had to build some houses for them. We built upstairs housing better than what was there. We built the John John Towers for the same people he was speaking about. What happened? We tried to build it as nice as ever. We put a little carpet on the floor. I do not even know the price of the carpet. Their government found that those houses were too good for the same people he was speaking about. They were never given to the people.

We struggled—and I am sure that the hon. Senator would know, he is an honest person—to get our people in them. While we were begging to get them in there, we heard it would be a football hotel. It was good for the foreigners to go in but not our people. We were not in government. I remember saying that I was there. We promised these people those houses. They belonged to the people. We were going to give them at the same basic rental that they could have afforded. He is saying that the people are in there now, but those people who were burnt out could not pay what those people are paying now. Let us be honest. Some of them were unemployed and some had low incomes. We did not think that it was too good for them. It was subsidized housing. All over the world there is subsidized housing. As we build newer houses we build them better than the last set.

We recognized the deficiency after so many years. They never let them in.

Those who are in there now are people who could afford to pay. Thank goodness that among the people in that area, some could have paid the rates they were asking. Every time I look at those buildings, I feel sad because the people for whom they were built were never allowed to get them. There is also the Savannah Villas. Right now they are middle and upper class. Because of the value of the houses their government said that people of low income cannot get in that. They were going to sell them at market rate which brought people like them sitting in here and those above to live in them. All those houses should have been for the people that they are concerned about. Sen. Smith, I know you are concerned. Those houses were built for them. Those people would have been able to pay for them with a PNM government because they would have been subsidized. The State would have taken up the cost. They sold them at market rate and a number of people got in there. Some did not even pay. They had to evict many persons from those buildings because some of them were there for months and never had a contract. The government could not revert to the other rate because so many persons had paid so much money. They had to be sold at the going rate.

When the hon. Senator speaks, I know that he speaks from the heart. It is my responsibility to let them know the attempts we have made to improve as we go along. The Minister of Housing spoke about other houses which are being built. With this Government, when we build those houses for the people of that income bracket, they will get them. We will continue to put the carpet all about. There are many in Debe. I saw the plans for them. Wherever land is available houses would be built for the people. I know and feel for them. We will move this thing forward.

The PNM cares for the people. Dollars and cents are the taxpayers' money. It is not our money. We would spend it on the people. We would not fritter that money away. In that short time we were able to construct all those houses. Unfortunately, before the election, we did not know that savages were going to take over and the houses were not distributed. That is the mistake that we made. We did not think that whether we won or lost that the government would not give the houses to the people. We thought that it was government for the people, but we learnt something else. We recognized that it was government for some people. It was not even for all of the "some" people. It was for those who live in a certain bracket. I will never forget their struggle to give Jack the John John Towers, so that people from Costa Rica, Panama and Canada would live there. Those people helped with the struggle and told them that that land was theirs and those houses were built for them—move! We are sensitive about what is happening there.

We won the election because we made some strategic intervention in communities. We took people who other people would turn their noses at and they

helped us work. We tried that experiment for nine months and worked hard. There were people who wanted to do better for their families, friends and themselves. They came out as leaders. They knew what they were about. There was one young gentleman who was going into the fire service. I found that he was such a good community worker and after discussing with him working at the ministry, he said that he preferred to work with his people. He had already passed the exam to enter the fire service. We employed about three of them. They made strategic intervention for my officers because they knew the people. So successful was the intervention that the Community Development Division advertised for 39 officers, one from each of the communities. We are taking them on to work. Positions for youth officers, cultural officers, environment officers and sports officers were advertised. In each community there would be one officer who would work with the public servants. That strategic intervention came because we studied this for nine months. That is why we won the election. We worked with the people and showed them that we appreciated them and now, we would have five persons from each community working together with the officers. They would help to develop their communities. When we say that we care, that is caring.

We have taken it further. When they talked about the Rock City intervention, that is a model for the Community Enhancement and Regeneration Programme (CERP). I heard the hon. Senator talk about some communities where there is no water, no proper sewerage and no lights. That is what this programme is all about. It is about bringing life to a community. The community development officers went to Rock City with the Community Development Fund, National Commission for Self-Help, WASA and T&TEC. That is a squatting community on a hill. We talked to the people about their needs and what we could give. At the end of it, we decided to give them roads, light, water and a playground. The cost was \$1.5 million. It was finished in a very short time. The Wesleyan Holiness Church was in a dilapidated state and I asked the permission of the pastor to allow the Government to refurbish it, so at the end of this physical enhancement we would be able to conduct programmes in that church. That was the only space available. She gave it to us. They are still working on it. They are working on the kitchen. There would be an extra room and a computer room. There are ten communities in which we would work. Whoever wants to see, can go to Rock City. In nine months, we did all that. That is why we won the election. We did not steal anything.

We had set up four of them. Now that we have left, there is a committee working with the community development officers organizing the people. You have quite a lot to worry about. What we tried to do for the people of that area,

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they destroyed. We spent \$8 million to build a pan theatre at Desperados panyard. It is one of the best. The design of that theatre had a base where there would be shops at the bottom. We had decided to upgrade the road. If you go up there and look over, you would see the most beautiful place. We were going to build an outdoor amphitheatre. Parking would have been at the bottom. When the tourists come they would have known that they can go there at any time to hear music. We wanted to give back to Laventille for what it had given to Trinidad and Tobago. We left that in progress. What did they do? They cut the design and removed all the shops. When the pan theatre was completed by NIPDEC, they never formally opened it because it belonged to those people. They left it there and it was vandalized. Now, it would take us \$3 million to refurbish that building. When they talk about self-perceived terrorists, I wonder whom they are talking about.

We came in with nine months on a fixed budget. The people at Despers understand. Before we do it, we have commissioned NIPDEC to build a fence around it. That would cost \$790,000. We would refurbish that building and pass it over. That is our contribution. Why now? Then people tell me why you lost. We stole? You had to lose because you were showing the things you did not do. That area gave Trinidad the pan. I am sure that you have seen the design.

We have decided to improve heritage gates around Trinidad and Tobago that would speak of the heritage of a particular place. For that area, there are two gates which are now being done. They would cost \$171,000. We are now working with the Mayor to put up the gates. The people are waiting to see their gates to say that pan city is theirs.

While we were doing our work and seeing about the people, they were sending out hate mail and taking young people to deposit things like this in my letter box. [*Pamphlet shown*] “PNM Achievement In Only Eight Months”. It came with the person who is opposing the representative of that area. I would not call her name. She is my friend. It is negative advertising. While we were serving the people, they were taking young people to walk with hate mail. While we were serving our people, they had young people carrying false WASA bills. Why Mr. Joseph won? The people of Mayaro worked for him. Look at this! [*Clipping shown*] This is people and organization. These people have not only learnt to manage a campaign, but also to manage their lives and constituency. While they were giving them hate mail, and while they were destroying themselves, the National Social Development Programme, one of the programmes which brought together the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs; Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment; National Commission for Self Help;

Community Development Fund and Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management for social delivery—we were working with the people. That is why we won the elections. We wanted to recognize the cultural contribution of our citizens.

The heritage gates are being done. They are as follows:

Mayaro	BellAir City
Point Fortin	Calypso City
Sangre Grande	Drum City
San Fernando	Engine of the Nation

All the cities would be recognized for their cultural contributions. Some communities had more difficulty and we had to find out from the people what they wanted their communities to say. Any visitor coming to those areas would see the gates. In Point Fortin there would be speakers on each side, and you would hear the calypsoes as you pass through. The engineering designs have been done. We recognize the cultural contributions of the people. We would continue to work on the same transformation centres because in the end, there would be a new set of entrepreneurs.

With the National Social Development Programme we have 60 community centres being renovated. We would do more because we know people need space. We are also doing schools, day care centres, places of worship, bridges, roads and sporting facilities. We were doing this for the people, that is why we won the election and you lost. In nine months we came and all the programmes that you heard about here, we have tested nearly 99 per cent of them. Some of the education programmes are already in the schools. You were concerned about linking this with our vision. Some people said that this was a dependency syndrome. You are concerned and quite rightly should be. We know that people must contribute and we are trying to move people from one state to become contributors to the development of their communities. If you work hard with us to move our people, and stop pulling back and saying that it cannot be done, we could do it by 2010 with your help. I agree with you, Sen. Anmolsingh-Mahabir. It would not happen overnight. As we move towards 2020 much would be done. The Senator has signalled to us that we need to get there fast. With the kind of commitment I am hearing about in this Parliament, I am sure that we would move faster.

I commend all those who made contributions. I listened to Sen. Dr. McKenzie and she said that they are not going to stop because they are interested in giving advice and contributing to what is being done and therefore, stay for a third year. I appreciated what she said. Thanks to all those who gave advice. It would not fall

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on deaf ears. We want to get there by 2010. I have to tell the Prime Minister that two Senators said we could make it in a shorter time. We would not stop when we reach there, we will continue to develop.

I like this ministry, it is a people ministry. You work 24 hours a day, but you feel satisfied when you see people give you the “thumbs up”. I went to see them paint the building. They regulated themselves and used the officers we put with them. I must compliment them for the manner in which they went about their business. They feel good because they helped to do it. It is small but they are part of the process. They are willing to work. Some took no part because of the politics. They stayed out. That has changed to a large extent. With God’s help we would get there. We would get all those people they call self-perceived and whatever it is, on board to help develop Trinidad and Tobago. I have that confidence.

There are other areas that we need to look at. I have brought everybody into it, but we still see some gaps. People talked about the macro imperatives, human resource development, social development, equity and justice for all. That is where we are. We have to ensure that there is equity and justice for all. Certain gaps still exist and I have a responsibility as Minister of Community Development and Gender Affairs to close the gaps. If I do that, I would be able to get more people to participate in the development. I have to close those gaps by reducing some of the obstacles to development. There are gaps between male and female, boys and girls.

Everything we talk about is not what we would do, but we are already doing them. We are continuing a process that was started. I feel pleased to be part of a government that did so much in nine months. I walk around smiling all the time. The people of Trinidad and Tobago are happy. I am sure you saw them. They felt like a burden came off their shoulders after the elections. People were light and singing a different tune. The stock market went up because confidence returned. Last Sunday, I was in a thank-you motorcade. It rained and people came out dancing. Why are you not happy? People are happy! “Come on man!” Smile!

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, 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. J. Yuille-Williams: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. This is the fastest 45 minutes I have had in my life.

There are gaps within the employment rates. In 2000, we had about 38 per

cent female to 61 per cent male. There are also income gaps. We want to carry everybody towards total participation. We had to create employment. We noticed that some time ago much migration took place of female heads of households because they were unable to get work. Many of them could not return and they left their families here. That caused many problems. We felt if we could close that gap and make opportunities for all, probably, we could stem some of the problems where families are left without heads. We looked at the non-skilled areas. Previously, women were not involved in welding. We did courses for them. We started in 1995.

I have noticed that at the end of the training, when I spoke to some businessmen, they were all happy for the trained women, but none could have taken them because the workplace discriminated against women. Those places were not designed for women. We must have legislation stating that when a work site is built, it must accommodate men and women. We have run programmes in agriculture. We started horticulture and nursing care.

We needed to bring another group of women who are entrepreneurs but need to expand. They need to get access to credit and be involved in information technology. Some of them are not linked into the formal structure. We are doing programmes to assist those women because they must contribute to the vision of 2020.

At the terminal malls, nearly all the business people are women. When I got to the ministry they were given eviction notices because they were unable to pay the rent. I said we cannot send them away because we have done nothing for them. They are now undergoing a course of training in financial management and marketing of their products. We would work with them and take them to get loans to help them to develop their businesses. We are putting someone to monitor them.

We went to the export centres. The Prime Minister said our programme has lost its way. We found that so many women were unemployed. We turned those buildings which were left by the NAR government into centres for training in craft. When they have become skilled craft persons they can produce out there, bring their products to the centre and export from there. That dream died. The same persons we left in 1995, we see them now as workers. Nothing has progressed. When I raised an alarm bell, people said I want to put them out. They have been working for small salaries for five or six years. They are saying that they are unionized. We are now forming them into companies according to their skills. We would give them loans. Some of them are setting up as a group. When we set

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them up we would bring 500 new trainees to do their period. We will continue at the end to set these people in business.

I thought people were harming the people on that programme by keeping them there doing the same thing. Export centre has \$3 million worth of fabric and a similar amount of ceramics in warehouses. They killed the programme. They manufactured and marketed the products for friends and family, but the people were left behind. We paid \$6 million a year and no revenue came into that. We have done a management audit of the centres to see what we are doing and what we have. We spent nine months doing this and we are ready to take them on board because they are a part of the vision. We will now resurrect the export trading company and make it the trading arm. So that the persons who manufacture will not have to think about marketing. We will do that for them.

As we close the gap we will look at HIV/AIDS. Our statistics tell us that to every five women there is one man and it is increasing. Many of them are heads of households. We have to look at our discrimination law. Some of them would not be able to work. They will have their families. They are alive and can contribute to economic development.

In terms of education and training there is also a gap. We have to look at reducing the rate of attrition of boys from the education system. We are going to train our teachers and work with parents at PTAs. They need to know how to socialize. We have had problems with socialization. I have been a past teacher and I always say, if you go through some of the texts we have, there are certain activities for males and certain activities for females. The opportunities are lost on both sides. We want to remove that so we must have that gender citation training with education personnel. We want boys and girls to have the free option to go into any class.

We looked at the rural women who are out there. We would continue to work at those centres and continue the distance learning programmes. Some farmers can go there to get an education. This is part of the project that we have already started. Where does that lead us? A policy and a plan are missing. We launched that national gender policy. We have taken the secretariat to work it. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the Canadian Government and UNDP have given us money. When we have this policy, it would tell people what they can do and what they cannot do.

Last week I went to the meeting of the Muslim women. The speaker was a past senator who spoke about marriage and the contracts. I listened to the philosophy. It is not only public consultation. We have to go to specific groups

because everybody must share in the consultation, so when the policies are made it will serve Trinidad and Tobago. All progressive countries that are looking at sustainable development must have a national agenda policy.

Let me move to culture. Some people do not realize the importance of people. The Best Village Programme is a programme in which people are involved. You have tried to kill that programme. When they did not give very little money, they said they were having consultation and symposium. This was the best ever. People were anxious go out there. I am sure you saw the folk fair. I saw Sen. King was there. Thanks for supporting it. I thank Sen. Anmolsingh-Mahabir for the community concerts programme. We had 45 of them. These concerts brought communities together. Debe and Penal had theirs on the same day and we were running from side to side to both concerts. This was nothing for particular areas. Out of those concerts we would be picking some of the better people to have a cultural caravan. We would bring those artistes around the country. We decided to use it as a social intervention. When Anaconda went we had Anaculture. It was the best.

We had the 40th anniversary celebration. Many said that \$3.8 million was too much for culture. Trinidad and Tobago came together. Ask Sen. Satish Ramroop. Eight thousand came to the chutney explosion in central Trinidad. We were one. Tobago started it. We ran that torch from Tobago to Trinidad. We want to develop an entertainment industry. You would see how much money we would give to those companies who want to have video production. We have just started. We won the election because of what we have said to you. We are with the people. I assure this honourable Senate that we will not fail the people of Trinidad and Tobago, whether they are self-perceived terrorists or otherwise.

Thank you.

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Mr. Vice-President, permit me to congratulate you on your appointment and on your already expert performance as Vice-President in this Chamber. [*Desk thumping*]

May I also welcome the new Senators to this place that we like to think of as the place of conscience and of consciousness. To those who have made their maiden contributions and have never served in another place, I would like to say that the naturalness with which they have taken on the tone and temper of this House is a promise of fruitful collaborative endeavour and a guarantee of the preservation of the character and dignity of the Senate in the coming weeks and months.

There are some general comments I would like to make on the budget, some notes that I would like to scribble in the margins and then talk a little more

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concentratedly on the subject of education. After all these years of professing, I still find myself having too much material and, therefore, I am going to leave out the notes in the margin and just say that BWIA is the national airline and it must not fall. I want to ask why is a company, a private company, going to oversee the redistribution of Caroni lands? On the question of crime I want to ask that more police be located at strategic points in this country, and if necessary, that we should build police booths, like telephone booths, to be seen in the distance, so any citizen in distress could know there is a police there.

We need, for the development of agriculture, a document in every respect like the Tourism Development Act which spells out in detail, every possibility, every concession, and every encouragement available to those in agriculture.

So those were the marginal notes. I cannot expand them. My general comments have the subtitle: 'The magic island'. Post socialists like myself believe steadfastly in the possibility of belief, and we cling to the dream of social equity. I, therefore, commend the Government for its stated intentions to tackle the causes and consequences of poverty and to uphold and advance the dignity of the person by promoting self-reliance and self-help. I will help them.

The Government's answer to those who accuse it of creating dependency is to say that it feels obliged to provide as a short-term measure, direct and immediate relief to the impoverished and vulnerable groups in the society. It claims, however, that its social policy is really transformational and developmental, and that its aim is to secure sustainable advances in human and social conditions. Since it is early in the term, I am prepared to believe this and to wait for the evidence.

I wish the Government strength to resist threat and temptation, and resolution to abide by the principles of democracy, human rights and social justice it has proclaimed, so that it may do what it says it wants to do and carry out its social intervention programmes for the benefit of every creed and race, every gender and every age group in our society. [*Desk thumping*]

I said I want to believe that they will do what they say.

Sen. Joseph: We are telling you that.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Good.

Implementation is never easy, but it can become difficult in countries like ours where there is entrenched a first-past-the-post, winner-take-all electoral system and an establishment of two main political parties, each with an ethnic base. It is a formation that can lead to the most unthinking partisanship, the blindest and

deafest adherence to party and party leader, and every five years a seasonal rash of fear, suspicion and jealousy that just does not square with the way we actually live with one another from day to day.

Until the Government forms a fist and tells me to lay off, and declares that it knows exactly what it wants to do, and that it intends to carry out its plans as it has a mandate to do under the unreformed Constitution, I am determined to take this budget statement and the Social Policy Framework as a script that invites and requires participation by all in the creation of an even better Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to begin in this spirit, because it is a script which, as everybody agrees, lists all the topics that matters socially, economically and culturally. The budget is thinking about poverty, health, education personal dignity and personal fulfilment, social and ethnic integration, economic growth and care for the environment. I cannot protest against that list, and I want to help to fulfil it.

Most scripts benefit from being work-shopped by those who are participating in their development. Most scripts are open enough to be susceptible to additions and deletions. Most scripts place a burden of interpretation upon the actors and directors, and most scripts call for and can entertain the most wonderful masks and costumes, set designs, lighting and choreography. I am serving notice to the Government that I consider the budget a script and I want to play my part and the nation wants to play its part.

You can say that what I am also saying is that we must make a virtue of the fact that the Government's plans are general and undeveloped in many places, lacking in detail in other places, and stingy on how and when implementation is to begin and how it shall proceed. I suppose you could think of that as a weakness, but I want to think of it as a strength and as an invitation to us to participate. Now that we have had our restoration, maybe the new Parliament will be allowed to be a kind of joint Parliament of parties and people, finding their way together.

Why I like this budget is because it reminds me that Columbus did not know where he was going, and look, he discovered a new world. This might be the destiny of the present Government of Trinidad and Tobago if it can humble up itself enough to embrace participation and encourage full representation.

Before we can fulfil our dream of development, it is absolutely necessary for the ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago to put into words the understanding of, and familiarity with, one another they obviously have and live when nobody is trying to manipulate them. We need to articulate, to put into words to one another, the differences and difficulties that we have with one another.

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We need knowledge, but we cannot proceed without self-knowledge. I would suggest that some kind of working group be established to promote activities and discussions, public discussions that will allow the ethnic groups to show themselves to one another and to encourage open debate on whatever comes out.

In the meantime, I think it is the responsibility of this Parliament to so parley and carry on its business that the population will be encouraged to stop holding back, to ease the tension, and to be what they are in the David Rudder calypso, which I am not asking you to sing along with.

2.50 p.m.:

I think the words can be read as a poem:

“Many rivers flowed to this naked isle; bringing fear and pain but also a brand new style

And of all these rivers that shape this land two mighty ones move like a sculpture’s hand

And today these hands—across the land, they’re still landscaping

And there’s no doubt they’ll work it out, there’s no escaping”

Mr. Vice-President, I call it a poem. This poem recognizes the existence, also, of people who have set themselves apart and above. But the poem sees, against these people, the endurance, work and bonding of the people of the rivers as something which could save them from those who wish to manipulate and exploit.

“The boys with their hidden agendas

And the mind benders”

The poem tells us:

“The people done take in front”

And the people can be generous.

“Various smart men and politicians can come along if they want”

Mr. Vice-President, I think, the politicians and the people who run this country have a lot to learn from the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I feel it is the duty of this Parliament, as we meet, talk and work with one another, to set an example at the highest level. It is our duty to demonstrate that we are one nation. It is our duty to work towards the creation of a sound economy and a society moving, and grooving, and stepping in style, and teaching the world a thing or two.

I hope you have noticed, Mr. Vice-President, that I prefer not to use the western-fabricated term; a developed society. Whenever I go to a developed society I run back home as quick as I can. Remember what development did to the Caribs and Arawaks.

The second short section, Mr. Vice-President, I call the bounty. The bounty that wells up in our blessed land is not the result of discipline or productive efforts on our part, but we still benefit from that bounty. And there is talk of a coming bonanza of which we will get even more.

Mr. Vice-President, I will never forget one Minister of Energy—the owner of the “Cow”, as it were, who came to this place boasting about how the country had secured its pound of flesh from an investing multinational. Our cow, and he was so pleased that we were getting one pound of flesh. In the coming bonanza, we need to sharpen our negotiating skills and get more from those who rush in and invest in areas of the economy, where there is the least risk.

So, Mr. Vice-President, I agree with those who think that our economic prospects are bright. At the same time we need to listen to the careful voices among us, including that of our colleague, Sen. Mary King, advising us that a certain amount of prudence and contingency planning is necessary. We cannot be sure that oil and gas prices will remain favourable, indefinitely. We do not know how the strains on other people’s economies and how events in other places, would affect us. You can keep your head, while others around you are losing theirs, but if you are a liberal trading nation, your economy cannot stand up high while others are falling.

On the question of imports, Mr. Vice-President, we could be asked to pay higher prices by those who grow the food we eat; those who produce the commodities that we have to import; and those who supply the consumer items for which we have developed inordinate appetites and cravings. May I say, incidentally and pessimistically, that the reason why we will never have a secure economy is that we refuse to understand that we have to change our inherited lifestyle.

Incidentally, again, Mr. Vice-President, I would like to tell you that my late mother was a PNM fanatic until death. She believed, un-chronologically, that the PNM’s introduction of free secondary education, in the 1960s, had given me a government exhibition in 1951. But that is the way of fanatics. She was a fanatic also because she felt that the Buy Local Campaign, and Dr. Williams’ plan to can “topitambo”, were the beginning of the end of the colonial mentality.

Sen. Dr. McKenzie: She was right.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: I know; that is why I love her and remember her all the time.

My last general comment, Mr. Vice-President, is also about matters the experts talk about in language that ordinary decent people cannot understand. But what I understand is this; we are becoming more and more dependent upon foreign direct investment and nobody seems to be noticing that these foreign direct investors (FDIs) are queuing up to invest in sectors of the economy like natural gas and oil, where the investment is not risky, and the take-home profits are high. We do not seem to realize that these people need us more than we need them! We do not seem to realize that for them now, absenteeism has no joys and as soon as they come here, they want to acquire a house and land right away, and the only reason they are not asking for citizenship is because they do not want to pay any income tax. "Trinidad is nice, this place is a paradise" and we should have pride in ourselves. Instead of whoring after the investors, let them come whoring after us.

Mr. Vice-President, there is a complementary change that is taking place in this society; a change in the nature of the plantation system. The former slaves and indentures are migrating to the metropolis to work in the urban fields and jungles. And the absentee landlords are coming down here to live in the sun. That is what is happening with these FDIs. I suggest that we draw up a list of areas in the economy that our vision for our society dictates that we should develop. We should turn our foreign direct investors to foreign "directed" investors. It is not what you want to invest in but in what we want you to invest.

I would give favourable terms to any group who could build a toll bridge joining Trinidad and Tobago. I would give favourable terms to any group who could teach us to grow dhal, channa and peanuts. I would give favourable consideration to any group who could encourage yam plantations and cut the wheat import bill by producing baking flour that is 75 per cent wheat flour and 25 per cent yam flour. I would give favourable concessions to anybody who has the resources to develop a fishing industry that would be concerned with making sure the reserves are not depleted as we are harvesting fish for use fresh, and for canning, smoking and salting. There are all kinds of things that we need to have developed in this economy but we do not have the money to do it. And if foreign investors want to come here and work and commit to getting a reasonable return for their investments, we should direct them there. So, Mr. Vice-President, that is me, walking a road that literary critics do not walk.

Before commenting on any one aspect of the plans for education and training, as set out in the Public Sector Investment Programme 2003, I would like to present an overview of the system in the form of figures relating to the population that is to be educated and trained. The figures, I will present, show, firstly, there are some serious problems in the system that affect the implementation of any education plan. Secondly, the figures clearly demonstrate a number of key points at which children fall out of the system. Thirdly, the figures show the necessity to take account of the mutual influence on one another, or the interaction between education, poverty, crime, health, and nutrition. You cannot think about any one of these things without thinking about the other.

I want to begin with some figures from 1999. Mr. Vice-President, 1999 was the last year before the decision was taken to shovel all children taking the Common Entrance Examination, pass or fail, to a secondary school or to any place dubbed or designated a secondary school. So, in 1999—and 1999 was not very much different from the preceding 20 years—30,000 children wrote the Common Entrance Examination of whom 20,000 were sent to secondary schools and who would, hopefully, write the Caribbean Examination Council Examination, five or six years later.

It is difficult to be sure how the 10,000, not placed in the secondary schools, were disposed of, or how they progressed. But we could assume that, at least, 60 per cent of them went nowhere, certainly, not to any school that we call a school. Mr. Vice-President, this kind of dropout has been going on for at least 20 years. About 6,000 per year just fell out over the course of 20 years and we do not know what happened to them: what was done for them; what kind of training they got; what jail they made. We do not know what happened to them, they are just lost.

But if you look at some figures of the labour force for the year 1990: of a total labour force of 467,700 there were 5,500 people with no education at all; there were 23,700 who only reached Standard 5 in primary school; there were 108,600 who only reached Standard 4; and there were 92,200 who had primary schooling, up to Standard 5, and some kind of training—it did not lead to any kind of certificate or diploma, but some kind of training: 5,500 plus 23,700 plus 108,600 plus 92,200. Mr. Vice President, I do not have to read and spell for you, nor do I have to read and spell for Members of this Chamber.

Even if we find a way of stopping this leak or haemorrhage, the society still has a large number of people now, between the ages of 13 and 35, who are living in some kind of depression, pointlessness, indifference, alienation, rage and

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resentment. So what are we going to do about them? How does education reach them? These are some of the people who Sen. Seetahal and Sen. Prof. Deosaran spoke about, who belong to this group; who have been gathering over the years.

I think, Mr. Vice-President, I would like to refer hon. Senators to a very useful discussion of our post primary or non-primary dilemma; a document—and if the hon. Minister of Education does not have one, I will lend mine to her. It is called: Post Primary Education and Discussion Draft, done by Dr. Ralph Romain in 1997. It is a very useful, thorough and intelligent discussion of this problem, which shows us some of the things that we might try to do.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to look now at the figures relating to placements in secondary schools between 1984 and 1997. For each of the years 1984 to 1997, about 20,000 children were placed in secondary schools. In 1997, the figures are: junior secondary schools 11,257. Mr. Vice-President, and hon. Senators, you know that the junior schools are three-year schools. So of the 20,000 children who are placed in secondary schools every year, or have been placed in secondary schools for the last 20 years; over half of them between 10,000 and 12,000 are going into junior secondary schools; 1,335 in senior secondary schools; 1,493 in composites; 2,730 in government secondary schools and 3,299 in assisted or denominational schools; another 1,200 go into private secondary schools.

Mr. Vice-President, everybody knows that this is appalling. Everybody knows that half of the children in the land are into some kind of shift system; they are placed in the junior secondary schools. And you know part of the worthlessness of some of our educators, the worthlessness of the whole establishment of the CXC, that when this CXC examination was started, it began with an examination. Here you are, governments and the university and everybody are paying you to begin a Caribbean examination system, and the first thing you present is an examination that they have to take in year five.

You cannot present an examination for year five, unless you have developed a curriculum for the years leading to year five, so that schools will know that we are heading there. And we have five years in which to work with our children; to get to know them; to go outside of the syllabus. You know, there is a little examination business right there in year 5, but we could educate them, because we have five years to educate them. In many of the five-year schools, they just lime and idle for the first two or three years, and then they say, oops, examinations are coming up in the fourth year. They start to tighten up and then in the fifth year they kill them and students have to take extra lessons and all kind of things.

Mr. Vice-President, the poor junior secondary schools. They do not even have

a curriculum. Some of them do not even have a book list. Plenty of them do not even have teachers. The only persons they have are students—children who have no place to go so they come to school.

So we have a problem about placements and that problem is reflected—You see the size of that problem when you look at the CXC results. The CXC results in mathematics and English, for instance, in 1999—what I am giving you here, is just mathematics and English: 1999, 20,580 students took the examination in English. Thirty eight per cent of them got 1s and 2s in English, and 62 per cent got 3s, 4s, 5s and 6s. I do not think that is a very healthy figure. Twenty thousand took mathematics, 19 per cent got 1s and 2s; 81 per cent got lower than 1s and 2s.

There is a reason why that is happening and the reason that is happening is that we feel proud about the number of people we are putting in the secondary schools. But we are playing a numbers game. Over 50 per cent of the people who go into our secondary schools are not ready for the secondary schools. I will give you some very shocking figures. Common Entrance Examination scores, 1992; everybody below the twelve thousandth mark is graded “poor” in mathematics—and the numerical grade they have is 23 out of 65. The fifteen thousandth candidate got 23 out of 65; the twelve thousandth candidate got 24 of the 65; the nine thousandth candidate got 36 out of 65. So between 6,000 and 9,000 they are a little shaky; below 9,000 they are kind of weak—just about viable—below fifteen thousandth, palpably, they need special attention. The figures are slightly better, I suppose, in English where, below the nine thousandth mark they get 35 out of 60; below the fifteen thousandth mark, it is the same as in mathematics, 23 out of 60.

So, Mr. Vice-President, when we talk or think about our educational system, we are thinking about a system from which children dropout early in the primary school days; we are thinking about a system which dumps over half our children into three-year junior schools; and we are thinking about a system that admits, into the secondary school, over 12,000 children who are not ready for secondary education.

And just to complete the story to make another point, Mr. Vice-President, I have a table about students writing examinations in 1999. Well, obviously, the figures are for different years. In 1999, 30,000 children wrote the Common Entrance Examination. In 1999, 20,000 children wrote CXC. In 1999, 3,759 wrote A’level. So you are starting with about 30,000 children in primary school, and only 3,759 write A’levels. Of that 3,759—our top students are brilliant, they are not the greatest in the world because the world is not just the English-speaking commonwealth and politicians should stop boasting that our children came first in

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the world in anything. The world does not write A'levels. But still our people are brilliant at the top—four A'levels plus GP, 58; three A'levels plus GP, 1,519. So 1,600 of the 3,759, you could say are quite brilliant. Seven hundred and forty five get two A'levels, plus GP and 459, one A'level, plus GP.

So what these results indicate for us is, first of all, the need for more A'level spaces. And when you look at people entering the University of the West Indies, in 1999, the figure was 2,500 students. So you start down the road with 30,000 and you end up with 2,500 going to university, to tertiary education. And then they have people who dare to write in the newspapers and go on radio and television and even come here and say we do not need another university.

What these A'levels results tell us, and what the entry to the university tells us, is that there is a need, not only for more spaces, but also for spaces of a different kind. Let us take the 2000/2001 entry: Agriculture, 37 students entered agriculture with two A'level subjects; 289 entered Natural Sciences with 2 A'level subjects; 270 entered Humanities with two A'level subjects—and in a way that is a lie because I was taking students in, after they did not get in Social Sciences, Computers, Medicine, and they have no where to go, they come by us—we are scrunting—we take some of them with one A'level. But, officially, two A'levels is required for entry. In engineering it is three A'levels; in Medical Sciences, three A'levels, Social Sciences, three A'levels.

So if you look at the intake, and if you compare the number that goes to university and the number you start with in the primary system, you need more spaces. If you look at the quality of the intake, what you are saying is that—first of all, you need to diversify, you do not just need more secondary school places and more people taking A'levels, you need a more diversified A'levels syllabus, following from a more diversified five-year system.

When you produce this diverse group of A'level graduates, you will have students who want to go, and will do a lot better in a technical university of Trinidad and Tobago. So, Mr. Vice-President, I do not want to belabour the point, we would have a lot of opportunity to talk about this at another time in this Chamber, but I just wanted to show, first of all, the whole field, the dropouts and fallouts and the invisible losses in the field. And then you wonder where the people who are committing the crimes come from, where is unemployment coming from and where are the vagrants coming from. They are coming from those who fall between the different levels and schools in the system and we cannot pick them up.

It is commendable that the Government has developed all these kinds of youth programmes to try and tell them to come and take a little SERVOL course, or come

and take a little course in this, you think they are coming? They are tired! They are sleepy! They are hungry! Their lives are disordered! You could set up courses until you are blue, five “fellas” will start and after three weeks, you only have one. You know how many YTEPP teachers—people who are teaching YTEPP say: “Oh God boy I would not get paid, this class diminishing, I wonder how I will get those students to come back?” They start YTEPP but then they drop out.

So it is a liberal decision to try and have those courses, to make them available but we have to revisualize, to reconstruct the educational system in such a way that we do not have these dropouts. And you do not have these dropouts because you teach them properly, but because you have a society that is forming a certain kind of human being; a person who is not starving; not in poverty; not living in one-parent home; not living in a shack; a person who is not living under constant stress and tension.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran says that the eggs are hatched in the secondary schools. Well I am glad he put it like that. The eggs are hatched in the secondary schools but they are being fertilized about eight or nine years earlier; when the children are three, four and five years old growing up at home. The eggs are also being fertilized when the children are in the primary schools. And if we want to deal with the whole educational system; if we want to help a certain kind of human being to evolve, we have to know that we cannot do education without directly addressing the question of poverty, and knowing that over half of the children who attend primary schools, come from poor homes. They are poor children from backward communities.

And, therefore, you cannot let the IADB design your school for you. You cannot let a local contractor design your school for you. You, certainly, cannot let the ministry officials design your school for you. You have to get people who know about education, who know about children and social conditions here, and who would know that we have to take the bull by the horns and recognize that primary schools, in a country like ours—with a history of slavery and indenture, colonialism and continuing history of poverty and parentlessness—have to recreate an ideal, or create a kind of home atmosphere. They have to expose children to adults who treat them as human beings—the teachers in primary schools are doing parenting.

The primary school is like a home and I keep begging somebody to give me a few million dollars to set up my ideal pilot school, which I am going to design like a house; it will have toilet, bathroom, kitchen, living room, dining room, playing room outside and so on.

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While I was hatching this scheme, Mr. Vice-President, by pure accident, I remember that the private school I went to was by a lady called Miss Jerome and her daughter and when I went there in the mornings and Miss Jerome would be making tea and cooking lunch and so on, and you would have to sit and wait. Then she would come and teach, she would give you water to drink; she would give you a piece of what was cooking and she hug you and ask you if you bring the coconut because she wants to make sugar cakes. Then she would teach you your arithmetic. So the whole day it was not just school, it was just like home.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President, thank you, colleagues. Mr. Vice-President, I understand that Sen. Mark does not want to speak at all or to use any of his speakers, could I have his hour? [*Laughter*]

Yes, Mr. Vice-President, I was saying, when you look at the society and you think about education, we are dealing with a minefield, and people who are dealing with a minefield live in a maze. On January 04, 1999 a Note concerning the restructuring and decentralization of the Ministry of Education went to Cabinet. This Note really comes from a self-examination by the ministry and it also comes from their reading what a number of committees said about them; the National Task Force on Education, the Coopers and Librandt Report, and the report of the Textbook Task Force.

I will not bother to read what was said, but the ministry reading this recognized that there was an urgent need for two things to happen: one, they must decentralize and, two, the regional educational districts must be empowered. They wanted Regional Educational Districts—they call them REDS—to be established as proposed under section 10 of the Education Act. These Regional Educational Districts would take over operations; operations planning; district level planning; trouble shooting; day-to-day administration in relation to schools; conflict resolution; liaison with denominational and other boards and service delivery.

These Regional Educational Districts would make the educational provision in the district a system with two or three secondary schools—if they have that many—with four or five primary schools. Relationships would be built between these primary and secondary schools to ensure an uninterrupted, undisputed and

stressless flow from one to the other. Implicit in that was the question of zoning—I do not know why this country has not gone for zoning, if you had zoning all the schools would get good. The only reason some schools are bad is because parents who have money and who care about education are sending their children to the already established good schools.

But if they force you to send your child to Lengua Methodist—if they have a school like that—you would be joining the PTA; you would be going to the meetings and talking to the teachers; giving them your little \$50 per month; writing to the newspapers and to the ministry, and that school would soon be on its “Ps” and “Qs”. So we are sabotaging ourselves by not zoning, but I am not going there yet. I am just saying that we need these districts that would set up a coherent system. Incidentally, that is how I feel the whole country should be run. Just as they have a Tobago House of Assembly, I want a St. Patrick house of assembly—of course, I want to be Chief Secretary. [*Laughter*]

I do not know what has happened with that but I believe, if we are going to do something about the educational system, we are not going to succeed unless major restructuring takes place in the Ministry of Education. I do not know if the hon. Minister has this. My spies gave this to me and I could let you see it too.

Sen. Manning: Mr. Vice-President, could I tell the hon. Sen. Prof. Ramchand that right now, before Cabinet, we have a proposal to start decentralization and the establishment of REDS. A committee has been established and they would get working, hopefully, before the end of the year.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: I am very glad to hear, Mr. Vice-President. Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mr. Vice-President, I think the argument for a university of Trinidad and Tobago would have to be made at another time. I simply want to congratulate the Government on its decision to start thinking and talking about the establishment of such a university.

I have some strictures about the basic education project by which the primary schools are being developed, and the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP). I was really delighted to hear the hon. Minister say, that when she came into office she realized that there was a lot of inefficiencies and delays in both of these. I think that there are also certain technical points about the meaning, the purpose of education and what is a curriculum, in the way in which the SEMP project is being done. You do not—as they are doing—say that you are going to bring out the curriculum for year one and try it out for two years, and

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then the next year you are going to start working on the curriculum for year two, and try it on for another year and so on, and go piecemeal year-by-year in a few schools, and 21 years later when you work it out and it is no longer relevant, and you have to get a new SEMP.

Sen. Manning: Mr. Vice-President, could I, again, through you, inform Sen. Prof. Ramchand—I am so sorry that he was not here yesterday—we are doing exactly what you are saying. We are putting together a dedicated committee to look at the curriculum and work on it constantly, so that it would not be as piecemeal as you are saying. That goes on stream in the next month or so.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Thank you very much, I hope that committee does not behave like a lodge. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Vice-President, I want to indulge myself in the last 15 minutes that I have by doing a resumé of some of the ideas I have about the educational system that appeared in a book called: *Contending with Destiny*. The passage which is about two pages long, I think, will take me about four minutes to read so I would not say any more about it.

“The time has come for us to conclude that our independence is compromised and vulnerable and it is so because we go through series after series of external motions and development plans without having discovered or seized the inner country whose fundamental reality, the creative imagination is never tired of intimating. What we need, in brief, is a complete revamping of the system of education in the region in the light of our own answers...”

Not foreign consultants’ answers.

“...to the questions ‘What is education.’? And ‘What is education for?’ Somewhere in the new dispensation there will have to be made, philosophically, a living connection between education and the creative arts; and this will be reflected in a commitment to use the creative arts as a means in the delivery of education.

What is called for in the first place is a series of measures designed to raise the level of consciousness and the degree of self-knowledge through the entire population and in the whole Caribbean region. The system of education in the region should ensure that every person is at least trilingual for ordinary communication and for accessing the rich literatures of our region; school curriculum in each set of territories should include exchange visits to the others to enhance familiarity and to facilitate language acquisition.”

A proper native system of education means.

“...debunking the practices and objectives that many of our bureaucrats and administrators slavishly follow, and embarking upon the construction of a system and a curriculum of our own, taking into account our particular means and needs...

It means abolishing competitive exams for secondary school places.”

Changing CE to SEA is Twiddle Dum and Twiddle Dee.

“...and with them the books, teaching practices and curricula these have spawned; and after that, there will be need for clear recognition of the difference between the educational task of providing for a wide range of learning experiences in the schools and the administrative one of devising a way of assessing aptitudes for the different kinds of secondary schools that must be set up.

Investment in the kind of education that is being suggested here may well turn out to pay back with interest when we try to imagine the effects it would have in preventing sickness, reducing crime and aberrant behaviours, and in lessening the need for the building of prisons and unsuccessful correcting institutions.”

So, Mr. Vice-President, what I am saying is that we would have to re-conceive the whole educational system, and link our plans with education very concretely and directly, with the eradication of poverty. We have to begin a new way of educating children in the very design and construction of our schools.

I thank you.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift): Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. Like my other colleagues, I, too, wish to add my congratulations to you on your elevation to preside over the deliberations of this honourable Senate during the current 2002/2003 budget debate.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide this honourable Senate with a general overview of the state of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs upon my assumption, or should I say resumption of duties in the Ministry last December.

I would preface my remarks, however, with the following introduction. From the perspective of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, articulation of domestic policy priorities ought to find the complementarity in the delivery of foreign policy objectives. Basically, the foreign policy objectives of my Government are normally predicated on the twin pillars of foreign economic policy and foreign

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trade policy. Naturally, therefore, a country's economic foreign policy would include such areas as international finance, whether this is from public international financial institutions, or other recognized official sources.

Any career diplomat, who has served different administrations during his or her career, would agree that if a government has no clear and coherent domestic policy agenda, it would be also true that it will not have a well-articulated foreign policy agenda. One complements the other and indeed, Mr. Vice-President, both are inseparable. The lack of awareness of this dictum could not have been more self-evident in the last UNC government, as will be demonstrated later.

The vision-based underlying theme of this Government's manifesto, which informs the 2002/2003 budget is that of making Trinidad and Tobago a developed country in the shortest possible time and, certainly, by the year 2020, with people as priority as the centerpiece of this object. The pursuit of this object would be better appreciated, therefore, if, as I said earlier, the legacy of the Ministry, which I inherited, could be placed in its proper perspective.

Firstly, I inherited a visionless ministry which, for a number of years, had undergone a series of metamorphoses, in name and, consequently, in its manner of functioning, resulting in extreme demoralization of staff and general confusion in its mission. Formerly, the Ministry of External Affairs, it underwent its first name change to the Ministry of Enterprise Development, Trade, Tourism and Foreign Affairs, to later become the Ministry of Enterprise Development and Foreign Affairs.

The net result of this constant metamorphosis, through merger of one kind or another, was that professional diplomatic staff became disoriented, demotivated, confused and therefore unable to function alongside newcomers from other ministries, who could best be described as aliens to the traditional business of foreign affairs.

Indeed, for the very mutating name, the role and function of the Ministry were whittled down from what was once a full-fledged ministry to a mere appendage, tacked on the other Ministries with which there was no natural relationship. From the foregoing, therefore, it was very simple to deduce that foreign affairs activity had all but collapsed in this ever-changing hodgepodge arrangement. As a result, professional staff sought more stable career opportunities in other ministries, as well as in the private sector, or secured secondment to various other institutions.

The chaos continued to the serious detriment of the Ministry's representational function overseas. Some of our major embassies, as well as High

Commissions, were languishing from the lack of representation at the level of ambassador or high commissioners. Among them were Washington, Brussels, Geneva, New Delhi and London.

In addition, the situation was further compounded by the last Minister in the UNC administration who, apparently, oblivious to the most elementary tenet of good diplomacy in his capacity as the ministry's chief diplomat, embarrassed the country from capital to capital, including Port of Spain, in his customary uncomplimentary tirade against presidents, prime ministers, fellow Ministers of Foreign affairs, as well as senior secretariat officials within and well beyond our Caricom borders.

In short, Mr. Vice-President, instead of winning friends and influencing people to support our cause, the UNC government was making enemies unnecessarily around the globe. Indeed, some urgent, corrective and remedial damage control measures had to be undertaken in order to win back traditional friends, on the international diplomatic circuit, beginning with our own Caricom partners. Moreover, the urgency of this remedial action became even more pressing in light of our international political and economic agenda at various fora.

Within the United Nations systems, we were pursuing the International Criminal Court initiative. In a hemispheric context, we were also pursuing the Government's bid for Port of Spain to be the headquarters site of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, as well as positions within the Inter-American System, in keeping with the foreign policy objectives articulated in our manifesto, some of which are excerpted as follows:

Regionally:

“The PNM will continue to support the deepening of regional integration and recognizes the historic responsibility of Trinidad and Tobago to contribute to the development of its neighbours, having regard to the considerable benefits that it has enjoyed as an exporter to its neighbours. This will be achieved by:

- Promoting initiatives of the domestic private sector to develop joint ventures and other complementary investments among neighbouring countries; and
- Developing technical assistance packages to support the development programme among neighbours and to the advantage of Trinidad and Tobago.”

Internationally:

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“The PNM will continue to focus its foreign policy on promoting and protecting the country’s political, economic, trading and cultural interest and links at the hemispheric and international levels, in keeping with national development plans and priorities and at enhancing the country’s profile. This will be conducted through:

- The development and execution of well-defined strategies and targeted objectives, coupled with a judicious allocation of human and financial resources and a well-equipped and highly trained staff. It will include the strengthening and/or establishment of overseas missions in the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe and Asia, and in important commercial and political centres of the world.”

More specifically, the PNM will:

- “Focus on the training and professional development of personnel and the reconfiguration of the ministry’s physical and technological infrastructure;
- Strengthen the regional integration process and our bilateral relations to Caricom, and in particular, with the countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States;
- Pursue and enhance mechanisms to facilitate and deepen areas of cooperation with Venezuela in fisheries, security, trade and investment, transportation and culture;
- In cooperation with the Ministry of Energy and Energy-based Industries, it will develop and implement mechanisms to facilitate the utilization and exploitation of cross border gas fields;
- Monitor activities in the global energy arena and analyze trends and their implications for Trinidad and Tobago;
- Work closely with the manufacturing sector to increase exports to and win new markets in Latin America and new niche export markets in the USA;”

Mr. Vice-President, I wish at this juncture, to remind this honourable Senate that, historically, successive PNM Governments have made meaningful foreign policy pursuits in the national and regional interests a matter of the highest priority. In line with said priority, and beginning with our first Prime Minister, Dr. Williams, PNM Governments have registered astounding successes in inserting the political and economic philosophy of Trinidad and Tobago on the international political agenda of many existing world and hemispheric institutions.

Indeed, it would be correct to say that successive PNM Governments transformed many of these institutions, or created adjuncts with sufficient autonomy in furtherance of national interest. Under Dr. Williams, we spearheaded Caricom's entry into the OAS. We sought and secured admission into the Inter-American Development Bank and we did not stop there. Once admitted to membership, we followed the Caricom Heads of Government mandate to press for the inclusion of Guyana into the bank by way of a charter amendment, as well as an amendment to secure funding for Caricom. We fought for our own seat on the board of executive directors of that institution, since we believe that we were better able to defend and promote our national interests.

3.50 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, following the ostracism of Cuba from the OAS and its full participation in major United Nations economic bodies, we agitated for and succeeded in establishing the Caribbean Development and Coordinating Committee (CDCC) of the United Nations, as an autonomous body, thereby enabling Cuba to be included in the development dialogue of the region.

We successfully led the charge to establish the Inter-American Investment Corporation, which is the IADB equivalent of the IFC of the World Bank, for purposes of private sector development financing.

Under the present Prime Minister we created the Caricom Trade and Investment Financing Facility at one of the hemisphere's premier international financial institutions, the Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF) headquartered in Caracas, Venezuela.

Furthermore, we, again, took the lead, having created that facility from which the Caribbean benefited at the outset to the tune of TT \$180 million for private sector financing, to become a member, in our own right, thereby creating considerable goodwill since we were not geographically an Andean bloc country in the Americas which the Bank was established to serve as a complement to the Andean Common Market. This very visionary initiative laid the foundation for massive joint venture investments between Trinidad and Tobago and other members for the Andean Development Corporation Bank in the energy sector, for example.

Similarly, under previous PNM Governments, Trinidad and Tobago played a lead role in the establishment of important hemispheric institutions such as the Latin American Economic System (SELA), headquartered in Caracas, Venezuela.

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Mr. Vice-President, not only did past PNM Governments participate actively in the establishment and fashioning of major hemispheric institutions, we went even further. We sought to ensure that our qualified nationals staffed these institutions at the highest professional levels as was the case of the Deputy Secretary General position of the ACP Secretariat in Brussels in the person of our present Secretary General of Caricom, as well as at the Organization of American States in the person of our own senatorial colleague, Ambassador Christopher Thomas.

As I said earlier, successive PNM Governments, because foreign policy is not new to us, have performed creditably and consistently in the international arena. [*Desk thumping*] Our voice has always commanded respect because we were resolute enough to deal with major issues. To the contrary, the same cannot be said of the UNC administration that was in office for the last six years. Indeed, I do not recall any single initiative taken by that administration, simply because they did not have a clue about foreign policy issues, whether they could adversely affect the interest of Trinidad and Tobago or not.

As I said before, as a government, if you do not have a coherent domestic policy, you simply cannot have the framework for a proper foreign policy.

Mr. Vice-President, to all appearances, the domestic policy of the UNC administration was always one inclined to cutting a deal here and cutting a deal there. It is this UNC “dollar-for-dollar”, “you take one and give me one or more”, policy that has left this Government the legacy of a massive law suit against us by the Canadian authorities for serious environmental violations in respect of an 80-year old office building purchased by the UNC government in a “one-dollar” give back deal between said government and their local financiers. [*Desk thumping*] Indeed, my Ministry and the Office of the Attorney General are still trying to unravel the strands of this mysterious “one-dollar” transaction.

Mr. Vice-President, I make bold to say that as early as four months into our nine months in office, the Ministry was well on its way to registering a number of accomplishments in pursuance of the Government’s objectives. We undertook staff deployment and redeployment exercises involving the matching of skills and posting requirements. To this end, ambassadorial and support staff appointments have been made to our Missions in Washington, New York, Ottawa, Brussels, Geneva, Caracas, Brasilia, among others, and key Consulates General in New York, Toronto and Miami.

In addition, the recruitment process is continuing with the objective of screening interested applicants on the basis of new criteria approved by the Cabinet in furtherance of the 2020 vision for developed country status by that year.

As a complement to our traditional diplomatic appointments, we continue to widen our representational band at the honorary consulate level as far afield as South Africa, Hong Kong, Australia, and other countries of the South Pacific. Also, we are moving full steam ahead in our bilateral economic relations with new Latin American neighbours with the negotiation of trade agreements with the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Costa Rica. Some of these agreements will definitely lead to the establishment of joint venture investments to mutual advantage. Indeed, the Government of Costa Rica has initialled one such agreement providing for their capital City San Jose to be the Central American hub for our national airline BWIA.

As far as our Far East relations are concerned, a number of bilateral cooperation agreements and instruments have recently been signed with the ministries of foreign affairs of the People's Republic of China and Japan with consequential drawdowns on financing provided for the implementation of specific projects.

On the question of candidacies, Mr. Vice-President, the Ministry continues to record successes in respect of Trinidad and Tobago nationals being proposed as candidates to sit on the Bench as a Judge of the Seabed Authority. The likelihood of another senior position within the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations system in New York is but a virtual reality for our illustrious and worthy candidate in the person of Ambassador Christopher Thomas from among the ranks of the Independent Senators. [*Desk thumping*]

Furthermore, in light of the pioneering role played by His Excellency, President Arthur N.R. Robinson, in the establishment of the International Criminal Court, we feel confident that the massive lobbying effort which has been launched by the Ministry in support of our candidate Mr. Karl Hudson-Phillips, will bear fruit and that he will be one of the 18 judges to sit on the Bench of this prestigious court.

In addition, coming closer to home, Mr. Vice-President, we feel equally confident that in pursuance of the formal establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice as a lead institution of Caricom, we can look forward to one of our qualified Justices sitting on that Bench as well.

Finally, Mr. Vice-President, it gives me great pleasure to inform this honourable Senate that as we seek to restore the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to its pristine glory, so typical of the PNM administration, we at the Ministry have secured Cabinet's approval for a US \$9 million facility from the Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF), Venezuela, to transform and modernize the Ministry

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of Foreign Affairs during this budget cycle. This funding facility envisages the physical improvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, training at all levels of staff in foreign languages, trade negotiations, and treaty negotiations to meet the demands of the 2020 Vision.

This financing facility will also equip the Ministry with the solid foundations of the requisite information technology infrastructure as a fundamental tool for delivery of relevant services globally, as well as provide much needed improved working environment for headquarters staff.

Mr. Vice-President, I wish to inform this honourable House that the Government, headed by the hon. Patrick Manning, has begun to re-assert itself in a leadership role within the Caricom family. Indeed, I can say from my conference attendance with the hon. Prime Minister, before our recent election to office by a clear majority, he received high praise from Caricom colleagues for his re-appearance on the conference circuit. [*Desk thumping*]

In fact, from the tenor of the congratulatory messages to the hon. Prime Minister, copied to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, following the election victory, I can safely say that Caricom, like Trinidad and Tobago, was waiting to exhale. [*Desk thumping*] Once again, our neighbours are likely to be early beneficiaries of this unchallengeable leadership status, bolstered by our bountiful natural energy resources.

I thank you, Mr. Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I wish to compliment the Senator on his maiden contribution in the Senate and congratulate him. [*Desk thumping*]

At this time we are going to take the tea break. This Senate is therefore suspended for half an hour, we shall resume at 4.30 p.m.

4.00 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Vice-President: At this point the Minister in the Ministry of Finance will respond.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, thank you colleagues.

Mr. Vice-President, two days ago we began the debate on the Vision 2020, Moving This Country Forward and all that we have heard to date suggest to me that we are on the right track. [*Desk thumping*] For the record however, let me

share with this honourable House how we arrived here. During the course of the last nine months we held consultations with a number of groups and individuals and I just want to give a sample of some of the groups we met with.

We met with the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago, American Chamber of Commerce; Association of the Trinidad and Tobago Insurance Companies; Bamboo Marketing Limited; Bankers' Association; Business and Professional Women's Club; Cooperative Credit Union League; Couva/Point Lisas Chamber of Commerce; the ECA; Fishermen and Friends; FundAid; Human Resource Management Association; Institute of Chartered Accountants; Institute of International Relations; Inter Religious Organization; National Carnival Bands Association; National Trade Union Centre; Pan Trinbago; Petroleum Dealers Association; Supermarkets Association; all the chambers of commerce; the Pointe-a-Pierre Wild Fowl Trust; Youth Delta and Trinidad Unified Calypsonians Organization—just to name a few—Trinidad and Tobago National Council of Parents-Teachers Association.

Mr. Vice-President, in the process of this conversation and consultation we came up with a series of ideas and positions that these groups indicated to us that they require. The approach we chose then, was to take all these suggestions and to develop a document which incorporates these ideas and to continue the process of consultation. The information coming out of that consultation is contained in this document.

The Social and Economic Policy Framework is a document that was arrived at, as a result of that level of consultation and it is our intention to continue the discussion because we believe that this is a good starting point for us to move forward.

What we basically did in the document was to talk about the vision and challenges of the global economy; we reviewed our domestic conditions; we set our policy objectives for the period 2003—2005; we looked at our policy agenda in the context of our social, economic and environmental policies; and we looked at those things that are required to facilitate that policy agenda. More than that, we developed a human development agenda, an economic growth and diversification agenda; an environmental agenda and an implementation matrix.

I think that a lot of the questions that came out during the course of the discussions can and will be answered by those who look at that document. We on this side will be pleased to continue to get inputs from all the stakeholders to make this document a complete one.

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During the course of our deliberations we spent some time articulating our positions on energy, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, the financial sector and the state enterprises sector. We spent some time on the social sector, talking about what we propose to do and how we propose to do it. I think that we have convincingly laid false to the statement that this is really about handouts. It really is not about handouts. [*Desk thumping*]. It is about ensuring that those who cannot, will.

Pensions, education, health, housing, national security, arts, culture, entertainment, sports, infrastructure and the environment are all matters that we articulated. The Green Fund, the importation of used vehicles, gaming taxes, public sector administration, Tobago, fiscal operations and then we concluded.

Mr. Vice-President, I think that in all that we have tried do and in all that we have said you can recognize that we are serious about our vision of taking this country forward towards the year 2020 and before developed country status. [*Desk thumping*]

Various commentators have made useful comments about our plan, and there have been questions that have been asked. There were issues on the policy for borrowings, energy stabilization fund, the mechanism for certification versus entrepreneurial, onshore/offshore economic activity, growth in the economy by at least 20 per cent, and some of these thoughts and some of these issues have, in fact, engaged our attention. Because they have not completed the round of consultations, we did not think that it was fair, at this point in time to deal with them, but we are certainly going to be dealing with them.

Mr. Vice-President, in terms of our economic management, integration of the systems for synergy, foreign representation and VAT and export services. Let me just make this point. It is not our intention at all to put VAT on export services. We have already asked our legal people to look at that provision again to change it to such that it reflects exactly what we want. This is to correct a situation in which a local individual with a local product, doing work for a foreign entity, basically, would get that VAT free as a result of a loophole in the law. That is what we were attempting to correct, and that will be corrected insofar as that particular measure is concerned. It is never our intention to make our export services uncompetitive. [*Desk thumping*] We are not doing that.

Insofar as the export allowance is concerned, let me make this point. This is something that has been signaled a very long time now. Even as we speak, we are still negotiating with the guys in Geneva to see whether or not there is any room, but there is no room. There is no room, and at this point in time we do not believe

that we have a choice. However, if there is any chance at all, of us not having to do it, then we would fix that as well. This is really not about anything else except agreeing to make our manufacturing sector competitive in the context of the World Trade Organization.

Mr. Vice-President, insofar as implementation programmes are concerned, allocations for criminology—the comments made by Sen. Seetahal, I think she has a really good understanding of the issues. I think that our Ministers have listened to her and I believe that we will be drawing on her expertise to make the thing a lot better than it currently is.

Challenges for consensus—those are issues that were raised; the enigma or raising expectations—a difficult issue—and measurement of success: These are all issues that we would want to address in the context of our ongoing consultations and discussions.

Some of the comments that were raised related to our capital projects. Yes, we recognize that at this point in time the allocation is \$800 million, but one needs to know that there are other mechanisms by which capital projects will continue. For example, UDeCOTT has the ability to go out and raise financing on the basis of its own resources without having to resort to the State. We are going to be using that particular instrument to deal with that.

Trinidad and Tobago, at this point in time, is poised to make a significant intervention in the economies of the world. Therefore all comments that were made, as they relate to the things that we needed to look at and the things that we needed to do, we would take those into account.

Mr. Vice-President, I particularly liked the discourse by Sen. Seepersad-Bachan about first-generation reform and second-generation reform. That is currently on the agenda, to put it through and to make sure that we move in that particular direction.

We have been here for a very long time. When we came into this Chamber, one never knew what one could expect, but I am happy to say that at the end of all of this, the one thing that I am clear about is that everybody here is committed to making this country a better place. [*Desk thumping*] I think, certainly, what you will find on this side is that we would appreciate your continuation of what, we believe, has started here today because at the end of all of this, all of us need to live in the society. At the end of all of this, all of us need to be part of the vision that we are talking about.

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Mr. Vice-President, this, for me, has been a most enlightening and learning experience. I believe that at this point in time nothing else remains for me to say but the following:

Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that a Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on September 30, 2003 be read a second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: Mr. Vice-President, in accordance with Standing Order 63, I beg to move that the Bill not be committed to a committee of the whole Senate.

Question put and agreed to.

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

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

Motion made and question proposed, That the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, November 12, 2002 at 1.30 p.m. [Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith]

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.45 p.m.