

*Leave of Absence**Wednesday, October 22, 2003***SENATE***Wednesday, October 22, 2003*

The Senate met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Prof. Ramchand for the period October 22, 2003 to December 08, 2003.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Professor George Maxwell Richards.

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., PhD., President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MR. BASHARAT ALI

WHEREAS Senator Professor Kenneth Ramchand is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 40(2)(c) and section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, BASHARAT ALI, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 22nd October, 2003 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Professor Kenneth Ramchand.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 20th day of October, 2003.”

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Basharat Ali took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 21, 2003]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, those who spoke yesterday were: the Minister of Finance, who moved the Motion; Sen. Mark; Sen. King; Sen. The Hon. Joseph; Sen. Prof. Ramchand; Sen. Arnim Smith; Sen. The Hon. Dumas; Sen. The Hon. Abdul-Hamid; Sen. Dr. McKenzie and Sen. The Hon. Gift.

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Glenda Morean): Madam President, I rise to take part in this debate at a time when we are in a season of joy, peace and goodwill. By the end of this week, the Hindu community in Trinidad and Tobago will be celebrating the joyous occasion of Divali, and I take this opportunity to wish you, Madam President, all Members of this honourable Senate and the national community at large, a very happy Divali, or Shubh Divali.

Madam President, next month this country will be celebrating the Muslim holiday of Eid ul-Fitr, and in December we will be celebrating the Christian holiday of Christmas. This says a lot for Trinidad and Tobago and for our unity in diversity, as we celebrate together these joyous occasions. Let us cherish that unity and oneness, and ignore the politicians and all this talk of race; let us do that.

This brings to mind a passage I read in the overview of the *Report of the West Indian Commission*. I will take time out to read it. This is Sir Shridath Ramphal's preface to the Chairman's report at page 7:

"I am the fourth generation of my family's anguished transplantation. Other West Indians have been here over a longer period, and through systems of greater anguish; yet it was natural for me to remind an audience during the Commission's consultations that 'I am a Guyanese before I am an Indian; I am a West Indian before I am Guyanese'. Oneness had replaced separateness in four generations. So it is for most of the people of our CARICOM Region. That oneness is the basic reality of our West Indian condition."

I commend this little passage to all of us here, all our politicians, all who would talk about race and foster divisiveness in the society. I trust that as this debate progresses we will continue to be able to disagree without being disagreeable; we will be forthright and forceful in our contributions, without being offensive and quarrelsome.

Madam President, I also congratulate the Minister of Finance on his excellent budget presentation, which is still receiving praise from all quarters. There is never consensus from the experts on the merits of any budget, and one would normally hear all sorts of criticisms, most times not very informed. It was notable that this time around the budget received praises from the business organizations, the economic experts, the newspapers in their editorials, and even the man-in-the-street.

You may want to check it for yourselves, but I believe that this year's budget presentation has received more praises from objective observers than any, certainly, that I have previously heard. [*Desk thumping*] I believe tremendous credit is due to the Minister of Finance and the Ministers in the Ministry of Finance, two of whom are Members of this honourable Senate. I would not leave out the technocrats in the ministry, all of whom played a role in devising a fiscal package that accelerates the country's drive to developed status.

One expects to hear, of course, the criticisms from the other side, and we have heard some already. Of course, they were absent from the initial presentation, since some of them were busy encouraging people to break the law in protest. [*Interruption*]

[*Sen. R. Montano jumps to his feet*]

Sen. R. Montano: On a point of order, Madam President!

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: I am not sitting; I am not giving way! [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. R. Montano: Madam President, the Standing Orders are clear when it comes to casting aspersions on the other side for improper motives.

Sen. Dumas: Yesterday you said there was none. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam President: Let me hear what the Senator has to say. Sen. R. Montano, please continue and address me.

Sen. R. Montano: Thank you, Madam President. There is the question of improper motives in Standing Order 35(5), and it is totally and completely improper for the Attorney General to stand and say that we were not present for the budget debate because we were encouraging the breaking of the law, moreso

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because the matter is before the court. When I came in here I listened with surprise, because the Attorney General—

Madam President: Sen. Montano, please do not make a speech; just state your facts.

Sen. R. Montano: I am not making a speech; I am stating the facts. It is improper to cast aspersions and improper motives, according to Standing Order 35(5), especially having regard to the explanation that Sen. Smith gave yesterday; it is totally and completely improper.

Madam President: I shall ask the Attorney General to either rephrase what she is saying or stay away from it for one reason, it is *sub judice*; I think that is the term. Maybe from that point of view, just be careful.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: As I was saying, Madam President, some people were not here, because they were taking part in certain proceedings that resulted in certain proceedings before the court. [*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Mark: That is wrong; it is a point of order!

[*Sen. Mark and Sen. R. Montano jump to their feet*]

Madam President: Everybody sit, please! This is not a market! I have not heard the Attorney General say anything improper as yet. She is stating what is a fact, as far as we all know.

Sen. R. Montano: No, she is not stating what is a fact, Madam President!

Sen. Mark: She simply repeated what she just said!

Sen. R. Montano: She is repeating what she just said!

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: You are arguing with the Chair?

Madam President: Madam Attorney General, please continue; I am listening to what you are saying.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: Thank you, Madam President. We see why some people are where they are.

Madam President, as you know, the Ministry of the Attorney General does not usually deal in economic matters, but I believe that we can all take credit for the robust performance of the economy over the last year. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister of Finance announced a growth rate of 6.7 per cent. This means that the Trinidad and Tobago economy has grown by almost 7 per cent in one year. This is the kind of growth rate not seen in this country for almost 25 years. [*Desk thumping*] I must confess my pride in being part of a government that has been

able to so manage the country's fortune that we can speak of rates of economic growth associated with the fastest growing economies of the world.

I also take pride in the fact that when we went to the population in 2001, it was on the basis of the kind of development that is possible when you cut out the level of massive corruption associated with the previous administration. We are already beginning to reap the benefits. However, we should resist the temptation to attribute this extraordinary economic performance just to the benefits of the gas monetization policy adopted by the PNM administration of 1991 to 1995, which conceptualized and initiated the Atlantic LNG projects. But make no mistake about it, this Government's relentless pursuit of anyone wishing to steal from the public purse, has set the tone for a serious approach to governance, and we are seeing the benefits in the stellar economic performances outlined in the Minister of Finance's budget presentation on Monday 06, instant.

The Ministry of the Attorney General has been steadfast in providing the resources for commissions of enquiry to ensure that all corrupt practices engaged in by the previous administration are investigated and prosecuted, and in laying the groundwork to ensure that kind of activity is not repeated by this or any other administration. [*Desk thumping*]

We are the makers of the law and policy. We cannot, at the same time, be the breakers of the law and in breach of policy. It is because of this, not to mention the fact that I believe the Senators on this side led by a Prime Minister totally committed to the concept of morality in public affairs, are of a different ilk. Our commitment to the job, rather than use our offices simply to find ways to line the pockets of friends and relatives, is what has contributed to the kind of economic growth that has put us among the fastest growing economies in the world. [*Desk thumping*]

What is more, Madam President, this achievement has come despite the fact that when this Government assumed office we met several things in a mess. Our predecessors in office were so busy fixing themselves and organizing deals that they did not even have time to take care of the people's business. In my ministry, for example, I have been told, not that I believe it, that I am at a disadvantage since my penultimate predecessor was one of the country's most political attorneys general. Not much can be said of my immediate predecessor, other than the fact that she tried to entice our former President to decide in favour of her leader. The truth is, much of what passed for governance under the previous administration was nothing but an elaborate hoax, which the people of Trinidad and Tobago eventually saw through and exercised their franchise wisely. [*Interruption*]

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Madam President, I would simply like to remind Sen. Mark of his words yesterday. We let him talk; we did not interrupt him. He, himself, said yesterday:

“Madam President, we anticipate her contribution...”

That means me.

“to this debate could well constitute her last in this honourable Chamber, so during her contribution to this debate I intend, as Leader of Opposition Business, to seek my colleagues’ cooperation in observing complete silence.”
[*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

Sen. Mark: I changed my mind.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: Typical UNC behaviour: You say one thing and do something else. Take control of your Front Bench, and let me talk in peace. [*Laughter*] Even if you do not like what I say, sit quietly and take it. [*Laughter*]

I turn now to the legislative agenda. Those in the Front Bench and others in Opposition are fond of talking about legislative agenda. I would like the honourable Senate to note that since I took up office as Attorney General in early January 2002, the legal staff in my ministry has been engrossed in reviewing several pieces of legislation that were passed in the last administration, which have been found to be downright defective and unworkable. It appears that the UNC government clearly operated on a “vaps” basis. When the “vaps” took them they would come to the Parliament with some kind of “vaps” legislation, any kind of legislation.

One of my colleagues recently reminded me that during a sitting of the Senate just prior to the 2000 general election, the then Minister of Works and Transport and his then Attorney General brought three separate bills to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act. They were so obsessed at the time with statistics that there was even a sobriquet for the then Attorney General. I saw the name “Billy Maharaj” around. I do not want any sobriquet; I am not interested in statistics. I am interested in bringing good legislation to the Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

Legislation is not a “vaps” matter; you do not just decide that you want a bill, so you put some words together and get legislation. You work with a team; you work with the stakeholders; you have your research to do, and you have to consult. Even after you have done all that, you may come here and still have holes punched in your legislation, so that means you have to be careful with what you have to do. That is how I have operated.

Despite that, during the 2002/2003 period, we passed 26 bills. During that same period the UNC passed 14 bills. You might well say that some of them were short bills because they were amendments to some of the legislation, but we now have a different type of Opposition operating from when the PNM was in Opposition. We did not oppose for opposing sake. [*Desk thumping*] So you did not have to spend whole day to pass a two-clause bill. That is what has been happening in this Parliament.

We may come with three bills that could be passed in one day, and we do just one. [*Interruption*] I am not talking about democracy; I am talking about the complaints. You exercise your democracy; that is your right, but you do not complain when things are not going as fast as you want them to go; that is what I am saying. [*Interruption*] You are still not being quiet. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Mark: I cannot resist your presence.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: Today, Madam President, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have to pay a heavy price for the myopic way and the lack of vision in the UNC's approach to governance. In fact, I have in my possession a list of several Bills passed between 1996 and 2000 that require major amendments.

Madam President, I would just name a few: the Evidence (Amdt.) Act, 1996; the Criminal Law (Amdt.) Act, 1997; the Community Services Orders Act, 1997; the Community Mediation Act, 1998; the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, 1997; the Tourism Development Act, 2000; the Telecommunication Act, 2001; the Regulated Industries Commission Act 1998; the Criminal Procedure (Plea Discussion and Plea Agreement) Act 1999, that too needs amending; the Bailiffs Act, 2000; the Sentencing Commission Act, 2000; the Minerals Act, 2000; the Equal Opportunity Act, 2000, that is before the court now so I would not say anything else. There is also the package of children's legislation. These are just some examples of the legislation left behind by "vaps".

10.30 a.m.

Madam President, to compound matters, when my committee, the Internal Legislative Review Committee which meets on a weekly basis goes through the legislation, we have been finding in many instances that a lot of these bills were drawn up without a policy paper. So there was no policy direction and that is why you find many times that the bills are flawed. This just goes to show that the other side did not clearly have any agenda or vision for this country.

I recall during my stint as Opposition Senator in 2001 that during the course of debates Senators on our side, including the Independents, frequently sought to

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obtain from the other side the policy that was behind the legislation being considered. I am sure those who would like to, would remember that the policy was frequently a problem.

Madam President, the records show that since the 18/18 deadlock was broken in October last year, a total of 26 for this part of the year and two in 2002 were passed during the last session. More than that, in last year's budget the Minister of Finance had referred to several pieces of legislation many of which have already been enacted or have been drafted and are awaiting presentation to Parliament.

In the 2004 Budget Statement, the hon. Minister of Finance advanced a reform agenda which includes reform not only in the economic and financial sectors, but also in the social sectors. Our legislative agenda therefore, for this Second Session of the Eighth Parliament will include a number of legislative amendments to ensure that we maintain a strong and well-regulated financial sector.

Also, as we position ourselves to participate in multilateral trade negotiations of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the Government will bring new foreign investment promotion legislation and review a number of proposed amendments to the Anti-dumping and Countervailing Duties Act, as well as the Fair Trading Bill. In fact, the Fair Trading Bill is already drafted and is being considered by a small committee.

The Bankruptcy Bill which is to enact legislation to provide for restructuring of failing companies is ready to go for comment, the Terrorism Bill has been with various stakeholders and I will inform you, Senators, that Bill has been out for comment since around May this year but we are still awaiting receipt of final comments from some of the stakeholders.

In the social sector, already I have several bills drafted which will be laid in Parliament as time goes by. I have appointed a committee to look at existing legislation and recommend what new legislation if any is required to treat with the problem of the differently abled. Quite apart from any new legislation that may be required eventually, there is legislation but it simply means that regulations may be required to ensure that consideration is given to such persons in the delivery of services throughout the society.

Madam President, we all recognize that crime is one of the most serious problems facing Trinidad and Tobago. Criminals have no respect for race, colour, class, creed, or political affiliations, so let us not be sidetracked again by certain posturing. Crime has no respect for anyone. I remember in November 2001, the then Prime Minister and Minister of National Security threw his hands up in the

air and acknowledged that he was unable to handle the spiralling crime wave that was engulfing our nation. So this is not a PNM thing.

Crime is on the increase and today we have kidnapping for ransom, which has become a new industry in the country. Government is mindful of the situation and has declared war on criminals. Over the last year, I had attended numerous fora seeking to explain to the nation the need for the Kidnapping Bill and the various clauses in the Bill. However, my friends on the other side have been hell-bent on retaining their reputation for being obstructionists.

We introduced a Kidnapping Bill with very strong penalties to deal with this phenomenon of kidnapping for ransom alone. However, as we all know and we will all recall, our dear friends chose to ignore the cries of the people. Initially, they wanted a debate on Caroni (1975) Limited. We responded and cleared the way for the debate. Then they changed their tune and demanded constitutional reform in exchange for their support for our legislation especially those that require a special majority.

Madam President, we have made it clear to the nation that this PNM Government is in fact committed to constitutional reform; however, we recognize that constitutional reform involves a process. In the last session of this Parliament, a lengthy debate took place on constitutional reform. We are not seeking to dodge or defer the issues, we are listening and I have already received several documents and suggestions on the issue. We have met on the issue and we will soon be in a position to disclose the way forward. But in the interim, I will still appeal to the better nature of people, because I still feel there must be some good in them. I am calling on my colleagues on the other side to strive to be a more responsible Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

When we were on that side, we supported several bills that required a special majority for their passage. There are times when we need to rise above the cut and thrust of the politics and do what is right and necessary in the interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Crime is a social evil that requires the collaboration of all right-thinking, law-abiding citizens for its eradication. While it is true there are a few people in Government in whom the responsibility for policy and implementation lie, nevertheless the solution lies with everyone here and in the wider community.

Crime does not just start like that; there is a history to it and Sen. Abdul-Hamid was very explicit last night in his explanation of some of the causes of crime. I will give you an example of what occurred a few days ago in the

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savannah. My husband had a bucket of balls practising his golf swings and some children passed; two little boys around 11 years or so started picking up the golf balls and running away. He stopped them saying: "Those are my balls. Why are you taking them?" The little boy started to cry and he ran off, but while he was crying and we were taken up with him, the others took up the balls and ran with them. That, Madam President, is the start of it. So it is the responsibility of all of us to deal with crime in a responsible way.

That brings me to the package of police reform legislation which emanated from a collaborative effort in 1999 when we were in Opposition. So again, just as I said today to the hon. Senator a short while ago, you have to keep your word. People must know that if you say yes, it is yes; if you say you will be quiet, you will be quiet; if you say you will support the Police Reform Bill, you support it whether you are in Opposition or in Government. Because you are all part of this country and if you are seeking to replace the incumbent, you have to show that you are responsible. So when next you are in office, people can say I can rely on a government comprised of these people. But no, that is not what we get, we get broken promises and complaints.

One of the things we must remember with respect to crime is that the police really are the enforcers of the law at that level; they implement, and one of the things we have to remember is that the police are comprised of citizens of the society; people like you and me. There would be some who are errant, but by and large the majority are hardworking and put their lives on the line daily for the average citizen. Law enforcement is in their hands, the Minister of National Security cannot play police; his job is to formulate policy and provide resources for them. I, as Attorney General, cannot go out there and play police; my job in this respect is to put the necessary laws in place.

Madam President, I listened to Sen. Smith's contribution yesterday and I said to myself; this habit of bashing the police and tarring all with the same brush must be demoralizing to the police service.

Sen. Smith: Madam President, on a point of order. I clearly stated yesterday that 98 per cent of the members of the police service are loyal and good policemen, and 2 per cent are rogue cops and they must get them out. The Attorney General is misleading the Parliament.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: Get the *Hansard*.

Madam President: The Attorney General, as far as I can recall is stating what I remember hearing and that is, you were saying that police officers are also

corrupt and involved—this is what I remember. So I do not think she is stating anything that was not said yesterday.

Sen. Smith: Madam President, if you send for the *Hansard* you will see that I did not bash the entire police force. It is wrong for the Attorney General to try to mislead the Senate and say that I bashed the entire force. I am sure Senators can support that. I said 98 per cent of the police service are good and loyal men and 2 per cent are rogues.

Madam President: Madam Attorney General, please confine your comments to the 2 per cent of the police service.

Hon. Senator: Until we get the *Hansard*.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: Madam President, we are all aware that there is need for reform in the administration of the service and the Opposition recognized this when they were in office. They introduced the Police Service Bills as I said earlier, so what they need to do is support any legislation that contemplates reform of the police service to remove as far as possible—putting it at its highest—the 2 per cent that Sen. Smith said are bad.

Whenever we are in trouble or have any problem, on whom do we call first? The police! Everything we say the police should be doing, if you have a problem you are going to call for the police. So we also have to display a certain degree of trust in the police. Our relationship with the police should be somewhat like husband and wife where you have to have trust because you cannot have that kind of relationship without trust. If a husband, on being told by his wife that she is pregnant, tells her to have a paternity test, that is the end of the marriage because there would be no trust. [*Laughter*] That would be cause for divorce, but we cannot divorce ourselves from the police service so we have to work with them and take measures to bring about reform in the police service.

Madam President, I now turn to the administration of justice. There are several reform bills on our legislative agenda aimed at improving the criminal justice system. For example, the Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill which would improve and modernize the criminal justice system by making it easier for the State to secure convictions while at the same time protecting the rights of an accused person. In fact, this Bill has been sent to a committee of the Judiciary for further input which I am awaiting before bringing it to Parliament. There was one drafted before which had to be redrafted for several reasons.

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There is a new Sentencing Commission Bill which contains provisions to deal with the issues of staffing composition and the funding of the Sentencing Commission. This Bill is repealing and replacing the 2000 Act. The changes were too fundamental for an amendment of the existing Act to be brought forward. Then there is the Police Powers and Responsibilities Bill which would seek to regulate the conduct of criminal investigations particularly as it relates to the detention and arrest of persons and seizure of property, this Bill is now being refined and is out for comment.

The Criminal Procedure Disclosure Bill, the Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) Bill are also being redrafted and again, in order to ensure that we come with the best possible legislation, we do consult with stakeholders because it is the persons who have to operate the law who can really critique the Bill and perhaps give hints of things we may not have noticed. That is why we go out to persons like the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), certain practitioners, the Law Association and so on. As I said before, the Terrorism Bill has been with the stakeholders for some three months now and we are still receiving valuable input from some who may have been a bit late with their responses, but speed is not the objective, quality is what we are after.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the Senator has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: Thank you, Madam President. These are just to mention a few of the pieces of legislation that are ready to be brought to Parliament in a short time. During the last year, several notes had been taken to Cabinet and decisions made which have resulted in a great deal of improvement to the justice delivery system.

In September, Cabinet agreed to the implementation of the audio digital recording system to be introduced in all the courtrooms in Trinidad and Tobago. This will assist greatly in reducing the backlog of cases.

I am sure I have reported to this Senate before in relation to the pilot project relating to the establishment of the Family Court and this is well on stream. I am sure you have seen in the newspapers an advertisement for staff for the court. The building, Nipdec House, is being customized and in addition, the complement of judges has been increased by three in preparation for this court.

In addition, the court buildings under Head 23 of the Estimates of the 2004 Development Plan, a sum of \$8.4 million has been allocated to the Ministry of the Attorney General for some of the main projects this year which will include designs for the construction of five new courts.

Other projects include the design of a new south office for the DPP, and as you probably know, the new wing of the Port of Spain Magistrates' Court is now occupied by the Judiciary. I can say that there is collaboration between the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Judiciary to ensure that the system of justice keeps improving. We have had problems with backlogs and the length of time before cases come to trial, but all these efforts are designed to ensure that the system of justice is speeded up.

In fact, recognizing the need to address urgently the increased volume of constitutional motions and civil suits being brought against the State by suspects and defendants alleging wrongdoing on the part of police officers, I have also taken the initiative to assist in the training programmes being pursued by the police service by preparing a series of investigative and procedural manuals for use by all police officers. This committee was established and started yesterday; it is chaired by retired Justice of Appeal, Mrs. Jean Permand.

The Summary Offences (Amdt.) Bill is on the Order Paper and I am sure Senators will remember the problems relating to section 72 when we debated the first amendment; it was mentioned, but subsequent thereto there was a situation which involved several prisoners who were sentenced in contravention of that section and together with the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation, I ensured that those persons had their sentences remitted, some of whom may have gone home and others are continuing to serve other sentences.

Staffing problems. This is perennial, maybe in all government departments but in particular the Ministry of the Attorney General and the plight of state counsel. Recently there was action on their part to highlight and give vent to their feelings, but in the spirit of cooperation we have met several times and a Cabinet Note has been prepared—I do not know if it has gone yet—for consideration to be given for increasing the interim allowance pending the overall exercise of revision of the terms. That is being done by the consultants.

In addition, there have been exercises being undertaken in the ministry to develop team-building and also to devise a strategic plan to carry the ministry forward towards achieving Government's Vision 2020. An IT consultant is on board who is now seeking to modernize the systems within the ministry.

11.00 a.m.

I turn to corruption. I cannot overstate the fact that we are committed to ensuring that the principles of transparency, accountability and honesty in public affairs are adhered to at all times. In fact, recently the Government has embarked on a review of the anti-corruption laws in the country and a consultant has been sourced who is at present working with the ministry to ensure that a new anti-corruption policy and strategy for Trinidad and Tobago is devised, because we intend, really, to deal with corruption in a holistic manner. The consultant has identified the three elements of the strategy which are to be implemented, namely, prevention, implementation and education.

Speaking of corruption, yesterday in his contribution, Sen. Mark referred to the Transparency International scoring of Trinidad and Tobago. As usual, I always cringe when Senators quote a report in the newspapers, because we all know very well that newspapers get it wrong. I have had that experience over and over and I would refer to that shortly, if I have the time. But I would like to read the letter that was sent to me by Transparency International relating to the corruption perceptions index that was reported in the newspaper. This is a letter dated October 09, 2003 from the Trinidad and Tobago Transparency Institute. It states:

“As you will note on page 6 of the release, the CPI ranks 133 countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians. It is a composite index, drawing on 17 different polls and surveys from 13 independent institutions carried out among business people and country analysts, including surveys of residents, both local and expatriate.

Trinidad and Tobago’s score is 4.6 out of a clean 10, placing us in the 43rd position. This score is based on the results of six surveys conducted between 2001 and 2003.”

I am not reading everything:

“It should be emphasized that the index attempts to measure not actual levels of corruption but perceptions of such levels. Headlines in newspapers that describe it as revealing that Trinidad and Tobago has become more corrupt are therefore misleading. What the index reveals is that, in the view of the observers surveyed, corruption has increased.

One reason for this perception may be that, during the last three years, there surfaced several cases of alleged corruption which had serious political

consequences. Another could be that the airport inquiry was conducted during the period. However the main reason, we think, is that, despite the efforts made, the observers who were surveyed were not seeing results.”

So this is what was actually said, not what was said to have been said here. The fact is that observers are saying they are not seeing results. It is the same way that people in Trinidad and Tobago have been saying, “Well, look, I am not seeing all the results of the corruption investigations.” And I am saying, “Bide your time; bide your time. Things will happen in due course.”

So it is not that this Government is sitting back and allowing corruption to go unpunished as was done previously. Steps are being taken to ensure that we have a system in place that would drive the whole process and that system, as we have pointed out, we have agreed that as far as this is possible and subject, of course, to the necessary legislation being passed, the Integrity Commission will be the main mechanism for driving that process, because that Commission is already set up and they are already on the way to doing that sort of work.

Madam President: Senator, you have two minutes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: So with respect to the commission of enquiry, while it is true that in relation to the airport enquiry we have had the report and we did say that we would lay the report in Parliament, however, arising out of the recommendations that have been made in the report, the lawyers and the persons who are advising with respect to the way forward, have indicated that because of the possible court proceedings that would follow, that we should not make it public at this time. But I do not think the population would be at any disadvantage, because this was an enquiry that was made public, but we do not want, at this stage, to give any cause for having the process derailed, because as everyone would know, trials, in particular criminal trials, can go easily the other way if we do not follow the strict procedures.

I thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Before we continue, a call was made for the copy of the *Hansard* concerning Sen. Smith's contribution and the fact that he may have alluded to 2 per cent and not all the police. I have gone through the *Hansard* twice and there are no figures as far as 98 or 2 per cent. So maybe you intended to say it—

Hon. Senator: He said it.

Madam President: Well it is not here so I have to go by the *Hansard*.

Sen. Sadiq Baksh: [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, I join this debate—

Sen. R. Montano: Madam President, just for the record, I heard Sen. Smith say—

Madam President: Sen. Montano, I am simply going by the *Hansard*. I do not want any argument on the matter. All right? If there is a mistake, then Sen. Smith will have to speak to the *Hansard* department about it.

Sen. R. Montano: Very well.

Sen. S. Baksh: Madam President, this debate on the budget gives Members of this honourable Senate the opportunity to assess whether optimum use is being made of the national resources with which we are well and generously endowed, or whether they are being frittered away at the altar of political expediency and the preservation of political power. It enables us to determine whether the fundamental challenge which our country faces, of developing our economy in a sustainable way to eradicate poverty and improve the quality of life of all our people, is being adequately and appropriately addressed.

A careful examination of the Minister of Finance's budget would reveal that there is no clear-cut plan to achieve these objectives. The budget is deficient in that it does not chart a clear course to create a vibrant and competitive economy capable of taking full advantage of the diversity and creativity of our people and the opportunities a dynamic global economy offers.

In fact, one characteristic which previous budgets of the PNM, all 35 presented so far, pervades this budget also. The People's National Movement Government has presented to this nation an unending volume of unfulfilled, broken or forgotten promises. I will not consume too much time but I will mention to you that as early as 1957, 42 years before the UNC government actually constructed the airport at Piarco, the PNM promised to have that same airport built here.

In 1958, again, the PNM announced plans for the construction of a fishing centre in Moruga—budget speeches 1957—1981, Volume 1, page 91. In last year's budget, 2002, the promise was made again. Do you know that one year later, as we look at the budget here, that fishing centre in Moruga has not yet been constructed?

Last year in his budget contribution, the hon. Minister of Housing indicated that Government planned to deliver 10,000 houses to the people of Trinidad and Tobago annually, over a five-year period. This year we heard the Minister of Finance alluding to 360 houses being completed during the year 2002/2003—

pretty good for delivery. Just imagine from a promise of 10,000 annually—we have the PNM in office for 22 months—they delivered 360. It is the worst performance ever in the Housing Ministry from 1956 to today. [*Desk thumping*]

In last year's budget the PNM promised to purchase an inter-island ferry to service the route between Trinidad and Tobago. One year later we hear the same thing; another promise this year. They also promised last year, \$300 million for tourism and a certain amount to go to Tobago—not one cent delivered to Tobago during the year 2002 to 2003.

It is this type of callous disregard for the people, of unfulfilled, broken and forgotten promises, that must have motivated Reverend Cyril Paul to give that impassioned prayer at the opening of the Second Session of the Eighth Parliament, seeking forgiveness for Members of Parliament. It could be nothing else. These are the things that continue to make people recognize that we need, as parliamentarians, to look at ourselves. I know that in every ministry, the Minister and the technocrats there would like to deliver, but it is difficult to continuously over-promise and under-deliver and then expect people to have faith and work with you for developing a society in which we must all live.

We in the UNC are committed to working for the development of Trinidad and Tobago. We are committed to unity; we are committed to working in the same direction, but how can we do that when a government comes here and tries to hoodwink the population? I want to draw this to your attention. You would recall that during the last session we recognized that the Government sold lands in Tunapuna. We had an answer from the Minister of Public Utilities where they sold WASA lands to WASA employees at one-tenth of the market value at a 20 per cent discount, and then turned around right in Tunapuna and purchased other lands to construct housing for the Ministry of Housing at twice the market price.

Sen. Dumas: The Senator suggested I gave him such a report. There was never such a report from this Minister.

Madam President: What did you say, that there was a report?

Sen. S. Baksh: An answer to a question.

Madam President: Just repeat what you said there.

Sen. S. Baksh: Madam President, I would forgive my dear friend. The position is that the Government sold lands at WASA at less than market value, at 20 per cent discount to employees and then turned around right in Tunapuna to use public funds to purchase other lands for the construction of housing in that same area.

Madam President: What was your point of order, Senator?

Sen. Dumas: That was not what he said. If he is correcting it now—

Sen. R. Montano: That is exactly what he said.

Madam President: All right. Go ahead.

Sen. S. Baksh: Madam President, it is that type of behaviour that, in fact, would make people want to think again on how we look at taking what they say seriously. We need to give careful consideration to the most vulnerable in our society, the poor, and to decide whether the policies outlined by the Minister of Finance would lead to greater equity and prosperity for all.

This cannot be achieved when on the one hand the Minister hands out unproductive largesse to one group of people, and on the other hand closes down Caroni (1975) Limited and sends home 9,000 employees. On one hand you cannot give out 110 CEPEP contracts to your supporters and people who support your party—all 110 contractors, without exception are close friends, allies and operatives of the PNM, and then expect to say: “Justice for all; equity for all; let us come together and work.”

It does not work like that. The PNM cannot come here and tell us that they are for the poor. They cannot fool us and tell us that they presented a budget for the poor. In fact, what they presented was a poor budget: poor, poor, poor. That is the position; not for the poor. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot say that you are assisting the poor and then raise the price of gas. I understand the need for the preservation of the environment, but the cost of production of unleaded gas is cheaper at the refinery than leaded gas. So the economics of it does not facilitate that increase in gas.

If you wanted to raise more funds to get more money for the Treasury and you do not want to raise taxes, say that. Do not come and blame it on the environment and cry crocodile tears and make us feel that you so care for the environment that you are, in fact, phasing out leaded gasoline. That was on the agenda for a long time. It was appropriate to be done and I do not have a problem with it. I do have a problem, however, with the increase in gasoline prices because it would have a ripple effect in all sectors of the economy.

The poorest of the poor that need to get transportation from remote areas and also in urban areas would find it extremely difficult to get transportation and to fork out money to pay the additional cost that the drivers are entitled to raise because of the additional cost of gasoline. What should have been done is, as you phase out the leaded gasoline, we should have assisted the maxi-taxi drivers,

possibly by giving them a duty-free concession on all new vehicles to encourage more people to use the mass transit system, reduce the traffic on the roads, utilize the priority bus route in a more efficient way and, in fact, reduce traffic jams in and out of Port of Spain and other areas in Trinidad and Tobago.

We need to look at those issues because transportation and mobility, in fact, do have a direct impact on the eradication of poverty. A lot of people believe that all you need to do is develop social programmes and throw money at people who are poor and they would help themselves. That is not possible. Help from outside enfeebles a people. It is only help from within that empowers a people and assists them to come out of poverty. When you improve the infrastructure of a country, in fact, you provide an opportunity for the poorest of the poor to participate in the formal economy, thus helping themselves to be able to take responsibility for themselves, their families and by extension their communities.

All of us in this country should be concerned about the implications of the utterances of the Prime Minister and his Ministers. It seems that the freedoms we enjoyed under our Constitution are now under serious threat. Already we have been threatened with the revision of the Treason Act and now we are hearing that steps would be taken to fingerprint every citizen to keep their records in the Ministry of National Security.

Whether you fly a kite or not, Madam President, I want you to know that Australia has no national identification, nor does it fingerprint the general population. In 1987, a plan to implement a national ID brought protests from hundreds of thousands of people. Both Houses of the Federal Parliament were dissolved because of that proposal. Germany has a national ID but does not require fingerprinting of its citizens. New Zealand has no national ID nor does it fingerprint its general population. The United Kingdom adopted a national ID during World War II but discontinued it in 1952 after Chief Justice Goddard ruled that it was unlawful for police to demand the card from citizens. Proposals for identity cards were considered again in the United Kingdom in 1989 and 1995 but they were rejected.

It would be well for this Government to take note of these occurrences internationally and ensure that we do not go along that road. I understand that the Prime Minister, in fact, retracted that statement, but the position is that I would like to advise that that not be considered.

To be a knowledge-based society with a globally competitive, technologically driven, diversified economy, we need to develop our human resources; we need to

ensure that we are able to sustain full employment; we need to ensure growing prosperity, equal opportunity, a secure life and ensure that we also have social cohesion. To have those things, there are fundamental principles that we need to follow: We need to ensure that we consult with the population; we need to ensure that our population is well fed, clothed, housed and they are provided with the opportunity to prosper. We are aware that the Government, in its major ministries that I was responsible for, in terms of Public Utilities, Housing, Works and Transport and the Environment, that they would have met in place a series of programmes that were intended to improve the quality of the infrastructure so as to facilitate the development of businesses, to create business opportunities and to encourage people to locate and relocate to Trinidad and Tobago to be able to create sustainable development and to create employment opportunities.

We are seeing now that the present administration has changed gears. Over the last 22 months we cannot pinpoint any sustainable jobs in any sector that were created during that period. Instead, we have make-work schemes that are unproductive and only serve its political purpose but do not serve the purpose of developing the country, developing the human resources or ensuring that we are in a position to develop a society in which we would be able to tackle things like crime; we would be able to ensure that we improve the number of people accessing tertiary education to above 20 per cent; we need to develop the infrastructure to do so, not only ensure that we get new places, but we provide the infrastructure around those places to facilitate that development.

A classic example is that we have in the Ministry of Housing an attempt to social engineering, to move people from one place within the country to another place to ensure they remain in political office. On Circular Road in San Fernando, we have under construction, 17—

Sen. Smith: Madam President, on a point of order. I have my *Hansard* which says that I said 95 per cent of the cops in the police service are good and loyal. Can I pass it on to you?

Document passed to Madam President.

Madam President: All right, I agree that you did say 95 per cent. I missed it. I was looking for the figures. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. S. Baksh: Madam President, on Circular Road in San Fernando we have the construction of 17 seven-story buildings. The construction of these houses never took into consideration the need for additional roads, water supply, sewerage, garbage disposal, schools, recreational facilities, employment

opportunities, or all the other basic needs. They just got a “vaps” and started to construct those houses, without permission. They went out there; did not take anything into consideration; just started to build those houses to ensure that in all the marginal constituencies in Trinidad and Tobago—in San Fernando West, Tunapuna, Barataria/San Juan and in Ortoire Mayaro—you have this social reengineering taking place.

How could you try to do those things, to socially reengineer the country, and then expect us to sit here, stay quiet, and then support everything that you do? That is not possible. If you want to mobilize our support and the support of the other half of the population, you need to govern the country in a just, fair and equitable manner and ensure that people feel as part of the process of governance. We are willing to do that, but you must make that step. We must have the confidence that you are prepared to do that. Until such time, you cannot get the support of the United National Congress. That just will not happen like that.

We have a situation again with crime in Trinidad and Tobago. We do not feel safe and secure in this country any more. If we were to rate and develop a score card for the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation and we decided that we would rate them on their performance in terms of curbing murders in Trinidad and Tobago, and we had to rate the Ministry just on the number of murders that took place, they have already crossed the 170 record; it is now over 180. How do you think the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago would rate the performance of the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation as far as murders are concerned in Trinidad and Tobago? On a scale of 1 to 10, I do not expect the Ministry to get 1. I expect it to get zero. It achieved the all-time record—and the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation cannot be proud of presiding over a ministry that, in fact, saw a record number of murders taking place in Trinidad and Tobago at this time.

If we were to rate the Ministry on a score card in terms of kidnappings for ransom, it also surpassed last year’s record at an all-time high, and if we were to rate on a scale of 1 to 10, the performance of the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation as far as kidnappings are concerned, we would give it zero again. We cannot be generous to even give it one at this time. If we were to consider rapes in Trinidad and Tobago on a scale of 1 to 10; maybe 1. I do not think they passed the record this year as yet. In politics, perception is reality.

11.30 a.m.

All the years gone by, the perception of crime in Trinidad and Tobago was in fact the reality. When the PNM came into office the perception was not the thing.

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We want to know the facts. As far as murders are concerned, since the PNM came into office we have had the highest murder rate ever. It is as if when the PNM is in office criminals have free rein to roam the country up and down and unabated.

We had that same situation in 1994. This quote is a classic. It points to the truth on a comment I made some time ago, for those of us who have forgotten our history that we are condemned to repeat it. This is the budget speech from 1994. Page 29 states:

“The violence in our society has taken on a wanton dimension which is alien to the character of the people of this country”.

Has anything changed? Is violence alien to the character of Abu Bakr, the Prime Minister’s riding partner?

“Madam Speaker, our best efforts at the amelioration of social conditions during this transition to growth and employment will be frustrated unless the problem of crime is aggressively controlled. Government is determined to arrest and reverse this trend, and to create conditions where, as before, parents could feel safe in allowing their children to walk the streets of their communities and to take public transportation, where our population no longer finds it necessary to make fortresses of their homes, and where we would not have to become inured to scenes of grisly violence portrayed in our media.”

Was that delivered? I continue.

“The first is the development of an efficient, disciplined, well-equipped and professionally-managed Police Service.”

This was back again in 2002 and back again as a priority in 2003.

“In this regard, Government will, within the constraints of available resources, seek to improve accommodation for the protective services and to increase their mobility”.

They did not fix the police station in Oropouche. There are many police stations that need infrastructural improvement.

“The provision of equipment needed for crime detection, including computers, will also be addressed”.

Did the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation not say the same thing in 2002 and 2003? It is the same old promises made, broken or forgotten. Maybe, they have goodwill, but they are incompetent in terms of delivering safety or security to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

In terms of infrastructural development and transport, we have heard the Government making proposals time and time again for the construction of highways and the interchange making the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway a freeway. Those are not new ideas. Those are old ideas. The construction of an interchange at Uriah Butler/Churchill-Roosevelt intersection was on the agenda since 1970. My good friend would have worked since then with an internationally renowned company, quite competent in developing that kind of facility. In the study of 1967, it was recognized that an interchange at that intersection was a priority. It took into consideration the number of man-hours and the loss in productivity since 1970. The promises came and went, but they never happened. We are back to the days of the 1980s, where we now have traffic jam from Chaguanas to Port of Spain.

The interchange alone cannot solve it, but proposals were made for the improvement of traffic management issues at Sackville Street and Wrightson Road and two overpasses at El Socorro and Aranguez. There would have been a free intersection from the Uriah Butler/Churchill-Roosevelt Highway straight to Port of Spain. The interchange would have assisted vehicles coming north/south on mornings and east/west during the day. Beyond a doubt we need an interchange and two overpasses and to solve the traffic problems coming to and from Port of Spain. Whether or not we develop Wallerfield and how long it takes, it was on the agenda of the UNC to create a science park there. We need to have the interchange at the Uriah Butler/Churchill Roosevelt Highway built and ensure we do the other overpasses at Aranguez and El Socorro and improve the traffic management issues at Sackville Street, Port of Spain.

While the Government promised over the years to improve the transportation between Trinidad and Tobago and those promises were unfulfilled, we need to do it now. We need to address the cost of living in Tobago and by the provision of the improved inter island service, Tobago would benefit as much as we benefit in Trinidad.

We have been hearing for many decades and we heard it reiterated by the present administration, the improvement of Crown Point Airport. We heard it in 2002 and 2003 and it is still on the drawing board. We need to capitalize on the opportunities that would come our way in terms of diversifying the economy. When the UNC took the decision to deepen the port in Port of Spain and improve the facilities at Piarco, it was intended to begin the process of diversifying the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, so that we would be able to withstand the challenges of the future, when our non-renewable hydrocarbon resources are depleted. We need to invest in our human resources and the infrastructure of the country and move in the same direction. We also

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need to have a sensible government committed to not only making empty promises, forgetting them or breaking them, but also working together with the people on all sides and the communities and ensuring that we develop a safe and secure society of which we would be proud.

I know how difficult it is in times of plenty to move from words to deeds and talk to implementation. We need to improve and strengthen our institutions in the public service so that they would be able to deliver on the promises made by any administration. We need to ensure that we improve the capacity for implementation to build the backbone and infrastructure that will support prosperity and growth.

During the last budget presentation, it was easy for the then minister to deliver. I always go back because we need to know where we came from to chart the course for the future and see how the government performed. They went on to point out all the things that were delivered. The fishing complex in Moruga was not delivered. The highway to Point Fortin was not delivered. I remind all of us that Project Pride was not delivered. Ten thousand houses per year were not delivered. Agricultural access roads were not delivered. Crime prevention and management were not delivered. Improvement of living conditions was not delivered. Increased productivity was not delivered. Urban redevelopment was not delivered. Justice and fair play were not delivered. What was delivered and what do we continue to get in terms of delivery from this administration? More unemployment, delivered. More poverty, delivered. More discrimination, delivered. More murders, delivered. More kidnappings, delivered.

Thank you.

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Madam President, thank you very much for the opportunity and for delivering me from my slumber. I wish to extend warm congratulations based on what I have read in the budget statement and the preparation of these accompanying documents. My congratulations to Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill and his public service staff. I say so not merely as a matter of parliamentary courtesy, but I have looked at these documents very intensely and from what I know from other Caribbean countries, the preparation of these documents is a standard that they can emulate. In that broad context I extend my congratulations to the Minister and his staff.

Yesterday, as well as this morning, we have had interesting and useful debate on what is one of the most important events in this country's economic life, the presentation and debate of a budget. There are many Senators to whom I would have liked to refer, but given the constraints of time, even though it might be

invidious to call names, I wish to extend congratulations to the Minister of Social Development because of the area of my professional concerns and given what he has said as part of his Government's operations. I was most impressed with the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation unit, something I recommend to all other ministries.

I am also disheartened when I look at the public gallery time and time again. Given the importance of this event and what it means for the country, not only on a day-to-day basis, but also for the future of the country, this generation and the next, it is very sad to see a gallery so relatively empty as it is. It is a measure of things in the country. The budget in itself would have to be considered in the wider social and political framework. I had planned to get straightway into the questions of national security and crime, but after listening to yesterday's contributions by my colleagues, I thought it might be helpful to reflect on the social and political framework in which this budget finds itself. Money may be necessary, but I emphasize, it is certainly not sufficient for Vision 2020 or for overall national development in the future.

When I look at the documents, the Social Sector Development Plan Investment Programme, Public Sector Investment Programme and the list within those programmes, I cannot help but be impressed with the detailed planning that has come up to operate this country's affairs. I looked at something published in the newspapers from the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs. It is a number of festival and cultural activities all across the country which signal to me that the intention is so noble. What bothers me at the same time is that the country appears to be socially fragmented, so quarrelsome and noisy. I have to wonder from where I stand whether the effort, resources and intentions put into such programmes will really reach the objectives, meaning social cohesion, community peace and even national harmony. In other words it might be money going down the drain because of a lack of a proper and social political environment.

I shall reflect on the budget speech of 2003. The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance made the point that that budget would have encouraged full participation; create a more cohesive society and help instil a deep sense of nationalism. I ask the question: Have these objectives from that budget been fulfilled? In my respectful view, I say not so.

The Minister of Finance went on to list 13 promises, each one in his own words his Government had kept. I am particularly interested in the tenth promise, where he said that his Government had supplied the protective services with

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resources and equipment to make them a first class, professional, highly-trained protective service. He said he and his Government delivered. Has the police service delivered?

In the 2004 budget speech, this time with more serious political implications, the Minister of Finance outlined an 11-point anti-crime plan which I will discuss briefly later on. A large part of that plan was premised in his view on getting the cooperation of the Opposition. I have to ask if that is a condition for getting some of these anti-crime measures effectively operationalized. How far will we go in reference to the political framework in which this budget was presented?

I listened to Sen. Baksh this morning and Sen. Smith, yesterday and I see a glimmer of hope that perhaps attitudes might change and because of the serious nature of crime, we would be able to close ranks over a period of negotiations. On that basis perhaps, because we have no other choice but to be optimistic. The alternative is chaos and deep civic confusion, if the chasm between the Government and the Opposition remains suspended and untreated as it now appears. The budget will become subverted.

In addition to that, in the last budget speech the Prime Minister said that the budget would be used to unify the society; citizens should lend a helping hand to the different communities and citizens should cooperate with the authorities. In the present social and political environment, I have to wonder whether there is any great hope for these things to be achieved. There needs to be some cementing between communities, citizens and the State. The Minister of Finance needs all the help he can get and in my respectful view, it is the obligation and responsibility of every citizen as far as he or she could, to assist the government of the day, whatever name or party that government might represent, on the serious matter of national security if it is within good civic parameters. I make the point because when Mr. Panday was prime minister, he made the same appeal. It tells you uneasy lies the head that wears the crown. If we do not understand in the context of such serious matters as crime and national security, that crime concerns all of us and there comes a time when we have to lift our heads above the normal controversy of the Westminster system, I think we will all sink together.

The enemies, that is the criminals, are so well-organized and they seem to be of such common mind, while we on this side, the civil side appear so fragmented. I believe that I should make reference to these issues if only to warn my distinguished colleagues and the country at large that the budget alone cannot do it. You need a facilitative social and political environment. Mr. Panday called for national harmony and unity. He even went to the point where he called for a

government of national unity. So pressured was he in trying to deliver the services and especially within the rubric of national security. Up to yesterday, Sen. The Hon. Abdul-Hamid explained the need and the value for having a week of social harmony. All these utterances and concerns emphasize the fact that the budget would be of little effect if the social and political environment is not facilitated.

In that context I wish to make some brief comments on the issue of governance, social sector development and then come to what is my major concern, the area of crime and national security. It is no secret that we live in a conflict driven society. It is not something that we invented. It is something that we inherited from the structures that came with the Westminster system. The Westminster system is adversarially based. For example, you have a government and an opposition side. The way the Westminster system was spawned and the way it was practised in some other countries also assume that there would be some level of restraint and rationality anchored in a common set of values and civility. You can quarrel but you must have the political maturity to negotiate because consensus and compromise are key elements as well in the Westminster system.

In other words, we seem to have no centre. There is no core in the country. There is one side against the other side and a number of parallel views desperate and disparate without reaching a workable consensus. I do not wish to call names and become counter productive. In these matters I would like to feel that a word to the wise should be enough, if only because crime is no respecter of persons. It is amazing to see that those who are responsible for solving crime especially at the political level appear to be so disorganized, as I said, while on the other hand, these criminals seem to have such common purpose. They deliver! They deliver fear and insecurity and yet, we are still quarrelling about what to do. It is important to look at it this way because there is no alternative except for all of us to perish slowly, even in the midst of a \$22 billion budget, the highest per capita in the Caribbean and being one of the most economically prosperous countries in the western hemisphere, per capita income of TT \$42,000.

As I said before, the money may be necessary, but in terms of quality of life it is certainly not sufficient. If in the Review of The Economy, it was stated that Guyana, Jamaica and this country are amongst those which are beginning to show, especially in the case of Guyana and Jamaica, some increase in GDP, it is instructive to note that these three countries which have relatively high prosperity through the GDP are those same countries which are experiencing the most serious increase in crime. Briefly, therefore, I rest my case that money alone will not

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solve our problem of crime. It depends moreso on a social and political framework. I wish to emphasize that particular point.

I am not saying that people should remain quiet. We need a strong Opposition, not only the Westminster system, but power corrupts and we know the story around that particular message. It is not that people are inherently evil, but occupying office becomes very seductive in terms of searching for more power. It is a natural element in all political systems. You need in the Westminster system a countervailing force which is the Opposition.

12.00 noon

Madam President, I am saying, implicitly, that democracy will be a noisy process, but there is noise and noise. I have had the honour to visit the Canadian House of Commons recently, and I have had a greater honour to have accompanied you on that visit. We witnessed noise, but noise within the parameters of parliamentary protocol; disagreements, but within the parameters of parliamentary courtesies and so on. I do not need to belabour the point.

Democracy is not merely about living in peace, it is about always finding the equilibrium. The best way to describe democracy for a country like this, with a plurality of interests, cultural groups, political and business interests, is the search for equilibrium, and the management of tension. In other words, you need skilful political management. You cannot base, as we seem to be doing, your policies, your politics and your government on wishful thinking that everybody would agree with you. That is not how the Westminster system, which we have, works. You have to anticipate reactions; you have to necessitate a process of negotiation, especially before you make big announcements. There are several big announcements that worry me, as a citizen of this country, which have not been preceded by sufficient consultations. I will not list them at this particular time.

Today, it seems to me that on both sides, we have stretched the adversarial system beyond its rational limits and we need to retreat. Of course, there are incentives for conflict—you play to this constituency or another—but that, in the end, is like cutting off your nose to spoil your face.

Madam President, I wish to turn now to social sector development, which is really one of the key levers in the budget. To some degree, because of course, I would have some reservations. I must commend the Government for spending so much time and money. It is not just allocation of money. I heard the last Prime Minister say that it is about \$2 billion when you cover all the sectors and all the programmes. I think it really reflects well on the Government to sit and delineate

the long list of programmes for the different sectors. Alongside that, I wish to refer to the Ministry of Education. There are about nine pages—in one of the documents, Social and Economic Framework—of specific programmes with target dates and so on. So it shows—and at this point I want to agree with my colleague Sen. Dr. McKenzie, that from the contents of the budget there is hope. I say so perhaps because we have no choice, hoping that hope will bring faith, and faith will deliver us together from the evil of crime.

Madam President, whilst we have the money and whilst Minister Enill would say that the macroeconomics looks quite good, I agree with him. The GDP, debt ratio per capita income and indices of that kind—we should be worried once again about the diminished social capital that we are experiencing, meaning the social and political framework in which the budget intends to operate is fractured. In fact, in recent years, if you want measures of social capital—basic level; membership in civic organizations has decreased, village councils have collapsed and youth groups have collapsed. It is therefore necessary, and rightly so as the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs and other related ministries have in their programmes, to resuscitate the youth groups through the youth councils and so on.

Madam President, I must tell you that every three or four years we have the same problem of trying to resuscitate these civic organizations. We do have a problem of building servility so that budget will be able to bat on the proper wicket. Otherwise, if things go on as they are with money and the social fabric becoming torn and tattered, increasingly so, we will end up with prosperity on one hand but it will merely be vulgar prosperity. It would have lost its essence. Money will make little or no difference, as it seems to be the case today. The more money you have and the more property you own, is the more insecure you feel, which is the converse of how a civil society should operate. Security should come with the wealth that you have earned, but it is not so—I am not saying the wealth you have acquired otherwise. So things are not going well. With all these programmes, however well they appear, we still have to get into the responsibility of accountability.

Again, I was very happy when I listened to the Minister of Social Development. I think he is entering into the proper formula of project management. It is not just enough to be accountable; you have to evaluate the product as well. I think, for example, if in the year 2002 you tell us that 14,000 people have benefited from training at these development and transformation centres, I would say that is fine, it shows a caring and compassionate government,

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especially since you want to open 21 more. But it is time as we move towards Vision 2020, and if we want to come anywhere near what we call developed-country status, which I really do not have time to examine, we really need some measurement. How many of these 14,000 people, since they also require training in different respects for their own self-development, are still in the programme? Is this figure of 14,000 increasing? Would it be increased? Would it be with the same persons and so on?

This is not a political point, Madam President. I want to be careful. These projects should be managed, not so much with one eye on the money, which is necessary, but are the people taking full advantage of the opportunity provided through the Government with taxpayers' money? Again, you tell me that in 2002 you have increased food hampers per month from 8,000 to 15,000—that is a whopping increase, almost 90 per cent. It is part of a \$23 million allocation. Again, a caring and compassionate Government. The question would be asked again, because these people, it is said, were also provided with some skill-based activities and micro-entrepreneurial opportunities. Again, that is commendable on paper. So we are asking how many of them have benefited. You have moved from 8,000 to 15,000. What is it this year? What would it be next year? And, Madam President, you would begin to see the implications.

Are you, implicitly, attracting more poverty, as it were? Are you implicitly, and with good intentions, inventing further poverty? Or, do you have in mind, as you move toward Vision 2020, a benchmark so that you know that is a reasonable level that we expect to reach? After that, the number of poor, whether they are given hampers or they are lodged in the development and transformation centres, would be less, over time? Or, are you going to sit smugly—and I say you in a very impersonal manner—and boast about how many more people you are feeding, how many more poor people you are helping? If you go that route you are implicitly saying that your other formal structures of training and socio-economic allocations and absorption—these mainstream institutions—are not working well and, in fact, they are going from bad to worse, if the number of people in your various social welfare programmes keep increasing year after year.

It means then that we use the model that the Minister of Social Development has articulated. You need an evaluation with a benchmark to know whether and when enough is enough, and when there would really be transformation, rather than creating, implicitly, at least, the cycle of poverty. Poverty is a popular political—I almost said gimmick—platform. But I do not think the PNM is on the quest for merely popularity. I think the PNM, from what I have read, seems to be

more responsible. As I have commended them for their programmes, we look forward with great interest to the next budget speech, to knowing whether their benchmark would be articulated, and the extent to which these programmes have met their stated objectives.

To underline the point, I think, that an estimate will tell us that between the ages of 18 and 55, you have a certain number of people, about 630,000, but when you count the number of people who are in one welfare programme or another within that age group, excluding people under 18 years of age and those over 55 years of age, in the age group 18 to 55 you have about 20 per cent in one welfare programme or another.

I am merely indicating that estimate of 20 per cent, which is one out of five, as perhaps a preliminary benchmark. You can say, as you move towards Vision 2020 in the next five years, it would be 10 per cent of that age group or you could use some other measures alongside this mark. But there are indices you could use to see how you are progressing, indeed, on the basis of these vast expenditures in this social sector case about \$2 billion, towards Vision 2020, incrementally. So we should have a level of tolerance, a benchmark for effective project management and accountability to the taxpayer.

I wish to state, Madam President, that this is happening in the United States. If you are on welfare for five years you have to show what you are doing with your training because they are going to cut you off the welfare. In the Scandinavian countries the same thing is happening. In the United Kingdom there are revisions to help policies. And then you have university training—you have to pay quite a lot for university training in almost all parts of the world, except in one or two islands in the Caribbean. We are getting a fanciful notion here—well, I better leave that for another time because it will take me a little too far away from my main concern, which I now get into—crime.

Madam President, and my distinguished colleagues, there is nobody I have met in the last year, especially so in the last few months, who has not recognized that crime and violence, and public fear, are the most serious concerns of the population, and the 1.3 million people in this country are waiting to hear what this Parliament would do and what the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation would do.

Madam President, it is a proper expectation because the basis of this democracy is representative government where tax dollars are paid for things like your personal security and a feeling of comfort—generally, the quality of life. So I ask the question, since it is such a widespread, common concern, why are people

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not prepared to sit together and work out a solution on behalf of the people they represent, since all of them from Toco to Carenage; from Caroni to Morvant, are affected? What is keeping back the process? With respect, I refer to Sen. Baksh's comments. There are conditions. Well, let us deal with the conditions! If it is constitution reform, what is there so impossible for the Government side to enunciate, at least, tentatively, some intention towards constitution reform other than saying that we would come to the—[*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, I do not make this as a narrow political point. The remarks I made earlier concern the deficiencies in the Westminster system. It is almost stifling us to death because we have to take postures of opposition even when we do not feel like doing it! The public expects us to play that role because they want a strong vibrant Opposition, as they say. If one side goes along too often with the Government they would think the Government bought you out! That is so because of the structural perversities that we have inherited. I am trying to suggest that the time has come for heads to get together because crime is increasingly wiping us away and we really have to make a start. I do not know if my words would fall on deaf ears, otherwise we would have to make Rudy Giuliani the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation and continue to hear what Yesenia Gonzalves says, because we appear helpless.

When I read what Yesenia Gonzalves says in a whole page in the Guardian of democracy sometimes or in the *Express*—[*Interruption*] Psychic—I thought you were going to make the Minister a sidekick. [*Laughter*] Psychic—is that what we are going to turn to? Is that what we have come to in this country to help us with crime? Bring people from thousands of miles away in an environment which is so different, in terms of jurisdiction; in terms of the relationship between the Executive and the police; in terms of the fabric of our society, to tell us how we must behave? Well, perhaps, we looked for it! We are waiting too long! There is a list of things I have which have been promised, and which I have spoken about last year, just as you did, Sen. Baksh, that are not fulfilled—a simple thing, with respect.

I know he has enough worries on his shoulders and I really do not want to add to them but I told the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation to check on those licence plates which are shifting from cars swiftly. I told him about Sentras as the prime vehicle, I am trying to tell him that is intelligence too. Intelligence is not only tapping telephones. We have a very narrow idea of what is intelligence. Intelligence has to do with knowledge and following the patterns of criminals. These are two indications, especially the one with checking on the manufacture of licence plates.

I remember passing the pictures, in the last debate on kidnapping, to show that there are about 15 such private firms, which are manufacturing these licence plates, and they promise to give it to you in five minutes. So when you have your expensive surveillance equipment hooked up there, tracking the vehicles, you are tracking the wrong person. You might even arrest the wrong person because the licence plate on the car, which was used for the crime, was already switched. It therefore shows you how absurd we could allow technology to precede common sense.

I also made another point in the Minister of Finance's last budget—the previous one. He indicated that signs would go up at these rum shops and different grocery stores which sell alcohol to persons under 18 years and so on. I made the point, that yes, it is a good idea and I mapped out a way we could help in implementing the law that was passed. As far as I know, there are no signs! Children are still buying rum for their parents and still smoking and buying cigarettes near the place. That is why the incident that Sen. King and my colleague, Sen. Dr. McKenzie raised, about minors loitering around these places, the law is not being implemented properly.

I know Ministers have a problem with implementation. Their job is to think and develop policies and one would expect, down the road, that these things would be implemented. That is why I requested, during the debate on the Kidnapping Bill, that police officers be here to see where they have to pick up from the policymakers. I do not know if it is that 98 per cent are good and 2 per cent are corrupt—in fact, I wonder where they got these percentages. I would have to consult my colleague, Sen. Smith, to find out where he got his percentages from, because I am always impressed with statistics. But I think he was trying to make a general point.

We would like to know, for example, how the previous plans worked or did not work, as a start, before we enter into new terrain. We have heard nothing about the role of “weed and seed”, or is it “seed and weed” but you know what I mean, that programme, has it worked well or not? If it were subjected as an example to what the Minister of Social Development is doing for his area of concern—evaluation and monitoring—perhaps we would have had an answer. For too long we have been approaching this matter of crime in a bit too lackadaisical manner. Most of the crime plans we hear are entered into quite abruptly, dramatically, but without any explanation as to what happened to the previous plans, so we would know how to strengthen them; why we are rejecting them and why is there a space for something new.

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Madam President, what I want to tell Government and the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation is that this is nothing new. This has been there for about 10 to 15 years, with due respect. This is the pattern of planning for crime in this country. I want to introduce, perhaps, the most serious matter that we are obliged to consider. That is the extent to which citizens are, indirectly, inducing totalitarianism in this country. I think it is a very serious issue. I guess those who do not want to listen at this point are free not to do so but I wish to say that the consequences are going to be very serious to all of us because they have happened in other countries. I am not saying that this is exactly what is happening here but you are seeing little signs of it.

When the gentleman, Mr. Ken Gordon, flagged the idea of a state of emergency earlier this year, the Prime Minister, quite correctly, in my view, refused to implement it. It was a wise decision. But there are other citizens who hold similar minds. So in the *Express* of October 05, 2003, the gentleman said, on behalf of his—well, I have to call the name of the organization, I really do not like to do this, the Hindu Credit Union, gentleman, full of energy, very brisk, he should be used somewhere; get him to do something so his energy could be profitably and properly used. He said: “Crime could be crushed in 48 hours.” Now this is Mr. Harrinarine—I really do not like calling these names but I know you would ask me for the context and so on. I have been saying that you really cannot deal with crime in 24 hours. I have been saying that you cannot deal with violence and delinquency in schools in 24 hours—overnight. He said that it could be crushed in 48 hours.

Theses desperate responses really take us down a road from where there could be no return. Do you know how he feels crimes could be crushed in 48 hours? By bringing the police, the coast guard and army and go from house to house and village to village. That is what I mean by the smoke signals becoming ominous as to citizen-induced totalitarianism. The irony is that it is not the Government, in this particular context, but it is a citizen. More than that, in the *Express* of October 16, 2003, on page 15, he is threatening the Government: “Implement these plans or there will be an economic boycott...” That is his right—

Madam 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.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, the hon. Senator has 15 minutes more to speak, but I think this is a good time at which we will take the lunch break. Sen. Prof. Deosaran, you will continue when we return from lunch.

This Senate is now suspended for lunch and we will return at 1.45 p.m.

12.28 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.45 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Madam President, I was making reference to some events which have been taking place reflecting the public's concerns over crime. I was trying to indicate to the Government, that while the temptation might be to take one route, it would be very helpful and more responsible to exercise the kind of restraint that was witnessed from the Prime Minister in dealing with the recent proposal for a state of emergency. I was also making reference to the Hindu Credit Union president in terms of the pressures that he thought useful to bring upon the Government to deal with crime. And may I also say, that the gentleman is entirely within his rights to do so, as is within the rights of every other citizen in the country.

If the space in terms of dealing with crime reduction, crime management is left wide open, citizens and organizations would very likely take it upon themselves to intervene and rightfully so, may I put on the record, as is the case with the Hindu Credit Union president.

Madam President, I was making reference as well to five stages through which citizens can be making proposals with some desperation. Such proposals are likely to take us down the road to some form of totalitarianism—and the evidence is drawn from what has happened in other countries—and I am merely pointing out to our Government that it needs to be cautious. It is really called the theory of incremental degeneration whereby you move from stage one where the Government is not responsible and expeditious enough in dealing with crime; stage two where the public gets panic stricken; to stage three where the public starts calling for all types of hard line policies such as more legislation, tougher laws, bullet proof vests, more army patrols; and the war on crime bursts wide open to stage four where the Government, seeing such as political feasibility accepts them which then leads us on to stage five, which can be called a stage of siege where, together with civic fragmentation, there are these repressive policies which take us into the realm of totalitarianism. It has happened in other countries and I am very pleased once again to emphasize for the record the restraint exercised in these respects by the Prime Minister. Because in this final stage, the

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pressures on the Government get so intense that there is a very intense controversy over the question of freedom versus security.

Fighting crime in a democracy is a very difficult challenge because as you move along the route to suppress crime, the question of civil liberties, even police brutality arises, so the very nature of democracy makes it very difficult indeed to deal with crime as frontally as many people would like us to do.

I wish now to get into the 11-point plan as proposed in the budget speech and say that the plan lacks an appropriate framework. I say so with respect, because the Government had to come up with something to appease public concern. But some of us who have been examining these issues—some of my colleagues here—for many years, Sen. Seetahal, would recognize that what one needs is a blueprint. One needs to look at, at least five areas of crime: the crime prevention part, the crime management part, the crime suppression part, the crime detection part and the prosecution part and when one has these five parts one can organize for each one a short, medium and long term projection. So you end up with 15 cells in a matrix into each; to describe it briefly, you prioritize your programmes and policies with the benchmarking to which I alluded previously. That is the blueprint matrix, the framework and then you would know what to do next year and the year after towards Vision 2020.

We have not been seeing that. What we have is every year, quite regretfully, a number of plans coming up without knowing what has happened to the previous one. On this matter of crime there is little or no room for error. You cannot afford to make too many mistakes. You can make a mistake with your housing programme but you cannot make too many mistakes with crime because it gets worse and worse. It is because of the absence of this framework, this blueprint that we have to be coming back year after year for repairs, for damage control which really does not do the public any good.

The Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation is one of the most, if not the most difficult Ministries to operate. Having admitted that, during the NAR government there were three ministers in the Ministry of National Security. They were Senator Herbert Atwell and two junior ministers: Mr. Joseph Toney and Mr. Hochoy Charles. And three ministers could not deal with that ministry effectively. One can imagine how difficult it is in having one minister when the problem has grown so very, very complex.

While I appreciate the problem, and I am trying perhaps to produce some constructive criticisms, suggestions and hint at a road map towards what could be

the eventual solutions, one still has to recognize that it is indeed a very difficult Ministry to operate. And that is why I thought, perhaps, all sides in the Parliament and in the public communities should really, willingly, come forward to assist in this common cause.

I will deal now with the first item on the 11-point plan as stated in the budget, the special crime fighting unit. And whilst, perhaps, we might say this could help inspire some movements towards dealing with the criminals, the residual issues still remain. Why are we not getting into the Pandora's box that is the police service itself? Are we going to leave the treatment of the police service idly by while we emphasize the role and support for this crime fighting unit? I think that would be regrettable. We have to get into that Pandora's box sooner or later than the sooner the better, to see what is really wrong with the police service.

When community policing was introduced into the police service, it created a big dichotomy in the sense that some officers felt left out, left behind and left apart and the chosen ones belonged to community policing. That schism still exists today at great detriment to the effectiveness of the police service. I do not think we should repeat that error—and that is another example of what I mean of not being able to learn from the past because the blueprint is absent so there is no incremental growth and the gaining of wisdom that we should get from the past.

Strengthening the riot squad. That should have its purpose depending on the need but I myself do not think that should have been put in the context in which it was placed, mainly because I thought that section of the budget speech should be making a loud appeal for civic support and the other cumulative proposals left for another occasion. The insertion of the riot squad should have been more tempered and, perhaps, placed in another context, bearing in mind, of course, what the riot squad does, is licks, licks. I wish to remind the Prime Minister with respect, that the Minister of Education does not like corporal punishment.

Increasing police patrols in business and residential areas is very commendable. Adding one thousand officers, however, brings me back to the Pandora's box. There are serious human resource questions in the police service that, because of time constraints, I will not enter. We have to fix the police service so that we would not be putting new wine into old bottles. The question of stricter laws for illegal arms and kidnapping and so forth, the Government has started to get this done but it would need Opposition support. I have spoken at length this morning about that dilemma.

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I move on to tax credit for business persons, proposal No. 6. The Minister said that this would be giving some form of subsidy to persons in sensitive positions who are at risk, to subsidize whatever security systems they put in their homes or around themselves. But the question today, Madam President, and dear senatorial colleagues is, that everybody is at risk in this country, and not only people who are in sensitive positions. So the response of the Government while understandably so to a limited extent, it needs to, perhaps, apply that policy or somewhat modify some of that subsidization policy to all citizens because we are all at risk. Nobody is in an insensitive position today. Everybody is in a very sensitive position when it comes to crime.

Public education for young people in knowing what is right and what is wrong, excellent! I am not too sure whether a public education programme may be sufficient. I think there is much going on in the schools and, perhaps, I was looking forward to hearing the Minister of Education speak because there is a tremendous amount of work now being developed; part of the blueprint I speak about into which character building and such values are placed. I would have liked to see the connection between this proposal and what the Ministry of Education is doing and also the role of the church and the families, which brings us back to square one because in the absence of proper functioning families, the diminished role in my view of the church and other civic organizations, it seems as if more and more responsibilities are being put on the shoulders of the government.

Madam President, we in this country have to realize that there are limits to governments. There is a line over which the Government in a democratic system should be wary of crossing. The question of scouts, girl guides and cadets is an excellent idea. The special security commission committee as a think tank is an excellent idea. I ask the question: is this going to be merely politically driven or is it going to be a professionally driven think tank such as you have in other think tanks around the world, the Carnegie foundation, the Ram Corporation from which one receives documents for public debate, documents written up fearlessly, fairly and professionally so that it would inform public opinion and government's policy? If it is a think tank that is circumscribed by purely political considerations and selections, you would be getting Caesar to Caesar speaking and I do not think that is what the Prime Minister has in mind and, perhaps, if anybody has the opportunity to advise him—the Minister in the Ministry of Finance or anybody else in the honourable Senate who is close enough to advise him, it is advice well given because the question is credibility. You want the think tank to operate effectively and with credibility and to help the Prime Minister who, as I said, needs all the help he can get at this time.

I hope in the years to come as we move to Vision 2020, one would see a fuller gallery, one would see the different elements in Parliament joining hands together to fight this common monster, crime, as one moves towards Vision 2020. And I say so, in the spirit of Divali, and I seize the occasion to wish you, Madam President, and the families of all my colleagues here a very happy Divali. Thank you.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo): Madam President, I rise to express my full support to the Appropriation Bill, 2004 that was presented by the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in the House of Representatives. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to participate in this, my first budget debate. [*Desk thumping*]

In my contribution today, I will take the opportunity to update my colleagues in this Senate, and the people of this country on the recent performance of the state enterprise sector that falls under my purview in the Ministry of Finance, as well as outline some significant initiatives to be undertaken during the course of the next fiscal year.

On November 15, 2002, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance launched Vision 2020, that outlined the goals for achieving developed country status by the year 2020. In the 2004 budget presentation, aptly entitled Charting the Course to 2020: Empowering People, the Government of which I am proud to be a hon. Member has presented to the people of this country the first phase of the process of transforming Trinidad and Tobago.

This budget represents another block in building the foundation that would guide the country towards the vision. The budget focuses attention on seven critical issues designed to improve the lives of its people, in particular the most vulnerable groups. These issues are: health, education, housing, social services delivery, strong and cohesive communities, unity in diversity, safe streets, homes, places of recreation and work.

Madam President, the measures outlined in the 2004 budget presentation together constitute a platform on which we intend to build. In his budget speech, the Minister of Finance presented a mutually reinforcing package of measures focusing on promoting human development, enhancing social and environmental conditions, improving social equity and harmony and expanding economic activity.

The Minister of Finance, while anchoring the 2004 budget in the context of the medium term vision, also reported on the country's economic performance

over the last fiscal year which was as you may recall, quite commendable given the instability and economic slow down that characterized the international environment. We have every right to be proud of our achievements over the last fiscal year.

We have had strong positive performances on all the major macro-economic variables—a growth rate of some 6.7 per cent, a trade surplus of over \$2.9 billion, an external reserves of US \$2.4 billion, the equivalent of 8.5 months of imports. We have experienced a declining rate of inflation and through prudent management converted a projected deficit into a fiscal surplus of some \$28.9 million.

In view of the favourable overall economic performance during the last fiscal year, we have contributed \$497 million to the Revenue Stabilization Fund. The Fund is an important instrument in the Government's financial management tool kit. The Fund encourages fiscal discipline, will perform a stabilization function in the event of negative oil shocks and will contribute to long term fiscal sustainability by encouraging national savings.

Madam President, let me now turn to my responsibility as a Minister in the Ministry of Finance with oversight of the state enterprises sector. The state enterprises sector comprises 67 enterprises all playing critical roles in a wide range of economic sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, energy, finance, transportation, communications and other services.

By Act No. 5 of 1973, Chap. 69:03, the Minister of Finance was incorporated as Corporation Sole. By this Act, all lands and other properties as specified in the schedule of the Act vested in the State or deemed to be vested in the State, were transferred to the Corporation Sole. As such, the Minister of Finance (Corporation Sole) is charged with oversight responsibility for the State's entire portfolio of investments. The state enterprises sector constitutes a major element of this portfolio.

For the first ten months of the last fiscal year, data from a selection of the enterprises indicated results of a combined cash surplus of some \$407 million. Nine of these enterprises experienced cash surpluses in excess of \$1 billion.

The placement of these cash surpluses in the domestic financial sector as well as the financing of the deficits of some of these enterprises have served to generate increased financial activity on the domestic market.

The importance of the state enterprises is underscored by their contribution to central government revenues through dividends. Also, a formal dividend policy

would be introduced in the very near future. In addition, the implementation of capital projects by these enterprises fosters a dynamic expansion of domestic economic activity. Such injections of capital create a strong multiplier effect and reverberates throughout the economy with a subsequent increase in demand for domestic goods and services. For the period October 2002 to July 2003, capital expenditures by state enterprises amounted to some \$843 million representing infrastructure development in the energy sector and telecommunications.

Madam President, the state enterprises have made significant contributions to the expansion of domestic economic activity, employment, capital investment, foreign exchange earnings and government revenue. It is in this context that the rationalization and reform of the state enterprises sector continues to be deliberate policy objectives of the Government.

In today's dynamic environment, it is necessary that the state enterprises sector be continuously examined and rationalized with a view to ensuring the optimum use of state resources to the benefit of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard, the Government's policy is to retain and acquire equity in the state enterprises sector only where such ownership is integral to the achievement of the policy objectives for the sector in which the enterprise is located. Nonetheless, it is recognized that there may be instances where state equity participation is necessary or may become necessary. Situations may arise where the private sector is not willing to take the risk in the absence of the State's direct participation especially with respect to the promotion of fledgling industries.

In the rationalization of the state enterprises sectors, state equity holdings will be evaluated against the following set of prescribed criteria:

- Strategic national significance
- Validity of Mandate
- Optimal Resource Utilization
- Viability of the Enterprise
- Market Efficiency
- Requirements for long-term competitiveness
- Socio-economic implications

In this context, the Government will continue to employ a variety of strategies including divestment, restructuring, mergers and liquidation of enterprises where necessary to obtain an efficient state sector. Our approach to improving the sector

is based on the philosophy that the sector must be efficient and should not be a persistent drain on the State's resources.

The Government remains committed to playing a facilitating role in the economy—one that encourages the activities of the private sector. Nonetheless, the Government is prepared to adopt a regulatory or a catalytic role if the conditions require this.

My experience in the private sector has left me with a number of lessons. One of the most important being that a dynamic private sector combined with an efficient public sector is crucial for development and growth.

It is against this background that the recent restructuring of the sugar industry must be seen. It has been widely accepted that in order to breathe life back into the industry and to reduce the burden on the Treasury, it was necessary to undertake a restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited. This exercise allows for the operation of a more efficient sugar industry while, at the same time, provides extensive opportunities for the growth of new business activity. The Government is committed to ensuring that Caroni (1975) Limited and its environs become a centre of growth and development.

Sugarcane processing would now be undertaken by a single factory under the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited (SMCL) utilizing canes supplied by private farmers at prices determined on the basis of quality. Rum Distillers of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (RDTT) is responsible for operating the rum distillery.

The reconfigured sugar industry entails the introduction of the private sector into the core and non-core activities of the former Caroni (1975) Limited. Private sector participation would be encouraged at the earliest possible time in the non-sugar strategic business units such as rice, citrus, dairy and beef production.

The extensive acreages of some 77,000 acres, formerly held by Caroni (1975) Limited would be managed by the Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited (EMBD). This company would undertake a land-use study and a capability study with a view to ensuring that the lands are appropriately used for agricultural estates, light and heavy manufacturing estates, housing projects and commercial complexes.

This initiative by the Government heralds a new era for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited has begun the process of reviewing 6,000 applications by former

employees of Caroni (1975) Limited for the lease of lands for housing and agricultural purposes. The EMBD has already considered more than 1,800 applications for agricultural plots from former Caroni (1975) Limited workers.

This administration is committed to ensuring the availability of retraining opportunities to empower former employees with new skills and the confidence required for re-entry into the job market and self-employment.

Madam President, opportunities for retraining have been offered to the former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited. The programme for daily-paid workers was launched with two 'Open Days' in August of this year. To date applications have been received from 1,244 former daily-paid employees for programmes offered by several institutions including the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA), Metal Industries Company Limited (MIC), National Energy Skills Centre (NESC), Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology (TTIT), Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. In addition, applications have been received from 600 former monthly-paid employees seeking inclusion in programmes which are being offered by the Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies, the University of the West Indies, School of Accounting and Management and the School of Business and Computer Studies including NESC, TTIT and YTEPP, mentioned previously.

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Government is also pursuing the restructuring of the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. This exercise will include the establishment of strategic units to undertake the business relating to infrastructure development, real estate management, cargo handling, cruise shipping and inter-island ferry service, towage operations and the Caricom wharves. The private sector will be encouraged to participate in some of the business units.

We consider the Caricom wharves and the inter-island ferry to be of strategic importance to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago in light of the responsibility for promoting inter-regional trade, and securing transport links with our sister island, Tobago. Government will retain ownership of these areas but will ensure their operational efficiency and effectiveness. The modernization of the port of Port of Spain promises to be a key component in our plans to make Trinidad and Tobago the transportation hub of the region.

Madam President, the state sector policy framework allows for the more efficient use of state resources in areas that are critical to the sustainable

development of the country. Consequently, where it is considered strategic, Government will utilize the state enterprise sector as a vehicle for implementing its economic policy as well as its social agenda.

In this regard, the deepening of the partnership between various communities of Trinidad and Tobago and Government has been identified as a major policy initiative. The Community Improvement Services Limited (CISL) will facilitate the process of building this partnership. This company, in addition to the undertaking of the upgrade of physical infrastructure, will also be engaged in the development of cultural centres, community centres and sporting facilities. Also, the National Schools Dietary Services Limited (NSDSL) is now fully operational and is expected to more effectively address the nutritional needs of the disadvantaged within the school population.

Further, it is recognized that the promotion of small businesses and the encouragement of private initiative is critical to the reduction of unemployment and poverty, empowerment of citizens of this country and a more equitable distribution of wealth and income.

In this context, the National Development Company Limited (NEDCO) will serve as a catalyst in fostering new business initiatives. The Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme administered by the Solid Waste Management Company Limited is not only involved in environmental projects but more significantly is serving to build entrepreneurial capacity.

The Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDeCOTT) and Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited (TTFM) are working in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and the National Housing Authority to deliver Government's targets for its national housing thrust. The Export/Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago provides support services for our manufacturers' thrust into new markets which is critical to our success in the environment of increasing liberalization.

Our vision for First World status includes the development of a technology and business park at Wallerfield that includes a light manufacturing estate and a campus of the University of the Trinidad and Tobago. The Property and Industrial Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago (PIDCOTT) has been mandated to achieve this objective in the shortest possible time. Its status as a state enterprise directly owned by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will afford PIDCOTT greater independence in decision-making and allow the company to take a more active role in the management of Government's industrial estates in general, and

the achievement of the vision for the Wallerfield technology and business park in particular. Among the industries targeted for the business park are plastics, pharmaceuticals, medical and electronic devices as well as agro-based industries.

Madam President, good corporate governance is critical to the efficient and effective functioning of an economy. It is a source of competitive advantage and critical to the achievement of economic and social progress. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that the fundamental principles of good governance, accountability, transparency, responsibility, fair treatment, meritocracy and management discipline be ingrained not only in the state enterprises but also incorporated in the operations of private sector enterprises.

Although several key governance issues are already addressed in the existing enabling legislation of state enterprises and other state agencies, Government will continue to implement measures to strengthen corporate governance. An important aspect of good governance is the reporting by state enterprises on its financial performance. Accordingly, we now wish to improve this disclosure framework to meet best practice in international standards. We have now imposed with immediate effect an obligation on all state enterprises to publish in at least one major newspaper a summary of their audited financial statements within four months of the end of their financial year and publish a summary of the un-audited financial statements within two months of the mid-year date.

It is the view of the Government that every enterprise has a responsibility to report to the national community. I am confident that this measure will improve the timely reporting of the performance and in so doing, the accountability of the state enterprises to the people of this country.

Madam President, the Ministry of Finance has already established a Central Audit Committee (CAC) to monitor processes and practices, to ensure compliance with applicable laws, instructions and regulations. During the course of the new fiscal year, this unit will be further strengthened.

The Central Audit Committee commenced operations in November 2002 and focused mainly on the review of tender procedures in use and contracts awarded by the state agencies. A limited number of operational audits were also conducted. To date, the work done by the Central Audit Committee has impacted positively on the transparency of operations of state agencies. However, we recognize the need for closer monitoring.

Government needs the assurance that effective systems are in place in the state agencies to ensure compliance, accountability and cost effective operations. As

such, the Central Audit Committee will be called upon to evaluate internal control systems of the state agencies and conduct more operational audits. To effectively discharge this mandate, the present staff complement is inadequate. Therefore, in the new fiscal year, this department will be strengthened by the employment of additional senior auditors.

Government also intends to introduce new by-laws, in order to standardize the environment in which the state enterprises operate. The Ministry of Finance has already received comments and recommendations from state enterprises on the proposed new by-laws.

To further enhance the transparency and efficiency of the state enterprises, Government also intends to introduce a code of best practice. This code will treat with ethical issues relating to responsibilities of directors, and special attention would be given to their responsibility for managing the process of information disclosure. It is anticipated that this ambitious move will serve to raise the level of governance in Trinidad and Tobago and may even act as a benchmark for domestic private sector companies.

Madam President, recognizing that corporate governance can no longer be treated solely as a local or national issue, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg last year. This initiative encourages governments, publicly traded, private and state-owned extractive companies, international organizations and NGOs to work together voluntarily to increase transparency over payments by companies and revenues to governments in the oil, gas and mining or extractive industries.

In June of this year, a multi-stakeholder conference was hosted by the initiative in the United Kingdom. Trinidad and Tobago participated in this conference at which a Statement of Principles and Agreed Actions was tabled. We share the belief that prudent use of natural resource wealth will provide the basis for sustained economic growth and development, but if such wealth is not managed properly negative economic and social impacts will be created.

Madam President, this Government is committed to prudent management of the economy. Over the last few days concerns have been expressed about the quantum of the public debt. Much has been said concerning the debt of this country—some of it has been accurate; a lot has been inaccurate. The fact of the matter is that the total public sector debt relative to GDP has fallen from 54.8 per cent in September 2002 to 51.5 per cent in 2003.

Debt management is a key element of Government's strategy of generating macro-economic stability and strengthening public financing. In fact, our debt management practices coupled with our macro-economic and financial stability have earned us an investment grade rating on our sovereign and external debt from two main international rating agencies which were previously mentioned, they are Standard and Poor's and Moody's. Indeed, in April 2003, the rating of our sovereign debt was upgraded.

Madam President, in spite of the favourable rating in the international arena we continue to gear our policy towards reducing our external vulnerability. We intend to diversify our sources of financing and to utilize our debt management strategy to develop our domestic capital market. An important facet of our management strategy has been the reduction of the overall cost of debt. During the fiscal year 2003, we have begun restructuring the local debt of central government and now propose to treat with the debt of the state enterprises.

A review of the debt portfolio of the state enterprises has indicated that it includes loans with significant variation in interest rates and maturities. These interest rates are reflective of the prevailing market conditions at the time of negotiation. Market conditions have since become quite favourable to the borrower. Consequently, Government has agreed to pursue the restructuring of the existing debt of the state enterprises in circumstances where interest rates on existing loans are in excess of current market rates and pre-payments do not attract penalties, that is in excess of the benefits of lower interest rates. Restructuring would assist in the developing of the domestic capital market through a regular programme of issuance of public sector debt instruments.

Further, in order to ensure that the state enterprises pursue a more structured borrowing programme, Government has agreed that funding requirements of state enterprises and statutory authorities should be identified at the start of the fiscal year to ensure orderly intervention in the market place.

Madam President, Government's commitment to prudent management of our financial affairs will serve the country well. It represents the best assurance that Trinidad and Tobago with its endowment of natural resources will achieve its potential for higher growth rates and a decent and dignified life for all our citizens. Our policies are geared to maximizing our resources and improving the lives of all our people.

I would like to emphasize that we have committed ourselves to the attainment of a vision of this country where all citizens will enjoy a high quality of life

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catering to the needs of our citizens, a preferred place to live, raise children, do business, work and go to school.

Again, I congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for his presentation of a comprehensive package of measures that sets us off on our journey towards the achievement of this vision.

I thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dana Seetahal: That last thing the previous Senator said was about a safe place for our citizens and this brings me straight to the essence of my contribution.

The level of security enjoyed by citizens is the most critical problem facing Trinidad and Tobago today, so said the hon. Prime Minister two Fridays ago when he delivered his Budget Statement 2004. With the number of murders standing at 183, as at today—and likely to peak at over 220 at the end of the year, twice what it was five years ago—with kidnappings for ransoms standing at 42, the second highest in the world, proportionate to our population size we are told, no one in Trinidad and Tobago and even outside can even deny what the hon. Prime Minister has said, that the level of security enjoyed by citizens in this country is their most critical problem.

Polls have shown again and again that the average citizen in this country lives in fear; fear of being robbed, kidnapped or just victimized. We see that with business places starting to close at 5.00 p.m. or 6.00 p.m. I went on one of my infrequent forays to a nightclub the other day and I was told that business had dropped in the last 10 months—the owner was saying—because of the crime situation as they put it.

It has been said, unfortunately, that there is a perception that Government Ministers, and others in authority, who have armed guards do not appreciate the plight of the people. Unfortunately, gratuitous statements such as “the average citizen is not affected by crime”, “it’s just collateral damage” and “Port of Spain is one of the safest places in the world today” seem to support that perception.

I do not hold the Government liable for the increase in crime, nor, I am sure, do most citizens, but what has possibly been most disturbing to the average citizen and the protective forces in this country—and may well have led to the growing disregard for law and order—is the special treatment meted out in the last 13 years to insurrectionists who caused so much havoc in our country. These people, contrary to what has been held out, were never exonerated for the multitude of crimes they committed against the citizenry. Before the world they

were seen to have committed high treason in attempting to overthrow the lawfully elected government. They shot at our Head of government and they were responsible for the death of many innocent people including policemen and public citizens, some right here in this Chamber or within the vicinity of this Red House.

The only reason—we should know this—they were not further prosecuted was because the Privy Council, which we are going to get rid of soon, in its wisdom, said that it would be an abuse of process to do that, in that, although the purported pardon was invalid, both sides had acted on the basis that it was and, in effect, the State had promised not to prosecute in return for freeing the captives and they must keep to their promise.

Some of us might prefer not to dwell on history, they might say it was so long ago and why bring it up, but we all know that those who do not learn from their mistakes and forget history are doomed to repeat those mistakes. Have we learnt from our mistakes in relation to that group? Have we ostracized them for putting this country through terror 13 years ago and setting back our development several years? It would seem not. This is a lesson apparently not learnt by the last government nor by this one.

The Prime Minister of the former government, Mr. Panday, entertained that group in his first formal meeting after he became prime minister. That is a fact. Our current Prime Minister had admitted he, too, met with that group more than once; and during the course of his tenure as minister of local government, the infamous or famous Dhanraj Singh appeared to have given members of the Jamaat al Muslimeen top jobs in the URP. He also had close ties with them. This is a known fact—it was revealed in the trial. The names of various members of the Jamaat al Muslimeen and their connection with the URP were bandied about by the prosecution and not denied by the defence. It was accepted as a fact: Chen, Saheef, Mark Guerra, the State's star witness himself—this is the State's witness saying, "Yes, the Jamaat is a violent organization". Talk of guns and contract killing abounded. Yet that organization continues to hold sway in many quarters in this country and it even appears that the current Government has associations with them.

According to a *Sunday Express* investigative report of October 05, 2003—I have it here—the police have identified connections to the Jamaat al Muslimeen and various groups connected to the recent gang-related violence in north Trinidad and behind major kidnappings. Now that Mark Guerra is no longer with us his detailed criminal history in the United States and locally has emerged. A man with such a past and charges pending at the time campaigned with the current

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Prime Minister in the 2002 election as is evident by this photo in the *Sunday Express* dated October 05, 2003.

Now, the Prime Minister—our current Prime Minister—is quite right when he says that the UNC has no moral authority to blame the Prime Minister for crime through association with the Jamaat al Muslimeen, since it was they who first gave that organization legitimacy in this country and even put forward a man called Sean Francis, known by those who are involved in criminal prosecution and others as a Don in Morvant. At the time he had many criminal charges outstanding. He was put forward as a local government candidate.

Now, while the UNC may not have any moral authority, all right-thinking citizens—I count myself as one of them—have a right to know what is the current relationship, if any, between the Government and the Jamaat al Muslimeen. What is happening with regard to the millions of dollars owed to this country by the Jamaat al Muslimeen? These questions demand answers. This is an organization we are talking about with members that are continually before the courts. Although as soon as that happens we hear that they are ex-members. Nevertheless, the *Sunday Express* investigative report details that at least 42 of the 114 original members—those who have not died, a few of them have gone abroad—have been before the courts in this country for crimes ranging from murder, possession of arms and ammunition to drugs and kidnappings.

The reason I raise this, Madam President, in the context of national security, we are talking about citizens who have to trust the Government; they must trust the armed forces; they must trust the protective forces and the protective forces must trust the Government to give them that support and have a policy which will allow them to function. If the trust of the average citizen is to be maintained, if it is that they are to feel that criminal justice means something in this country they need to know what it is with this organization. What is the status of the relationship with the Government? Are the police to go to them with hands that are tied? Are they to be very careful? Why did it take two, three or four weeks to question the leader of that organization when ordinary people would have been questioned immediately if a motive were known in a killing? These are questions that must, at some point, be dealt with and not just brushed under the carpet because before we can deal with crime effectively, people must have confidence in those who are seeking to do so, that includes the Government, the police and everyone. Therefore, we need to clear the air.

It may be that there is no relationship now. It may be that everything has started afresh with this new unit they are talking about and all of the things that

are being put in place, but it needs to be clearly stated. No one should be able to tell me, or anyone else, that if you talk about them you had better watch out and be careful that somebody does not shoot you. This is ridiculous! For speaking freely in this country and saying that those people are criminals and should be ostracized and have no business having any say in the running in this country I should feel afraid? [*Desk thumping*] Well, if anything happens to me when I leave here, you know what is the cause. The point is that we should all be free to talk and just as anyone else who wants to ill speak the Government, the Opposition or whatever it is, we should be able to say, "This is this". We will not tolerate that from people who put the country at that risk and not be afraid that we would have to walk around in protective custody the next day.

Madam President, speaking of gang—and the Jamaat is what I would consider the worst gang in this country—it is perhaps, no wonder, that in the circumstances that in the last decade gang activity has increased in Trinidad and Tobago. If you have a situation where a successful gang seems to be getting away with it; seems to be moving ahead and being successful and having power and being able to associate with the politicians and going in the Grand Savannah and sitting in the box and going wherever it is and having a PBR pass, then you might as well. If you cannot get what you want through legitimate means—if you cannot become a lawyer, doctor or whoever makes money, I do not know—then you go for the gangs. Sen. Prof. Deosaran, I am sure, will support me when I say that is common knowledge of people who study criminology. We know that gang activity and big gang subculture develops from an underworld where people who cannot get what they want through legitimate do it through illegitimate means, especially if other gangs appear to be successful.

As long as gangs are given any legitimacy this signifies to potential law-breakers that they have power. Politicians are afraid of them; people are afraid of them; people cannot say what they want; it is like the Mafia. This is what has happened in Jamaica. I was there in 1996 doing something for Caricom dealing with the witness protection, as far back as then we were talking about feasibility of a regional witness protection plan—and I went to Trench Town, in the middle of the day; they would not take me in the night. I wanted to go in the night, but they said, "No," and we must go in bullet proof cars. I saw an army tank in the street. There was the little head coming out of the tank watching around to shoot people in case they shot at the soldiers first.

There they have the army, they have these units because they have declared partial states of emergencies in these inner cities; West Kingston, Trench Town,

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Arned Gardens—about six of them. The crime spirals and it continues to spiral. I am not saying that it means our crime unit will fail. I am saying that you should bear in mind that it is not the first time, but the reason that it fails is that gang activity continues unabated because of the relationships between the Government, the politicians, the Opposition and these gangs. They grow in power. So, we had better be careful.

To get back to the budget statement, and the underlying acknowledgement that crime is out of control, the Prime Minister said that the Government is declaring a “war on crime”. Of course we know that this is a statement, but I think it is really an intention to show that the Government wants to do something. I have no doubt that the Government is really sincerely motivated, if for no other reason than to win the next election. Clearly, if crime goes out of control, that might be the end of the Government. I do not think that is the only reason, I think they have a genuine interest. I think most of the Ministers in the Government really want to do what is right for the country, let us look at the “crime fighting proposals.”

2.45 p.m.

The question of the crime unit is the first item—and I think my colleague mentioned it—that the Prime Minister referred to. I just want to make that point. That is something we need to look at carefully. It is not just the question of legitimacy—whether it is legal, whether or not we should have soldiers doing what the police are supposed to do internally; whether or not soldiers are to fight war; whether it is a breach of the Defence Act or the Constitution; whether it is the President who should decide what they should do—that is not my point.

My point is that no one has a clue, or at least we have not been told, how this unit is to function. If the police keep to their position and say: “You know, we are not getting involved: we are so tired; we are fed up; we are not taking any instructions; we are just taking instructions from the Commissioner of Police; that guy, Mr. Joseph, cannot tell us what to do”, what will happen? What will happen with the unit from the regiment, the unit from the coast guard; all of those units? Who will be arresting the wrongdoers? Will we give the army powers—precept them to be able to arrest?

Even if that worked, what about citizens ' rights? What will they tell them? Do they know what a caution is? All of us may not know, but when a police officer arrests someone he has to say: “You have a right to remain silent. Anything you say will be taken down and may be given in evidence”. I know it by rote. I could be a police officer just to deliver that, but that is something that must be told.

You also need to tell the people about their rights, otherwise if you do not, the arrest is illegal and then the State may be sued for money—thousands of dollars. These are practical issues that must be considered in the operation of this crime unit—this multitude of people. What about the judges' rules? What about taking a statement? Do they know all these details? These are questions that must be finalized; must be answered, rather than a blanket statement that, like it or not, that unit will come; seems a bit drastic or even dictatorial.

I move on to the question of lawlessness—another issue—and I am dealing with some issues mentioned by the Minister of Finance in the budget in the area of national security. It seems that everywhere I turn I am hearing about zero tolerance. Suddenly the country has discovered these words. Lawlessness will not be tolerated. We will have strict enforcement.

It is a joke in Trinidad and Tobago that people—and this brings me to something I mentioned more than once: Who operates PH taxis? Who breaches two sets of laws—the current basic law and the other law, which demands that they have insurance for taking people here and there? They breach that law and they are never charged.

This morning I was trying to jog up Mount St. Benedict and I nearly got run over by three different vehicles. They were all PH vehicles, breaking the law. Nobody is going to charge them. Two nights ago I saw, on national television, a PH driver explaining why he is raising his fare by 50 cents; as if it is perfectly lawful, you know. This is his normal activity. When someone is kidnapped, he is a PH driver. That is an occupation, Madam President. One would think that when we talk about enforcing the law there will be some recognition in these people that maybe we should keep this hidden. But no, because everyone knows it is okay.

Why are these people not made to obey the law? They might be providing a service, but why do they not just register like regular taxis and pay the insurance and protect ordinary people from what happens if they have an accident? We are told, on the other hand, that we are responsible for crime because we pelt bottles outside a window. I do not remember doing that for a while, but even if I did, it pales into insignificance when we talk about people driving and making U-turns, breaking red lights, breaking major roads and they know they are performing an accepted task, but it is not accepted that I spit on the road, which is probably wrong, but still. We must have equal treatment for everyone. If we are talking about enforcing the law, go in the street and enforce it. The police officers who drive, let them enforce it. Everyone should have the laws enforced against him, not selectively.

It is said that lawlessness will not be tolerated from either criminals or other persons. If it were lawlessness, then other persons would also be criminals. I am not sure what that means, but it is really an empty threat. It only angers law-abiding citizens like me who feel that we are entitled to protest. Now, we are being threatened by the riot squad with rigid enforcement of the law and so on. My colleague mentioned it earlier and I had intended to say that the Government had better be careful if, in its zeal to send a clear message, it does not further alienate citizens who already feel threatened by criminals, by gangs, and they have little faith in all these crime plans and the thousand police officers and they now see the State as attacking them for daring to say, “We cannot take crime”.

Alienation itself can create a feeling of anomie and Sen. Prof. Deosaran will tell you that anomie leads to deviant behaviour. This is one of the accepted causes of crime—socialist organization—you feel separated from the State and then you might as well go and commit the crime if they are treating you like a criminal. That is how people react.

Speaking about alienation brings me to two issues connected to criminal law, referred to in the media and in Parliament. One is that consideration might be given to redefining the law on treason. I hope this is just casual talk. If it is serious that people who “bad talk” the country abroad could be held liable, then many, many people would have to worry about that because it is a common practice to do that until, of course, someone else—not of this country—decides to agree with us. A lot of people do that abroad and some can justify why they get a foreign accent or why they stay abroad.

There is no sense, apart from the morality of it, to say someone should not exercise their freedom of expression to criticize the country, even if it is to tell others abroad what a bad place it is. I do not think it is patriotic, but not being patriotic hardly equals treason. Treason is where you assist the enemy in times of war or where, like previous persons, you seek to overthrow the government. The best answer to detractors of this country—I would suggest to members of the Government—is to prove them wrong. Do not say, “I will bring out the big stick”!

Another rather repressive suggestion—in passing, if I might say—is that we should fingerprint everybody in the country. Apart from the difficulty logistically in doing so, surely it must be obvious to those who said that, if they are lawyers, that this is a breach of your right to privacy. It is also something that is not reasonably justifiable in a civilized society that has respect for human rights.

So even if you seek to amend the Constitution and say to fingerprint everybody, you also have to get over the next hurdle: Is it reasonably justifiable?

The only way I can see it being reasonably justified is if 90 per cent of the people are criminals and you want to check their criminal records (CROs) in the police station. Otherwise, I think if you want to assist in crime detection, the way to do that is to enforce the DNA Act to detect real criminals in bringing the DNA. Train the people in the Forensic Science Centre and pay the money. Another thing is to let the national identification (ID) registration work. It should not have to take nine months to get a piece of pink paper to tell you to come and pick up your ID and then you find out that it is smudged. If you cannot do without an ID card, you are talking about fingerprint identification? Please!

In respect of the many laws the Attorney General referred to, I want to say that I think it is commendable that we will be getting so many improved laws and I hope that they come soon.

One thing I saw in the statement; and that is that the Government wishes to increase the penalties for offences such as kidnapping. I do not know if that was an error. Maybe they cut and paste from the last document and then they put it on this one and left out kidnapping.

Madam President, you and all the Senators here must remember, we recently increased the penalty for kidnapping so that it is the second most serious penalty in this country. Apart from murder, there is no other minimum mandatory sentence of 25 years for a serious offence. That means that a court can sentence a person for 40 years; more than for rape; more than for manslaughter, which is at least 25 years. What more do you want to increase it to? The way to deal with kidnapping, it would seem to me, is not to go further and increase it to 100 years now, but to deal with the persons causing the kidnappings. I do not know whether we trust the Anti-Kidnapping Squad or not, but I know some of the officers personally and I would have faith in them.

Nevertheless, they say that they can bring the kidnappers to account if they have a few more officers, so that would be a simpler way to deal with the matter immediately, and a more effective way, rather than waiting until a person commits the crime and then give him 100 years. It is ridiculous. I really do think—and I feel seriously about that—that the investigative capacity of that unit should be extended immediately. They should not have to be standing on the corner asking for 20 more persons.

The last part of my contribution is the vexed question of prison reform. The Prime Minister talked of restorative correction. In this regard, he referred rather vaguely to the introduction of rehabilitative programmes in prison and of moving the prison system towards the reformatory mode.

May I point out that in the last budget it was stated that resources would be committed to the correctional services to embark on internal rehabilitation programmes aimed at preparing offenders to re-enter society. I am not aware, from a study of the appropriations last year, of any such resources. I also had the experience of sending a client, who had been a former inmate at the maximum security prison, the condemned—so you know what he was in there for—to access some rehabilitation at the Ministry of National Security. Up to today, he has not been able to do that. He was sent to at least two different people and, nothing.

Another client who was a drug user was released from prison after five months. He had been clean during those five months because, presumably, he could not get the drug while in prison, but within a week he was back on the drug. Why? Because he had never been treated while in prison. So, back in the same environment, with the best will in the world, he was an easy prey and his family is devastated because they tried hard. They got all kinds of reports just to get him out. He and others had no rehabilitation inside or outside.

Let me say that in the Maximum Security Prison, (MSP) there is rehabilitation inside, but if you are on remand and not in the condemned. I do not know why. I imagine they think that if you are condemned, that is the end of you at some point, so why bother. With the remand, you are waiting to be tried or you are waiting for your appeal. So, if you are waiting, you again do not get a chance to get any treatment.

Some prisoners spend all their time in remand or in condemned. They can spend 10 years. I know a person who spent 12 years in remand back and forth. He was in remand. He was tried, he was convicted, he appealed; he was back in, he was in condemned; he got a retrial, he was back in remand. The only way he managed to read was because another prisoner in the condemned opposite him, Prof. Neptune, who had been condemned similarly, had a book and he was reading his book and my client was reading his book and they would read, “Jane” or whatever it was and they would memorize it. He actually learned to read in the condemned. But this is unusual.

I would make some suggestions from my experience as a criminal law practitioner—I was going to say a criminal lawyer—somebody who has been involved from the prosecution and the defence. I do not think that there is anyone here with quite that training. There are certain things that I feel we could take on board.

One is to immediately implement drug counselling in all the prisons—the maximum security prison, state prison, the women’s prison, Golden Grove prison,

Carrera prison and I suppose the Tobago prison. I heard that there is going to be a prison in Tobago and it is badly needed.

Over 60 per cent of all prisoners we are told—information from the Ministry of National Security last year—are drug addicts, but they do not have treatment whilst in prison and they pay through their noses to get a cigarette. Cigarettes can run, for your information, at about \$500 per pack in prison. It is all illegal, you know, but I am just telling you that for information. This is why when they cannot get drugs, they use cigarettes and pay that phenomenal amount. People secrete these items in certain passages in their bodies to go into prison. Many of these things you find, so let us start with that.

Secondly, extend the teaching and other activities that exist in the maximum security prison. People learn computer literacy. I went to see someone and was told I had to wait because he was in a computer class. But he was serving one term at maximum security. Extend that to the other prisons! That should not be difficult.

A high percentage of inmates are illiterate. Perhaps this might be a useful indicator that they have fewer resources. I think we should have more formalized training. Right now we have prison officers who are committed and who are doing the job outside of their normal activities. There are other prisoners doing the job and helping prisoners. That is useful, but you never know. Let us formalize it.

There are people like Bill Trotman who go in there and assist—people who do not talk about it. Maybe I should not have mentioned that, but they do all kinds of assistance training with the prisoners. We do have rehabilitation, but it is mostly voluntary. I do not see much money, if any at all in this budget moving towards this. If we are talking about dealing with crime and preventing recidivism, this is clearly the way to go. So, why are we not doing it?

Upgrade the 1843 prison rules. Those prison rules were amended once in the last 55 years and it was of no significance. When you look at it you see the food you have to get: two ounces rice, half ounce salt fish; and the clothes—one hat, one bonnet, things like that; ridiculous things—one pair of shorts.

Sen. Morean: There is something I would like to clarify with respect to the prison rules. I would like to inform that Mrs. Grant of the Law Reform Commission, together with an officer from the prison and other legal officers are on a committee and they are well advanced towards drafting the revised rules and perhaps amending certain portions of the Act in preparation for the reform processes that are about to be put in place.

Sen. D. Seetahal: Thank you very much, hon. Attorney General, but since I did not hear it mentioned and it is a major piece of legislation—and we have about the oldest in the Commonwealth Caribbean—I thought it was important.

The immediate renovation of the over-100-year-old state prison. I do not know if anyone, apart from the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation, has been to visit the state prison in recent times. When I go, I get special treatment. Do you know why? Because the prison officers want me to listen to their suggestions as to what changes they should make and whether I cannot say something for them. When I say “for them” I mean for their terms and conditions.

That prison is over 100 years old. That is where all condemned prisoners and remand prisoners are held. There are about three gates to go inside. I am sure you do not even know that. You see a green wall and say that is the state prison, but inside of that there is a waiting area where lawyers have to wait—some benches. You know those benches you sit on during Indian prayers? There are about three and some concrete and then there is a toilet in the corner, which is open, and you wait and then they will tell you that you can go into this open big room. The lawyers’ area is condemned. There is no lawyers’ area again because it is too dilapidated.

There is a supervisors’ office and he lets you sit there. The supervisors are always shouting at each other because it is their room. The celotex is falling off; there is garbage all over the place and this is what I can see of the state prison. If there is no room there—because you can only have one lawyer at a time visiting because you do not have any room; the lawyers place is condemned, unlike the maximum security prison, which is much more modern. So, you have that, then they let you go up to the condemned where you have these people they bring up quite close. Of course they are shackled, and they have to peep at you. Nobody wants to let them touch them, so if you want to have some privacy with a client, it is prohibited. That is a breach of their rights, but that is another point. All we need is a lawyer to take up the point just now and that might happen soon.

My point is that this is a terrible condition. There is nothing in the budget. There are \$4 million allocated to the MSP because we know that about three wings are not yet opened. There is nothing about that prison which houses condemned inmates. There are quite a number of them and if we do not house them properly, it would be cruel and unusual punishment and then they would be freed and then the country would ask about the Government and what they are doing.

There are two other points. The parole system exists in Jamaica, St. Lucia and a few other countries in the Caribbean and it is worthy of consideration. In 1989,

the then NAR government set up a committee to study the feasibility of parole in this country. The head of that committee was the late Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. Hercules. I was a member and there were two other members, two of whom are now dead. We did have a report. We went to Canada. We went to the international parole studies. We did a lot of things, but the report went in during June/July and we had the coup. Like everything else, we had the coup and that was the end of the report. We had the attempted coup and that was the end of the last Constitution reform. Those people have a lot to pay for.

In any event, I have to point out that it is not the first time that we have been thinking about it, but it needs to be aired and we need to be careful about the implementation. If we are going to have the parole system, we need to increase the number of probation officers, because it is the probation officers who really implement the system.

Parole is a system by which you spend part of your sentence outside. It is not as if you are freed. It is not like probation. You are sentenced to 20 years and after 10 years they say you are eligible to be let out. There is a board and you are sent out. You are supervised and you report every week; make sure you have a job and other things. We need to have a system in place for all of that. If we do not have jobs for people who are released, who have finished their sentences, what about people who are still serving their sentences? Will we have jobs for them?

You cannot just say *vaille-que-vaille*, parole by September 30, 2004. I saw that in the budget. I do not want to sound pessimistic, but when we talk about the inactive and secret function of the Mercy Committee—and I have reason to say that—when we are talking about the failure of the Sentencing Commission to ever meet—I heard the Attorney General say that the legislation is replaced, but it is still a failure.

There is the lack of use of plea-bargaining. I heard about that too. Ninety-five per cent of cases in the US are dealt with through plea-bargaining, but we have the legislation and, for whatever reason, we do not use it, mainly because the lawyers here, DPP and people like that, are not trained in it.

There is the lack of use of community service: 126 persons got community service last year; that is when you go there and do something for the community and again, you must be supervised by probation officers. That is why I really wonder about this parole system. Oh, we are going to have parole and it is going to help with prisons and prison reform. Let us see what we have working and then we can talk about that. By the way, where is the funding? I do not see anything in

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the budget. It must be somewhere in some general fund because it is not in anything I looked up and I looked up every single one of these red and blue books.

My final point is legal aid. Speaking of funding, only \$6 million was allocated this year for the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority when compared with \$11 million last year. I heard no mention of it anywhere. I heard talks about fingerprinting the whole country from the Minister responsible—not the Attorney General—but nothing about legal aid.

Legal aid and the Act is meant to allow poor people access to justice. If we do not have legal aid and it is properly funded, what will happen? Trials will be delayed and if people in serious matters do not have lawyers, then that would be good grounds for allowing appeal on conviction. This can go on. Right now there are appointments being made and they are all void according to the Chief Justice of this country. It is over four months and there is no director. We do not have a director or chairman and we have less money and we are talking about reformatory justice?

It is a good time for me to support Sen. The Hon. Sahadeo's proposal about the disclosure on state enterprises, but I want also to talk about boards like legal aid and the police. All of these people should, every year, give an annual report telling us what they are doing and letting us see what is happening. That might prompt them to be more efficient and prompt the persons responsible to do their jobs.

We have a lot of action by the Government in some spheres and we have a lot of inaction in vital departments and ministries. There is no explanation up to now why there is no appointment. We hear that there will be. Why "will be"? A lawyer of seven years standing could be the director. They had a lot of time to think about it.

On a final note—and I just want to say that in the budget \$225 million were allocated to the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and \$200 million to the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP). Somebody in a senior position in this country asked me recently what is the difference between the two. I have read the budget and I have read what they are supposed to do and I have read that all of them involve training, but I still do not know. It seems to me that one of them is staff funded—cleaning up the country—through private contracts, and the other is through the ministry? But why?

Secondly, what about the people who are already employed in the Ministry of Works and Transport or Local Government? What do they do? The same thing? There are three sets of people doing the same thing in this country. Why do we need to spend \$425 million? Sen. King asked it and I am asking it.

You see, Madam President, the Prime Minister talked about voice data and video for police vehicles and something called GIS linkages to the Judiciary and the Magistracy and they want to get all this updated system and they are going to fight crime, but only \$4.1 million was allocated for that. Let us be serious. If they are going to access people's criminal record in a police vehicle and they are going to be able to check on the car licence numbers and check which one is false; if there is one authority issuing car licences, then you will know which one is false. All of that and they are going to spend \$4.1 million. Half CEPEP and put the money where it will be useful. Let us get some action in these areas. Let us spend money on technical updating.

The sum of \$83.8 million to the whole of the Ministry of National Security for developmental projects is just not good enough, especially when most of it is spent on refurbishing and building facilities—police stations and vehicles.

Frankly, I have to say that the budget, insofar that it purports to deal with crime at any level and make real progress in the positive development of the criminal justice system is somewhat of a disappointment for me. Intentions cost nothing, but the Government should put our money—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

3.15 p.m.

Sen. D. Seetahal: I just want to wrap up and say that intentions cost nothing, but the Government must put our money where their mouths are; where it really matters. They may have good plans, and they appear to do so, in education, health, environment and business matters. We all want to see a better world. We want what might even be termed a utopia. It is stated at the back of their document that all children shall be better educated, all sick better cared for, all elderly more secured, all disabled more respected and there shall be greater advancement of the young. It sounds like I was reading the *Bible* or some religious book. In any event, it describes something that we yearn for.

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The way to do it, in order to have more secure homes and safer streets, is to grapple with issues such as that organization I talked about (Jamaat) to ensure that they are—I would not say, exterminated. Once I used the word ostracized and one of the members of that organisation thought I meant exterminated—what I say is to put them away to the sidelines where they belong and we get on with the business of controlling crime and dealing with the fallout from that terrible situation 13 years ago and what resulted then. We should ostracize them and get on with putting the country back where it belongs; on the safe track. I have pointed out the areas I think that we can go.

Thank you very much.

[The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs stood]

Madam President: It is the Opposition's turn, unless they give way.

Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan: Thank you, Madam President, for giving me the opportunity to contribute in this budget debate today. I feel very strongly when a government comes before the people to give an account of its stewardship. Among the factors that the people would measure and take into consideration when measuring the performance of this Government, must be, beside the statistics that will be a measure of the socio-economic performance, the respect that we have seen this Government show for the Constitution and the legal framework which ensures good governance. There is also another very important criteria, I believe, and a very important intangible that we must measure when the Government comes before us, that is what is the mood of the people, the psyche, the spiritual health and well-being, the sense of security, the sense of hope, optimism in the future, a sense of a society moving forward forging a better future for ourselves and for the succeeding generations.

Madam President, we must ask ourselves what sense do we have that as a society we are actually defining ourselves and working towards our own definition of excellence and development. I totally agree with Sen. Prof. Ramchand when he questioned if we had defined ourselves and what of development we want really to see, whether it is in 2010 or 2020.

As I listened to the contribution of the Junior Minister of Finance, especially with respect to the socio-economic statistics, it reminded me of a song which I think most of us here may be familiar with: *If Love So Nice Tell Me Why It Hurts So Bad*. I think the people of Trinidad and Tobago would want to know today from this Patrick Manning administration, if the PNM is so nice, tell us why our people are hurting so bad. We have all these positive statistics: growth in the

economy, growth in the manufacturing sector, growth in the gross domestic product (GDP), and a drop in the interest rate with a positive external balance of trade. Standard and Poor's gave us a positive rating. Yet, with all the positive socio-economic statistics, there is a deep sense of frustration, fear, alienation and uncertainty in the society that cuts across all class, race and cultural barriers. No one is exempt: the businessmen, entrepreneurs; manufacturers; our working people who have lost their jobs; the young children who are forming themselves into gangs in our communities and schools; young people who are leaving school without any hope of getting a job in the near future; young men who have spent years unemployed on the "blocks" and are now engaged in a fratricidal war to the death; our women who have been relegated once again, by this administration, to cleaning toilets under the so-called women's programmes; and young people living with HIV/AIDS. All of us are affected by crime, kidnapping for ransom and total lawlessness in the society; encouraged by the present administration.

I want to know who measures the depth of despair, the loss of hope, the loss of a future of the citizens of this country, who live virtually under siege in the land of their birth? Who gives us these statistics? Who measures the anguish of mothers who bury their sons daily? Who measures the anguish of the businessmen and entrepreneurs of this country who have to live here and send their families abroad for their safety? Where are the statistics that measure the frustration of the working poor? Where are the statistics that measure the clinically depressed, the suicidal, the vagrants, the dropouts and the dysfunctional among us? All these are the result of the misguided economic policies of this Government. Surely, these are important statistics and measurements that any government would have to bring to the people in any civilized society, when they come before us with a budget.

Economics and governance must be about the welfare of the people. It must be about their spiritual, moral and physical welfare, because these are the people who toil in the society to produce the GDP figures that they so glibly bring before us. If economics and governance does not work in the interest of these people, what is the point? Any government, which can only relate the socio-economic statistics and not give an account to its people of its respect for its laws and Constitution—

We live in a society where we have reached the stage where every morning citizens would ring each other and ask: "Which foot did the Prime Minister put in his mouth this morning?" We are sure when we get up on a morning there is going to be some explosion or damaging remark that the Prime Minister has made; whether it is to assassinate the character of eminent citizens; or to blame

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the UNC for somebody coming out of jail; indirectly attacking the Judiciary, as in the case with Skelly; or blaming our political leader for the liberation of that person on bail. You can rest assured that every morning there is a fresh outrage and a hissing, "oohing" and "ahing" in this country, at the behaviour of this political directorate, especially its leader.

There is a sort of disrespect for the Constitution and the laws and the independent institutions of this country. We have seen the Elections and Boundaries Commission under terrible attack in this country. We have seen this honourable Parliament under attack by the Executive of this runaway, dictatorial Executive. When we see that the Constitution and the legal framework and the moral and spiritual health of the country are under attack, we know that this Government has abjectly failed its people and it stands indicted today, 22 months in office as an abject failure.

This points, I believe, to a failing in our Constitution; one which we should correct as soon as possible. I feel that we should have a system in the Constitution which makes provision for a recalled election, such as was held in California recently. If such a recalled election were to be held in this country, the PNM would be recalled immediately.

We see what is happening in this country with respect to the dichotomy between all the positive economic indicators and the actual quality of life of the people of our country. We see this dichotomy because eminent economists have postulated that the traditional economic indicators used to measure performance of different aspects of our society do not necessarily reflect the reality of the poverty levels, the economic inequalities, the increase in the gap between rich and poor and the jobless growth, which we are experiencing because of the particular economic policies of the Government.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance has stated that he hopes, and Government expects, despite the collapse of the WTO talks at Cancun, that the more advanced countries would stand by their commitments to a liberalized trade and permit access to their markets by developing countries. This statement crystallizes the essence of this budget statement by the Prime Minister. This essence of a budget is totally divorced from the reality or the recognition of the potential devastation facing developing countries, including ours, in the face of the intransigence displayed by the developed countries with respect to fair trading practices in this new globalized economy. Cancun collapsed precisely because developing countries have recognized that the hopes of our eminent Minister of this Government, for fair trade and access to markets, is not on the agenda of the

developed countries. When Winston "Gypsy" Peters sang a few years ago: *Captain the Ship is Sinking*, that statement is even more applicable now under globalization, than it was a few years ago.

I would like to quote a document produced by Oxfam: *Rigged Rules and Double Standards, trade, globalization and the fight against poverty*. This document purports to analyze the globalization process and how it affects developing countries. This document postulates that:

"Despite some notable successes, the expansion of world trade under globalization has produced disappointing outcomes for poverty reduction. Rising tides are supposed to lift all boats; but the rising tide of wealth generated by trade has lifted some boats higher than others, and some are sinking fast.

The benefits of trade are not automatic—and rapid export growth is no guarantee of accelerated poverty reduction. Yet when the potential of trade is harnessed to effective strategies for achieving equitable growth, it can provide a powerful impetus to the achievement of human-development targets."

What they are in fact saying is that they recognize that the globalization process has potential for poverty eradication, but it must be linked with internal strategies in the individual countries to ensure that wealth generated is shared equitably among all sectors in the society and that poverty elimination is a goal achievable by individual governments, due to its strategies. Increased access to international markets by itself will not be the panacea for all evils.

When Oxfam took a look at what is necessary, it went on to say:

"If countries are able to engage in higher-value-added trade, as in East Asia, export growth can contribute to rapid increases in living standards."

When the Government talks about the Wallerfield Industrial Complex, which they are going to link to the new University of Trinidad and Tobago, what they are saying is that we have to ensure that any production in developing countries for export must be higher-value-added and that is the only way you are going to get the expected results from increased exports. Even if you have all that in place, what are the statistics and facts with respect to the participation of developing countries in international trade of which the Minister hopes we will be able to participate, despite the collapse of Cancun based on the expected goodwill of the developing countries?

Sen. Enill: An intervention, Madam President. The statement made in respect of the initiatives at Cancun is really a statement supported by 183 countries,

coming out of the recent World Bank and IMF meetings held in Dubai. The statement is made against a background of countries that have taken that position which we support. This is not a guess. These are actual decisions taken at the World Bank and IMF meetings and it is based on those commitments that statement was made and not any other gesticulations or anything like that.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: The statement, as the hon. Minister said may have been made by a number of developing countries, but what are the facts? I was about to state the facts:

“Low-income developing countries account for more than 40 per cent of the world population, but less than 3 per cent of the world trade.”

That is a fact.

"Whereas rich countries export goods and services worth approximately \$6000 per capita, the equivalent figure for developing countries is \$330, and less than \$100 for low-income countries."

Those are the facts, as expounded by Oxfam, Madam President, based on research.

Competition in the international trading system can be likened, as Oxfam said, to a hurdle, with the difference being that the weakest countries face the highest hurdles. Trade restrictions in rich countries cost developing countries approximately \$100 billion a year: twice as much as they receive in aid, which is a fact.

The worst offenders—according to the research, in damaging the interests of developing countries through trade barriers—are the United States and the European Union. They did a double standard index where they measured 10 important dimensions of rich countries' trade policies and they defined which countries were the worst offenders with respect to keeping developing countries out of their markets. This analysis has significance for us because we know that over 40 per cent of our exports go to the United States and we import over 30 per cent into our country.

Developing countries such as ours will have to fight every step of the way for fair market access, for protection from dumping practices and for internal linkages in our societies, if we want to gain international access and eliminate poverty in our own country. There is no way we can, as the PNM is inclined to do, depend on the goodwill of the rich, developed countries.

What exactly are the demands of the developing countries? What is it that we have to fight for in order to ensure the survival of our children and our children's

children in the future in this globalized economy? Some of the issues that the developing countries are fighting for that would have caused the collapse of the Cancun negotiations are: duty-free and quota-free access for all low-income countries; a general reduction in tariff peaks, so that no tariffs applied against developing country exports exceed 5 per cent; an accelerated phase-out of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement, to allow market access for textiles and garments, which are the main labour-intensive exports of the developing countries; a comprehensive ban on export subsidies, and a restructuring of farm subsidies to achieve social and environmental objectives, rather than increased output. Later on I will speak about agriculture.

Oxfam has shown that one of the greatest injustices done to developing countries such as ours is the despair of export subsidies by rich, developed countries in the field of agriculture. Developing countries such as ours will have to fight tooth and nail, every step of the way, to gain recognition of the rights of our countries to protect our agricultural systems for food security purposes. As I said before, these objectives will not be achieved by hoping and wishing, but by a firm commitment to the fight for these principles as evidenced at Cancun. Our farmers, our manufacturers, our people, their livelihood, their jobs and the future of our people demand no less.

In the context of the impact of the globalization process in our fragile, open oil and gas-based economy, what is the underlying philosophy in this budget presented here in 2003? As far as my untrained layman's eyes can see, the underlying philosophy of this budget is business as usual. It is a laissez-faire approach to development. It is conspicuous consumption, political patronage and largesse based on our wasting assets—our oil and gas. We still continue to rely on oil and gas as the main drivers of our economy; despite warnings from the most eminent economist and despite—in the face of the history of this country—the fact that we have suffered since the 1980s when we had oil booms where we created and gained nothing. We have had no infrastructure. We have failed to diversify the economy to deal with the shocks of these fragile assets.

This budget betrays the lack of vision by this Government for the development of the agricultural sector. I believe this is one of the deepest betrayals that have been perpetrated on the people of this country. When you look at page 6 of the budget statement, it is a virtual photostat copy of previous budgets; nothing has changed. The same old issues have been raised of water conservation and different projects being continued. This is particularly startling in light of the fact that since 2001, in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources serious concerns were raised as to how we in this country were

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to position agriculture to compete in the globalized environment; serious issues were raised with respect to the new institutions, policy guidelines and initiatives that were needed to position our farmers and our agricultural sector to compete effectively. Since 2001 to now, nothing has been done, it is business as usual. All the programmes that were on the budget for the last 20 years are still there muddling along and nothing new has been accomplished. This budget comes to the population—I think the previous speaker remarked on it also—but it seems that this is a Government that just dropped from the sky; a brand new government has no history. The tone of the budget is that we will do this, that and the other. There seems to be no history of having had the time, space and the money to accomplish defined objectives. There are no defined objectives elaborated in the budget for agriculture.

All developed countries are acutely aware of the sensitivity of their agricultural sector for the stability of their economies, for employment generation, industrial generation and food security of their peoples. Cancun collapsed precisely because large agricultural countries such as India and Japan understood the significance of the protection of their agricultural markets. I would quote Oxfam again to indicate how agriculture is being targeted as one of the areas where rich, developed countries are going to make it almost impossible for us to compete in their markets.

"Nowhere are the double standards of industrialized-country governments more apparent than in agriculture. Total subsidies to domestic farmers in these countries amount to more than \$1 bn a day. These subsidies, the benefits of which accrue almost entirely to the wealthiest farmers, cause massive environmental damage. They also generate over-production. The resulting surpluses are dumped on world markets with the help of yet more subsidies, financed by taxpayers and consumers."

We are living this reality today.

"Oxfam has developed a new measure of the scale of export dumping by the EU and the United States. It suggests that both these agricultural superpowers are exporting at prices more than one-third lower than the costs of production. These subsidized exports from rich countries are driving down prices for exports from developing countries, and devastating the prospects for smallholder agriculture. In countries such as Haiti, Mexico and Jamaica, heavily subsidized imports of cheap food are destroying local markets. Some of the world's poorest farmers are competing against its richest treasuries.

Rich countries have systemically reneged..."

This is fact. We are not talking about what they say they will do. We are talking about what they are actually doing.

"Rich countries have systemically reneged on their commitments to improve market access for poorer countries. Instead of reducing their own farm subsidies, they have increased them. Having pledged to phase out the Multi-Fibre Arrangement, which restricts imports of textiles and garments, they have liberalized fewer than one-quarter of the products for which they had agreed to open their markets."

In this context of a virtual undeclared war on the exports and the access to international markets by rich, developed countries, how are we in Trinidad and Tobago poised to meet these challenges? In Trinidad and Tobago we see today, inflicted like a veritable plague on the hapless, persecuted members of the agricultural sector, a minister of agriculture whose highest and best contribution to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago has been to import cheap, substandard goods from North America and resell at a profit in Trinidad and Tobago.

3.45 p.m.

Madam President, we have a Minister of Agriculture Land and Marine Resources who has no history of manufacturing or production in this country—not even so much as a toolum or a sugar cake—and yet we have this plague descending upon our land, destroying hundreds of acres of sugar cane; destroying entire communities; and destroying the morale, the spirit, the heart and soul of major agricultural producers in Trinidad and Tobago who have toiled and sweated in this land for over 300 years. We have a spectre of 10,000 sugar workers and cane farmers who are pauperized and marginalized in this country.

This is how we are positioning ourselves to enter the international markets; to expand trade in agriculture; to increase food security for our people; to increase employment for our people; to fight joblessness and the jobless growth imposed on this country by the PNM administration. This is how we are positioning ourselves for this great new world of a globalized economy.

Madam President, in the *Sunday Guardian* newspaper, last week—I do not have the article with me—there was a very heart-rending article which detailed the mood being experienced, right now, in one of these villages. The whole village is practically now unemployed; they are emasculated; there is a sense of despair; and there is a sense of no future. I am wondering how, in this context, can

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this budget boast of agriculture being an important factor in the growth and development of this economy?

Given this scenario, it is no wonder that this budget also boasts, in the same breath, of the intention of the Government to equip our riot squad with technologies second to none in the world—to confront whom? The people whom they have pauperized—poor people, hungry people, people who are marginalized and people who have no recourse.

The farmers in the East-West Corridor have scarcely fared any better. In the October 12, 2003 *Sunday Newsday* investigative report, there is a headline: “Farmers Grumbling—Housing Forcing them out of Agriculture”. We are a small developing country, and we are competing against the big, rich and powerful countries that set up all kinds of tariffs and non-tariff barriers against us. We need to mobilize and motivate farmers and producers. We need to produce food for this country—in the light of the food import bill that is growing every year. What is happening in Trinidad and Tobago in the year 2004?

“Hundreds of farmers across the country are grumbling over the Patrick Manning government’s housing project, saying soon there will be no land in TT for agriculture and they will be ‘snuffed out’ of a living.”

They went on to say and I quote:

“They said they have no problems with housing but reminded Government of its role to feed the nation.

With Government’s proposed National Housing Development project, there has been a mad rush to start housing developments across certain parts of TT to meet an election promise of housing for all.

The farmers said they have been promised some land for the purpose of agriculture from the Government, but only about 15 acres of land, compared to the hundreds more being used for housing construction.

There aren’t many prime agricultural lands left—”

I would like to repeat that:

“There aren’t many prime agricultural lands left—among them River Estate, Diego Martin, Tucker Valley, Chaguanas, Santa Cruz, Maracas, Curepe, Caura and Arouca.”

One of the farmers was quoted as saying:

“‘Maybe Government foresees we will be mixing concrete and water for meals,’”

Madam President, one of the farmers described the bulldozing of prime agricultural land for housing as a sad day in Trinidad and Tobago and a sad day for agriculture. He said that the Government has offered them a lease for land for 30 years, but the rent is way too high. The rent is \$2,000 per acre for one year, and the farmers are upset about this. He said that if they cannot pay that rent it would mean that the farmers would have to stop farming. The farmers said that mostly the bigger farmers are getting the subsidies—to the subsidies that this Government boasts about—but the smaller farmers are getting nothing. The farmers pointed out that while a lot of young people seem to have the desire for farming, they may soon have to find other occupation, because there would be no land left for agriculture. The farmers went on to talk about a land grab situation and I quote:

“‘land speculation’ corruption, pointing out that land is being grabbed not just for housing, but for golf courses...concessions to friends and relatives of the PNM Government.”

Madam President, this is totally disgraceful and unacceptable. If we had the privilege of recall, governments would fall and this issue of land; this issue of food security; this issue of employment for our people—when you decimate your farmers; and when the Government totally denies any prospect of food security, what are we going to live on in this country? Is everyone going to have to work for Patrick Manning as part of a Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) gang? Is this the future of this country?

Madam President, economists and other persons have estimated that we have 10 to 15 years of foreign reserves of oil and gas left. We will smile, we will laugh and have a good time now, but it is our children, and our children’s children who will feel the brunt of this cynicism, this contempt and this total disregard for the future and for the people of this country. Our children will feel it. [*Desk thumping*]

What is happening with agriculture? I was talking about agriculture in this country and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. In 2001 the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources was poised to implement new systems and new institutions that would ensure that—because we have signed the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements in 1995, which make it imperative upon us to institute sanitary and phyto sanitary safeguard systems—the

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food is safe from farm to table. For that to come into being, there is a whole host of institutional and practical arrangements—including training of people and so forth—to ensure that at every stage of the proceeding—from the farm right up to the table—that there are strict controls in place to ensure, primarily, food safety. This is a necessary safeguard if we are to get into the foreign markets.

Madam President, it is also imperative that we have these systems in place if we are to deter dumping of food on our markets. The agreements are structured so that if you do not have the proper systems in your country to monitor the food and safety procedures, you will not be able to inspect procedures and you cannot stop anyone from bringing in food into our market, because we do not have any systems of understanding whether the food has gone through the processing stages and so forth—and in what condition it reaches our table. It is a two-edged sword: you must have the systems in place to be able to export and you must have them in place to deter dumping of food and products on the market.

Two years have passed and there is still no word, in this budget or anywhere, of the setting up of the institution, which the stakeholders have called for since the year 2000. The UNC government had put urgent initiatives in place to make sure that the Food and Agricultural Health Safety Authority became a reality and to ensure that all the sanitary and phyto sanitary requirements for the export of food and to control the import of food were met. Nothing has been done. There was no mention of this in the budget.

Research and development seem to be a dead issue with agriculture in this country. The Sugar Cane Feed Centre continues to remain a well-kept secret, because this centre is an important centre for research and development to teach farmers about mixed farming; to teach farmers about agricultural practices; to maximize their crops; to conserve the environment; and to integrate farming mechanisms so that farmers get the optimal use of plant, production and animal production—use one to complement the other and so forth. Nothing is being done to encourage development and research to back our farmers in their drive for increased production.

Madam President, how could the Government say that the agricultural sector is critical to the achievement of favourable economic growth and diversification if all these things are being neglected? The Government is mutilating the sugar cane industry; decimating the food crop farmer industry; and neglecting to put any systems in place for the further development and export of agricultural products. At the same time, the Government is shutting down the accelerated land distribution programme, which was initiated by the UNC government to ensure

that farmers are given access to land, access to techniques and technologies and that they are supported in their drive for food security and food production in this country. So, all these high-flown phrases in the budget with respect to agriculture being critical to the achievement of economic growth is just another PNM myth.

The hypocrisy and cynicism of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources know no bounds when one looks at what is happening today in agriculture. It seems that this Minister came not to save agriculture, but to destroy it and to destroy it to the extent that we will be eating oil and drinking gas in the next 20 years in this country. All this is in the context of the Government taking 77 acres of prime agricultural land from Caroni (1975) Limited, and refusing to account to the nation for a viable plan for those lands—what they intend to do with the very fertile agricultural lands of former Caroni (1975) Limited.

When we speak of self-sufficiency and so on, we must enter into the realm of the poultry industry. The poultry industry is extremely important—not only in Trinidad and Tobago—but also in the whole Caricom region since the per capita consumption of chicken in 1999 in the Caribbean was 40.39 kilograms per annum. This is on par with the United States of America, and above average for industrialized countries whose average is 24 kilograms per capita, and above developing countries average which is 9 kilograms per capita.

Madam President, poultry comprises 86 per cent of the region's meat consumption compared to 40 to 60 per cent in the most industrialized countries. Sixty-five per cent of the chicken and 50 per cent of animal protein consumed in the region is produced by the industry. It provides direct employment in the region for over 30,000 people—not including employment in the production of associated corn, rice and supporting services. The industry provides one of the few strategic storage systems for food in the region in the form of grain and feed mills silos, which can hold between six and 12 weeks' supply of grain in the larger Caricom states.

According to a document which I have before me entitled: *The Caribbean Poultry Association Presentation to the Ministers of Agriculture of Caricom Kingston, Jamaica October 4th 2001* it says:

“The sensitive nature of the industry and its products as well as the contribution made to economic development has prompted many producing nations to protect their domestic market and improve their competitiveness through the use of trade and other support measures, many of which are trade distorting.

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The US and the EU still provide significant export subsidies to their poultry industries. These are utilized to a large extent in markets where there is intense competition. A notable example occurred in the 1980's when the US facing an appreciating currency and declining competitiveness of its poultry products in the Middle East, used compensatory export subsidies in order to safeguard against loss of market share. In addition these two (2) countries provide indirect support in the form of subsidies for research.”

What are we doing here in Trinidad and Tobago? In Trinidad and Tobago over 6,200 persons are directly employed by the poultry sub-sector. Caricom has already liberalized trade to the extent that 35 per cent of market excess for Caricom consumption is allowed. This exceeds countries such as Canada, Mexico, Brazil and the United States of America.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the Senator has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: What this document is saying is that we in the Caribbean have liberalized the import of poultry under the WTO agreement to the extent that we allow 35 per cent of poultry and poultry products into our markets, and this is higher than what the United States of America, Canada, Mexico and Brazil allow into their markets. These are some of the largest poultry producing nations of the world.

This country is committed to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) agreement in another year or so, and the Caribbean Poultry Association has proposed that the industry should be regarded as a sensitive one and, as such, be excluded from coverage under the FTAA. The argument being that some of the largest poultry producers—including Brazil—are part of the FTAA and, therefore, our smaller Caricom markets will be endangered; the jobs of our people will be endangered; our poultry processors, producers and agro-processors and so forth will be endangered by having to compete with these larger poultry producers in the same FTAA environment. These are vital issues which must be addressed if this Government has the slightest intention of positioning the agricultural sector for continued growth and expansion, and to increasing employment opportunities for our citizens in the 21st Century.

The question of monopoly pricing structures can and must be dealt with in the Trinidad and Tobago Poultry Industry, quite apart from the duty of this

Government to protect the livelihood and jobs of thousands of our citizens. So there is no point in trying to threaten—using the small-minded and taking the low-ground approach—the poultry producers in this country with price fixing and threatening to flood our markets with cheaper imported products. That is counter-productive, because we are talking here of not only affecting the livelihood of Caricom workers, but also over 6,000 people and their dependants; all the spin-off industries and services that depend on the poultry industry like the pluck shops and so forth. The Government has threatened the livelihood of thousands of people. If these people are getting together and fixing prices and endangering the availability of poultry on the local market, then the Government should deal with them in a different way. The Government has the power to deal with them, but it should not threaten the livelihood of the people.

What is the point of the Government telling us that they are going to ensure that we could get chicken at a price of \$2.00 per pound when people are going to be out of work, and they will not be able to pay ten cents a pound for it? This is clearly counter-productive. The Government has to deal with this matter in a more productive way; take the broader view and understand what is happening with globalization, and understand the dangers and threats to our economy—our employment and our people and large producers who limit our access to their markets, but who could flood our markets with cheaper products, because of their better comparative advantage and competitiveness.

As we are on the FTAA, I would like to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs: what is Trinidad and Tobago's position with respect to the exclusion of Cuba from the FTAA? The Minister alluded to a number of countries that we have established diplomatic relations with and so forth. I know that Cuba is a part of the Association of the American States. I know Cuba has observer status in Caricom. Cuba is one of our closest friends and neighbours that we look to because of its advanced development in medicine. This Government has seen it fit to import doctors and nurses from Cuba; this Government has seen it fit, in a sense to defy the stance of the United States of America towards Cuba and has established some sort of rapport with Cuba. The Government is extremely silent on the continuing viciousness of the United States of America government in punishing the Cuban people for daring to take their own road, charting their own course and their own path in history. They are punishing millions of people because they do not agree with their political system and so on. I want to know what is our position with respect to the exclusion of Cuba from the FTAA? This is something that the Government should enunciate if they are not to be accused of

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being hypocrites—on one hand, pretending that they are friends with Cuba and on the other hand, sitting in the United Nations and saying nothing, or being silent about the continued exclusion and ostracization of Cuba by the United States of America.

I just want to say a few words with respect to education, our children and what is happening today in our country. It struck me that this is a good opportunity because Sen. The Hon. Abdul-Hamid indicated to this honourable Senate yesterday that there is an inter-ministerial committee of Government that is able to examine the functioning of all ministries, being able to co-ordinate and avoid duplication of work, and understanding what is happening from ministry to ministry in order to facilitate a more efficient delivery of goods and services by these ministries to their intended targets. The Minister dealt with children and I would like to know if the Minister is aware of the burning need in this country to initiate strategies, institutions and initiatives, along with the Ministry of Education, to protect the children of this country, many of whom have no one else to protect them, except the Government.

Every day I interact with young people. I have young daughters who also interact with young people and it is heart burning and heart-rending to hear the stories of the neglect and the situations that a lot of young people find themselves in and with no one to turn to. We are failing these children when no one picks it up in the society. These children go to school and face their teacher—there are supposed to be counsellors in schools—they interact in the communities and, yet, no one picks up a child at a vulnerable stage of his life where some form of strategic intervention at that point would mean the difference between actually life and death; would mean the difference between the child being able to position himself to take advantage of opportunities that might be available to him in the society; and not go the way of the drugs and the negativism that is always out there to pull them in.

There are hundreds and thousands of young people in this country who live in houses where parents have gone away. Parents are daily leaving young people—14 years and 13 years—in the care of maybe older siblings who are 16 years and 17 years—these older siblings have boyfriends and girlfriends or whatever—and they then move away from the houses. There are instances—all across the East-West Corridor—where you will find children who are 14 years and 13 years being practically self-supporting, and getting along as they could in houses by themselves. They go to school every day. I am sure they are the same children who are disruptive in the classroom; they have serious problems; they cannot

learn because they are hungry in the first instance; and they have no direction or guidance—nothing in their lives. There is no institution which immediately picks up this matter or any social welfare programme whereby counsellors or social welfare officers can visit these children where they live and understand what is happening to them, or get in touch with their parents or guardians and bring them to the book for the neglect and abuse of these children—because there is no other word for it but the total abuse of children—who have to fend for themselves and so forth.

Madam President, a lot of the times these parents are between a rock and a hard place. There are mothers in this country who are unable to care for their children; who are untrained and who are unable to gain gainful employment and, therefore, they feel the only option is to go to the United States of America Embassy and get a six-month visa, go up to the United States of America and work for some money, and then send barrels home to these children—sometimes they send the barrels and sometimes they totally abandon the children; the children do not hear from them again.

A lot of these young people are giving trouble in the school system because there are serious problems in the home and it is not detected. There is no institutional framework for the checks and balances from the school to the home to make sure that these children do not drop out of the system.

Madam President, I was horrified when my daughter told me of a young girl—junior secondary school age—who was raped. The girl felt so ashamed after the incident she never went back to school. Do you know that nobody ever checked for that child? Neither the principal nor teachers came around to see what has happened to this child. Young people who are 13 years and 14 years just drop out of the system and there are no checks and balances to understand where these children have gone. There is a whole missing generation in the midst of plenty; in the midst of a \$22 billion budget. [*Desk thumping*] This is disgraceful, this is shameful; and we have to do something about it. It is no good looking at the past; we have to look to the future. How are we going to envision 2020 when we are going to have a whole area where productive and socialized people should be, and there is a whole space? There will be a space because children are missing.

So I want the hon. Minister to look into this matter and put the social programmes in place where no child would be lost and everyone would be accounted for. Community by community we must account for all our children whether they are boys or girls.

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Madam President, I saw in the document the Social and Economic Framework for 2004, under Human Capital Development—the Government is talking here about principal strategies and measures and established targeted recruitment programmes, and this is for the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTATT). One of the principal strategies and measures is to establish targeted recruitment programmes for male Trinidadians between the ages of 17 and 24, especially Afro-Trinidadian males.

4.15 p.m.

What is the meaning of that? I understand totally that we have a serious problem with our young male Trinidadians, but the answer to this is not shoveling them through the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT), the answer is finding these children when they are young; finding them when they are vulnerable; making sure that they go through the system; that they come out of the primary and secondary systems able to go to a higher level of tertiary education. You do not just play games with numbers and shovel them through the tertiary system.

This is really a total disrespect and it is a cynicism that must not be allowed to flourish and take root and grow in the society. You have to take these children, nurture them from the preschool, to the primary school, to the secondary school and make sure that they go through all the stages; make sure they are capable people not only intellectually, but socially, morally and spiritually and then they are ready for tertiary education. You just do not take them off the streets and send them to COSTAATT and say that you are targeting young Afro-Trinidadian males. You are doing them more of a disservice than anything else.

These are the concerns that I have with respect to young children, to their vulnerability, to the lack of census taking and of an awareness of where they are. Madam President, there is a whole missing generation that we have to reclaim. The budget has not addressed it and I advise the Government that it should deal with it forthwith.

Thank you very much.

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Roger Boynes): Madam President, it is a privilege and honour and, in fact, such a pleasure to be here today to take part in this budget debate. First of all, allow me to join with other Members on this side in congratulating the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for delivering an excellent budget. Such a budget presentation and the contents thereof would certainly put

our country in the direction and take us to another step in ensuring that we achieve developed status within the shortest possible time.

Let me immediately just deal with one or two issues that I heard a short while ago while the hon. Senator was on her feet. She spoke about the fact that we must have a system for looking for these children that have slipped through the loop, as it were; a child who did not attend school; she got pregnant and no one looked for her and so forth. I am glad to see that today the hon. Senator could actually come here and talk to a caring Government; [*Desk thumping*] a Government that would listen to her and would certainly put the systems and structures in place to deal with that situation. I am very, very glad. We on this side are very focused in doing what is in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to just indicate to this honourable Senate a statement that was made when Sen. Seetahal was on her legs and it concerned me a bit. The hon. Senator mentioned in her deliberation and submission that Ministers of Government have armed guards. I do not know what country she was talking about, because I do not have any armed guards and none of my colleagues here have armed guards. I do not know who these Ministers are, and when we come here and make statements like these we must be able to back up the statements with facts, because remember the young people are listening to us. If we really and truly say things and position ourselves as role models and leaders in our society, we must be in a position to speak the truth and not be strangers to the truth. [*Desk thumping*] So I want to put on record immediately the fact that this Minister and my other ministerial colleagues do not have any armed guards. [*Desk thumping*] We can walk the streets of Trinidad and Tobago any day, any time and anywhere! [*Desk thumping*]

Our position is that in terms of dealing—I heard the said hon. Senator mention about the whole aspect of crime and violence in the country and the young people and I want to say this—I have said it on numerous occasions—that the whole aspect of crime is not something for us to politicize; it is not something for us to play games with; it is our country. We have to join together in chorus and sing out to the top of our voices that we are at war with crime and we want to protect this nation. That is our duty as Members of Parliament and hon. Senators. It is our duty to guard and protect this nation.

I want to indicate that I recently attended the General Assembly of the United Nations and I want to commend my colleague, the Minister of Community Development and Gender Affairs, Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams for holding the fort in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. [*Desk thumping*] That

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session was very revealing, because we participated—along with my good friend, the Minister of Foreign Affairs—in a number of deliberations; in a number of committee workshops; we saw the importance of youth; we saw the importance of sport; we co-sponsored resolutions to take sport to the highest level, so sport would be used for world peace and development! These are the things that we did.

We also were able to put on the record that Trinidad and Tobago wants to take and champion the works and the whole aspect of youth and youth development in the world. That is what we were out there doing. We were also out there trying to get support for the FTAA. If we can only bring the headquarters to Trinidad and Tobago, what would it mean? Do you know what it would mean for our citizens? We are not out there crying wolf; we are not out there bad talking Trinidad and Tobago; we are not out there telling people do not support our bid for the FTAA. That is criminal! Why are we doing this? This is our country! I am pleading with hon. Senators, let us ensure that as we try to bring what is in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago, let us work together “nah” man. When we are on the hustings; when election is called the swords could be drawn at that point, but other than that, let us recommit and rededicate ourselves today in this honourable Chamber, that we want to put our country first.

So I am simply suggesting that if there is the Kidnapping Bill—let us wake up and smell the coffee—support! The police service legislation—support! Not because any one or any side wants to achieve political power must you hold the country at ransom, and that has been our position. We are for Trinidad and Tobago and we appeal to our senatorial colleagues on the other side; we appeal to all and sundry, let us put this blessed nation first. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me also just indicate that as the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs we have decided to approach the nation's business from a structured perspective. We recognize at that ministry and the Government recognizes that we do have a problem with youth delinquency in our nation, and in order to deal with it we must approach it from a structured perspective. We recognize that a number of entities are competing for the interest of the youth, such as crime and so forth, and we are also competing for the interest of the youth. We have to make what we do so attractive, so structured and well organized that we could win the battle for the interest of the youth. That is why we have decided to ensure that the first thing we must do is to work on the youth policy.

So we have examined the youth policy; we have gone back to consultation with the young people on the youth policy; we have been able to bring all of them

on board; we were able to work with all the stakeholders as we look at each aspect of that youth policy. We also held the Blue Haven Summit whereby we got the scouts; the girl guides; the Tobago House of Assembly; the religious groups; we got the Commonwealth Youth Organization; the Caricom Youth Ambassador's Programme; the Office of the Prime Minister; Ministry of Social Development and several other stakeholders. We brought them together and we looked at the youth policy because these are the NGOs that actually deliver youth programmes throughout Trinidad and Tobago. They deliver them! We brought the Trinidad Youth Council together as well; the Tobago Youth Council and we sat down and examined every limb of that draft youth policy, and we came up with something that is in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago on the basis of proper discussion and consultation with all these organizations. Let me tell you, Madam President, that all the youth NGOs, at the end of that summit, said that for the first time they were involved at that level of discussion and they felt that they had a role to play.

Never before in the history of this country had such a gathering come together in one area dealing with the youth policy; and under that youth policy you would not believe how the young people—the Tobago Youth Council and the Trinidad Youth Council spearheaded the discussions and they came up with certain ideas, plans and programmes second to none. One of the programmes they came up with was to deal with youth expression. For instance, they have indicated that when you listen to one of the radio stations it is so popular that sometimes if the youths are told to jump they ask: How high? It is so popular then how do you compete with that? They say, "We need not fight that but we can work with that".

So we go to the same radio programme, take slots from that radio programme and we articulate positive things such as HIV/AIDS awareness. They say we go on the television and we take out a programme and we articulate the views of the young people and get the young people involved in positivism. That is what they have suggested.

They were also able to celebrate International Youth Day on August 12. They brought BET into Trinidad and Tobago and they were able to have that on the Brian Lara Promenade where there were several booths with information made available to young people. There was also a booth set up for testing young people for HIV/AIDS on the promenade. Do you know, hundreds of persons tested for AIDS? Sometimes it is difficult to get them in the traditional health centres.

Madam President: Hon. Minister, I regret having to interrupt your impassioned contribution but it is time to take our tea break.

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Before we do so, however, I failed to congratulate Sen. Sahadeo on her maiden contribution here today. [*Desk thumping*] We certainly look forward to hearing from you in the future.

Hon. Senators, we will now take the tea break. This Senate is therefore suspended for tea until 5.15 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.15 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. R. Montano: Madam President, just before the debate resumes there is one bit of housekeeping, with your leave, I would like to get cleared up and that had to deal with the problem of my colleague, Sen. Smith, this morning, and the question of whether he had said something or not. Sen. Smith challenged the Attorney General and finally you were persuaded that Sen. Smith was correct. The normal thing is—in a case like this we are concerned with the record—that you would either require the Attorney General to withdraw the qualified remarks or alternatively you order them to be struck from the record. So I make that request now so that we can tidy the record, please.

Madam President: Hon. Senator, as you know nothing is really struck from the record, what we can do is set the record straight by saying and, in fact, reviewing the *Hansard* it was found that Sen. Arnim Smith did say that 95 per cent of the police force were not to blame. Okay? Could we continue, Minister?

Hon. R. Boynes: Madam President, on the last occasion, before we took the tea break, I was referring to the establishment of the National Youth Policy and implementation thereof. Let me just indicate that the National Youth Policy was a draft document which eventually made it out of the starting blocks and finally it has reached the finish line.

In keeping with Vision 2020, the National Youth Policy was redrafted to prepare youth for the challenges ahead. The ministry is of the view that there are structural challenges in fulfilling aspirations and envisages young people participating in problem solving of the issues related to crime, unemployment and education. We thereby looked at it, completed it and worked on an action plan for policy implementation and this plan consists of 15 courses of action involving all stakeholders, taking into consideration Vision 2020, the needs of youth and youth-serving organizations. Key activities include:

- restructured youth service delivery system—utilizing all the latest technology;

- creation of a youth empowerment unit in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

We feel that such a unit in the youth affairs department is critical because when you look at the ministry that deals particularly with youth, it is the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, but there are several other ministries having opportunities for young people in Trinidad and Tobago. We, who have the responsibility at that ministry, must be in a position to coordinate all these opportunities that are, in fact, available for young people. So that a youth empowerment unit of that nature would serve to coordinate with every single ministry in Trinidad and Tobago, looking at what are the opportunities; what are the training programmes; every single thing that affects the young people from that perspective and ensure that the young person, for instance, in Cedros; the young person in Matelot; all over Trinidad and Tobago at least, has the necessary information about all the different programmes, so it is actually taking the programmes closer to the young people in Trinidad and Tobago.

As one of the actions proposed is the creation of a youth development fund so that young people would be in a position to access this fund in terms of training, business and that sort of thing; the development of a youth employment and employability policy; block leadership initiative for the new generation; the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs supports this philosophy and concept by encouraging youth-led activities by youth councils and community-based organizations.

Madam President, we seem in Trinidad and Tobago, based on our approach to dealing with the youth NGOs, as partners to the Government. We are seen as doing something that is different in the world, because we feel that in order to deal with programmes for the young people who would be better to address the young people than the young people themselves. So that the programmes that we are proposing, and the manner in which these programmes can be implemented would be partnering with the youth NGOs such as the boy scouts; the girl guides; the national youth councils and empowering them and letting them execute the programmes on the ground.

This seems to raise a lot of concerns and interests by a number of the international organizations and as such last week I met with UNICEF in New York and we went through that whole aspect of a partnership with youth NGOs and they are very interested in ensuring that they could work with Trinidad and Tobago to spearhead that and use it as a pilot for the rest of the world. So we really and truly feel that we are on to something good and we would like to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago gets the mileage in the world for so doing.

Let me also indicate that we took the opportunity while we were there of meeting with another international organization and we were able to explain the programmes; explain the whole concept of youth-led NGOs and one organization pledged US \$100,000 to assist the National Youth Council—if the Government could match that over a period of two years. And the moneys would go towards the institutional strengthening of these NGOs; it would be capacity building; they would look at the different programmes that the young people have to execute on the ground and ensure that it is meaningful; it reaches the community throughout the length and breath of the country.

But we were very pleased to know that the whole youth-led approach is something that could actually propel us on to centre stage in the world, and we are saying to all and sundry here that that initiative is one of which we are very proud because it is actually allowing the young people themselves to really deal with the different programmes. They have several programmes that are quite interesting; for example, the youth Parliament. They want to make sure that they organize a youth Parliament so that the voice of the youth could be heard. As I mentioned earlier the whole concept of the youth expression where they utilize the television, the radio and music is something that the young people have been saying, that through music they could reach other young people. We did a survey recently and we found that the two things that interest young people are music and sport. On that basis we have said that a programme involving music and led by the young people can, in fact, reach a number of young people.

We also dealt with and have proposed a youth motivational and inspirational programme, and we have learnt that based on a pilot project that we ran last year when we utilized Brian Lara and Ato Boldon in the schools and communities in this country, and the impact that it had we felt that it is something that we should look at. We have incorporated the youth councils and the Ministry of Education and collectively we have been refining that programme so that we would not only go into the schools, but we would also go into communities and really inspire and motivate the young people of this nation.

Madam President, last year we ran another pilot project called the Youth Health Service entitled: “The Liming Spot” and the whole concept of that was to establish a facility where information on health could reach to young persons in such a way that you could attract them to come to this facility. So we had a lot of sporting heroes at these facilities; we had a lot of entertainment there such as the counsellors; we had information on HIV/AIDS there; we had the young people running it; we had technology there; we had access to the Internet available; we

have established one at Malick Youth Facility and we propose to expand two more this year and eventually we will have them established throughout the entire country.

Madam President, the race is not for the swiftest but for he or she who endures to the end, hence the continuation in the 2004 budget of our capital investment programme. Some of these include:

- empowering marginalized young people;
 - youth health programme and save the youth in marginalized areas;
- these are programmes that are ongoing—
- the refurbishing and reconstruction of youth training facilities;
 - we are also going to be assisting the national youth councils and non-governmental organizations as I mentioned here from the Government perspective;
 - and the establishment of a project implementation unit.

That is critical because you will no doubt appreciate that we have established a project implementation unit for the implementation of the sport policy; likewise, we are going to establish a project implementation unit for the youth policy whereby we can bring people together who can actually be working on a continuous basis with a proper secretariat, to make sure that the policies dealing with youth and young people are actually implemented in the best interest of the country.

We also would be looking at providing institutional strengthening and capacity building to the young people and to youth structures. Our ministry also expects to utilize resources of the Commonwealth Youth Programme. What has taken place is that through our association with the Commonwealth Youth Programme they have decided that they want to assist and work with Trinidad and Tobago, bearing in mind our aggressive stand and our pursuit to dealing with the youth of the nation. They have seen where they could work with us and give us their resources because they have been dealing with youth throughout the Commonwealth, and they want to give us that type of resources to assist us in the institutional strengthening and capacity building for ourselves in the ministry as well as for the youth NGOs. So we are working hand in hand.

Similarly, with respect to the United Nations, we have linked up through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the United Nations and with the youth

department there and we are working hand in hand to ensure that we press the point in Trinidad and Tobago and the world that the young people are the future of our nation, and we must put a lot of emphasis in that direction. Madam President, if you notice, I started this contribution and my submission dealing with the youth first and not with sport first and it was very strategic, because sometimes when you hear about the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs you immediately think about sport, and that aspect of the ministry is most important because they are the future of this country.

I will now turn to the other part of my ministry which deals with the area of sport. The all-inclusive nature of sport demands that we focus on sport in a very organized, professional and structured manner. Madam President, in order for us to achieve First World status within the shortest possible time we must have a plan.

5.30 p.m.

I have listened to all the radio programmes, I have listened to the commentators—I have listened to all of them. We have gone to the entire country, east, west, north and south, meeting with persons who have the expertise in sport. Persons have been coming—I mean, you will be surprised to see how many people come into the Ministry on a daily basis with their programme on something dealing with sport because they are very interested and sport is so interesting in this country and in the world. It invokes a passion in people and a lot of people, for instance, come into the Ministry and give us a lot of advice, and we listen to everyone.

Speaking of passion, Madam President, you know, when I hear about youth and sport it invokes a passion in me as well. May I also just indicate that one of the first things we did was to ensure that we establish a revised sport policy and that has been adopted and passed by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago and everything else flowed from there. We say we want to reach First World status within the shortest possible time. We then do a policy. Coming out of the policy, there are certain things to which we need to address our minds. The first thing coming out of the policy, is, we need to establish the sports commission. So we have put in place a project execution unit in order to establish the sports commission within a period of two years. That is ongoing.

As a matter of fact, before I came here, I was at the Hasely Crawford Stadium meeting with the Project Execution Unit, the Ministry and with the advisory committee to implement the sport policy and to ensure that the sports commission

is established within two years' time. Pursuant to that, my Permanent Secretary, the unit and the commission went to Cuba recently and looked at all the structures in Cuba—the schools, the sports schools, the academy—they looked at the whole structure. On one occasion, one of the coaches dealing with the young people in sport was able to tell my Permanent Secretary that, “You see these young people here” that he is in charge of, “they will be competing in the Olympics in 2012”. That is who he has and the responsibility he has there right now.

When he asked about, “So you know about Trinidad and Tobago and about—?” He said, “Look” he has a book. He pulled out a book dealing with every single country. He turned to Trinidad and Tobago and he was able to tell us when we first entered the Olympics in 1946, I believe. He then went on to tell us who were the persons, who won what medals—they had all the statistics. “Talk about sports medicine and all them different things”, I mean, they have their business organized in a certain way. So we are looking at ensuring that our sport commission is structured in such a way that we could touch on every aspect of sport in an organized and professional manner.

We are also going to Australia. We would be sending a team to Australia to look at the model in Australia as well and compare the model to Australia, compare it to the one in Cuba, see what we have here in terms of how we could use those, bearing in mind what we have in Trinidad and Tobago, and put a proper structure in place so that we will not just simply, you know, once in a while, be producing an Ato Boldon, a Darrel Brown or a Brian Lara but we will be mass-producing these athletes, sportsmen and sportswomen, on a regular basis. Without a shadow of a doubt, in terms of the human resource base in sport that we have in Trinidad and Tobago per capita, it is one of the highest in the world and the Cubans will tell you that. They have said, “Look at your track record”. We feel that we are onto something and we have decided to structure it in such a professional manner and the establishment of that commission is very important in so doing.

The sport policy also deals with the whole aspect of total participation in sport and it is important to understand that when we deal with sport, our role is to make sure that we get our population healthy. They must live a healthy lifestyle, you know. We have to be able to bring recreation throughout the length and breadth of this country. We have, for instance, to be in a position to bring so much recreation throughout the nooks and crannies of Trinidad and Tobago, have these young people occupied and taking part in sports morning, noon and night—every time—so that they will have no time for crime. We will have to be in a position to put

the programmes out there and, in so doing, we have put a number of programmes on the ground.

May I just indicate, that, at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, we have a step programme, for instance, and this programme is for children between the ages of 8 to 14. It is conducted throughout the country in the multi disciplines, to identify talented individuals for further training. Apart from exposure through the multidisciplinary approach, participants receive training in social life skills, which helps in their personal development. This holistic development approach that marries sport promotion with social life skills training assists young people in their socialization process and there are a number of programmes that we have embarked upon and that we have out there. The national youth games are games, for instance, that we have put in almost every area of Trinidad and Tobago. It is just to get the young people occupied.

We have been talking and planning and one of the plans is to ensure that we light up all recreation grounds through Trinidad and Tobago and start programmes with the young people. In Cuba, for instance, they start by having programmes for the young people from the age of five. Do you know what will happen if we light up the recreation grounds in the night and put a walking track? I mean, you will have people recreating throughout the country day and night. We have to understand where we want to be and the importance of total participation in sport. So that is part of the plan, Madam President.

We also, under the sport policy, have been mandated to look at the whole aspect of high-performing sport and elite athletes. Recently, the Cabinet took a decision to assist the elite athletes and we were able to get the list of names, from the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee, of those athletes who stand the best opportunity, based on their criteria of qualifying for the Olympics, and, on the basis of that, Cabinet took a decision to ensure that we support them and a similar thing was done on the other side with respect to Ato Boldon therefore. *[Interruption]* Yes, he is among the list of names of persons who have been identified in getting that type of support.

You see, the support the Government has put in—we have decided to give approximately \$250,000 for each one of the sportsmen and we have also established—as I said, we want to start marketing the whole aspect of the 150 per cent tax rebate for persons contributing to sports up to a ceiling of a million dollars. So we feel that by putting these mechanisms in place companies will be in a position to help the sportsmen. We do not only want to help them after they have achieved a medal. You need to help them while they are preparing for the Olympics and they are preparing to represent our country at the highest level.

Sen. R. Montano: Have you told them?

Hon. R. Boynes: Yes, they know about that. Well, I just came back too, “eh”, but that decision was taken as well so it will be made public very shortly.

So may I also indicate that the whole aspect of establishing—the policy speaks to establishing a sport institute and, you see, we must have our universities, for instance, producing the experts in the field as managers, sports agents—sports medicine, we have to focus in that direction. Sport is a specialized area, and, as we proceed to making it an industry, we must have the experts to be able to carry out the functions. We do not want to be forever bringing in people from different countries. I mean, at this time we have a number of coaches from Cuba who have been able to work with us over the years because we do, in fact, have a bilateral agreement in place with Cuba. However, we need to be in a position where we create the experts who could operate at an international level and train our youngsters and our sportsmen and sportswomen, in fact; so we have been liaising with the University of the West Indies in that regard.

The whole aspect of a sport academy—based on the various trips that we will be making and based on our own assessment, a sport academy is something that we, in fact, would be looking forward to establishing because we want a place, a home, where somebody could actually go to school and learn about sport. There are some times, for instance, if there is someone—a girl or a boy—who is very talented in sport and they are attending the normal school, when they leave their class to represent the school, sometimes the teacher does not stop the class and he or she has to play catch up. So we want a sort of specialized environment where at least sport could be—you know, the school is teaching sport, as it were, so we are hoping that we can go in that direction as we present ourselves, within the shortest possible time, as a First World nation.

The other aspect I wish to draw to this honourable Chamber’s attention is that, under the sport policy, another limb deals with the whole aspect of establishing the region as a sporting hub. Even before I mention that, one of the important achievements is that the Ministry of Education has been able to get “phys ed” on the curriculum. I tell you, that is something that the Ministries of Sport and Youth Affairs and Education have been talking about and the Ministry of Education has decided that it is going to do it, and to have physical education on the curriculum is a step in the right direction. It is in the curriculum and every time we mention this—and the Minister of Education will bear me out on that—every time we mention that throughout the country, the people are so grateful because it is so important for us to appreciate the importance of “phys ed” and to make sure that it

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is mandatory now is really something of which I am very proud. I will have to congratulate the Minister of Education for ensuring that that obtains. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me also indicate that in ensuring that we have sport as—have the area as a sporting hub—we have to understand what we have here, you know. We have five stadia, we have indoor facilities and we have some of the best weather in terms of the climate is good. When you go to New York right now it is a bit freezing, you go to England it is freezing, and year-round we have this beautiful climate and we have the facilities. We have met teams from abroad, in universities, who are saying, “You know, we need to come to your country and train during the winter period.” So we need to encourage that, we need to get for instance—we need to look at the different sporting events that we have.

I remember at one time we had Carifta here and we had West Indies cricket playing here. When we put a calendar of activities together you will be surprised to see how many sporting activities we have in this country. Any time persons come from any part of the world—they could at least come here and participate in something happening in Trinidad and Tobago. How do we market that? We need to package that. We need to touch base with Bee Wee, we need to touch base with the hotels, we need to touch base with the cars, accommodation, everything. We need to get a package out to our tour operators throughout the world and let them sell our sporting programmes and the beautiful stadia, the beautiful country. “I mean, yuh could say wha yuh want!” This is one of the most beautiful countries in the world! [*Desk thumping*] “Yuh could say wha’ yuh want, and we need to market that; and doh talk about the people, you know! Robin, dey could say wha’ dey want about you; we have de nices’ people in de world.” [*Laughter*]

Yes, Madam President, with respect to even the awards, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs obtained Cabinet’s approval sometime earlier this year so that we will be having national awards, celebrating the talent of our nation’s youth and of the sportsmen and sportswomen in the communities, in the schools, you know, the disabled, the physically challenged. We are going to reach real people. Sometimes you may be a coach, a livewire in a community who may be participating, assisting in sports. He is the unsung hero. We need to find him and award him and celebrate him. That is what we have to do. We have to cherish what we have and we really have a good thing here but we have to promote it.

Rather than sometimes when you pick up a newspaper and see things, we need to put positive things on the newspaper and that is why we have to thank the Bovells, the Darrel Browns, the Ato Boldons, the Kertson Manswells, all of them.

They have really and truly made Trinidad and Tobago proud. The hockey team, the volleyball team and the boxing team, they have made this country so proud and for that the whole of Trinidad and Tobago is proud of them. Our sportsmen and sportswomen have really and truly done well over the past few years and we are very proud of them.

Let me also indicate, Madam President, that in terms of the support at the United Nations level, Trinidad and Tobago is well known, you know. We met with the Greek ambassador and they asked for our support in co-sponsoring one of their resolutions to have the Olympic truce, you know, demonstrating—have it as a mark of world peace, and we were able to co-sponsor with them. We made some minor amendments and whatnot but the fact is we co-sponsored with them because our position in Trinidad and Tobago is that we know the importance of sport. We remember 1979, you know, we remember when Jean Pierre brought us home the world championship in netball. We remember Hasely Crawford. We remember Ato Boldon. There are so many—Roger Gilkes—we remember all of them, all of those heroes who made Trinidad and Tobago what it is today and for that we are indeed very proud.

Let me indicate here and now that I can go on and on and on about the facilities that we propose to establish, but the fact of the matter is, Madam President, that in terms of sport, we really mean business. We have a structure, we have a policy, we have an implementation plan, we mean business in this country and I am sending a signal loud and clear to those so-called bandits, because I find the name “bandits” is too good for them. They are a bunch of losers, you know! That is who they are; losers, you know! You must not even honour them with the word “bandit”!

I will send a message loud and clear to all of them. “You all are looking for de same market that we looking for, yuh know. We looking for de youths and we are going to pump so much ah sporting programme” and do so much in sports in every nook and cranny in this country, we are going to make sports more attractive to the young people than what you all have to offer, bandits or losers, because this is our country and we mean business. [*Desk thumping*]

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

Sen. Basharat Ali: Madam President, I propose to limit my contribution to this debate to what I perceive to be my area of competence, and that is the energy sector. I hope to address the problem or the position of crude oil production and pricing, natural gas production and pricing and to touch on some of the projects

which have been identified for further development in the budget speech and in the presentation of the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. Conrad Enill.

Madam, President, I have something in common with a couple of my friends and the lady across the road there, the accountants who balance numbers—input equal output. As a professional chemical engineer, one of my first areas of training was in doing mass balance and energy balance—heat balance we used to call it, now energy balance—and that is, in fact, an exercise in balancing input against output and trying to account for differences. Later on I did move from the technical field into the numbers field so I do have a feel for what my friends across there talk about when they talk about income balance against expenditure. I think it is critical because we are talking within the energy sector of the mainstay of our source of income, which in fact converts in the long run to our ability to spend—our expenditure.

Madam President, let me first go to crude oil production. I note that the estimated production for crude oil for the fiscal year is 133,000 barrels a day and I have made some simplifying assumptions to arrive at what this split might be in terms of the different kinds of crude, because crude oil is not crude oil, okay, and land production, if we look at the statistics, come to about 18 per cent of the total production. I am using that figure. I am subject to correction. So 18 per cent of that 133,000 barrels a day is 24,000 barrels a day. The balance is marine production and we have two marine production areas, the south-east coast which is the very productive one and the south-west which is—I prefer to call it Soldado crude not Trinmar crude because Trinmar does not own any crude—and of the balance of 109,000 probably 75,000 barrels is south-east coast crude and 34,000 is the Soldado crude. So that is a mix—24 land, 34 south-west marine, 75,000 south-east marine.

I have no problems with that. The problem I have is what is really the definition of the price. In the Prime Minister's and Minister of Finance's budget speech he spoke of an average budget price estimation of \$25 a barrel. In a post budget comment he said, "Well this is really the Galeota mix." The Minister has referred to that same \$25 a barrel as a baseline price so there is a little difference there, but the difference does not matter too much. I think the best explanation as to what this price was came from the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries in his contribution in the other House and fortunately *Hansard* was able to provide me with a copy.

In fact, it was a very interesting speech which unfortunately on the day they started it—and that is on October 10 when they started broadcasting that after the

Leader of the Opposition's speech—it was suddenly cut off because, he was just getting into that process of education of the nation on what crude oil pricing is, when he was preempted for “The Young and the Restless”. So as an aside to my friend, Prof. Deosaran at the end there, I note that he has got back on the Order Paper his Private Motion regarding public broadcasting of important debates and I hope that within the next six weeks while I am serving here that I will have the opportunity to speak in support of that Motion because we are not getting sufficient information. If I did not come here and did not have access to the *Hansard*, I would not know what the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries said because it was not reported in the press to any degree.

Basically, I am on the same wavelength as the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries because he sort of indexed that price, the so-called Galeota mix, to WTI which is the West Texas Intermediate, and I have no problems with that because that is a good marker crude by which to judge crude oil produced off the south-east coast. So if that is what we are looking at as a \$25 crude I have no problem, but the average crude price is below \$25 and that is what we do not know, because 40 per cent of the production—the 24,000 land and the 34,000 barrels per day off Soldado—is, in fact, lower in value because it is higher gravity, higher sulphur. So if we look at the composite mix, we arrive at a figure which is lower, and I do not know what it is. I believe the minister on the opposite side will have to tell me.

I note in fact that last year where the prices were higher than budgeted overall, the *Review of the Economy 2003* gave the oil price—crude oil price I presume with condensate—of \$26.34 a barrel compared to the budget of \$22. So I hope that I will get some clarification so that I will have my two figures, which I have to multiply to get the income from oil—that is the production which I agree with or I have access to, and the price, both of which make up the income from crude oil or liquid fuels.

On the question of natural gas, there has been a call from many sources for the gas price basis for the budget. As you are aware, Madam President, petroleum revenue tax is based on the income of both crude oil and natural gas produced in the country and those are the two taxes which actually end up—the surplus ends up in the Revenue Stabilization Fund. So we would not know until we know what that gas price is going to be, but nobody has ever tackled that. I looked through carefully the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries' contribution and there is no mention anywhere of a natural gas price and it is a sizeable amount of gas. In fact, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance has given us some figures for natural

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gas production, 2.93 billion cubic feet a day, which is equivalent to 488,000 barrels of oil. That is, the gas production is 3.67 times the crude oil production if we convert them to oil equivalent.

So my question remains: why no statement on the natural gas price? I wonder whether there is a problem within the Government for disclosing this number, because natural gas has a number of ways of being disposed of at the well head or other fiscalization point. I know, and I believe it may still be so, that whatever is sold to the buyers, other than the ALNG, is sold to the National Gas Company, that is in fact the trader because they in turn sell to all the users, be it T&TEC, be it small users, be it all the methanol plants, ammonia plants, DRI plants, whoever it is.

They are the ones who sell, resell, in fact, and they are taxed as corporations, if I remember rightly, because I happened to be on the board of the National Gas Company from its inception in August 1975 until we were asked to resign when a new government took over in early 1987, so I am very familiar with that side of the National Gas Company's business and it is a company which, in fact, is very close to my heart, having been there from the very beginning. So their price, unless it was changed, is based on a negotiation with producers, whether it be BPTT or BG or the other people out on the east there, their price is based, as far as I remember and unless it has changed, on a fixed price with escalators, and that is how they sell their gas to a lot of their consumers.

If you look at your electricity bill, you keep seeing a figure there, which always is creeping a little—each year it creeps up, in fact—and they are the energy adjustments. They call them the energy adjustments. One of them is purely the gas escalator; another one is a currency escalator correction. In fact, Madam President, when the last electricity price was fixed for domestic consumers at 15 cents per kilowatt hour, we have since had increases, more than 50 per cent, purely from gas and currency corrections. So next time, whoever it is, look at your bill and you will see those numbers and 15 cents, in fact, is quite high. The actual price is quite a bit higher than the 15 cents, which was the regulated fixed price at the time.

So I think it is fairly easy to determine what the price should be from the producers to National Gas. So that basis I do not think should give us a problem. The problem may be, and I am not saying it is, the price of gas that goes into an LNG plant. How is it priced? I am not sure. One surmise on my part is that it is based on the net back price of LNG because LNG, in fact—let us take a case—is transported to the United States under one of the contracts and the price there may

be by net back pricing. So you start with what they call the Henry-Hub gas price, which today is very high, in fact it is \$5 or \$5.50 per million BTUS, and you start subtracting. You subtract the foreign terminal and regasification costs, you subtract the LNG shipping costs from there to Trinidad, then you subtract the Trinidad liquefaction costs and then you subtract the transportation costs to get back your well head price.

6.00 p.m.

If that is what it is, then we would like to know what, in fact, nets back to the producer company independent of what is coming from LNG. If the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is in a position to advise us, I would be very happy to know what that figure is, and I think many people will be, especially as we keep saying that gas is now the dominant feature of our petroleum operation, if not our economy. I think we owe it to the people that they should know.

I know, Madam President, that from the point of view of gas pricing by the National Gas Company to downstreamers, particularly the newer petrochemical plants like methanol and ammonia, there is what is called flexible gas pricing where the gas price is indexed to product price. If methanol is up there, the gas price is up there, and if it is down below there, then it gets down to a floor price. That is fixed by negotiations between National Gas Company as the supplier and the manufacturers, whoever they may be, on the other end.

I believe, if I am not mistaken, the National Gas Company won the Prime Minister's Innovation Award for this pricing system, and I do have my reservations as to whether this is really an innovation. I base this on the fact that going back to the mid '80s, a high powered committee was appointed by the then government to address the question of natural gas pricing, and within that gas committee, that idea of formulation of flexible gas price related to product price did come up. I know for a fact, because I was working in Projects at the time, and the National Energy Corporation, of which I was a member of staff, offered a pricing formula in mid-'86 to an Italian company that was the lead company in a project for ammonia manufacturing, and that pricing formulation was based on a flexible price—base price, floor price, and then prices increasing with increasing product price.

That was a firm offer for someone who wanted to put down a project. That project was intended, in fact, for ammonia production in Point Fortin, not Point Lisas—Point Fortin. That project, in fact, was aborted because by the end of 1986, as one would remember, there was a change in government and then the

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National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) came into power and there was no development in that particular field for that particular period.

I do not consider whatever is done now as innovation. I know sometimes they talk about new innovation and old innovation. To me, an innovation is something new, particularly in terms of idea, and I really would still like to know why the National Gas Company, which I said is a company which is dear to my heart, because I was there when there were ten people employed in the company at the very beginning. Why is it they got the Prime Minister's Innovation Award for selling, giving this gas pricing or negotiating and completing sales of gas under contract?

I agree with that concept. It is very good, particularly when the prices are good. I note it from the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries' contribution in the lower House that methanol price is US \$306 per tonne, and that must mean that the gas price for those projects which come under that regime of gas pricing must be doing extremely well.

I note also that there is a new gas fiscal regime which is planned, and I believe the target date for releasing that is January 2004. I do not know what that entails, but I believe there must be some concern about all this revenue because the National Gas Company, in fact, collects US dollar revenue from these manufacturing companies, and really, I believe they may want to do something about it in terms of showing it up in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). I believe this is one of the concerns. I do not know. That is not my area of specialization and I go very easily on it.

Madam President, once again, I appeal on behalf of all of us, can we have a little more transparency in gas pricing and in oil pricing so that we know where we stand, and if the market starts breaking down for one reason or the other, then we will understand what happened if we know what the base was.

I come to discuss some of the proposals which are listed for diversification and/or stimulation of the productive sectors, I would like to address some of these items identified for development within the energy sector. Specifically, I do the following:

The first one listed as "promotion of a gas refinery". I put it in inverted commas because I did not know what it was, which from the Prime Minister's Budget Speech entails the production from natural gas of what is called "syngas" or synthetic gas, which is carbon oxides and hydrogen. As far as I understand, the intent is that the syngas will be converted to methanol, which is a natural way of

going to methanol. There is nothing new about that.

The next step is for the methanol to be converted to olefins, which are the ethylenes and propylenes. The chemistry is what baffles me in this route, because we start with a mixture of pure hydrocarbons: methane, ethane, propane, butane—which are all pure hydrocarbons—we oxygenate it in order to get methanol, because methanol is CH_3OH —we are putting an O into it—and then we deoxygenate it to get to olefins so we get back to our hydrocarbon, albeit to a different hydrocarbon, like ethylene or propylene, whatever it is. So the logic really escapes me as to why we are going this route, and I am open to be convinced that this is a good route to go. This so-called MTO, methanol to olefin, I think it has that kind of title to it.

Madam President, I would leave that for the moment to go to the second item which is listed quite prominently, and that is “initiation of feasibility studies of gas to liquids project”. While we are initiating studies for this manufacture or technology—GTL technology it is called—I got a piece of information here which is dated the 20th which is Monday, in fact, BBC News, the headline is:

“Shell signs \$5bn Gulf deal.”

In bold print it says:

“Anglo-Dutch energy giant Shell has signed a \$5bn (£3bn) deal to build an energy plant in the Gulf state of Qatar to convert natural gas into liquid fuel.

Gas to liquid, or GTL technology, produces cleaner fuel, according to Shell.

The energy giant signed the agreement with state-run firm, Qatar Petroleum.”

And the signatories were the Shell Chairman and Qatar's Energy Minister.

“‘Shell will be building the first world scale gas to liquid projects,’ Sir Philip told BBC Radio...

‘Qatar is supplying the gas; Shell is to supply the technology,’...

The plant will eventually produce around 137,000 barrels of liquefied fuels per day by the time it comes fully on stream by the year 2011.

The Qatar plant will produce both naphtha and environmentally friendly diesel and is being billed as capable of creating a green revolution for car drivers.”

So while we are just about starting to study, there is a little state of Qatar signing a \$5 billion deal to be implemented between now and 2011, and it will be a huge project. So, I bring that to the attention of the planners, that I hope we are not

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fiddling while Rome burns, or while gas burns. This, by the way, is available for those who would like to see it. It did appear on BBC News. It comes from their website.

The third item I would like to address is the question of “feasibility study of aluminium smelter”. Our experience, and my personal experience has been that we have been dealing with feasibility studies on aluminium smelter back to June 1974. I remember very clearly sitting in with two eminent Prime Ministers and a President—that is our own Dr. Eric Williams, Mr. Michael Manley and President Burnham—at the Hilton to sign a little agreement to do what was called then a joint venture project, and I was a member of that group as a technocrat.

The joint venture group was supposed to do the feasibility studies related to setting up what they called a joint venture aluminium smelter whereby the two parties, Guyana and Jamaica, would provide alumina and Trinidad and Tobago would provide natural gas and, of course, build the necessary power plant because really, aluminium smelter requires electricity, not gas.

That project did not get anywhere. It broke down for various reasons because three different countries had their own objectives and they could not come to terms. That did not stop feasibility studies, as far as Trinidad and Tobago was concerned. I know we saw a lot of other people like Kaiser, Alcan, South Wire Aluminium with whom we did quite a bit of work. I think we spent over US \$1 million in studies with South Wire.

I went personally to visit with Martin Marietta, a big defence contractor in the US who had a smelter out on the West Coast and who wanted to find alternatives where the cost of energy was cheaper.

In that period, 1974 to early 1980, we just could not find partners for an aluminium project to induce people to come into it. In later stages, I believe Norsk Hydro was one of the people with whom we—I do not know exactly—had very serious project development discussions. Norsk Hydro, for those who may not know, is the parent company of Hydro Agri which manufactures fertilizer in Savonetta and which is also a 49 per cent equity partner with the Government in the Tringen plants.

They are big in aluminium because Norsk Hydro, as the name implies, built their smelters in their part of the world based on hydroelectric power. I do not know with whom we have signed an MOU. That is all I read, that we have signed an MOU, so I do not know who the other party is to this MOU. I understand it is a reputable person—I hope it is a reputable person—and I do not know what the parameters are for the setting up of such a plant, but it is a sizeable plant.

What is the source of alumina, if it is alumina? Or bauxite, if it is bauxite? And when we talk about bauxite, I warn that we might be facing the import of pollution, because when one processes bauxite to alumina, one produces what is called red mud. Anybody who has been over to the Dominican Republic, from the air will see the red mud which flows down to the sea. I would like to know really what they are. I believe there are big downstream benefits which are being promised, but we do not know.

As I say, we do not even know who the MOU has been signed with, and I find that a little strange that it is announced that we have signed an MOU and nobody knows who it is. I do not know whether it is a big secret, but if it is, well fair enough.

I am not a big supporter of the projects which depend on a foreign source of raw material, and that is the category in which I place aluminium smelter. Downstream may be fine, but if one does not have access one way or another to the alumina, then one is really in the hands of whoever is the supplier there and, in fact, as I say, the only input we really have to a smelter upstream is the natural gas which, in fact, requires a rather large power plant, depending on the capacity; if it is 100,000 tonnes that is a small smelter. Once again, the information is sparse as to where we are going on that project.

Ethylene feasibility has been listed and I am very pleased that the Minister opposite has given some figures. We have been waiting a long time to reach that critical mass of ethane production, and I would say even without Train 4 that we have it, but with Train 4 we certainly will have it as you have quoted in your figure, 850,000 tonnes a day of ethane feedstock convertible to ethylene, and ethylene, of course, into all the other derivatives of ethylene.

I do not think they are going to want to be producing ethylene or even polyethylene just to that step. We have to find the right partners, so we have the raw material, we should have some other investors here who might be interested. We have BP, people who are in the downstream business, we have Dupont, to name a couple of them. I wonder why we go chasing other projects when this is the one to me we should be really chasing.

While we are on that, I would like to say that we need to get going in that direction very soon and we need to do prioritization of projects. I learned quite recently that we do have what is called a natural gas task force. I believe they operate out of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, but they have personnel who are seconded to them and I think it is an admirable idea to have

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such a task force but I do not know the composition or what their terms of reference are and I do believe that the chairman of that task force is my revered friend, Prof. Julien. I may be wrong, but I thought it was him who was leading that task force. I stand corrected as I seem to be getting that signal from the Minister there.

Those are the projects that I would like to see handled, and I have one other project which I would like to bring before you, and that is one listed again, the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery upgrade, and I think the Minister in the Ministry of Finance who is responsible for state enterprises should be listening to this one, because I did some consultancy work on the previous refinery upgrade on which they spent—the figure quoted is \$360 million, but I think it is much more than that.

Quite a bit of off-project financing there, because the limit was set by what was being loaned to the Government by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). I stand corrected again. There was also a fair number of items of expenditure which were supposed to be done but were not done, all because of the budget constraints and I do not blame the then government or the people who were implementing the project, because once again, when there is a change of government, everybody stops to see exactly where we are going before they can kick start again. So there was equipment and all the things like that and it was quite something to get the project back on stream, but it always comes at a cost.

I have some reservations about what we are going to do there because I do not think we have ever had an audit of that refinery upgrade. When I say audit, I do not mean the financial audit. I mean a technical audit to determine whether we got anywhere near what the consultants said we were going to get in terms of capacity, product quality or otherwise, and if we had not done so, I would have liked to see that being done before we start venturing further into another refinery upgrade which I believe is going to be quite costly. I do not know what the configuration of that upgrade is, but I would suggest that we go very cautiously, especially as I hear that they are planning again to go with a mix of old plants and new plants. I believe our experience with old plants and building within it new plants has not been all that good.

Caution is the word on that one and, as I said, we need to look at it, because I do not think that the \$360 million-plus has in any way paid off. In fact, I think there are still some loans outstanding to the Ministry of Finance from Petrotrin, if I am correct. It may be that, it may be some other figure. I do not know.

That is what I would like to see done in terms of where we are going in the project development. If we have a task force, then we must prioritize what we have, prioritize them on certain definite criteria so that we sort of start getting closer to decisions. That is what we did in Point Lisas. I was honoured to be on the Government Coordination Task Force from 1976 to the implementation of the first few projects in Point Lisas, and that is the way to do it, as far as I know. I believe the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries was saying that, in fact, other people have been asking us how do we go about it and seeking our advice, and I think we should follow our own advice in this particular case.

Madam President, I do not propose to go for too much longer on this one, except to have a very short input into the question of gasoline pricing and reduction of tetraethyl lead in the gasoline. It is a move which I fully support. I have to say that from the outset. My only problem is the length of time it has taken to make this last step, because to the best of my recollection, lead in gasoline was already down to .15 grammes per litre in 1995 and, as I understood it then, and as I said, I was working as a consultant—

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate continue sitting. Madam President, after the hon. Senator is finished we have three on our side, Sen. Ramroop, Sen. Hackshaw-Marshlin and Sen. Titus. We should be completed at the end of Sen. Hackshaw-Marshlin's contribution.

Question put and agreed to.

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Sen. B. Ali: Madam President, I do not have much longer. In fact, I was hoping to keep within my limit, because I am on my last topic. This is unleaded gasoline. As I was saying, already in 1995, we were .15 grammes per litre of lead in gasoline, and which was done voluntarily, in fact, because I think I must give praise to Petrotrin and the government at the time that they did take that initiative to keep reducing it.

Why the last step took so long because, as I said, it was intended that when the upgrade was finished then we would go the whole hog and go unleaded, but I do not know what happened that prevented that. It may have been that, as we all know, in late 1995 there was a change in government, and that may have deterred or delayed any change in something like this.

I would have expected that the incoming Minister of Energy and Energy Industries at that time would have been an ardent proponent of removal of lead, since he was then the project manager for the refinery upgrade. So, I do not believe that that was the problem. The other problem may have been that MTBE, which is an excellent octane improver, when pure it has an octane number of 115, was earmarked as the material to provide the octane so that one could go unleaded. Some of you may be aware that MTBE is now virtually banned in the United States because they have discovered that it leaks into the ground water and it is, in fact, a carcinogenic material.

That may be one of the reasons the phase out of lead was delayed, because I have seen some rather curious kinds of statements coming from the EMA about leaks in tanks and having to change to plastic tanks, and so on, but no reason stated, in fact. Whether it is unleaded or leaded, the leaks will always be there, but I suspect the concern was MTBE, which is now banned in many parts of the United States and other countries where it is already recognized that it is a hazard.

I think the switch is going apace and I would make one appeal, in fact, that the supplier company, together with the dealers, should get together and educate the users, who are the people who own cars, as to what is the octane requirement of the cars. They probably sold to the person: 95 unleaded, 92 unleaded. I know 92 unleaded is, in fact, what is regular in the United States, because that is how they categorize the gasolines. So really, am I to go and buy 92 octane and be satisfied with it without having to find that my car is knocking all the way? I would appeal to the Ministry, to the National Petroleum Marketing Company in conjunction with the dealers, to come out and say that these are the cars that we have here and these are their octane requirements, so that the user is made conscious of what is his best option.

6.30 p.m.

Madam President, I have one final comment on that: I am not too much in favour of subsidies on products, unless it starts hurting the poorer people. I do think that we have to pay for quality, and this is a case where we may have a small price to pay for air quality. I believe, in fact, that there is a little adjustment in the gasoline prices, unrelated to the removal of lead, and that is the 15 cents put on to the unleaded 95 octane. We know that it is there, so let somebody say, "Okay, 92 unleaded gasoline will go up by \$1.00 per gallon." People understand gallons: \$1.00 per gallon, so 25 cents a litre.

Madam 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. B. Ali: Thank you, Madam President; I only have about one minute to go on this.

As I said before, this is a question of education. I believe that from the amount of information that is being broadcast about the increase in prices, it would appear that the lowest currency in Trinidad is \$1.00. Although my fellow Senator said that she heard about a PH driver who spoke about a 50 cents increase, but as soon as the price goes up it is by \$1.00. One dollar is the increase on a gallon; one gallon of gasoline takes you about 20 miles. I think that the Ministry of Consumer Affairs may have to come into the taxi drivers' position when it comes to increase in prices.

I have one final comment, which is a recommendation with respect to an article in yesterday's *Express*, by a former Member of this Senate, Prof. Julian Kenny, who wrote a very informative article on this same subject of lead pollution, and, in fact, extended it to the situation with regard to diesel fuel. The headline of the article read: "And now for diesel". It identifies the next step on the road to better quality. That is a hard step, because we have sulphur, which is another poisonous material, more common than the lead, and it is not so easy unless you have the refinery configuration to deal with it. I think we have to go the route, one way or another. If we are talking upgrade we should be talking about low lead, very low sulphur diesel fuel, automotive gas oil as I prefer to call it, which meets the requirement for quality from the point of view of the sulphur content, which will help to keep our atmosphere intact.

I notice that kudos were paid by the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), but I am a little different from him. I bring to the attention of this Senate what I consider a disingenuous advertisement from the *Express* newspaper of Wednesday, October 15, 2003. There was one in the *Express* of October 14, 2003, as well, so I presume they ran two simultaneous advertisements in all the newspapers. As far as I am concerned, that is money down the drain.

The advertisement reads:

"Trinidad and Tobago is phasing out LEAD from gasoline

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Lead used in gasoline can cause serious damage to human health. It can adversely affect the brain, blood, nervous system and vital body organs such as the kidneys and lungs. Lead can also hinder proper mental development in children.

With the removal of lead from gasoline, we can enjoy:

- An environment that supports proper mental (IQ) development among our children
- Improved academic performance from students”

Minister of Education, please note.

- Freedom to enjoy our beautiful outdoors without the threat of inhaling lead
- A healthier lifestyle
- Fewer personal health bills.”

I think this is completely unwarranted. Mr. Minister, I think you must ask them whether they can give the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) some money. When there was a flood problem NEMA said, “Well, we do not have any money because money has not been released as yet.” In an emergency that is an unacceptable answer, when a sister or brother authority is spending money free sheet after September 30, on what I consider to be useless advertisements.

Madam President, thank you for the opportunity to give my views.

Sen. Rawle Titus: Madam President, let me first compliment the Ministry of Finance and all the public servants and others who contributed to the budget document 2003/2004 that we are now discussing.

In my contribution, which I hope will be brief enough, I am going to be going in and out, because I want to respond to some contributions made by previous speakers. Having said that, I also compliment the previous speakers and say to this honourable Senate that I feel pleased to be participating in a debate, which has had the tone this one has had. [*Desk thumping*]

When you talk about a budget, the discussions do not begin in the Parliament; they do not even begin on budget day; they begin long before that, because the public is looking forward to something. Of course, there are anxieties whether taxes, food prices or gasoline are going to be raised; this is the kind of thing that happens to the public. Where the Government is concerned, it has to fashion a

socio-economic response to the needs of the people that would lead to a betterment of life for the people. In the case of the Trinidad and Tobago Government, this response has to lead into the channel that eventually leads to Vision 2020.

The Opposition in both Houses also look forward to the budget, and for them, as far as I have noticed, it is: "Let me see what is bad in there; what is bordering bad; let me see what I can criticize; let me see how well I could ignore what is in the budget and how much criticism I could level at the government." The business community also looks forward to the budget. I particularly want to talk about this part, because yesterday Sen. Mark spoke in terms of the prices of goods and services that have increased over the last couple of years. My understanding of his contribution was that he was willing to attribute blame to the Government.

When the business community looks forward to the budget obviously it thinks in terms of how it can benefit. There are no two ways about it; we do not have to be hypocritical. All of us know for years on end that on budget day the shops, especially, close at least an hour before the budget is read. You may call by the window, if you are in a village, and we know the village shop situation, and they will tell you, "We doh have". [*Laughter*] One hour after the budget is read, the doors are opened and they have, at an increased price. The Government does not cause that; that is greed; that is wickedness, if you want to call it that. That is no concern for the public; it is in total opposition to what this budget is about, which is concern for the people.

Whereas Sen. Mark would have said that prices increased over the last couple of years, that is in the situation as he knows it in Trinidad. I was very pleased to hear him talk about it, because over the years there has been a lot of discussion on the difference in the cost of living between Trinidad and Tobago. I was very pleased to hear Sen. Mark use actual comparisons to bring his point home. I would like to offer a similar situation before the Parliament this afternoon.

In Tobago, prices are, at least, 30 to 40 per cent more than they are in Trinidad; that is a fact. It is impacting on the lives of Tobagonians in a way that, whereas it is unacceptable, Tobagonians are in a situation where they can do very little about it. We have to be thankful to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for decreasing the airfare, thereby allowing people to travel, within the course of one day, to Trinidad and so make the prices in Trinidad available to them; that is caring. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark was not the only speaker who attracted my attention yesterday. I remember the contribution by Sen. Smith, who was very passionate when he

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spoke about the criminal element. I want to tell this honourable Senate that the Government cares about the crime situation; the Government is concerned about it; the Government is very, very worried about it. The point I want to make about Sen. Smith's contribution has to do with what he said. I am not using his direct words, but he said something to the effect that you go around the corner and you meet people talking about the criminals, because they know who the criminals are. They talk about the kidnappers, because they know who the kidnappers are.

I gathered from his statement that he has been on those corners and might know who the criminals and kidnappers are. I say to Sen. Smith, through you, Madam President, "If you know who these people are, report the matter to the relevant authorities". [*Desk thumping*] How well I remember the statement, "If you have evidence, take it to the police". [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

Sen. R. Montano: On a point of information, Madam President, for the record, I have taken information to the police about a crime concerning the murder of my cousin, when an Assistant Commissioner of Police covered up the crime, and nothing has been done about it. [*Crosstalk*] I did not say that it was a point of order; I said it was a point of information. Nothing has been done about it!

Sen. R. Titus: Madam President, I declined at first to say that this is my first contribution from this position. [*Desk thumping*] I would like to have your protection, please. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark: The way you talking boy, like you spoke already. [*Laughter*] My troops will declare a ceasefire. [*Laughter*]

Sen. R. Titus: Madam President, I totally agree with the view taken by Sen. Dr. McKenzie that there is need for training in a marketable skills area. I would like to inform her that training in marketable skills is proceeding at a very, very good pace. I do not know if she knows that there is an untraditional training programme in Tobago for women. Only this weekend the Minister of Community Development and Gender Affairs was in Tobago to attend the graduation ceremony. Young women are making themselves available to take these courses and are going out there as masons, plumbers, electrical workers and so forth. I also agree that there should be follow up where the Youth Training Employment and Partnership Programme (YTEPP) trainees are concerned. When they do leave YTEPP I think we need to keep in touch with them to follow them through for career guidance.

I want to make a point about the contribution by Sen. Prof. Deosaran. He spoke about the fact that a budget could be delivered, but we have to look at the socio-political climate. Here is where I would like to make a few comments. Every time a budget is presented, it is a fiscal package for a nation; we have to understand that. So it means that all responsible people must try to see that the package works. The political environment can affect, not just the delivery of the budget, but the life of the people, the life of the communities and crime in the country. [*Desk thumping*] Let us not fool ourselves.

If we demonstrate that adversarial qualities are what we are about, then adversarial qualities will filter down. If we demonstrate that we are, in fact, leaders, and I take it that Senators are appointed because of certain qualities that were seen in them that will filter down. If we demonstrate that we deserve to be in the Senate, then that too will filter down. If we demonstrate, however, that we are here and are prepared to make differences—you are on that side and I am on this side and I am not supporting you for any reason; that is also going to filter down. If we do not resort to civil obedience, that is going to filter down too.

Madam President, I listen to commentators day after day, sometimes I choose to remain silent when they talk; sometimes I think very hard on what they have said. When we could come to the Parliament and mislead the public, especially in defiance of the oath that we took as Senators, that is dangerous. Every single Member of the Senate took an oath. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. R. Montano: Who is he talking about? You are talking about me? [*Crosstalk*]

Madam President: Senator, please continue.

Sen. R. Titus: We are talking about the business of the people.

Madam President: Please, allow the Senator to continue.

Sen. R. Montano: He is making some very controversial remarks for a maiden speech.

Madam President: Senators! The Senator is giving a contribution; he is stating his opinion like everybody else did when they gave their contribution. Please continue.

Sen. R. Titus: Thank you, Madam President. Too often we have been in this Senate and we have had to hear, “We represent so many thousand people.” I do not know if that is what was referred to when someone said I was controversial.

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We have all heard it; it is recorded. The budget has nothing to do with whom you represent, except that it has to do with your representation of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, only. It has nothing to do with people talking about, “We represent this percentage and you represent that percentage.” [*Crosstalk*] We cannot afford to give that kind of opinion or to let people even feel that is what the Senate is about.

Sen. R. Montano: I am shocked; he is confessing to being biased.

Madam President: Please continue, Senator.

Sen. R. Titus: Similarly, civility means legality. We cannot call on a population to engage in what is termed civil disobedience and then ask, “What are you doing about the civil disobedience?” Civil disobedience also involves breaking the law. [*Crosstalk*] I will not say any more about that.

Sen. Mark: That is not true!

Sen. R. Montano: Holy cow! This is the Vice-President of the Senate?

Sen. R. Titus: Madam President, I compliment the Government for the stand it took on Tobago. I looked at a statement made by the hon. Minister of Finance, where he said that Tobago needed to catch up. I make this point because of the fact that some people said that Tobago got exactly what it wanted. Tobago did not get exactly what Tobago wanted; Tobago got what it deserved. [*Desk thumping*] As a matter of fact, it will go down on record that some government cared enough to recognize that Tobago had to catch up. [*Desk thumping*] If we must get to 2020 at the same time, then we definitely need to catch up. [*Interruption*]

Sen. R. Montano: This is the man who has to sit in judgment of me?

Sen. R. Titus: Madam President—

Madam President: Just one moment, Senator. It is not the first time that a Vice-President of the Senate has taken part in debates. [*Crosstalk*] Please, continue, Sen. Titus. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. R. Titus: Madam President, I give the assurance to this honourable Senate that whatever the allocation given to Tobago, it will be in the safest hands. [*Desk thumping*] Anyone who has been to Tobago recently would find that it is almost unbelievable the kind of development taking place. I said to a gentleman just yesterday, “Tobago will never be the same again”. Government in Tobago will never be the same after this, because since the PNM-led Tobago House of Assembly (THA) took office, it has been nothing short of a demonstration of

efficiency, proficiency and capability. I am glad that the Government recognized the fact that Tobago needed to catch up. As I said, whatever the allocation given to Tobago, it is going to be in the best hands.

I was very happy when Sen. Baksh spoke about the airport situation. There is need for development work on the airport; we need to expand it. In this very presentation, note was made of the fact that the airlift situation has increased; not only that, I want people to recognize that travel between Trinidad and Tobago has also increased significantly. [*Desk thumping*] Trinidadians are coming to Tobago for holidays, holiday weekends and ordinary weekends. Tobago schools come down to Trinidad and go to the industrial estates and stuff like that. The local travel has increased immensely. [*Desk thumping*]

What does that say? It says that we have got to get some more machinery in place so that people can get from place to place with some measure of convenience. I know that has been occupying the attention of the Tobago House of Assembly and the Government. I trust that would be in place very soon. Similarly, the matter with the inter-island ferry is also receiving attention, and we are very happy for that. One of the speakers earlier had made the point that there was one promise, and then another. I know that there has also been dialogue. My firm belief is that having to deal with people who choose not to “cuss” but to discuss, these things will happen. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, I am pleased for the kind of budget that was presented by the hon. Minister of Finance. I wish to ask all concerned to understand that the budget is not about any sector of Trinidad and Tobago, but about Trinidad and Tobago. If we represent the interests of Trinidad and Tobago, we must all make an effort to see that the execution is in place.

I thank you.

7.00 p.m.

Madam President: Let me congratulate the Senator on his maiden contribution although I must say he spoke like a veteran.

Sen. Joan Hackshaw-Marslin: Thank you, Madam President. I stand here to give support to the budget statement 2003/2004 and I am happy you have given me the opportunity. I hope my friends on the other side allow me the ceasefire.

Sen. R. Montano: Do not worry; I will protect you. If anybody interrupts her I will protect her. [*Laughter*]

Madam President: Senator, you have the promise of the Senator on this side. So I think you are in safe hands.

Sen. J. Hackshaw-Marslin: Madam President, I wish to commend the hon. Prime Minister and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the various initiatives as contained in the national budget for fiscal year 2003/2004. However, I am constrained in particular to refer to those initiatives which are geared towards the development of our youth population.

From my own perspective, I am of the view that the imperatives of youth development are some of the prerequisites for the perfection and advancement of our society for a better Trinidad and Tobago.

Our society becomes vulnerable to a number of social ills when programmes for youth development are lacking or misplaced in the priority list, but this is not the case in this 2003/2004 budget and for this, I am most pleased. So permit me to list and elaborate briefly on some of these measures.

I start with youth training. Madam President, the Minister responsible for youth and sport gave us a comprehensive outlook of the plans for his ministry so I am just going to deal with what I read in the budget and what I picked up as being the most important for the youths.

The Minister of Finance in his budget presentation remarked that some of our young people do not have a proper concept of right and wrong and are therefore in need of re-orientation. I agree fully with the statement of the hon. Prime Minister and, therefore, support the expansion of the Cadet Corps, the Boy Scouts movement, the Girl Guides and Brownies. These organizations and groupings have produced some of the finest citizens in our country because of their commitment to discipline and self-development.

In some countries, military or national service is compulsory and considered an important component for the development of the civil society. Whilst we are not pursuing the mandatory system, creation of disciplined minds could be achieved through institutions such as the Cadet Corps and the Boy Scouts movement.

Madam President, I sat here yesterday and heard my friend Sen. Mark's description of the budget using very colourful words. He was on my television, he was on my radio and I asked myself: Why is he being so irresponsible? Did he read the budget? Did he see all the measures geared to the development of the youths? So I am here to remind him, and also to let him know—I do not want to

be too political because they have a ceasefire—that the youth population has mastered the art now of seating their representatives in this Senate. They decide whether they sit on your left, or on your right. They also determine how long they stay in this Senate. I know the Senators in the Front Bench are waiting on a recall, so I beg them to be kind to the youths.

Education. This is an area of greatest thrust in the interest of youth development therefore, it is refreshing to note that emphasis will be placed on the development of scientific and technical skills to prepare students for continuous learning. The establishment of a National Curriculum Council as well as a Teacher Professional Development Programme will add value in this respect. The book loan and the book grant programmes would enable students to obtain learning tools.

Madam President, the provision of 90,000 lunches daily as well as 25,000 breakfasts five days a week will certainly assist thousands of youths who up till now have been unable to obtain a decent meal.

The expansion of the school transportation system at a cost of \$40 million per annum would ensure that students are transported to and from school safely and on time without their parents having to find money for a fare. The commencement of construction work on the University of Trinidad and Tobago is instructive in terms of the emphasis which is being placed in securing a better future for our youths.

Madam President, it also dealt with sport. Sporting activities are extremely critical to the development of strong bodies and sound minds. The establishment of a Sports Commission of Trinidad and Tobago to implement strategies as outlined in the National Sports Policy, which the Minister just spoke about, is integral to the achievement of several objectives including the refocusing of youth in the area of self-development and self-esteem.

Madam President, too many young people have lost their sense of direction because of family, societal failure and support. It is regrettable to note that a large number of them are outside the mainstream of economic, social and cultural activities. Sad to say, some are in prison with their young lives being wasted; your children, my children, our children. The various initiatives in the national budget are intended to reverse this unfortunate pattern and trend, but our young citizens have a similar role to play in this regard so none are lost or left behind. However, there are more measures in the national budget to assist our young citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. And permit me, Madam President, to itemize some of them.

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1. The establishment of a Children's Authority;
2. The completion of a National Plan of Action for Children;
3. The establishment of a Child Indicators Monitoring System;
4. Military Led Academic Training Programme to focus on youth who completed secondary school but did not graduate with a full certificate;
5. Military Led Youth Apprenticeship and Reorientation Training Programme;
6. National Service Programme;
7. Halfway House for male ex-prisoners;
8. Remand House for young female offenders;
9. Increase in the allocation for CEPEP in order to provide additional jobs to the young, unemployed population;
10. An expanded URP including the expansion of the women component.

Madam President, I have not dealt with the development expenditure, which would provide improvements and expansion to the physical environment, which is also essential for creating a better place in which to live and work. Our country would have achieved accelerated growth rates when all its citizens are brought under the national umbrella. There is no doubt that the budget has sought to focus on all the economic and social groups in our country. No one can dispute this fact.

Madam President, I wish to make a personal plea to our young citizens to take full advantage of all the opportunities that have been afforded to them through the national budget 2003/2004. We cannot and must not waste or squander these opportunities as to do so would be to our peril. I urge, plead and beseech each youth in our country to develop a personal road map which would chart their lives and identify milestones and achievements over the coming years.

Some of us think about achievements, but in our case, let us plan achievements and like other cultures in different parts of the world, establish a road map for the next 25 years. We must be clear in our minds who we want to be and where we want to go from henceforth. We must not waste a single day, let alone the year.

Madam President, I borrowed a quotation, I know you usually have to say from where you are quoting, but I cannot remember where I read it, so I will just say:

“We must not fly on borrowed wings, or walk on borrowed legs, as we will reach nowhere.”

Another one says:

“The empires of the future are the empires of the mind and the empires I refer to are the empires of youth.”

Thank you.

Madam President: Let me congratulate yet another Senator on her maiden contribution this afternoon. If this were a cricket match, we would not be getting any runs at all.

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Sen. Satish Ramroop): Thank you very much, Madam President. I hope I get some protection too.

Hon. Senator: You are old.

Sen. S. Ramroop: It is my pleasure, Madam President, to address this Senate and join with my colleagues on this side as we debate the annual Appropriation Bill and the provisions outlined therein by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in his budget presentation for the fiscal year 2004.

Madam President, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Finance, the hon. Prime Minister on his budget presentation for fiscal year, 2004. He created history in this House as he presented the largest budget to Parliament, and by extension, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, a budget in excess of \$22 billion. It was not only the largest budget delivered in the history of the Parliament, but one which catered to all aspects of the national development, and by that I mean the targeting of growth in the national economy and development of the society as a whole.

There is something for business, commerce, science and technology, the revamping of the public service, development of education, and an enlightened society. Of course, the significant target areas were food, health, utilities, housing, and national security; issues which are uppermost on the lips and in the thoughts of everyone in our society.

I join with my colleague in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, hon. Edward Hart in acknowledging that this was a budget with a conscience, and I go further to say it provided magnanimity to all sectors of the society and with malice to none.

I shall deal with some aspects of our local tourism and the tremendous contribution that marine tourism has been playing and could play in our development. I shall deal specifically with more aspects of culture and tourism. As you know, Madam President, I am fortunate to be in two ministries and I know Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams would have much to say.

I shall refer specifically to the yachting industry and a consultation held by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism on October 21, 2003. This consultation made a number of revelations in the yachting sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

The industry is focused mainly in the Chaguaramas peninsula, it has experienced significant growth in yacht arrivals over the last 10 years with arrivals peaking in May through November, the period which is usually referred to as the hurricane season.

The growth in yachties was equally matched by the significant growth in marina facilities totalling 17 facilities. Trinidad and Tobago is now recognized as having developed its strength in repair facilities over the last two decades.

At the economic level, estimated visitor expenditure approximated over TT \$130 million annually with the sector contributing to GDP over TT \$90 million, over 1,100 jobs were currently generated in this industry. In 2002 alone there were an estimated 2,300 arrivals. This reflects a steady increase between 1990 and 1995 with 1990 accounting for 637 arrivals and 1995 registering 2,307 arrivals. Arrivals peaked in 2000 at 3,249.

The foreign consultant who presented the paper on Tuesday, October 21, 2003 to a packed audience of yachting experts and yachting industry personnel in Chaguaramas accounted for the significant growth in the industry as follows:

Trinidad was a hospitable country with significant private sector investment and supportive policies from customs, immigration, and Tidco. Moreover, we possess the competitive price level for boat repairs and storage with a well-skilled labour force, low cost of living and duty-free imports of boat parts.

Madam President, it will interest you and this honourable Senate to know that a complete profile has been identified for the yachting tourist which is to be used as a guide by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in planning programmes and projects for the yachting industry, an industry that has been left entirely untapped in our economy.

For instance, the yachting tourists come mainly from Europe and the United States of America; he or she is usually in the 40—60 age group mostly male,

mainly retirees and generally remain in port between two to six months. Trinidad has a comparative advantage in providing significant services to the yachties in the range of marine works. We provide boat maintenance; services in cleaning; boat repair; electrical and electronic work; engine repairs; fibreglass and marine mechanics; painting and refurbishing; propeller repairs and service; sail making; welding; wood and woodworking; refrigeration and air condition services.

With all this, we do experience some challenges. However, the work of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is clearly identified and we propose to deal with it expeditiously. We are currently seeking to restore a slight drop in yachting arrivals over the last two years in restoring competitiveness. We would work with the various ministries, agencies, and other arms of Government, and the private sector in treating with and undertaking aggressive promotion dealing proactively with environmental issues including sewerage and garbage disposal by the yachties; establishing training programmes to meet with the requirements of the high-skilled, diverse employment opportunities.

Madam President, at this time, I now turn to the issue of culture as it affects norms, values, attitudes, behavioural patterns, customs, oral traditions and heritage, both built and natural. Our culture therefore represents all our artistic impressions, our experiences, our values and behaviours, heritage and the way of life which has been influencing us and which will continue to guide us. It determines our behavioural patterns, thought processes and our attitude to God, society, family, our environment and our financial management. It also deals with our attitude to education and our aesthetics, in other words, our culture identifies us as a unique people with a unique environment. This influences the mandate that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism embraces based on the above.

The ministry has gone one step further in the finalization of its strategic thinking and planning in accordance with the mandate of the Government in achieving developed country status by the year 2020. There has been a wind of change blowing over the ministry and filtering down to the agencies under its jurisdiction and even as I speak, there is ongoing planning and programming of new and exciting developments.

At this time, I would highlight some aspects of the different divisions of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. I begin with the National Museum and Art Gallery. While it had mounted 12 exhibitions as at September 30, 2003, for the period October to December alone the museum will launch two permanent exhibits, five permanent exhibitions, three educational workshops and lecture series, five outreach projects and one tour for the purpose of developing the

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awareness of staff. The permanent exhibits include exhibits on the asphalt lake at the La Brea Community Museum. In December, we will have sport and sport heroes of Trinidad and Tobago.

Some of the temporary exhibitions from October 27—31 will feature an exhibition on the history of calypso in collaboration with TUCO; October 13—20 we would have an exhibition on paintings by London-based Indian artist, J. Patel in collaboration with the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Cultural Cooperation. November 11—31, there will be an exhibition of works by the elder artists of this country, 70 years and over, and on November 4—11, there will be a jewellery exhibition; December 9—21, there would also be an exhibition of recent works by Jamaican-born Trinidad and Tobago-based artist, Rex Dixon. We would also have some education exhibitions and programmes.

From October to November, there would be a workshop in acting, improvisation and photography with the Trinidad Theatre Workshop. On October 14, we have the Amerindian Heritage Day, which will consist of gallery talks and the highlight of permanent exhibits on the Amerindians. There will also be video presentations and giveaways during the whole day.

On November 12, 2003, there will be panel discussions and a lecture series on our architectural heritage in collaboration with the National Trust. Other special activities would be on every Sunday of each month at 6.30 p.m. There would be a study circle with all poets. On October 15, poetry day will be celebrated and there will be recitals with the writers' union and the circle of poets.

From November 5—16, there will be a play called "The Single" by Patti-Ann Ali who is the star of the famous Westwood Park. On December 07, 2003, there will be a quarterly museum concert showcasing Phase II Pan Groove and on December 09, there will be the launch of the 2004 Museum Calendar, and on November 17, we would have a cultural tour discovering our Amerindian heritage at the Cleaver Woods Park and the Carib Community in Arima.

Madam President, these are some activities of the National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago. A major requirement for the Museum and Art Gallery to be responsive to the needs of our people is that it should be a living museum, it must be proactive in providing information and services that exist and anticipated clientele requirements. This makes it a dynamic, living entity meeting the demands of its citizenry. In this regard, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism will partner with the museum to provide the required forum for exhibitions, workshops and space for other aspects of the art.

Madam President, I now turn to the National Carnival Commission (NCC). This is the agency through which Government provides opportunities and the environment for the achievement of full artistic expressions, the generation of social and economic capital, the development of small business entrepreneurship and moments where social, political, economic and cultural differences are set aside. It is therefore considered to be a major, social investment that allows positive avenues for youthful energies which may be most prone to anti-social behaviour. This in a sense makes us a unique society and the focal point for social anthropologists and tourists. A significant amount of groundwork and aesthetic development was done in Port of Spain in 2003. The following projects were undertaken and completed:

1. The building of 120 new vendor booths for Carnival 2003;
2. The completion of installation of new seating in the Grand Stand;
3. The successful completion and overhaul of its financial management systems and procedures; and
4. The installation of a new website.

The NCC has launched Carnival 2004 and this was done on Sunday, October 20, 2003 with street parades, the involvement of pan, calypso and mas.

In the area of promotion of the steel pan the NCC, through Pan Trinbago has sought to broaden its contact with the promotion and expansion of indigenous culture in addition to the traditional competitions which were successfully held.

The NCC continues to support and promote directly national events and celebrations which have elements of Carnival. In 2003, the commission gave its support to the Arima Fest, the Point Fortin Borough Day, the Toco Season, the Guaya Fest and many community-based Independence and Republic Day celebrations. The NCC is also committed to the preservation and exposure of the traditional art forms of Carnival.

I wish to emphasize the work of the NCC in the education of our young people and foreigners on this aspect of our culture. In this regard, in 2003, the commission sponsored and funded a number of workshops on traditional mas characters for over 1,600 primary school children as far as Guayaguayare in the south, Toco in the east, Princes Town in the south, in central and Plymouth in Tobago. This serves as training ground for young persons under 16 years to gain a greater knowledge of the traditions of Carnival. Traditional characters welcome

visitors with the taste of Carnival as it used to be. The occasion was also used to exhibit Carnival arts and artifacts.

7.30 p.m.

For 2004, the NCC will be looking at issues of adjudication, route identification, traffic management of masqueraders and improving the overall information base and overall aesthetics of the Carnival environment so that it becomes a self-sustaining event contributing to the national coffers in a positive way. In this regard, the Ministry will continue to support the development of Carnival in other regions. The Ministry will continue to partner with other Carnivals in other parts of the Carnival diaspora.

The National Carnival Commission would also continue to support the development of closer linkages with international carnivals, in particular, new initiatives in other places where “Trini” carnival is not yet celebrated. Madam President, Carnival has become a cultural industry and the NCC has moved expeditiously, not only to improve its administrative capability, but also to refurbish the infrastructure at the Queen’s Park Savannah.

I now turn to Queen’s Hall. You will no doubt be aware that this performance hall, the pride of Trinidad and Tobago, has been rehabilitated and refurbished at a cost of over \$35 million. There are some additional construction works to be undertaken for the total refurbishment of this building. This is expected to be undertaken within the first six months of the fiscal year. Meanwhile, the theatre has been booked to capacity and has already had many international concerts, including the major musical of “Carnival Messiah” in July 2003. You will no doubt be aware that the Ministry has been monitoring this production and many countries of the world have expressed positive interest to bring the production to their countries.

I turn to the Naparima Bowl. During the past year the 41-year-old Naparima Bowl continues to be stretched to its maximum in terms of usage and its capacity to withstand the vagaries of nature, including the flooding of its premises in 2003. In 2004, we propose to make greater progress in our planning for the rehabilitation and expansion of the building and premises so that this theatre can function as a premier auditorium for South Trinidad.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has been successful in facilitating an agreement also between Pan Trinbago and the Pan-in-Schools Coordinating Council, for the hosting of a National Junior Steelband Music Festival. The National Junior Steelband Music Festival would comprise two segments: the folk

segment managed by the Pan-In-Schools Coordinating Council and the open segment managed by Pan Trinbago.

It has also been agreed that the grand finals of the National Junior Steelband Music Festival will be hosted and managed by the National Junior Steelband Music Festival Management Committee. This would be chaired by Pan Trinbago. The National Junior Steelband Music Festival Committee comprises of Pan Trinbago, Pan-in-Schools Coordinating Council and the youth arm of Pan Trinbago. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the School Principals Association and the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association are also to be invited to be part of the National Junior Steelband Music Festival Committee.

The National Junior Steelband Music Festival Management Committee will formulate one budget and plan and organize the logistics for the grand finals of the National Junior Steelband Music Festival. Both Pan Trinbago and the Pan-in-Schools Coordinating Council have agreed to conduct a budget review of the National Junior Steelband Music Festival. With regard to the financing of the festival, Pan Trinbago and the Pan-in-Schools Coordinating Council have agreed that all sponsorship agreements gained by the two organizations would remain in place. Sponsorship gained for the folk segment of the festival would be administered and disbursed by the Pan-in-Schools Coordinating Council; sponsorship gained for the open segment of the festival would be administered and disbursed by Pan Trinbago. Pan Trinbago and the Pan-in-Schools Coordinating Council will contribute equally to the financing of the grand finals of the National Junior Steelband Music Festival.

I now turn to the Trinidad and Tobago National Steel Orchestra. The National Steel Orchestra continues to grow from strength to strength. The band has continued with a number of projects in 2003, which include performances both locally and abroad, performing in over 10 concerts, including the gala opening of the 30th Anniversary of Caricom, which was a resounding success. In 2004, there are a number of new initiatives being considered to improve the orchestra, inclusive of moving to new, enhanced accommodation and a number of concert engagements.

I now turn to Open School for the Arts. This is one of the new initiatives of the culture division of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. This is the new concept in arts education which provided training for interested persons in such areas as drama, song writing, folk, modern and social dance, music literacy, pan sinking, Indian music, Indian dance, welding for pannists, events management, calypso and ex tempo. The objectives of the project were:

1. To develop practitioners in performing and visual arts.
2. To promote the concept of culture in its holistic form through the exposing of the communities to attitudes, beliefs, values and the practices which positively impact on the way of life of the nation.
3. To foster a greater appreciation for the varied and diverse art forms in our society.
4. To sublimate negative traits and behaviour through the medium of the arts.
5. To allow greater collaborative efforts between Government and the civil society.
6. To provide institutional strengthening for community growth.

This project was a major success. These classes ran for a period of 12 weeks, which constitute 36 contact hours, in which over 49 persons were employed. Training was provided in a number of skills which allowed for sustainable development among members in the community.

The outcome of this is that digital video disks were produced on the work of the Open School for the Arts. These video disks, together with the recording of all our other projects, are to form part of the ministry's archives which can later be accessed by the public for research purposes. Also, partnership was fostered with communities through the provision of institutional strengthening support for community groups and the active fostering of better relationships. There was a low attrition rate among the participants in the courses which augurs well for our planning and delivery, including the continuation of the programme.

For the fiscal year 2004, the Division of Culture proposes to introduce a number of new courses to be added to the programme, to name a few: Ramleela, Biraha, wire bending, traditional Indian wedding songs, story telling, rapso, drumming, which would be inclusive of tassa and African drumming, dance for the differently-abled and singing for the hearing-impaired. We would also increase the number of venues from 22 to 40, and this would include six communities in the sister isle of Tobago, in collaboration with the Tobago House of Assembly.

We would also provide additional employment opportunities for approximately 100 persons and we would also increase training for approximately 1,200 participants at introductory and intermediate levels in one of the many disciplines offered.

There is also a programme called the Culture Immersion, which is a joint project of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Education, but

initiated and run by the Ministry and Culture and Tourism. The aim of the project is to totally immerse a number of the nation's schools in the culture of the nation. These would include: drama, roti-making, story telling, steel band playing, drumming, stick fighting, dance and tassa drumming. This project is divided into three deliverables:

1. The immersion of schools in culture.
2. The children at risk.
3. Creative arts vacation camps.

The immersion of schools into culture introduces students to the great diversity which constitutes the national culture. It affords opportunity for exposing the genius which appears to be ethically or geographically specific to students across Trinidad and Tobago. This project runs for the duration of 12 weeks during the first term of the academic school year.

The children-at-risk project is aimed at children in the school system who are having trouble in school. For the 12-week duration of the project, the students would be exposed to nine hours of immersion in the creative art forms and nine hours of exploration of feelings evoked through the creative expressions towards identifying coping mechanisms for dealing with feelings. The hours would be divided into one and a half hour sessions once per week. This is in keeping with the aim to facilitate and nurture the creativity and development of all citizens through the provision of a supportive environment.

The deliverable would assist in reducing negative behaviour among students. It would also assist in treating with the emotional problems of these children through creative arts and group therapy. The objectives of this project are as follows:

1. To identify coping mechanisms for dealing with feelings of anger, joy, love, sadness and frustration.
2. To transfer coping mechanisms learnt to other areas of their lives.
3. To develop some basic skills in some form of cultural expression.
4. To develop a keen sense of appreciation for creative expressions.

The following benefits are envisaged:

1. Improved mental awareness resulting in better grades at school, better team spirit thereby creating better relationships.

2. Preoccupation with the arts instead of negative habits.
3. Improvements in moral values and higher levels of patriotism.

For the fiscal year 2004, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism proposes to increase the number of schools participating in this project and to increase the number of camps from two to six. The ministry also proposes to pilot this project in Tobago in collaboration with the Tobago House of Assembly

This Government, through the Minister of Culture and Tourism, for fiscal 2003, not only celebrated the major festivals of Baptist Liberation Day, Indian Arrival Day, Emancipation Day, but also provided support for the various national bodies to organize commemorative events at the community and national levels. Financial assistance was provided for Eid ul Fitr, Baptist Liberation Day, Indian Arrival Day, Emancipation Day and also Ramleela.

Permit me to dwell for a while on the celebration of Ramleela, an event which is observed in over 30 communities in Trinidad. Ramleela is basically a story of the triumph of good over evil, of knowledge and justice over ignorance and injustice, and we witness it over and over. For the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago our icons of Ramleela, who have kept the festival alive for over 120 years, were honoured and celebrated by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism on September 14, 2003. [*Desk thumping*]

This ministry, in conjunction with the National Ramleela Council of Trinidad and Tobago, comprising 27 functioning Ramleela groups, organized the Ramleela Bhushan award ceremony to pay homage to the pioneers of our village theatre in the celebration of Ramleela. Moreover, in order to demonstrate Government's commitment to support Ramleela in a tangible way, grants were provided to the active Ramleela organization even before the start of the celebration. Of great surprise to them was the increase in the grants for Ramleela, 2003. The Ministry provided funding in the sum of \$300,000 for the celebration of this festival, an increase of more than 100 per cent over last year's contribution. [*Desk thumping*] In addition, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism paid out the sum of \$66,000 owing to Ramleela groups for the fiscal years 2001/2002.

For the Divali celebration, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has increased the general allocation of grants to organizations in the sum of \$400,000. This includes the provision of assistance to 91 celebrations in the country, inclusive of the National Council of Indian Culture. The National Council of Indian Culture received this year, and before the beginning of Divali Nagar, a grant of \$100,000, an increase from \$75,000 under the last administration. It look a PNM Government to raise it to \$100,000. [*Desk thumping*]

Grants were provided to almost twice as many organizations as compared to last year—58. In addition, the ministry, in collaboration with a number of Divali organizations, is celebrating Divali today on the Brian Lara Promenade. The event was also marked by displays, lectures, lecture/demonstrations and cultural performances throughout the day. Even as I speak, the cultural programme is going on and over 2,000 deyas would have been lit on five blocks of the Brian Lara Promenade.

We have also received tremendous support from the Government of India and his Excellency Mr. Virendra Gupta, in securing the services of a visiting Rajsthani Folk Dance Group Company from India, which is currently on tour to these parts. I wish this entire Senate was there on the promenade to witness the merging of tassa, dance, our local singers, and pan in a grand culture experience which, in itself, is history. To my knowledge, it is the first time that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism is actually celebrating Divali on such a grand scale in the city of Port of Spain and on the Brian Lara Promenade. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, it was important for us to understand the aspects of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and what we are doing, because many times when the programmes are implemented, we always hear about discrimination from the other side. But you would see that we enveloped all aspects of the community and the programmes are also implemented in all areas of Trinidad and Tobago, leaving none out.

The other aspect of my contribution—I was going to close off, but—[*Laughter*] seeing that they insist that I continue, I would talk about the other ministry, the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] Madam President, there are so many programmes in the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs that I think I would need some more time, but with what is left, I would continue to talk about some aspects of it.

First, let us look at the words, “community development”. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam President: Members, let me just remind you that the Senator has not even finished his first 45 minutes and he still has a 15-minute extension. So, please, everybody got their full time, let the Senator continue. I think it is too late for the Brian Lara now anyway. The deyas are most probably out.

Sen. The Hon. S. Ramroop: Thank you very much, Madam President. I am happy that Divali is in the air and I hope that my colleagues on the other side would light a light in their home to remove that ignorance and darkness. What is happening is a difficulty—maybe I would talk from my head now.

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Madam President, thanks for the protection. With regard to the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs, most people are aware of the number of community centres which were refurbished in fiscal year 2003. Also in 2004, it is proposed that we are going to build 25 new community centres. [*Crosstalk*] They would sit and joke on the other side because they do not even understand the Vision 2020, because they do not even have 20/20 vision. You see, what happens, when they sit on the other side and they look across here and they witness the budget, they cannot come to terms with knowing to themselves that they would have to sit there for the next five years. But we would continue with the vision to ensure Trinidad and Tobago becomes developed by 2020.

So in order to envelop the word, “community”, it is about coming together in unity for the development of gender affairs, development of people. [*Desk thumping*] Some of the speakers who contributed today, all spoke about us coming together for the betterment of the country, but some of us do not understand that. Maybe they should undergo some of the programmes in the Ministry of Community Development and it might do better for them.

We have programmes such as the community concert where we go to many communities, showcasing the talent of the individuals and give an opportunity to those who never had an opportunity to go on stage and perform. In the last fiscal year we had 54 such community concerts throughout the length and breadth of the country, most of them even in the areas where there is a sitting Member of the United National Congress. Yet, they say discrimination.

We propose to continue the community concerts in 2004. We propose to have 60 community concerts, cultural tutors training and also community caravans. When you witness these community concerts and you see people performing on stage, people who never had an opportunity to read or enter school, but they come on the stage, some of them cried and some performed. Where the whole community had turned against them, it was through the community concerts they could have come on stage. Red, white, black, all races came together under one banner, community togetherness, to perform in these community concerts.

I think some people might call it a handout, but when you witness these programmes and see what happens at these concerts, we are touching lives. If after each concert you touch one life, I think this is something that we should be commended for, during these community concerts.

We also have the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme, which, in the last year, by just putting one programme in Felicity, we had so many problems

from the other side. They felt that in their term of office they could not put one within their area, and by going to Felicity with the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme, we did something wrong. But the programme was designed for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The individuals in Felicity have embraced this programme and as such, in that centre we had the same number of males and females for the first time in the history of the GAP Programme. Also, the entire class stood the cost of the programme. Yet my colleagues on the other side never thought it was fitting for a programme to go into Felicity. This programme will continue in the next fiscal year. Another 600 persons are expected to enter this programme.

The Community Home Service Programme would employ some 50 caregivers. Two seminar workshops will be conducted for training centre staff and this will continue in the next fiscal year.

There is a lot more happening in Community Development—

Sen. R. Montano: “Don’t stop; don’t stop; yuh going good!”

Sen. The Hon. S. Ramroop: —but I know it is getting a little late and everybody seems to want to go. At this time I take the opportunity to wish all my colleagues in Parliament “Shubh Divali”, and I invite them to light a light. On the Brian Lara Promenade our team in the Ministry of Community Development is saying, bring “Om to the Home”. If you look at the word, “home”, the centre is “om”. In Hinduism, the Sanatan Dharma philosophy, “om” is the representation of God. If we have God in the home, then the behaviour pattern of individuals would change.

I want to invite Members on the other side and all Members of this Senate, to light this light and let it truly eradicate the negatives in our lives and bring out the positive values as we celebrate Divali with the East Indian community and Trinidad and Tobago as a whole.

So “Shubh Divali” and I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to Thursday, October 23, at 1.30 p.m., at which time we would continue and hopefully complete the debate on the budget.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.57 p.m.