

SENATE

Friday, October 22, 2004

The Senate met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS

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

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation for year ended June 30, 2004. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill)*]
2. A Draft Policy Paper on Local Government Reform 2004. [*The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph)*]

APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 21, 2004]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Vice-President: Those who already spoke on the Bill were the presenter, The Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill; Sen. Wade Mark; Sen. Mary King; Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas; Sen. Roy Augustus; Sen. Basharat Ali; Sen. The Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid and Sen. The Hon. Satish Ramroop.

Sen. Robin Montano: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. There are three issues facing the country today, which this budget has failed to address. In no particular order, the issues are corruption, competence and creditability.

Mr. Vice-President, there is a disconnect that I have so often said—I have been saying it for the last year—between what is happening here in the Parliament and what is happening outside. When you come to the Parliament, as we heard the Ministers last night, you will hear them say that all is right in the kingdom. The rain is falling, the sun is shining, the flowers and the roses are blooming and there is perfume in the air. That is in essence what they said. Everything is right

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and the only dark clouds on the horizon are the dark clouds of these silly UNC people who failed to see the light. In summary, that is what they said.

I would be the first one to say good grief, thank goodness that they are right, look at what is happening. I do not see it. When I talk to the big businessmen, they are complaining. When I talk to the little businessmen, they are complaining. The only people doing well are those in the energy sector but everybody else is going down. Oh, I almost forgot the CEPEP contractors. They are making a bundle. They are raking it in. But, apart from a small handful of people, the boom that is taking place in the country is not touching the ordinary man. What are we here for, if we are not here for the ordinary man, the man in the street? There is a total disconnect.

We keep hearing about Vision 2020. For more than a year I have been asking them: "Where are your benchmarks?" You are going to make this country a developed country in 16 years. Where are your benchmarks? We heard the junior Minister in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education last night talking about "illegible" students getting "tusion". You have a Minister for tertiary education, who cannot speak English properly. Good grief! Where are your benchmarks? What are we trying to achieve? He boasted about so many students getting tertiary education. That is all well and good. As a former educator, you know it is not quantity so much the issue as quality. What is the quality education that is going to be provided? We are hearing little about quality, but plenty of numbers. Let us throw money at the problem, money will fix it. I am sorry to tell you, it will not.

Mr. Vice-President, let me ask the country, through you, the following questions. I am speaking to the ordinary man in the streets. Having read this budget, will you personally be better off this time next year? The answer is a yes or a no. Are you better off than you were one year ago? Secondly, do you think that the country as a whole will be better off this time next year? Do you think that the country is better off than it was one year ago? Do you think that the health system will be better off this time next year? Do you think that the health system is better than it was one year ago? Do you think that the education system, with its thousand and one problems, will be solved this time next year? Will it be a better system this time next year? Do you think that the education system today is better than it was and has improved over the last year? These questions beg a simple yes or no answer. I am not asking for a paragraph, chapter or book to explain the answers. Do you think that the road transportation system will be better than it is now, this time next year? Do you think that the road

transportation system is better today than it was this time last year? Will crime be less than it is? Will the crime situation improve this time next year? I mean better for us the people, not better for the criminals. Will it be better this time next year, yes or no? Let us have some benchmarks. Do you think that the crime situation today is better than it was a year ago? These are simple questions. As I have said before, if you want to understand a problem go back to basics. My final question to the country as a whole: Do you think that as a result of this budget the country will be less polarized this time next year, than it is now? Do you think that the country is less polarized than it was a year ago? I am not asking for a chapter, a paragraph or a book. I am asking for simple “yes” or “no” answers.

At the end of the day, it is the man in charge who takes the responsibility. If things go well, who gets the credit? The Government gets the credit. If things go badly in this Mickey Mouse situation we find ourselves in, who gets the blame? The Opposition! I cannot understand it! It is the Opposition’s fault for everything. We have no power. Anything goes right—George Bovell wins a medal in the Olympics, the Government is very pleased. George Bovell won the thing, but it is the Government’s credit. Ato Bolden loses, it is the Opposition’s fault. It is not right. The buck must stop somewhere and responsibility must be taken. If you are in charge you take responsibility. [*Desk thumping*] Simple points.

This is where we have to go, which leads me to this very unfortunate issue of corruption and the Landate project. Let me say at the outset, so that the Senate, the nation and the world will understand me clearly, hopefully. Firstly, I have always boasted that I am a democrat. Secondly, I have always boasted and I adhere to that boast, I believe in the boast, that a man is innocent until he is proven guilty. Nothing I am about to say ought to be interpreted in any way as impacting on the guilt or innocence of the Minister of Housing, Dr. Keith Rowley, or the head of NH International, Mr. Emile Elias. I am ready, willing and able to accept, until the opposite is proven, that they are innocent until they are proven guilty. I believe in that. I am not going to be like certain Opposition politicians were once upon a time, in the bad old days when UNC ruled the earth; when they saw anything they said: “Corruption, corruption. They are guilty.” I am not going to say that. I will be the first one to say yes, they are entitled to the presumption of innocence. That is their democratic right and entitlement. Having made myself clear let me move on to the most unfortunate “but”.

10.15 a.m.

The “but” comes with the very serious charges that have been laid against them. In a nutshell—I am using my words—let us understand what are these

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charges. Basically, the evidence that was presented in another place, essentially—I am putting it just like that because I do not want to be misinterpreted—suggests that Dr. Rowley and Mr. Emile Elias are guilty of corruption. That is what town is saying. Putting it in the vernacular, they thief! That is the charge.

Now, Mr. Vice-President, the charges are serious. The prima facie evidence that was produced is compelling. There have been a number of emails and other things that I have been reading. I did hear Mr. Elias saying on radio or television that Dr. Rowley's project cost \$2 million. I have in my possession, a Bill of Quantities for the Landate project, and that Bill of Quantities shows \$3,223,127.56. If I heard what Mr. Elias said was correct, then there is more than a 50 per cent cost overrun.

Mr. Vice-President, I have something else, if you will just bear with me. I will look for it. I will refer to it in a little while. I have an email that I wanted to refer to. I will come back to it. I seem to have misplaced these emails. I will come back to them. I did have an email from one of the managers from NH International to another manager. I am looking for the email. In essence, the email says—from one manager to another and they were talking about the Landate project—that he knows that this project is a bit of distraction, but they must go through the process. Why should a project be a bit of distraction when you are being paid for it? Things just do not make sense. When something does not make sense then you have to ask yourself, very seriously, why?

My English Literature professor told me, “Montano, when a man is telling you something that you do not understand it is either one of two things. It is either he does not understand what he is talking about, or he does not want you to understand.”

Mr. Vice-President, I have been listening to the explanations of Dr. Rowley and Mr. Elias with some concerns but, at the end of the day, they are not answering the central questions.

Let me refer you to page 10 of a *Guardian* newspaper report where Dr. Rowley said that citizens have a responsibility to monitor the Government's performance continually, and to speak out if there is evidence of corruption. Why are we the sinners when we are monitoring the Government's performance and speaking out on the basis of evidence that is before us? The evidence is there and, most certainly, there is a case to be answered. Dr. Rowley said that we have a responsibility to monitor the Government's expenditure patterns, and to ensure that as we embark on this period of prosperity, that significant revenues are coming into the hands of those who are acting on our behalf.

So, should we not be doing just what we are doing? What has happened? How did we get to be the bad boys? Dr. Rowley said that the experiences of Africa, South America, Asia and Europe have shown that human beings have a way of losing their way in the face of great potential, especially if that potential involves money.

Now, I am going to refer to an article in the *Newsday* newspaper that appeared on Sunday, October 17, 2004 by Suzanne Mills. The article says:

“The allegations made Thursday in Parliament by Opposition Chief Whip Ganga Singh—that Government materials were being used on Rowley’s land development site—have long been circulating in the form of rumours, with all the usual hyperbole that gossip-mongering brings. Talk for months has also been that Rowley had become a mega developer, building houses left, right and centre, up and down the land.”

Mr. Vice-President, it is a small country. You see, the problem with corruption is if that if “A” bribes “B”, “A” knows that he has bribed “B” and “B” knows that he has taken a bribe, but nobody else knows about it. To get the evidence will be very difficult. In fact, it is almost impossible. It takes a serious will to do it and also competent investigation. An incompetent investigation will botch it.

“I first heard the Ganga ‘corruption’ claim earlier this year and from more than one person. None of these however, could provide any documentary evidence to support as serious and defamatory an accusation such as theft of State materials. I told my informants however, that in my view, there was another important problem with Rowley’s involvement in land development: conflict of interest because of his Cabinet portfolios. First, he had been Minister of Planning and Development and now he was Minister of Housing.”

I will pause there. There has been a lot of silly talk this week. In fact, last night, we had silly talk coming from a Government Minister, who started singing one song, and when Sen. Mark pointed out to him that the commission of enquiry was going to be instituted, the Minister retracted almost immediately. There has been silly talk saying, “Ah boy, we caught the Opposition. They wanted a commission of enquiry and now they want the Integrity Commission to investigate, so we are doing what they want. What do they want?” Why do people believe that we do not understand?

Mr. Vice-President, I saw a movie once, where a Mexican turned to an American. The Mexican said that just because he speaks with an accent, do not

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believe that he thinks like one. Just because I am on this side of the House, do not believe that I cannot understand and appreciate and see a problem.

Now, for the benefit of the country, let me explain the Integrity in Public Life Act and the Prevention of Corruption Act, so that everybody—my friend Sen. Dumas, who is unfortunately not here this morning. I invited him to teach me about the law last night, and he threatened to do so, but he would not do it. Now, using my words, I am going to go to the law. The Integrity in Public Life Act is basically about ethics and the Prevention of Corruption Act is basically about corruption.

Now, a corrupt act will, 100 per cent of the time, involve a breach of the Integrity Act, but a breach of the Integrity Act will not necessarily involve an act of corruption. One will involve the other, but one will not necessarily involve the next. They do not cross.

Section 24 of the Act reads in part that a person in public life must arrange his private interest, whether pecuniary or otherwise in such a manner as to maintain public confidence and trust in his integrity.

On the face of it, there appears to be a serious case to answer by Dr. Rowley to the Integrity Commission under section 24(1)(c). The question is: Has Dr. Rowley arranged his private interest, whether pecuniary or otherwise, in such a manner as to maintain public confidence and trust in his integrity? This does not mean that Dr. Rowley may be corrupt; it does not deal with corruption. What it deals with is integrity. Because I can do something, but the way I do it could be in such a manner that people would say, “Hey, what is going on?” That is the point.

A person in public life must also not use public property or services for activities not related to his official work and must not directly or indirectly use his office for private gain. That is in the Integrity Act.

The Prevention of Corruption Act is something else. In this Act, advantage includes any office or dignity or any forbearance to demand any money or moneys worth or the value of things and it includes any aid, vote, consent or influence. In other words it is very broad.

Now, we are coming to the issue of corruption. Let us assume, but not accept, for the sake of argument, that Dr. Rowley and Mr. Elias are guilty of corruption. They should be charged under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Let us assume, but not accept, that Dr. Rowley is not guilty of a corrupt act—it may very well be that he is guilty of not arranging his private interest in a

manner that will maintain public confidence. I am going to stress again that I am not saying that he is guilty. I do not want that to be done. The jury must not go out on Dr. Rowley unless and until he has been given the chance of a full and complete public explanation. This is what must happen.

Mr. Vice-President, if I could continue with the article of Miss Mills, it says:

“Development on his Tobago Mason Hall project began, by Rowley’s own admission in, 2003. But when in 2003? Did work commence when Rowley was Minister of Planning and Development?”

That is the Integrity in Public Life Act.

“If so, then it would not be obscene to suggest that Rowley granted permission to himself for his Mason Hall project.”

That is the point with respect to the Integrity Commission. How could people not understand that? There are two issues. There is the issue of ethics and there is the issue of corruption. The Integrity Commission has to deal with ethics and the commission of enquiry has to deal with corruption. If they get it right they will understand it. But do not come to me with silly comments about, “Look at what you have got boy. We caught the Opposition. Ha! Ha! Ha!” Wake up and smell the coffee. Do you really think that we are that silly?

10.30 a.m.

The article continued:

“If the go-ahead was granted in Camille’s tenure...”

She was referring to Hon. Robinson-Regis, the present Minister of Planning and Development.

“this too, looked bad because the public would still believe that office was used to attain this sanction. (Indeed, this is why no minister should be involved in land development or any private business). Rowley should have withdrawn his name from the project and let his family attend to family matters. He was elected and appointed to see about the public’s affairs.”

Section 24.

“After hearing Ganga Singh’s statement Thursday, I realized that even if not a single grain of sand had been transported from the Tobago hospital site to Rowley’s development, he was conducting his private and public affairs in a manner which had opened the door to Ganga’s accusations. The same

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contractor working on the Scarborough hospital was working on Rowley's private development and renting from the Minister? Ganga Singh was correct; there was a definite 'appearance of impropriety' ... Rowley should—as I have already stated—severed ties with the family project and he definitely should not be renting his house to anyone involved in a Government venture or permitting his developer to sub-contract Elias for his Mason Hall development. He also should not have employed the same designer. Materials and machinery for the two projects should have been stored separately and it was Rowley's public duty to ensure they were."

The Integrity Act again.

If I could pause here for a moment—you run into another problem. The problem is this—I will come to it; that I promise you. Let me finish here.

The article continued:

"Had all these things been done, no one would have been able to cry 'foul' and he, Rowley, would not now be crying UNC conspiracy, which in itself is ironic given that the Minister went after the UNC with a vengeance from 1995 to 2001. Rowley was the loudest accuser of all, always dramatically producing 'evidence of corruption' in the form of documents and copies of cheques in the House...

Challenging the UNC, as she did to make the charges outside the House..."

She is talking about Hon. Robinson-Regis.

"is an old Government trick. When in power, the UNC used to throw down the same glove to the PNM when the Opposition PNM was alleging corruption in the Piarco, Inncogen, and the Desal projects. PNM members never made their accusations outside the House.

That's what Parliament is for. Its privilege allows things to come to light that might otherwise remain hidden. As for Camille's silly question about what the problem was with people in the PNM advancing themselves, the obvious answer is again: that's not what being a Minister is for. Ministers were in office to 'advance the public.' Anyway, weren't Ministers always complaining that they had too much work to do, particularly when they also have to serve as MPs? So, how did they justify their being able to find time for their own private business? They could not."

Mr. Vice-President, other issues arise with this same contractor: You have NH International getting the Scarborough Hospital Project. I do not have the figure, so

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I stand subject to correction, but my information is that it is \$134 million. You have the same contractor getting the San Fernando General Hospital Upgrade, Phase 1. I am subject to correction, because I do not have the figures, but my information is that it is \$34 million. I have the figures for this one though: the Customs and Excise Building, a multi-storey car park, the Board of Inland Revenue (BIR) building, the Ministry of Legal Affairs building and the Ministry of Education Building Complex, for \$901.8 million.

Hon. Senators: Ooh!

Sen. R. Montano: So now we have got over \$1 billion coming through. I quoted from the *Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) 2005*. [*Crosstalk*] The Customs and Excise building, a multi-storey car park, the BIR building, the Ministry of Legal Affairs building and the Ministry of Education building—\$901.8 million. Then, finally, you have the same contractor getting the Siparia Administrative Complex for \$29.5 million. I have not bothered to add the figures, because I am not the accountant in the family; my brother is; you do the sums. When last I looked, \$134 million, plus \$901 million, comes up to more than \$1 billion; add to that \$34 million and \$29.8 and you are coming pretty close to \$1.1 billion; one contractor—the PNM financier. Everybody knows that.

In fact, Mr. Vice-President, Mr. Elias used to tell me—and it is nothing to be ashamed of—that he gave heavily to the PNM and Dr. Rowley for their campaigns. I do not think that is a sin. It becomes a sin, if it is done for other purposes; but being a financier is not a sin. I know, I am not asking you; Mr. Elias is a PNM financier and a major one at that. If they want, I can tell them who the other financiers are; I know.

That is what I am talking about: the appearance of corruption. That is why we called, not only for a commission of enquiry, but also for the Integrity Commission to get its act together. Quite frankly, I do not have a lot of faith in this Integrity Commission. They have proven to be reactive and not proactive. In my view, the commission should not have waited for me to write to it. I wrote to it. On Monday morning I went on a radio talk show programme and called for a commission of enquiry; then I went down to my office and wrote to the Integrity Commission. I wrote, “You guys are not proactive, you are reactive and I have complained about that; I have noted, and it is my perception, that you have been notoriously reluctant to investigate this PNM Government.”

For example, the Integrity Commission has failed to and refused to investigate the Repsol flight issue. I made a request and they refused. I am not going to

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bother to go into it now; that is water under the bridge, but they ought to have investigated it. I am sorry, Mr. Vice-President, in a million years you cannot convince me that Repsol flight did not require an investigation. I asked them a simple question. The Integrity Act says that a person in public life must not use his position to advance his financial situation or that of his family. It is something that we, as a country, need to get right. I asked the Integrity Commission whether it was right that a Prime Minister should appoint his wife to the Cabinet when she is not a Member of the House of Representatives. Do you know what was its reply? “The Constitution says that the Prime Minister can appoint anybody to the Cabinet, so we cannot investigate.” That is not the point. I do not want to discuss that today, because I am not going to have enough time, if I did.

The point is: There may be a breach of the Integrity Act. The Integrity Commission has refused to investigate these breaches and now we find this issue going on. Now it is going to investigate it because, apart from Robin Montano asking—and, of course, if it was only Robin Montano, I am fairly certain it would have said, “Go jump in the lake”—somebody else, a guy called Patrick Manning has asked; so I am waiting to see what it says. I am going to wait with great interest, because the commission will have to come real, real good. I am saying it publicly: I do not have faith in the Integrity Commission; particularly in the Chairman, Mr. Gordon Deane. I am telling you that straight. But let us wait and see. I am the first one who will jump and say, “Glory hallelujah; thank God I was wrong.” Prove me wrong; show me that I have reason to have faith in you.

Getting back to Landate, which is where I would like to stay, there are other issues that come up. For example, my information is that the Scarborough General Hospital does not yet have planning approval. So here you have a contractor working for the Government and the Government is breaking its own laws. Dr. Rowley, in a related matter, came to this Senate once and said, “Oh, that is the norm; private contractors do it all the time.” In other words, the excuse is, “Private contractors do it, so we, the Government, can go ahead and do it; we can break our own laws.” What kind of Mickey Mouse explanation is that? Just because I speak with an accent, do not believe that I think with one.

I mean, good grief; you are building a \$134 million project without planning approval? The Ministry of Health is one of the buildings. If planning approvals had been granted, I will apologize. I will be the first one to say, “I am very sorry; I humbly apologize; I am proud of you,” if it was granted. If it was not, I mean, good grief, is that the way we want to run the country? That is the right thing to do?

My cousin who was murdered, almost eight years ago, poor fellow, by a policeman, always used to say, “There is usually only one way to do something right, but there are 1,000 ways to do it wrong.” When you do wrong like this, you are setting a bad example. The Government, Ministers and leaders must be like Caesar's wife: cleaner than clean. That is what we must be like.

At the end of the day, the issue is not what some people have said. I have heard persons on radio programmes and some Government persons saying, “Well, you see, when the UNC was there, they did this, that and the other.” Gravely has the UNC sinned and we paid for it; we lost office. Whether the sins were real or imaginary is irrelevant; we have paid for the perception of sin. The issue is not what happened yesterday. The issue is what is happening today and what will happen tomorrow. The issue is: How are we going to deal with this? That is why on Monday morning I called for a commission of enquiry. That is why the UNC called for a commission of enquiry.

What do we want? We want a commission of enquiry headed by three persons: The first person must be somebody with impeccable credentials; not somebody against whom charges of bias can be laid; a lawyer. We can find a person like that in Guyana, Grenada or elsewhere; somebody not connected to the PNM or does not appear to be connected. We want a second commissioner who knows and understands building contracts. We want a third commissioner who is qualified in forensic accounting. Pay attention, Mr. Vice-President, because this is important. The person appointed as counsel for the commission must not be connected in any way to the PNM. He must be a lawyer who is not getting any State briefs.

Why do I say that about the counsel for the commission? There was a leading case by Justice Telford Georges. If my memory serves me correct, it went to the Privy Council. There was a leading case in the Caribbean Court of Appeal by Justice Telford Georges; I cannot remember the name. It said, “Where the counsel to the commission is biased, his bias automatically taints the commission.” So if you appoint a PNM lawyer—and my definition is that a PNM lawyer is any lawyer in this country who is getting work from the PNM Government.

Hon. Senator: Miss Gillian Lucky.

Sen. R. Montano: With pleasure, appoint Gillian Lucky; I will take her. I will make an exception.

10.45 a.m.

I want an independent counsel. That is what I want; that is what my party wants; that is what the country wants. We want somebody totally and completely

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independent. If not, you can have three of the best most unbiased men, but if you have a counsel to the commission that is biased—

Sen. Mark: Like Theodore Guerra, with the Piarco Enquiry.

Sen. R. Montano: Let us not call—we all know the types that we have and I do not want today to descend into the PNM-type of bacchanal, because this is the country's business and it is serious, serious business. This is an argument that we must listen to very carefully. I want to reiterate again that Dr. Rowley and Mr. Elias must be presumed innocent unless and until they are found guilty. That is the law. That is our democratic process. It is better for 10 guilty men to go free than one innocent man to hang. I believe that sincerely, because I have seen, time and again, the power of the State come down on innocent people. I have been personally involved as an attorney when that has happened and I have seen the trauma and the stress that they go through. Ten guilty men go free, than one innocent man to hang, any day of the week, but there must be a free, fair and a proper commission of enquiry.

When we go on to the commission of enquiry, let me point out to you how wrong the handling of this affair has been. Let us assume for the sake of argument, but not accept, that Dr. Rowley and Mr. Elias are guilty, when the mark burst in Parliament last week Thursday, what do you think guilty men would do on the Friday morning? Is it not reasonable to assume that guilty men would go back to their offices and would shred every last incriminating document and destroy every computer hard-drive that had incriminating evidence on it? It is the logical thing to do, assuming you are guilty, because when the Anti-Corruption squad finally swoops down—if they ever swoop down—and they start looking for evidence, the evidence will have long gone. It is the intelligent thing to do if you are a crook. And one thing that you can say about Dr. Rowley or Mr. Elias, whether you like them or not, is that they are intelligent.

Now, let us turn the cup over, as it were, and put the shoe on the other foot. Let us assume, but not accept, that Dr. Rowley and Mr. Elias are innocent of the charges. The first thing any reasonable bystander is going to say is: “Hey, but you had a lot of time to destroy the evidence. How do I know that you did not destroy the evidence?” So what happens? There is a cloud hanging over them. The commission may say: “Well, there is no evidence to hang these ‘fellas’”. And that would be the point; there is no evidence, because there has been a lot of time to get their house in order.

So if they are innocent, they are dammed because there is now going to be a cloud. Nobody would be able to put his hand on his heart, if they are innocent and

they are found innocent, and say: “Hey, you know what? Yes, I am satisfied”, because they have had time to destroy the evidence. If they are guilty, they have been given an opportunity to escape punishment because they had time to destroy the evidence.

It “ain’t” right. It is not right for the country on the left-hand side and it is not right for the persons under the spotlight on the right-hand side. It would have been fairer to the gentlemen in question if the Anti-Corruption Squad had made a swoop on Friday morning and seized everything, because then the country would know that whatever evidence there is has been secured. But it does not work, and you see the flip-flopping going on. There are other questions again.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. R. Montano: Thank you very much. By the way, Mr. Vice-President, let me just say this. I have today written to the Auditor General asking her, pursuant to section 116(3) of the Constitution and section 9 of the Exchequer and Audit Act, to conduct a special audit of the accounts relating to the Scarborough General Hospital. That Auditor General has those powers.

Let me go on and point out something to you. You see, corruption comes in many forms. For example, we know—hold on a second; I am looking for something. [*Short pause*] I had sent it to be copied and they have not brought the copies back for me as yet. But we know, for example, that the Government is engaged in house-padding. House-padding is a crime; it is an offence. There is the case of Dame Shirley Porter in England where she was ordered to repay £120 million because she was found guilty of house-padding.

Why do I say that? Listen to this memorandum. It is an internal memorandum from the Land Assembly Co-ordinator of the NHA, a Ms. Debra Cheesman, addressed to the Chairman of the National Housing Authority, dated February 26.

Sen. Mark: Who is the Chairman?

Sen. R. Montano: The Chairman is one Andre Monteil. It states:

“MATTERS DISCUSSED

- (a) Government’s objective to construct 100,000 two (2) and three (3) bedroom multifamily and single family units for low income citizens.”

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Give this to Mr. Vice-President so he can follow me. [*Copy of document handed to Mr. Vice-President*]

“(b) Areas to receive priority attention for new housing construction are as follows:

(a) San Fernando West”

A marginal:

(b) “San Juan/Barataria”

A marginal:

(c) “Tunapuna

(d) Ortoire/Mayaro

(e) St. Joseph

(f) Tobago

DECISION TAKEN”

Wait for it.

“The Authority to communicate with the People's National Movement's Constituency's Representatives and Chairpersons for the listed constituencies (the marginals) seeking their assistance and co-operation in identifying the following:-

(i) Lands for new housing construction;

(ii) Contractors with a good track record in the housing industry.”

I have asked for copies to be made and to be distributed to all of my colleagues. House-padding—a crime. It is February 26, 2002.

But why has all this been going on? Why has the Prime Minister flip-flopped on Dr. Rowley? I have here—and I am not going to have time to deal with everything I wanted to—according to the *TnT Mirror* of today's date it states: “Rowley Resigns but Manning Declines”. Why?

I have here a copy of an internal memorandum from the Executive Assistant to the Chairman. The date is April 23, 2004. Pay attention to the date, Mr. Vice-President. The subject is: “Demolition of Squatters Home at Union Hall”. It states:

“I refer to our telephone conversation last night whereby I informed you that Minister Joan Yuille-Williams had just telephoned me some minutes ago and

was extremely upset by the actions taken by our Executive Director in breaking down the houses in the Prime Minister's Constituency."

The houses were broken down on April 22, 2004.

"She also advised me that the Prime Minister was reportedly angry.

I also wish to refer to our discussion earlier this morning in which I again raised the matter with you and your reply to me was..."

Listen to this:

"that the issue was much bigger than that, and that little people like me should not get involved in big people business (words to that effect). You also went on to say that the Prime Minister cannot and would not do the Executive Director anything."

Mr. Vice-President, we know that the Prime Minister did not do the executive director anything. We know. I continue:

"While it is not in my place to get involved in the politics of any situation, I wish to place on records my disappointment of the Authority being used for political purposes, which I learnt from my conversation with you is what the Executive Director is apparently doing."

There is more, a lot more and it will come out all in the fullness of time.

But you see, my information is that the real reason the Prime Minister flip-flopped and then flipped again, was because he had no choice. There is something called the "black caucus" inside the PNM and when he first announced a commission of enquiry, according to my information, the black caucus went and forced the Prime Minister to refer two other Ministers to the Integrity Commission. I ask my friends: Is this true? Have two other Ministers been referred? I know their names. If you want, I will call them. Do you want me to call them?

Sen. Mark: Yes, I want to know who these people are.

Sen. R. Montano: Do you want to know? Very well. Sen. Chin Lee says he wants to know: The Minister of Works and Transport, Franklin Khan and the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, Eric Williams. Is it true that they have been referred?

You know, in Suzanne Mills' article, she says here:

"I have some added news for the PNM. There are more rumours about Ministers and conflict of interest. The use of PNM-owned facilities for Government conferences..."

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[SEN. R. MONTANO]

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There is an awful lot going on. House-padding: We know for a fact this memo which, as I said, I have asked the Clerk to copy it and distribute it to my colleagues—this memo is serious. It was signed by the Land Assembly Coordinator, Debra Cheesman. House-padding is dishonest; it is wrong; it is criminal. We have been yelling about it for a long time but we never had the evidence until now. We knew it. It was like knowing that somebody was doing something; it is like knowing that your spouse is cheating on you but you cannot catch him or her, and then all of a sudden, one day you get the photograph.

That is what is going on. And look at the reaction: Smiling, jokes. This is a serious thing and these guys laugh. PNM country! Why? Because they feel that nothing is going to happen. Once the PNM is there, nothing could happen. “We can house-pad all we want and nothing will happen.” Well, I have news for you. Just because I speak with an accent, do not make the mistake that I think with one.

11.00 a.m.

There is another issue involving the chairman and CEO of the Estate Management Business Development Company. According to my information, he has been drawing down a salary for a non-existent chauffeur for the last two years; two cleaners and caretakers who do not exist. He has been doing many things and there have been reports on his misdeeds coming from the Central Audit Committee of the Ministry of Finance and nothing seems to be happening. Maybe, Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo would be able to tell us what is happening here in the fullness of time. He is an Indian national. I believe his name is Rau.

Sen. Sahadeo: Mr. Vice-President, to clear the record. There is absolutely no information of that nature on my desk or the Central Audit at this time. That statement is totally erroneous.

Sen. R. Montano: Just because you say that it is not on your desk does not mean that my information is erroneous.

My information—and this is not erroneous—is that this chap is recommending to the Government that former Caroni workers have to pay market value for the Caroni lands. Now, Minister Sahadeo, do you still want to say that you know nothing about it? Credibility, incompetence or competence and corruption, the three Cs of the PNM.

The PNM financier, Mr. Elias came out with all sorts of obfuscations on Monday morning on TV and said that just because Dr. Rowley and his wife are black they are coming under attack. How did that connect happen? If you are

assuming but not accepting that you are a crook, my experience is that crooks come in all shades, black, white, yellow, pink, blue and green. If you are a crook, you are a crook. If you are a black crook, you are a black crook. If you are a white crook, you are a white crook. If you are an Indian crook, you are an Indian crook. I did not know that “crookery” had colour, class or religion.

Sen. Enill: Mr. Vice-President, thank you. A couple seconds ago you made a comment about Emile Elias getting close to a billion dollars in contracts. If that is what you said that was news to me so I checked it. The Customs building has been awarded; Inland Revenue has not been awarded, tenders closed last Friday; the tenders for the Ministry of Legal Affairs will come out in six weeks. It is important. The only one that I am aware of is the Customs building. There is a series of things that you talked about and I am saying that on the basis of the information, the way you made the statement is not correct. I just want to put it on the record.

Sen. R. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Enill is one of my favourites on the other side. Because I speak with an accent, do not make the mistake of believing that I think with one. You said that the information is not accurate, what is accurate? What is the accurate figure? Any bets that Emile Elias gets the contract? I am running out of time. Let us wait and see how this particular cow is milked. There are other issues.

NH International is a Cayman Island company. Is NH International owned by locals and has been set up to take advantage of tax loopholes so that it can pay less tax in Trinidad and Tobago? If so, is it right that NH International should get these multimillion dollars contracts so that it pays less tax than its competitors who are not so set up here? Are the tax loopholes allowing NH International an unfair advantage over local competition? That is a serious question.

Why was Romain and Associates not involved in the enquiry? We called for them to be in the enquiry. The question is asked open-ended without innuendo. Are you leaving Romain and Associates out because that is where the “ticky-packy” is? They are designers of both projects.

Unfortunately, I have plenty more. Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end. Last night my friend, Sen. Abdul-Hamid said good things hurt the soul. That is social delivery. I disagreed with him last night and I disagree with him today.

Sen. Abdul-Hamid: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. The Senator is misrepresenting what I said. I said that good things hurt your soul.

Sen. R. Montano: No, you did not! I am not going to bother with that. If he is saying that, what is he saying? That my soul is so black and dark that it will hurt me? Rubbish! Pull the other one kiddo. It's got bells on it. Anyway, forget about that rubbish.

There is more to talk about and in the coming weeks and months I certainly will talk about it. I have plenty more on the house-padding. This will come out in the fullness of time. I mentioned it today because it is too serious to be swept under the carpet. We are not better off than we were a year ago and this budget will not make things better in one year's time. I join with my colleague, Sen. Mark in saying to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to have faith and courage. The darkest night has an end and the sun always rises.

Thank you.

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Mr. Vice-President, I wish to speak on four issues that arise mainly from the social and economic policy framework and the budget presentation. These four issues are connected to the current concerns of the country and the hope we have from a \$27 billion budget to meet those concerns. Given the time constraint, I hope that I can cover the topics on crime, national security and economic growth; the welfare dilemma facing the country and the Government; how the cultural policy as exists instigates ethnic conflict and so promotes incivility; the imperative of constitutional reform and prison reform, and its impact on civility.

It saddens most of us to know—and I am quite sure the Government side as well—that with a \$27 billion budget, during the days when that budget was presented, there was such doom and gloom across the country. The psychological context in which the budget was presented was one more of hopelessness than optimism. Frankly speaking, I do believe that the Government should attend to this matter very seriously because it is being increasingly shown that money will not solve these problems.

I refer in the first instance to this article from the *Daily Express* dated October 03, 2004 “SRP and taxi driver killed and the murder toll reaches 203”. I refer on the same day in the context when the budget was being considered, “Food prices eating poor man's pocket”. I am asking the question with respect: Is this the proper context for a \$27 billion budget? On a per capita basis, it stands as one of the highest across the world. The *Trinidad Guardian*, September 28, “Pharmacists stage protests”. Worst yet is this, “Pensioners in tears”. Basic things like medicine. “Pothole in Maracas Road. A biker dies”. September 26, “Traffic congestion worsening”, *Newsday*, October 03, 2004.

I can go on and on. I merely want to convey public concern in this Chamber, so that we would not be deluded by the high sum of \$27 billion. I was trying to get a theme in which the budget is located. Is it a liberal budget; a budget seeking to have a free market economy; a budget that will tighten our fiscal policy so it could be conservative for the next few years and taking stock of the social programmes? I can find no such theme except one. This Government indulges in compassionate pragmatism. Where it seems to work and you feel sorry for a group, you let the money go in that direction. That is good and I will support it. Compassionate pragmatism has its limits especially when you consider that it draws on taxpayers' money. In that sense, it seems as a Mother Teresa budget. You want to help and take care of those that seem to be in distress. We must remember that Mother Teresa came and she went and Calcutta still remains as it was. I say no more except that I want to tell the Government side that what I am saying is not designed to remove them from office. I am saying these things not to discourage them from facing the tough challenges that we are aware do face them, but there is a moment for alerting them, as to the dangers ahead if the expenditures are not handled in a tightened context.

I wish to take one minute to extend my personal congratulations to the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill. Knowing something about publications and the preparations that have to go into the technical aspect of the preparation and knowing with due respect, that the substantive Minister of Finance was away for several periods, duly so, and the heavy burden that fell on Sen. Enill's very strong and broad shoulders, to commend him and his technical staff in the ministry. [*Desk thumping*]

Before I get into my substantive subject of crime, national security and economic growth and to show the extent of the disconnectedness between money, value and security, I wish to refer to the question of quality of life. Without being too melodramatic about it, for some years now I believe that this country is losing its soul. It is an intangible quality but the uneasiness and hopelessness that are spreading in different parts of the country, are not commensurate with the kind of expenditures that we have in hand, \$27 billion.

11.15 a.m.

We know that stress, drugs, violence and heavy traffic are among the four elements that accompany modernization all over the world; we are not alone. Where we have faltered is that we have not learnt from the mistakes of others. Take the traffic, for example, we should have seen the growth of vehicular traffic in this country for years before. My friend, Sen. Baksh, was there; he can tell you. I do not know what he did. He can tell you what he did or what he did not do.

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

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Mr. Vice-President, it seems that those who have gone before, as well, did not see the locomotive coming down the road. I will talk about the train in a few minutes.

Mr. Vice-President, why are they constructing all these large buildings in Port of Spain—I saw a list of buildings which they call “Mega projects”—when they know that the city is overcrowded? It is congested in unbearable ways. Does it take a rocket scientist to tell the Government to decentralize its public offices as a means of decentralizing the traffic? If they put all these buildings in Port of Spain, continuously, the improvements they make for today's traffic will soon be overcome by the sheer law of supply and demand.

Why do governments lack such common sense? It does not take a consultancy from abroad to tell the Government that. Why is there this persistence in doing things that they know will create problems for us in a short while? They have moved the Licensing Office but have put it on the same Wrightson Road a few yards away. Mr. Vice-President, the Immigration Office, the tax offices, even the very Parliament. If they want to move the Parliament, why are they putting it in Port of Spain? What is wrong with decentralization? What will they lose? They will gain a lot in terms of traffic and in terms of a symbolic gesture to the people; that Trinidad and Tobago does not reside in Port of Spain.

I can say much more about this because for donkey's years now I have been expressing regret as to why we have removed the train in 1962 or thereabouts. When I checked the records it could not be a matter of finance because PTSC, its replacement, has been a financial disaster year after year, worse than that incurred by the train. The maxi-taxis have become a nightmare on the road even when they do assist the traffic movement. Why are they going to India for a light “monotrain” or whatever it is—India? The sophisticated manufacturers of such an entity come from Japan and Germany, but I say no more except to say that I hope that there are tenders for this kind of equipment because there will be maintenance as a primary support system afterwards and the required technology.

Mr. Vice-President, when I spoke about the quality of life, I had in my mind for a long time hearing these grievances in different ways. I wish this is something that will catch the attention of the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance; the middle classes are catching hell in this country, and increasingly so. You are damaging the middle class, the salaried class, the public servants, the teachers, the nurses, not only by the salary range they enjoy—which might look attractive, but that has a Houdini effect, what you see is not what you get. The

Minister knows that the increase in taxation from that class should signify to him that they are paying a bulk of their money back in taxes, apart from the other environmental stresses. I think it is some 22 per cent of the total revenue. I do not have time to refer to the exact figure but it is around that. Taxes from incomes and profits increased by about 22 per cent of the revenue.

Mr. Vice-President, you have to understand what middle class in this country means. It does not have to do with inherited wealth. These are people who have climbed the ladder in their careers through sweat and sacrifice. When they reach there you feel that they have that from which you can take, inordinately. We have reached this point because when the VAT legislation was presented in 1989 by the then NAR government, there was an implicit suggestion, at least, that personal income tax, especially for the middle classes, would be reduced. There was a promise to establish a prices commission to safeguard the middle class and, more so, the poorer classes from inflation and any inordinate increase in food prices, such as we have today.

Mr. Vice-President, I think, with respect, the Cabinet should take a retreat—the whole Cabinet. They should go on a retreat and look at the general problem of services to citizens—just that subject. How are we servicing our citizens, especially in the context of a \$27 billion budget? I say this with no disrespect. I say this with the sincerity of the concerned citizen.

Let me now speak about crime and national security and economic growth. When you have money through your gross domestic product (GDP), which is a classical measure of a country's economic progress, you use that to suggest that there will be an improvement in the services and in the quality of life for your country. More precisely, you would expect to have a safer, more secure country. But the whole question of crime statistics and crime trends has been, if not in disarray, in utter confusion.

I have two reports prepared by Ernst & Young: the first one on the 2004 budget, and the second on the 2005 budget. They are quite good documents—and lest I forget, I wish to commend Ernst & Young for the preparation and the courtesy of having them circulated to us. Mr. Vice-President, they would tell us, as many people keep telling us, for example, on page 19, that:

“The crime levels in Trinidad and Tobago have soared to unprecedented levels within recent times.”

Similarly, in the 2005 budget they have said:

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“Over the last year...”

meaning, last year, 2003,

“the level of crime has soared to record highs...”

Mr. Vice-President, I know that there are serious concerns over crime and I do share those concerns. In fact, our own study at the University of the West Indies, the Centre for Criminology and Criminal Justice, reveals that the problem is not with the police report as the official statistics. If that were the beginning and the end of the story, we would have relative comfort, so to speak. But there are many crimes that are not reported to the police. So we took the figures from the police stations, selected areas, and we did what we called victimization surveys and we found out, for example, that robbery, break-in and burglary, dwelling house larceny, that 60 per cent of the crimes committed in those districts were never reported to the police. Mr. Vice-President, again you have the Houdini effect. What you see from the police records is really not what you get in reality—there is a disconnect and that is a serious thing.

Mr. Vice-President, if people are bothered about crime and you rely purely—though you should—on the official crime statistics, the Government would not be able, as a policy matter, to respond to these concerns. This is a matter that I have raised several times with the hon. Minister, and I am quite sure he is concerned. I hope he is prepared to do something about it in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Vice-President, for rapes, incest and domestic violence, over 80 per cent of those incidents were not reported to the police; they did not reach the police record. Well, do not ask about drug abuse and drug trafficking, which by nature are very clandestine crimes—over 90 per cent, and you have to drag it from the people to find out whether it is high in incidence or not.

Mr. Vice-President, but more to the point—and I do not want to get into all the protest movements and people giving press statements about what to do with crime and so on. There is a lot of confusion and I believe the multiplicity of groups trying to do something about crime, whether it is through a march or through a petition, it does confuse the Government, but perhaps the Government should take some responsibility because they have not as yet come up with a formula to mobilize the country towards a frontal attack; a collective attack against crime.

We have a new Commissioner of Police, Mr. Trevor Paul, relatively new, and knowing him as I do, I look forward to him taking on these challenges with much gusto, as it were. That also includes expeditious reports on allegations made

against police officers. Mr. John Roget, Deputy Commissioner of Prisons and I believe soon to assume the top office, and knowing him as I do, I look forward as well to him tackling his tasks of penal reform properly.

Mr. Vice-President, here it is from 1970 to 1979 your gross domestic product increased by 572 per cent; by any standard that is a remarkable improvement. What would you expect? You would expect better services and in the specific instance you would expect better security; a greater sense of safety for your citizens because you can have the goods and services in which you can strengthen your institutional capacities. But serious crimes increased by 116 per cent. In other words, even at that early period, relatively speaking, economic prosperity did not provide national security and personal safety in the context of serious crimes.

In 1980—1989, the GDP increased by 23 per cent, and we have some ideas about the reasons: the oil crises in prices and so on. Serious crimes increased by 47 per cent, so even though there was an increase in the GDP, serious crimes still had a life of its own. In fact, in that same period 1980—1989, minor crimes increased by 305 per cent, even though the GDP showed what can be considered a modest increase—minor offences by 56 per cent. The question we have to ask as a country is a question the Government should ask and that is: Why is there not a relationship between our economic prosperity as measured by this indicator, and national security and personal safety?

In 1990—2003, the GDP increased by 214 per cent; serious crimes showed a slight increase; and so the story goes. Even in your control of population for those periods the picture still remains the same: economic prosperity in this context is not met by a fuller amount of national security in the sense of personal safety and a reduction in the serious crime rate, particularly.

Unemployment, Mr. Vice-President, is the same thing. We know from 1980—1989 unemployment increased by 120 per cent—and we have some ideas why. Of course, serious crimes increased. But the two important points are this: it seems as if, especially in the relatively earlier period, the GDP did not match the employment rate, leading to the phenomenon we call “jobless growth”

11.30 a.m.

And that is what helped to aggravate the disconnect between the gross domestic product (GDP) and particularly serious crimes even in the period 1990—2003 when there was a modest increase in serious crime.

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People will say the GDP and the lowering unemployment rate did have a dampening effect for the 1990—2003 period but when you are examining the crime statistics as you would, with fiscal balance sheets and so forth, you have to get inside to unravel some of the distortions. Because you will find in that same period 1990—2003 even when the GDP was moving up, so did the murder rate increase by 144 per cent; so was kidnapping for that period; it increased by 400 per cent. So was rape; it increased by 125 per cent. Wounding by 104 per cent and so on, for those very serious crimes. I do not think all in all, if things continue as they are, we are heading for trouble. We can go more deeply into the analysis in terms of multiple regression and a correlation, Pearson's and so forth, but we will just stop at the percentage difference.

What we have really is a criminogenic prosperity, a prosperity that breeds crime, incivility, and civic despair. And, may I add, with respect, it did not start two or three years ago. We were on a slippery slope for many years now, and I am merely urging my distinguished colleagues in this Parliament to take note of these trends and do not believe as you talk, when you had your \$22 billion budget the preceding year, that the \$27 billion budget will solve these basic human problems.

First of all, it looks as if creating jobs in itself may not necessarily reduce crime. That is a very serious policy issue. Crime really is not only of economics, but it expresses in this country a collapse of civility and our institutions, so putting money in those institutions in itself will not help. In fact, you will aggravate the problem and the Houdini effect will still persist; that is, what you put in, you will not get out and the 'Mother Teresa' budget will not have worked. Calcutta will still remain with us.

It is a matter of values; but, of course, we can ask very simply at this stage: What does it profit a country to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of its own soul? It has come to that, to put it in very spiritual terms. It is coming to that. Your gangs will increase. Government assistance will be delivered out of compassionate pragmatism but these projects will be exploited because people know they will get and get and get without conditionalities attached to that dispensation. So what are you shaping? You are shaping a greedy society with champagne taste and mauby pockets. Maybe, that is why it is called a 'mauby budget'.

Inequality is worse than poverty. So what we have to do is re-examine the gross statistics and recognize as a serious Government with the available expertise, that there are several qualitative elements inside there like little jumbies that you have to discover and deal with. For example, you have to definitely look

at the question of urbanization and population density. You cannot continue to develop Port of Spain with all these structures to aggravate the traffic congestion, limited parking, and putting so much more stress upon the population, and, I repeat: it should not take a rocket scientist to understand the implications.

And these are not accusations against the Government. My duty here is to use whatever little knowledge I have and understanding of the problems which fall within my knowledge of competence, to help the country. And the unit positioned constitutionally to help the country is the Government, whether you call them 'X', 'Y' or 'Z'.

In this context it does not matter to me. This is called a National Action Plan Against Crime, and you might want to know why I am displaying this to my colleagues. But this is an interesting story because this plan, really the outline of a plan, identifies 12 particular areas to which the Government should respond in a coordinated fashion both in terms of data analysis, policy development, implementation and evaluation. It was called a 12-Point National Action Plan Against Crime, Causes, Prevention, Management and Training. It had a two-year target and it asked the Government to set up a coordinating office with all the supporting requirements that would lead to the implementation of the plan as it developed.

This is a newspaper headline which says: "The Prime Minister Vows to find \$5 million for crime plan to get the thing off the ground". Any Minister should recognize this; the bureaucracies really stand in the way of implementation in many instances and ministers are struggling for many years now to face these obstacles.

Mr. Vice-President, what the plan did was not only to delineate areas for action and policy consideration, but how to get it fast-tracked and that is how the request for \$5 million came about. You are wondering when all this happened. But before I get to the members of that body—and I want to pay tribute to them because we sometimes believe that people in this country are selfish, non-cooperative but with proper leadership, there are people in this country who are willing to follow righteous causes, especially if it is in the public interest.

The vice-chairman was Mr. Ken Gordon, Professor Richard Bennett from the Department of Justice and Law and Society in the American University, USA; another member was Mr. Kenneth Lalla, Chairman of the Public Service Commission; the then Commissioner of Police, Mr. Jules Bernard; Professor Daniel Katkin, Dean of the School of Florida State University. Another Professor,

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Jagan Lingamneni Criminal Justice Department Governor State University; Mr. Frank Mouttet, Chamber of Commerce official at the time and my colleague, Miss Dana Seetahal; Mr. Rawle Richardson, Director of Schools Supervision. There was the Assistant Chief Probation Officer, Mr. Vasant Ramkissoon; TUTTA, Mr. Frank Ramnanan; Miss Jennifer Sampson, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development; Professor James Clarkson from the Grenada Police Force, Assistant Commissioner; Miss Shirley Christian-Maharaj, Senior Statistician in the Central Statistical Office; Mr. Verne Sylvester, Acting Superintendent of Prisons, Ministry of National Security; and my colleague at the university, Dr. Hamid Ghany, and Yours Truly. I was chairman, on behalf of the university.

Why am I doing all this? This was given as a start. We did not ask for any money. The principal at the time was Professor Max Richards. When we developed the plan and all its supporting documents, Professor Richards took myself and a few others and he went to Port of Spain and handed it to the then Prime Minister at a specially convened meeting and the Prime Minister was exhilarated, as you say in Trinidad, “happy like pappy” because they came into office in 1995, the United National Congress, that is, without knowing much about this horrendous problem because it is indeed a complex problem. It is a pity it often becomes a political problem. It is much more than a political problem and the longer we deal with crime as a political problem we will remove ourselves from a proper bipartisan solution. This is the picture! Mr. Panday was smiling, “happy like pappy” and so was Professor Richards, who now holds the office of President.

I can go more deeply into it, what it is and what it is about but time is not on my side. So the \$5 million, the Houndini effect. We never got it for whatever reason, now I do not care. The money was not for me. It was not for Professor Richards and certainly not for Mr. Ken Gordon. But we wanted to help the Government set up the system. Let it run outside the normal constraints of bureaucracy and when it picked up then the ministries could have come in and move it along in their respective jurisdictions. So people were willing to help; people are still willing to help.

You might ask what we should do now. Briefly, there are several things we could still do to intervene in this serious crime problem, especially when your economic prosperity seems to be so antagonistic to the realities of crime in the country. Do some more micro-analysis, micromanagement and ground level data through examining what each police station does or should do, and do some victimization surveys.

If I had more time, I would speak about micromanagement because we take all these fads from abroad and we do as if micromanagement has no place in running a system. To me, in this day and age, and with the State corporations behaving as they do and a number of taxpayers' agencies behaving as they do, what you really need is micromanagement. You cannot remain at a distance anymore when the questions of accountability and delivery of services and integrity in your institutions are lapsing and tell me micromanagement is bad. That is just a word. It is the need at a particular time and in a particular context that is superior to fads that we usually borrow from North America, Japan—quality circles, flattening management—and all those foolishness which really do us no good. Micromanagement has its rightful place.

Another way is to link police effectiveness, accountability, revive community policing with your social sector programmes. I do not think it is directed in this respect; to have families take on more of their responsibilities. For how long will the Government go on taking care of families, children, and single this and that with compassionate pragmatism where taxpayers' money is used? There should be a limit.

In a democracy, generally there should be a limit to Government and it has to draw the line sooner or later as to how far into family life and the social sectors it is getting into. That is why my colleague was speaking about these mothers who are going out to work and leaving their children behind. The lines have to be drawn.

I have great sympathy for the Minister of Education and even the ones before her. All these problems come upon the ministry and then you blame the ministry for not doing this and that and the other. Whereas, as I said, there has been a collapse of civility in the society and, worse yet, the word I was looking for in the budget last year and this year was the word, "self-responsibility", what I have called earlier, the conditionalities you ought to attach to your welfare programmes. I call it a welfare dilemma. There is a reason for it.

I have a list of things that, perhaps, we can do to assist in the crime problem: an efficient and competent judiciary, urban planning, penal reform, but there is one I want to mention now.

11.45 a.m.

I think Government should use the non-governmental organizations much more in its social delivery programmes with the formula for accountability and measured deliverability in place. They are burdening their Government

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bureaucracy too much. Apart from the question of efficiency and political obstacles from the community level right up to the Parliament, the Government has to withdraw a bit.

What are we doing? We at the university are trying to do our work. We are establishing, from January, a graduate programme in criminology and criminal justice in which we are going to teach and train in such things as school violence and delinquency, political violence and terrorism, crime management, corrections and penal reform, mediation and restorative justice. We are holding a conference for the victims of crime. We have set up a working group at the university to consider and recommend ways to reduce the incidence of prisoner recidivism and consideration would include the matter of conjugal rights. Somebody told me yesterday, "I believe that Members of the honourable House should be more enthusiastic about these conjugal visits in prison because the way things are going they may have need for it some time."

I want now to refer to what is one of the most intelligent articles written by a newspaper in recent times. It is called "Feeding on Innocence...". It was not deliberately sensational. It was informative and the narrative was enlightening as to why we have a culture of violence and delinquency in so many different districts beyond the reach of the police, beyond the reach of parents, beyond the reach of teachers, beyond the reach of \$27 billion. It is the culture of the place.

It was written in the *Sunday Guardian* of October 03, 2004 and headlined, "Feeding on Innocence and a way of the Wild". Briefly, Mr. Vice-President, you know that time travels very quickly here. I must tell you that the mothers are in it, too. The young girls are allowed to prostitute, but the mothers are the pimps. I have to use the raw language because it seems if you are not so clear, they will not understand or they will not really see what you are trying to say. The mothers know what is going on.

The report was excellent; it should enlighten us as to what is really happening in this country. The young girls and boys are saying they want respect, and, for example, the way they get respect is to have, as a boyfriend, a gangster with a gun so that nobody troubles us. That is the way we are respected. Their value system is quite different obviously from somebody going to a good secondary school, who hopes for respect through a certificate with five or six O'levels. Each one wants respect, but look at the route one is taking and look at the role of parents in this.

Up here one of young girls was saying:

“People mentality is you have to out gold and out dress everybody else and a fellow who working KFC cannot afford to see after me.”

The value system is even, I would say, worse in terms of death and mayhem.

The four youths who were killed in Felicity, when the news reached their parents and the family, they all said that they were such good boys. They were quiet. One was going to a junior secondary school; the oldest one, I believe, was already working, which meant that jobs would not necessarily reduce crime.

You see how dangerous the situation is? People say we want more jobs to deal with crime. It will not necessarily connect. It is the value system spawned rightly or wrongly, through the families. I cannot say anything more. What more can I say? I am telling you this with all the knowledge I have. After that, what the family disregards and puts out there in vulgar form, the police pick up, the school will have to deal with, and the picture is not rosy.

So in the few minutes I have, I want to get to the second part of my contribution—the question of the social sector. The welfare dilemma, as I said, is how could this Government be compassionate, but set certain conditions apart from the fact that we have no reliable indices of efficiency in the delivery of these social services. Any intelligent minister on that side, especially one in Cabinet, should pursue this point in their own interest, so that they can come next year and tell us some percentage of effective delivery, what went wrong and why it went wrong because taxpayers’ money is involved. Again, the culture of responsibility and accountability must start with the Government. I think this is a good way to get it done.

I listened with some fascination yesterday when Sen. The Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid took on Sen. Wade Mark. Sen. Mark was saying that there were 300,000 poor people in this country and the Minister promptly got up and said no, how could that be because we are looking after 439,058. I am not sure that he understood what he was saying. Was it that he was boasting that we have more poor people than 300,000? Is he proud of that as a service agency?

I think that there is an irony in that response. He is saying that there are 139 social programmes. I hope that I misunderstood him, but the way it came across was that it was good to have 439,058; it was better because there were more people for us to see about. Is he manufacturing poverty? What he cannot discover, he is inventing and that that brings fame and glory to his Government; that the

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more people they look after it is better for them? Is that the implication? If I am wrong, I would be happy to be corrected in this instance.

Not for 1.3 million persons, including children. There are almost half a million persons being looked after in social services. Listen! I am glad he mentioned the figure because I would want to hear that this figure is halved by the \$3 billion being spent this year and the \$2 billion plus last year. A person does not have to be a rocket scientist to understand that this is the way to go. They cannot come next year with this same figure. This is what I mean by indices of delivery. People will say you are manufacturing dependency, and then they will get vexed.

In 2002, there were 8,000 hampers. They came here and made an announcement, with pride again. It has moved to 15,000. Then they are telling us that this year it is going to be 20,000. I thought people would be climbing out of poverty and the accompanying programme of skills training and transitional and transformation centres would be helping them to reduce this hamper delivery. Social development programmes may be hampering the alleviation of poverty.

I do not need to make these points in any laborious way and I make them so that the Government would be attentive in its own interest and after that in the interest of the country. On all fronts, the GDP and so on are linked to the psychology of crime, incivility and dependency. I think it is horrible under the umbrella of a \$27 billion budget.

You cannot reduce poverty in a lawless society—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. You cannot reduce poverty, in a lawless society and you cannot reduce poverty, I submit with respect, within the loose framework that the Government has unfolded in the previous budget and in this one. If you say all right, you have to be sorry, I agree with you; you have to dispense, yes, but as a Government you have to know where that line should be drawn.

Sen. Abdul-Hamid: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President and Senator for allowing me to explain what I said yesterday. Sen. Mark said that there were 300,000 persons living in absolute poverty. I said that there were 439,000 persons who were beneficiaries of the programme, not that they were poor, but they were beneficiaries of the programme. They came and they accessed the programmes.

Whatever their conditions, I did not make a specific reference to it. I did say they were beneficiaries of the programme. It may be in poverty or not in poverty.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. The word “beneficiary” connotes to me that a person is dependent on state funds for a livelihood or for some sustenance. I think that figure should be cut down. In fact, to be charitable myself, there is a continuum of dependence. We know that some people are so handicapped and destitute that they cannot do anything else but to rely—and properly so—on Government’s help. We know that. We have consciences. We are compassionate too, but as you go up the scale, there are con artists. There are exploiters of the system. There are redundant beneficiaries. If Government wants to stretch its hands to that extent, still, I say you must have your measures and your policy must have some restraining mechanisms to know when you are being taken for a ride. The fly in the ointment is this: by Government being the dispenser, they can be blackmailed into continuing the process of charity. The dependants can tell you plainly that if you do not give them, they will not vote for you.

That is why I want to connect this kind of policy—at least some of them—to the use of NGOs under a framework of accountability and efficiency in delivery. Up to yesterday, Sen. Dr. McKenzie and I were speaking about this—she might elaborate on it—but it is a way out. They will be blackmailed as they are being blackmailed now by the vendors. The first thing they will say is that they will “thief” when you move them. These people who are the beneficiaries—a very polite word—but to me some of it still falls within what I am trying to say.

It is interesting because you have to be careful you do not manufacture the problem or compound it. When you begin to have agencies that serve the poor exclusively, people want to stay in business and poverty becomes an industry and it expands itself. That is business. You do not want to go out of business. Do you think that lawyers want to go out of business?

If you have a perfectly healthy society, doctors would be out of business, so we have to have a reality check and know the limits towards which we can extend ourselves. I suggest, as it crosses my mind now, that for all these social sector programmes, it is time we have a welfare inspection unit to monitor these programmes in terms of efficiency and feedback to the Ministry, supervised by Parliament.

12.00 noon.

Here are a few words on our vendors. I say you cannot reduce poverty in a lawless society. Much vending takes place under lawless conditions. More often than not, they should indeed be moved. But, I believe you have to show some

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regard to the developmental implications of those vendors. In a sense, they are the salt of the earth. They show you the energy under sun and rain to sell and grow and to buy and sell. They are traders. Their energy must be respected in the first instance. I therefore believe that the Government should now step back a while, while it is moving them, to ease up the congestion, but mobilize them in a way that their energies and enterprise can be used in the informal economy.

To me it seems that you are creating an antagonistic relationship, which might be necessary when lawlessness is committed, but at the same time, regard it as a contributor to the economy by building places for them. Negotiate with them, show them some respect, because they are part of what we call the grey economy. If they are left as they are, running here, hiding there, they will join in the relationship which is a classic one across the world. As the informal economy grows carelessly, crime also increases. That is part of the problem that Jamaica faces today; with the informal economy and crime, because it has been carelessly handled.

Another point is constitution reform. I call it the imperative of constitution reform. We cannot continue this way. Money will not buy our democracy. Money will obstruct the growth of our democracy. In most of the programmes we have, where it is necessary to have proper governance, the politicians stand in the way. There is a well-known calypsonian in Tobago. His name is Axe Back. I do not know if you know the gentleman, Sir, but he sang a song, "Politicians In The Way". Perhaps the gentleman has joined a more entertaining arena. He has left calypso singing—[*Interruption*] He is doing both.

We have the myth of representative government. Where do the Members of Parliament get the views of their constituents properly and bring them to Parliament, so as to make representative government a reality; a functional part of governance? They come and talk whatever comes in their head when they get elected. I need say no more. We have to revisit that question of representative government.

Then there is this Parliament. Of all the toothless tigers in the country, I think this Parliament is the most toothless of all. We suffer under Executive "lock neck". The Executive has our necks locked. It is not their fault—as my good friend, Sen. the Hon. D. Montano articulated once—it is the Westminster system. That is why I am saying that it is imperative for constitution reform. It is not a matter of the UNC wants it and that they are bluffing. It is not so anymore; not when you have \$27 billion on one hand, and public grief so widespread on the

other hand and the politicians in the middle fighting each other, as the Westminster system requires. That is the central issue. How can you get constitution reform without undermining the present Government's position?

How can the Government allow constitution reform, without inviting the Opposition to take over after constitution reform? What elements do you put in that document, that will prevent either thing from happening? That is the challenge! Who will take the first step? The first time it happened with the Wooding Commission, the then Prime Minister said that report was like a stab in the back of the PNM. That attitude cannot work. We need constitution reform and we need to do it in order to get the business of this country done more properly. This is not time for me to detail what I would like to see or what my Independent colleagues have put together in a document. One thing I will tell you, the manner of electing the Prime Minister has to change. Secondly, the control that the Prime Minister has, directly or indirectly, over this Parliament, has to change! We cannot come here—a good example is what we are doing today. Do you think anything any one of us says will necessarily have an effect on the outcome of the budget? It is theatre, especially given the differential status between the Lower House and the Upper House.

Another matter we need alongside constitution reform, is election financing. There are too many people in the backdoors, leading governments by their throat, because they have financed this or that particular politician. It has been happening many years now. Our democracy cannot be hijacked. Our democracy cannot be kidnapped by private election financiers. Open up the laws! Take your donations, but let it be transparent, to some extent, and let there be accountability. So you would not win an election and the next morning you hear Mr. So-and-So is Chairman of TSTT. You never knew where he came from. He came because of the use of his dollar. Democracy should not be bought by the dollar. It cheapens the integrity of the system and it even belittles those politicians who are the recipients or the beneficiaries of such largess.

As I come to the end, regrettably, I left out prison and culture in my contribution. Finally, therefore, the time for people behaving like Pontius Pilate should end. Rather than shed crocodile tears tomorrow, we should take stock of what is happening in our country. Thank you very much.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo): Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. At the onset, let me take the opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for his

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putting together and working closely to put this budget together. I know some comment was made earlier regarding his ill-health, but I want to assure the Senate that he had a substantial input at all times.

Let me also express my wholehearted support to my colleague, Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill for his presentation and inclusion in the budget and Appropriation Bill in this honourable Senate.

The last budget debate, I was just about four months in office and just grasping my way around. Having spent a year, I was really looking forward to this budget debate. As I sat I started hearing some concerns and issues and I said: Let me listen carefully. To my dismay, when these documents were circulated—first of all, when I heard it I could not believe it. Then, when these documents were circulated—and here we have the Senator on the other side putting it up for everyone and the cameras to see, of course, here I have them to hang. Utter rubbish!

Do you know we had no chairman of the National Housing Authority (NHA) on February 26, 2002? [*Desk thumping*] The current Chairman of the NHA was appointed on March 27, 2002. What is more vulgar is that this document is totally bogus. I assure you that there will be legal consequences for this. Therefore, this should be put exactly where it should be, in the dustbin. Please try and get rid of it. I really cannot understand that the people on the other side will resort to these types of tactics to make a big hullabaloo on a document which is totally inaccurate. As I said, I am sure we are going to have legal consequences emerging out of the inaccuracy and falseness of this document.

Sen. R. Montano: On a point of order, I do not deal with bogus documents. I have seen the original to this document. It exists. This is not a bogus document. For your information, Mr. Andre Monteil was in charge at that time. I am not asking you. I am telling you.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Mr. Vice-President, it appears some of us really hallucinate on a frequent basis. I am telling this goodly Senate that the present chairman was appointed on March 27, 2003. They got their dates mixed up in cutting and pasting. That is the problem!

Mr. Vice-President, let me get down to the people's business. It is really vexing when we in this honourable Senate are really exposed to that type of tactic, as I call it.

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: Would the Minister give way for clarification? I am just asking a question, Mr. Vice-President. Are you saying that there was no chairman during that time? You remained without a chairman during that period?

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Mr. Vice-President, as you could appreciate, from time to time, a chair remains vacant. That happens from time to time. We did not have a chairman at that date.

Mr. Vice-President, I have limited time to make my contribution, therefore, I would give way only if it is on matters of importance. There are three items I would highlight at the onset of this budget. The first one, as was rightly said, it is certainly the largest budget that was ever presented in this country.

Secondly, for the first time we have seen a budget where there are revenues at one price and the price of oil or gas in the energy sector, and our expenditures, therefore, are now targeted at a different price level altogether.

Lastly, it is the first time in our history that we have what is called a "Supplementary PSIP". At this time, let me congratulate those who have been involved in it. As you know, the Supplementary PSIP involves expenditures in the state enterprises. My Permanent Secretary is here and I want to take the time to congratulate her and her team for taking quite a lot of time to ensure that this was included. The reason for inclusion is for us to have a higher level of transparency and accountability. The document ended up a little thick. We did not read it through, because there is still a debate whether we should talk for three hours in a budget or not. I am not going there at all today. We really tried to give as much information as possible to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. As we talk about governance, we talk about transparency and accountability. We decided that we must account in terms of where expenditures take place.

The PSIP is an indication of Government's investment thrust in all sectors of the economy. It is a major contributor in the achievement of economic growth. I would talk later on the performance of the state enterprises.

I want to spend a few minutes on some of the projects which were highlighted in the PSIP. If I recall rightly, I think Sen. Basharat Ail had some questions and concerns regarding some of these investments. I am not quite sure if he had a copy of this at the time. Did you have a copy of this? Okay. Regarding the Supplementary PSIP, I would like to highlight the major expenditures.

Under the National Gas Company, we propose to utilize \$2.6 billion. We have \$254.8 million in equity investment in ALNG Train 4. I think some concerns were

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also raised yesterday, in terms of where are we with finalizing those arrangements. I would come to that in a while.

12.15 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, as a matter of fact, what I understand is that the final investment decision of the four investing shareholders—albeit outstanding at this time, they have agreed on many salient issues—have given their various guarantees. At this time, the total expenditure is approximately \$1 billion.

We have \$502.0 million investment in the Biche Field Upstream Development (BUD), and it involves the development and maintenance of onshore pipelines across the south of Trinidad; we have the \$1 billion investment in the cross island pipeline from Biche Field to Point Fortin, and this is to transport gas to the Atlantic LNG Train 4 expansion; and then we have \$819 million which will be expended to acquire a 24-inch offshore pipeline from British Gas.

I would like to refer to the NGC which proposes to expend \$35.2 million on the extension on the Savonetta Pier 2 North; \$297 million on the continuation of work at Union Estate, La Brea; and \$0.5 million on the reforestation of La Brea.

Mr. Vice-President, I can go on and on because we are really proud of the levels of capital expenditure through the arm of the state enterprise. I will just go through Petrotrin because in terms of capital expenditure, this is also a very huge chunk. The capital projects for 2005 are estimated to cost \$1,322,000,000; \$37.5 million will be spent on phase II of the business improvement plan, to improve the efficiency of the refinery; \$425 million will be spent on the Gasoline Optimization Programme; and \$859.5 million will be spent on exploration and production, including drilling activities, together with a work-over activity, to increase oil and gas production for both land and marine operations including Trinmar.

Mr. Vice-President, at the end of this year, what we saw under the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), was that we expended \$1.7 billion, and we saw the state enterprises expending in capital expenditure over \$2.7 billion.

For the coming year 2005, there is also a situation where we have just \$2.1 billion under the PSIP, and \$7.4 billion which will be expended under the Supplementary Public Sector Investment Programme. As I said, this is really the state enterprises.

Many concerns have been raised in terms of the heating of the economy like inflationary concerns, et cetera. In the first instance, although we are seeing a lot

of expenditures in the energy sector, we do not anticipate that level of heating, because the kind of expenditures in the energy sector, by and large, will not affect the type of demand and supply problems that we would have.

The area where we have some concerns and where we will have to monitor closely would be expenditures, for example, in the housing programmes, et cetera, where we know for a fact, if not managed and monitored closely could have an effect on the economy.

Mr. Vice-President, by and large, as we are moving towards developed country status by the year 2020, we should ensure that our capital programme put us along that road in that direction.

I know many comments have been made with respect to how well the money has been spent; how we are accounting for the money; and that we are only talking about how much we are spending and not what we are spending on. I, therefore, would like to urge every Senator here to really take some time and go through the expenditures. We have detailed each of these programmes, to ensure a high level of transparency and accountability. In other words, you would know where your tax dollars went. As a citizen of this country, you should be proud in terms of the capital investment programmes. For too long, we have heard the comments that too much money is spent on recurrent expenditure and not enough money is being spent of a capital nature. I am sure the hon. Sen. Mary King will agree that we need to ensure that we spend more money in that light. I have read many of the Senator's articles where she has indicated and encouraged the Government to ensure that we do not expend all our moneys in terms of current expenditure, but invest into the future.

Mr. Vice-President, I notice that Sen. Wade Mark is not here. Very early at the outset, he was very concerned with a comment in the budget statement regarding pension reform. As a matter of fact, to me, that is one of the more exciting measures which were introduced in the budget. All of us must ensure that as we plan for the future, we plan for our retirement. When we look at the measure that we are proposing under pension reform, we must recognize that these reforms are going to make a very big difference to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

First of all, we should all be planning, in terms of saying, when I retire what pension should I have, and should not just depend on the State to say this is how much pension you should get. That is why the proposal of a Contributory Pension Scheme is certainly one which we should all look to optimally. The issue of

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contributory means that you pay some and your employer will also pay some of it. Therefore, what this means is that when we have reached the age of retirement, we would be able to enjoy a better pension.

Mr. Vice-President, yesterday, Sen. The Hon. Abdul-Hamid, indicated that there is also an ageing population and, therefore, this is going to have a lot of stress in terms of the Treasury, in terms of the payments of pension. In that regard, we must plan for the future.

In terms of pension reform some of the recommendations include: pension profitability; proper criteria for the engagement of fund managers; indexation of pension benefits; minimum guaranteed pension levels; pension accrual and, most importantly—the one that I like very much—is pension portability. What pension portability means is how you could move your pension from one institution to another. Pension portability is something that should be encouraged, not only in terms of just the Government, but it should be encouraged everywhere, including the private sector, because with most of the younger persons not staying in jobs for long periods of time, in a few years to come, we will certainly have problems, if we do not really look into the future in terms of pension reform.

The other side of pension reform means that the moneys collected and invested from pensions also go a very long way in developing a country. So, the other side of pension reform means a lot of money will become available, and proper investment of these funds can also lead to the economy in terms of improving it substantially.

Mr. Vice-President, I regret the hon. Senator was not here. I am not quite sure if the Senator understood the concern, or if he thought that the Government was saying here that it was going to pull back, that is certainly not it. As a Government, we remain responsible and committed.

Senators have indicated earlier in their contributions what is the Government's responsibility and what do we inculcate in our people. What pension reform is saying is, let us plan ahead; let us not leave our future in the hands of the Government; and some may say, in the hands of politicians. This will depend on who are the politicians.

Mr. Vice-President, let me clarify a comment made by Sen. Robin Montano. I really do not know why we like to confuse the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] A lot of time has been spent on trying to inform the people of Trinidad and Tobago on our position regarding Caroni (1975) Limited. As a matter of fact, this morning, at 8 o'clock, we had a meeting with EMBD Caroni

(1975) Limited and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to discuss precisely, and to ensure that we keep with our timetable regarding surveying, in order to have the distribution of lands to the people of Caroni (1975) Limited.

Although I have not yet received the official report, EMBD has indicated that by the end of 2005, based on their analysis, 3,000 plots would be completely developed. This means that during the year at each quarter, lands will be distributed to those workers who have qualified. [*Desk thumping*] There was this nonsense about people having to pay market value.

In this budget debate, there have been a lot of comments in terms of how much money has gone into the social programmes. If you ask me: “I can tell you, I tell a man I teach him to fish, I prefer not to give you a fish.” If my friend is very hungry, I would first have to give him a fish, and then teach him how to fish. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, when this statement was made in this House—and if it is not well distilled it could be wrongly carried across that the workers will have to pay market value. Let me state categorically that is not on the drawing board. What is on the drawing board is that the workers will be given priority access to these lands. That will be persons who are qualified. Certainly, there will be a cost, and we are certainly looking at the cost, but most of it would just be development cost in terms of the price which they will have to pay for these lands.

Mr. Vice-President, sometimes it is really worrisome because as Senators, we do not take the opportunity to educate and inform—

Sen. R. Montano: On a point of order. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Montano, we had a very mature debate so far, and I would ask you to desist from doing it like that.

Sen. R. Montano: Well, then, I genuinely beg your pardon. On a point of order. Mr. Vice President, the Minister said that Mr. Monteil was not appointed chairman until March 2003.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: It was on March 27, 2002. My apologies, if the date is wrong. He was appointed one month later, or should I say, one month subsequent to the date of that memorandum.

Sen. R. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, I have a copy of the board’s minutes dated Friday, April 26, 2002.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Did you steal that also?

Sen. R. Montano: When things arrive in your letter box, you do not steal them, you get them. This is saying that Andre Monteil Chairman—my friend said that he was not appointed until March 2003, and now she is backtracking. My information is that in February 2002, Mr. Monteil was sitting—whether he was actually appointed or whether he was just acting until his appointment came through—in the chairman’s chair on February 26, 2002, whether officially or unofficially, on the Board of the National Housing Authority.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Mr. Vice-President, a desperate man; a desperate people. [*Desk thumping*] I hope it is not lunch time, because it could also be a hungry man.

Mr. Vice-President: Having made the point about hunger, the time is 12.30 p.m. [*Laughter*] I would have to ask you, Madam Minister, to continue your contribution after we take the lunch break. We shall take the lunch break now and we will return at 1.30 p.m.

12.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Mr. Vice-President, for the record, I requested a copy of the *Hansard* in my opening remarks. I want to quote the first paragraph:

“To my dismay, when these documents were circulated, first of all, when I heard it, I could not believe it. Then, these documents were circulated and here we have the Senator on the other side putting it up for everyone and the cameras to see, of course, ‘Here I have them to hang, utter rubbish.’

Do you know that we had no Chairman of the National Housing Authority (NHA) on February 26, 2002? The current Chairman of the National Housing Authority was appointed on March 27, 2002. What is more vulgar is that this document is totally bogus.”

I hope I have clarified, for my friends on the other side, that I did indicate it was one month later that the Chairman was appointed. Therefore, the board minute that the Senator was able to put his hands on—and, again, I do not know how he got it; the inference is that he should not have had it and if he had it, how did he get it; but that is another thing. There are legal consequences of circulating a letter which is totally bogus.

Now that we have all had a good lunch, I am sure we are much more comfortable and, therefore, we can proceed with our budget debate.

I was just wrapping up on pension reform and I had just indicated that it was, certainly, a desirable position. Probably, what I should add is that we should see the status, in terms of Chile and the advancement it has made on pension reform. The positive side of pension reform is how these moneys are invested and the savings and investment, that circular flow, in terms of the economy, certainly is strengthened. We in Trinidad and Tobago should take advantage of this opportunity for pension reform.

Mr. Vice-President, much has been said on the Interim Revenue Stabilization Fund. A few months ago, when we had the transfer there was much discussion and dialogue on it in this Chamber. In that regard, I must state that my Government's commitment to sound financial management, fiscal responsibility and the welfare of future generations are evident in its 2004 fiscal year transfer to the fund of a full 100 per cent of revenues, in excess of budgeted amounts received from oil companies for royalties and other non-tax revenues. The commitment is underscored by our decision to also transfer a full 100 per cent of the oil and gas revenues occurring from SPT, PPT and production-sharing contracts, in excess of what had been originally estimated. Government also intends to transfer \$1.2 billion for the year 2004. With what is proposed in the current year, 2005, it means that will bring the Interim Revenue Stabilization Fund in excess of \$4 billion.

Correctly so, there has been much concern regarding same, but we have not really finalized and put legislation in place. However, we have made a commitment to do so. I assure this honourable House that we are going to hold to that commitment. Regarding it being "a revenue stabilization fund", whether called a "heritage fund" or an "intergenerational fund", the issue at hand is that we are not setting aside those funds for this generation. We fully recognize that these funds are set aside for future generations. Therefore, when we talk about a "heritage fund", we know that it must be constitutionally protected. It is inflation protected, which means that its principal cannot be touched. The fund also has international institutions as trustees. While we deliberate on all the various discussions taking place, we intend to come to this honourable House, some time before the end of the year, as promised, and we will have legislation in place to deal with it. We made a commitment at the beginning that we will be transferring those surplus revenues. You have to recognize our optimism, as we proceed along the year.

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I turn now to corporate governance issues, which continue to be of concern to each and every one. As we all know, state enterprises and statutory authorities are entrusted with significant sums of Government resources. The Government is of the view that it is our duty to put the necessary mechanisms in place to facilitate state agencies in maintaining the highest level of good governance. The Government has been reviewing the existing corporate governance framework in the state sector to ensure the fundamental principles of good governance, which are embedded at all levels of public policy execution, namely: integrity, transparency, accountability and responsibility.

The legislation governing the conduct of business activity in Trinidad and Tobago is guided by the Companies Act of 1995, Chap. 81:01. This Act makes provision for the following elements of corporate governance: appointment and removal of directors; duties and powers of directors; liabilities of directors; the establishment of audit committees; the rights of shareholders; the holding of meetings; minority protection and rules on insider trading. Other pieces of legislation that relate to governance in the state sector include: the Integrity in Public Life (Amdt.) Act, 2000; the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1987; the Freedom of Information Act of 1989; the Constitution (Amdt.) Parliamentary Committees Act and the Exchequer and Audit Act, Chap. 69:01. In the case of statutory authorities and other similar state agencies, many of their enabling legislation make provision for key corporate governance issues including: the powers and functions of office holders; arrangements for reporting through a Minister to Parliament; the accounting and financial management framework to be adopted and the auditing of financial statements.

There are serious concerns regarding the practices which apply to the state enterprise sector. As a matter of fact, there is an article, to which I would like to refer, by Claude Denbow, Senior Counsel, called "Flaws in the Governance of State Enterprises"; a very brilliantly written letter to the editor. We should thank him for it. If I had to pay for that advice, it would cost me a whole lot. I want to publicly acknowledge the article and thank Mr. Denbow for taking the time, because we are, actually, thinking along the same lines. His comment was that there were fundamental flaws between the Companies Act of 1995 and some of the governance and reported issues of state enterprises. In that regard, we have on the front burner the Draft By-Laws to make recommendations, so that proper reporting guidelines will be encoded by law.

In addition to that, we will be establishing a code of best practice. The Ministry of Finance is formulating this code, which will present an elaboration,

extension and refinement of the existing performance monitoring manual for the state enterprise sector. The code assigns to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the enterprise board and management, those norms and practices that should be adhered to. The objectives of the code are: to improve performance of companies in the state enterprise sector and to maximize shareholder value. As you can see, we are looking in terms of implementing a code of best practice and improving the whole essence of corporate governance in state enterprises.

Additionally, we would have heard the mandate, just over a year ago, about the publication of financial statements. We have seen both half-yearly and annual accounts. I assure you that those organized state enterprises, which were in arrears, are now aggressively pursuing completion of their accounts and we should see many more being published in the newspapers. The publishing of financial statements is twofold. It is to account to every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, who is a shareholder, how each state enterprise is performing on a semi-annual basis.

In addition to that, we have also developed a dividend policy, which means that all state enterprises would pay to its shareholder 100 per cent of its profits; unless, of course, the State negotiates with the company, in terms of capital expenditures that the company may need to undertake. We understand that some of these state enterprises will be, in fact, carrying out substantial capital expenditure and we refer to them as “the Supplementary PSIP”. This forces all of us to have higher levels of accountability and ensure that before there is capital expenditure, all factors are taken into consideration.

Mr. Vice-President, I will like to go a little into the investment and divestment strategy of this administration. In the late 1970s Government used its petrodollar and took the lead as the prime investor in the natural gas intensive industries, that is, ammonia, urea, methanol, iron steel wire rods and natural gas liquids. In the late 1980s, the divestment of the Government’s portfolio in the gas intensive industry saw these mature and successful pioneer plants being sold to private sector interest, with the Government resorting to a role as facilitator, rather than lead investor.

1.45 p.m.

I was not quite sure when Sen. King made her comment or observation if, in fact, she was making the point, should we have divested or not. We can sit for a whole day, a whole year, but the essence—what I am giving to you is really the model that the Government has adopted. In stating at the onset, what we do, we

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invest in areas that even the private sector would say: "I am not going there." Generally it would be risky investments and the average investor is going to say: "Wait, let me see what is happening."

Government is saying that this model that we adopted worked and we continue to adopt this model. In the other place, a lot was said in terms of the various strategic investments which Government has on the front burner at this time. On the other hand, a lot has been said regarding the divestment policy of the present Government. You know when you divest or when you sell, you try to optimize and hopefully get the best value for what you are selling. Therefore, it means before we take divestment decisions, it is under certain diverse situations.

Firstly, the question arises: Is the company of strategic importance? Is the business activity of strategic importance to the Government? So that is the question that is first and generally addressed and, therefore, it means that we have to, in every situation, address these fundamental issues. Additionally, you always ask the question: When do you divest? When is the right time to divest? The third question is: How do you divest?

I have to refer to an article both in the *Newsday* and the *Trinidad Guardian*. When the budget was debated in the other place, many comments were made. I have no problem if subjective statements are made, however, I take great umbrage when my character is being assassinated and statements are made which I do not have the opportunity to defend.

Much has been said about First Citizens Bank. First, let me take the opportunity to applaud the bank; its management and employees for the turnaround we have seen in this restructured company. [*Desk thumping*] I am reading here from the *Newsday* and it says here under the heading: "Yetming: Sahadeo will ruin T&T." I quote:

"Government was currently subsidizing FCB which is holding \$1.5 billion of paper from Taurus, backed by the Government. FCB is benefiting to the tune of \$100 million."

The goodly gentleman has it wrong. This is closer to \$200 million. Then he goes on to say:

"She will be willing. You could imagine if she were there for two years, she would tell whose loans to write off."

Again, the *Newsday* says:

“She will be telling them who to grant loans to, whose loans to write off and that is not such a farfetched idea. We know about it. It has happened before.”

The mere fact it is said: “We know about it. It has happened before”; what I would like to ask my friends and colleagues on the other side, I think, respectfully, they should submit to this Parliament exactly how many loans were written off and the quantum of those loans which were written off. I also want to put on record that I have not requested any loans to be written off for my good self. I have no loans. Right now I am not investing. I have nobody’s loans to write off and I would not request any loans to be written off for anyone. So, again, I think it is the responsibility of the Members on the other side, during their term in office, to tell this Parliament how many loans were written off and for whom.

As I was talking about divestment—

Sen. Mark: The Senator asked a question, Mr. Vice-President, and I was going to respond to her. You do not want us to respond?

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: I have given way. He can respond.

Sen. Mark: We know of an instance where Dr. Lenny Saith’s loan was written off at FCB, some \$12 million. You are aware of that?

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Mr. Vice-President, as I indicated to you, I have just congratulated the management and the hard-working staff for where FCB has reached. I am quoting from a newspaper article which says: “We know about it and it has happened before”. In the 2000 accounts, which was during the time of the previous administration, there were large sums written off.

Sen. Mark: Bring the evidence!

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: That was in the newspapers. I can bring it, but I did not come here to make a big—if it is you or whoever it was—but I want to put on public record, I have requested absolutely no loans to be written off for myself, my family, friends or whoever. It is not my style and I will not do that type of thing. Therefore, I believe it is really unacceptable that we use the parliamentary privilege to continue making statements of that nature.

Let me say at the onset, again, that I believe that we must continuously review the process of divestment and, therefore, I agree that FCB, in the long term, we are looking at it in terms of when the time is right. FCB is still under section 44 and under the control of the Central Bank, just to set the record straight.

We go back to investments. A while ago I indicated that the Revenue Stabilization Fund, at this time for the last year, we transferred 100 per cent of the

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excess revenues. At an earlier time, we indicated that 60 per cent of the surplus was scheduled and targeted for that transfer to the Revenue Stabilization Fund, with the other 40 per cent being used for strategic investments; strategic investments being defined in terms of where really we see the country on the horizon, be it in the energy value chain, and because of diversification we would think it would also be in other areas.

One of the items dealt with quite well in the budget presentation was local content and I want to elaborate a bit more on the whole concept of local content in the energy sector. I want to refer to the Interim Policy Statement. I read:

“As T&T is rapidly growing its businesses to help the international community meet their energy needs, we shall use this opportunity to leverage the capabilities of international companies in our midst to build our own businesses, people, technology and capital markets.

Recognizing the fact that in growing and depleting our natural resources we are simultaneously removing our opportunities to capture future wealth, it is incumbent on us to ensure that we make the most of this opportunity to create the capability to generate wealth in the future.”

When we talk about local content in the energy sector, this entire concept of local content is really critical. It goes on to say:

“This policy, therefore, while addressing local content, does so in a manner that recognizes the impact of other mechanisms on local capability development for maximizing local content and building the capability for increased local value capture now and in the future and seeks to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago does not overlook opportunities provided by activities in the support of the sector. The policies will be vigorously applied to ongoing proposed and future projects and activities within a framework that will maximize the use and development of Trinidad and Tobago nationals, Trinidad and Tobago-owned businesses and the local capital market in every aspect of the activities conducted in the sector.”

As a matter of fact, we already have a committee established and this policy document is being finalized to be implemented. As a matter of fact, the local content will be included in all contracts to be negotiated with all energy companies. So what we are saying for those who are listening and to find out where we are also again in terms of tax reform, it means that in production sharing contracts and all other contracts, we will now have a clause of inclusion insisting on a high level of local content.

I touched a little on taxation and probably I should just again take a minute or two for us to fully understand where we are with it.

Sen. Mark: May I ask, through you, Mr. Vice-President, the Minister referred to a document called an Interim Policy. Is that an interim policy on local content? Could the Senator tell us the date of that document? Who published that document? We need some clarification. We do not know.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: I am happy to know we have created some excitement.

Hon. Senator: You always do.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: I always do, thank you; such a confession from the hon. Senator. I am almost blushing now.

Mr. Vice-President, as I indicated, the standing committee on energy has introduced a policy paper which has been developed and I am sure very shortly, by and large, it will be distributed. The reason we are sharing this with everyone, it was included in the budget statement, is because we believe that a lot of development will take place there. We should see a lot of local businesses enjoying and being able, therefore, to benefit from the growth in the energy sector, and not just growth, because the issue here at hand is our talent and our people. We cannot continue allowing foreign people to come in here—when I say, come in here, we need to have our local people develop the expertise and export this expertise also, because right now, as a matter of fact, many of our local people are placed abroad in the energy sector.

So this, to me, is another area. I think it is quite exciting and it is an area that I believe all of us should be looking closely at, to monitor it, to measure it and to ensure that we get our due value.

We talked a lot in terms of our tax revenues. This may be on the soft side—

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Vice-President, I do not want to take up too much of the Senator's time, but just a quick one, in terms of the local content. Whereas you are drafting the interim statement now, there must have been some policy that was guiding local content with respect to all the contracts that have been awarded: LNG, Train 4 and others. What has been guiding them?

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Before such time we mainly dealt with moral suasion, loose agreements and we would say, "This is how much we would put towards this and this is how much". We now are including it in the contract. I am

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sorry to sound like it is the hard line approach, but we have to protect ourselves in terms of moving forward. So we are now looking at local content to be a definitive position, not one which is on the soft side, but we are saying we want the inclusion—local content—it must be quantifiable, measurable and we are now saying it must be included in terms of contracts.

We talk about the sanctity of contracts and when we talk about the taxation regime, I know we have gotten quite a lot of knocks for it, and probably I may even say, rightly so—

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

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. J. Yuille-Williams*]

Question put and agreed to.

2.00 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Thanks, Mr. Vice-President. There has been much concern in terms of the revision of the existing tax legislation governing the energy sector for the entire review of the taxation regime. When that statement was made last year in the last budget statement, we had a report in our hands and were considering it. When we looked at it closely we were not very impressed. The question is: Should we have hurriedly taken that recommendation and implemented it, or was it better for the country to review all the concerns in detail and ensure that we have proper dialogue and negotiations with all the parties? Trinidad has been deemed to be an investment destination. We have had much foreign direct investment here. One of the reasons for that is our environment in terms of our climate for investors and full recognition of the sanctity of contracts.

I also want to lay on the Table why the data is not available. We have to understand that we have shifted from an oil economy in terms of taxation to an oil and gas economy. The data collation—and some may say that the data may have been collated to suit whom it benefits—did not segregate in terms of the statistics relating to oil and gas, sufficiently, for us to make the decisions that we need to. All these areas will be looked at carefully. We would have proper discussion and dialogue before we move forward. A commitment has been made and we are optimistic that we will have in place that revised legislation as promised.

We can move on in terms of a review of the state enterprises. We have with us the hon. Penelope Beckles who will also make her contribution. I intended to do

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both but I will stick to the state enterprises and she will have the privilege and honour of dealing with the public utilities.

As I indicated very early in my contribution, we must congratulate the state enterprises for their performance in the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) in terms of carrying out and executing many of the programmes that the Government needs to carry out. The government service is really geared to administrate. The reason we have state enterprises is for the execution process.

Much has been said about the non performance of the state enterprises. Let me correct that misconception. In 2003, overall net profit was \$974 million; in 2002, \$204 million and in 2001, \$650 million. Some state enterprises have contributed tremendously. This year the National Gas Company (NGC) had \$1.6 billion and the project for the coming year is \$860 million. Petrotrin \$1.891 billion is projected for the coming year; NP \$98 million and Tringen, \$80 million. I mentioned the performance because too often we make the statement about non performance.

Some state enterprises by the essence of what they provide are not there for profit. We have the Export Centre Company whose mandate is to develop and offer training for single mothers and to ensure that they can develop and move on their own and become small entrepreneurs and earn an income on their own. We have state enterprises whose mandate is not profit maximization. My colleague will be here to talk about some of the statutory authorities that fall under her ministry.

We also have some level of subsidy element given the rate at which we pay. It would be remiss of me if I did not take a few minutes to address some of the concerns raised by Sen. Basharat Ali in his contribution. He had some concerns regarding the gas reserves which were reflected in the newspaper and what was made in the budget statement. The Minister's statement reflected the updated information as at December 31, 2003. This was based on drilling information and other analysis in the ensuing year. It is a reduced position we sought in order to be transparent and give more accurate information. It would have been the information received from the drilling information at hand.

We have already discussed the investment decision. I indicated the various parties to Atlantic Energy. They are still working together. As we know, that plant should be coming on stream in late 2005. We talked about a natural gas master plan. That master plan is before the interministerial standing committee on energy. As you could appreciate the plan was submitted to us. We have to review it to determine how much is applicable to us. That plan becomes available on completion and review.

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Regarding the ethylene cracker—it sounds like we are reviewing many things—it is being studied intensely at this time. Regarding the concern of ISG, we are fully aware of the gas contract between ISG and NGC for the supply of gas for this facility. The moth balled plant is being reactivated and natural gas has been reintroduced.

The other query in terms of NUCOR, it has returned to Trinidad and proposes to establish a refurbished and upgraded mega mode DRI plant based on proven technology and is expected to start in 2006. I know your level of dissonance, however, I am being hopelessly optimistic.

Sen. Ali: I was not querying the mega mode plant. I know that it is well proven technology and an improvement to what we have, just across the fence Ispatt. These people are coming again, their second coming, but there is no downstream project associated with it except the so-called Steel Authority, unless you want to tell me what the Steel Authority is.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: Mr. Vice-President, there were many items to discuss under the downstream side of investments earmarked. I am sure that my colleague in the Ministry of Finance will elaborate on that. I did not realize that time would have ran out on me. I am not a talker so I did not anticipate that time would run out so quickly. When we meet we will discuss them. There are many downstream joint venture arrangements that are being reviewed. Recently, you would have heard a memorandum of understanding was signed between SURAL and NEC in terms of aluminum manufacture. Many downstream activities are being looked at.

In terms of public debt, it was stated in the budget that our debt relative to GDP has fallen to 52.5 per cent from 59.3 per cent. Government's prudent debt management has helped Trinidad and Tobago earn an upgrade from BBB to BBB+ in the Standard and Poor's credit rating. We also have the country's credit rating for long-term local currency which was revised upward from A negative to A and overall Standard and Poor's gave Trinidad and Tobago an outlook that moved from stable to positive.

Whereas there is more to be said, it appears that I have run out of time, let me take the opportunity to say that I hope that I have been able to clarify a few issues.

I should conclude by acknowledging the article by Sen. Mary King, *Is the Exchange Rate Real?* It is an excellent article. In her contribution yesterday she indicated those messengers of doom and gloom, those economists and certain former ministers who continue to make statements, the question is: How sound is

the analysis? Is it really sound? I am no economist and I do not pretend to be one. When we look at the demand and supply of foreign exchange, it is what the economists have advised me, our inflow is called lumpy, whereas our demands are continuous. We would always have some levels of mismatch. The Central Bank reduced its reserve by over \$500 million as was required. I refer to IMF mission report which says:

“They have raised concerns about the competitiveness and appropriateness of the exchange rate. The mission welcomes the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago indication that its exchange rate policy is flexible, and in particular, that in the event of changes in the supply demand relationship in the market, it would be willing to allow the exchange to move in order to safeguard the reserve position.”

Sen. Mark: Translate that for us.

Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo: It says that Central Bank has a commitment. It is not the Government. Central Bank monitors it. The Bank has given the commitment and if it means that we do not have enough foreign reserves to put in the system, then it will. If you do not put money into the system the forces of demand and supply will take place. I hope that would have clarified much of the concerns raised regarding the exchange rate.

Thank you.

2.15 p.m.

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Hon. Penelope Beckles): Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. I would like from time to time to refer to my notes. I also thank my colleagues for the opportunity to speak in this honourable Senate.

First of all, I would like to start by adding my congratulations to the Minister of Finance for delivering his 2004/2005 budget presentation. The theme chosen for this year's budget presentation is “Ensuring Our Future Survival” and bearing in mind this Government’s focus on transforming Trinidad and Tobago into a developed country by 2020. I would like to say, therefore, that the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment has a particularly important role in ensuring that vision materializes.

The allocation for the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment for the fiscal year 2005—and that includes the recurrent expenditure, the development programme and the state agencies—is just over \$1.7 billion, which is an increase of 42 per cent over the revised allocation for fiscal year 2004.

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Mr. Vice-President, we, in Trinidad and Tobago are signatories to almost 10 multilateral environmental agreements and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is expected to account in relation to those multilateral agreements. Apart from the environmental aspect of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, we are also responsible for the Institute of Marine Affairs, WASA, T&TEC, SWMCOL, TTPost and our services include the provision of water, electricity, meteorological services, environmental management, environmental awareness, education, solid waste and hazardous substance management and water resource management.

Mr. Vice-President, as we know, this Ministry was established in 2002 and, therefore, we are still a relatively new Ministry but our focus would be to do some institutional development both in terms of infrastructure and focusing on becoming results-driven and service-oriented.

As we all know, every day we become more and more aware of the dangers of indifference to and improper management of our environment. For instance, the effects of atmospheric pollution on the global climate may have resulted in the increasing incidents of hurricanes this year, with the devastating impacts on our Caribbean neighbours: Grenada, Cuba, Jamaica, Cayman Islands and the Bahamas. We all know that there is no easy solution to the problem as it relates to the environment.

What we are witnessing is the effects of pollution of the air, water courses and seas, and deteriorating biodiversity, including the lost forest cover and several of our species. Considering that the country's natural resources are inextricably linked to the socioeconomic development, it is critical that these resources be restored where possible and, the remaining resources be properly protected.

What this ministry, therefore, has sought to do is to have several interventions in terms of public awareness, in areas of policy and legislative development, stepping up environmental monitoring and control, research and development, rehabilitation of our forests and watersheds, and deepening support of community-based initiatives.

In this respect, in relation to the forestry department, and in respect of environmental education and public awareness, during the next fiscal year they propose to purchase three environmental buses to be used for the purposes of awareness and education, particularly, for the young people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Institute of Marine Affairs proposes to continue the "Adopt a school" community project. And also the Transformation of the Forestry Division south

office into an information and exhibition centre. Mr. Vice-President, some issues that have been in the forefront in relation to the environment, one mainly being that of the water pollution rules and overall the country has been concerned with pollution in general.

Pollution is an area of major concern both for the Government and, of course, for the Ministry and our efforts are really going to focus on improving environmental monitoring and control focus in many ways on reducing the sources and impact of pollution.

We are all aware that is quite a challenge, particularly with the presence of heavy industries that are essential for our country's economic growth and development knowing, of course, that they can impinge significantly on our natural environment.

The discharge by these industries' effluence, the improper disposal of sewage and farm wastes; we also have a situation of the non-functional sewerage treatment plants and the disposal of domestic refuse is degrading the nation's rivers and streams. Air pollution is a major environmental concern as it occurs in most areas of Trinidad and Tobago and, in particular, in our more densely populated communities.

Trinidad and Tobago has been identified as the country with one of the highest rates of motorization in Latin America and the Caribbean. Our very large motor vehicle population has been one of the major contributors to the serious air pollution problem, both in Trinidad and Tobago. Apart from the production of green house gases, particularly, carbon dioxide and ozone depleting substances, the use of leaded gasoline presented a real threat to the health of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and therefore a number of studies have taken place by international agencies such as the WHO, the US Environmental Protection Agency, Kairi and lead has been identified as a possible carcinogen. Therefore, Mr. Vice-President, on April 01, 2004 Trinidad and Tobago stopped the sale of leaded gasoline out of concern for the health risk posed to the population by the use of such fuel.

During the period April to June, the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health conducted a baseline survey of blood levels in primary schools children between the ages of eight to fifteen. After the testing of about 500 children the analysis of the data revealed that the average blood test level was comparable with over-developed countries, suggesting that the lead may be not be a major public health concern, except in localized population.

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In respect of the concern for such localized population, I am extremely pleased that the EMA has been allocated funds to finally clean up the lead pollution situation that has existed in Demerara Road for quite some time. Whilst we know that this issue has been outstanding since 1990, we are now committed to having that problem finally dealt with.

In fiscal year 2002/2003, the Environmental Management Authority also established an air monitoring equipment at Galera Point in cooperation with the United States Geological Survey, the Ministry of Works and Transport and the University of the West Indies to monitor Sahara dust and possible health impacts. We know from time to time that we have had quite a problem in relation to the Sahara dust.

A second station, developed in cooperation with Point Lisas Development Company, was opened on Monday and these stations will be part of a network of four stations, the data from which will help the nation prioritize strategies to manage air pollution.

The issue of water pollution continues to be a very serious concern for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. In order to address this problem, the Government will shortly table in Parliament the revised water pollution rules and the water pollution regulations for consideration.

The Attorney General has for the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago laid before the Parliament the legislative agenda, and on that agenda would be both the water pollution rules and the beverage container rules.

I noted earlier that the non-functioning of sewerage treatment plants posed a serious threat to the environment and in this regard the fourth major initiative of pollution control for fiscal year 2005, is the takeover of the sewage treatment plants of the National Housing Authority by the Water and Sewerage Authority. Several of the 34 plants are in a serious state of disrepair and in the new year many of these plants will be rehabilitated to the required standard of operation. This sewage treatment issue has also been quite a concern for many of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran: I want to thank the Minister for giving way. Hon. Minister, you are raising a very vital issue for the health of the country and I appreciate the intervention, but I need some advice if you will care to give it to me. I have given Cariri, last Monday, a sample of water for examination in terms of bacterial content or other viral content. On site the water that is collected from WASA main onto the house, at that point when we collected the water, it looked as if there was an animal kingdom inside the water, without any other intervention.

I would like the Minister to advise me, when I collect the results from Cariri where should I take that water to get some corrective mechanism—and the lawyer is now telling me—and some relief for any dangers that might be done to my health.

Hon. P. Beckles: Well, since you have already gotten free legal advice I would not comment on that aspect. [*Laughter*] What I would say later on in my contribution is that one of the critical things for the Water and Sewerage Authority is the whole issue of water quality and what we will be investing this year to ensure that we improve the water quality of the entire country. That is a concern and it is a matter that is urgent and, yes, it is being treated this year.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran: Where do I carry these results?

Hon. P. Beckles: There is a laboratory at the Water and Sewerage Authority and I think it will be very important for them, as well, to have information as it relates to that particular situation you are describing. I would certainly also be very grateful for a copy of the results so that I can do my monitoring.

I think the EMA would also be interested in those results, as well as the Regulated Industries Commission that will be, I think, by the end of the year setting standards for the Water and Sewerage Authority.

2.30 p.m.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran: Could I get a refund for the expenses accrued from the Cariri examination?

Hon. P. Beckles: I do not think that I want to answer that but, certainly if it is a matter that would result in any impairment of health, I am sure there would always be some way we could address that situation, and I am hoping that would not be the case.

Sen. Seetahal: Sorry to interrupt. I wanted to ask this question about the sewerage treatment plants and you had indicated that WASA is intending to take over those from the National Housing Authority. About a year or so ago I asked about private people. I know there are many town house developments where these sewerage treatment plants were established and they are giving a lot of trouble and there was some intention eventually of WASA doing—is there any progress in that field?

Hon. P. Beckles: As a matter of fact Cabinet—the decision really, is in the first instance, to take over the 34 NHA plants but there are 100-plus private plants

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and that matter is also being addressed. But first, we are taking over the NHA plants and the consultancy that would take place in relation to the whole issue of the sewerage treatment will include both the private and the NHA plants. But the decision that is being implemented now, is the NHA plants and we are in the process of examining what it will cost for WASA to take over the private plants.

Mr. Vice-President, I just want to continue on the vein of the milestones that we have reached on the issue of monitoring and controlling the protection of our natural assets. I know Sen. Prof. Ramchand in particular, would be interested in hearing that today, we signed the Designation Notice for establishing the Matura Forest as an environmentally sensitive area and that is soon to be published in the *Gazette*. Moreover, we look forward to the eminent conclusion of arrangements for the designation of the Buccoo Reef, the Aripo Savannahs and the Nariva Swamp as environmentally sensitive areas. The manatee, the pawi and the white tailed sabrewing hummingbird have also been declared by Cabinet to be environmentally sensitive species in the month of June 2004. As I said, Buccoo Reef, the Matura Forest, the Aripo Savannahs and Nariva were also declared environmentally sensitive areas earlier this year by the Cabinet and the Environmental Management Authority. They are now in the process of doing the appropriate administrative work and the legal notices would soon be published after the surveys are done for those other areas.

As you can see, therefore, the Environmental Management Authority is central to initiatives to enhance environmental monitoring and control and, in this regard, in the new fiscal year we will strengthen the capacity of the Environmental Management Authority in this area primarily in two ways. Firstly, through the procurement of additional environmental police. In fact, we will launch the first of these environmental police officers next week Tuesday. I am sure Sen. Dr. McKenzie will be very pleased to hear that and, secondly, additional staff will be acquired with a view to improving the application process for Certificates of Environmental Clearance as well as the monitoring of projects governed by the Certificate of Environmental Clearance.

With respect to the policy and legislative development, in collaboration with the Environmental Management Authority, we will be facilitating a national conference on the environment very shortly. One took place about six years ago but we do recognize that with the increasing projects in the energy sector that it is necessary to have another consultation that would allow the general public to contribute and to give their views as they relate to the revised environmental policy for Trinidad and Tobago. Those consultations will take place next month

and we expect to have our final policy in place by the end of the year. Emerging therefore from this exercise, and again in collaboration with the EMA, the Ministry will focus on developing legislation with respect to the disposal of beverage containers, the water pollution, the air pollution and the waste rules.

The Institute of Marine Affairs, which is also another agency for which I have responsibility, undertook environmental monitoring and research in the Gulf of Paria and investigated pollution from land-based resources and activities in the Caroni Basin, monitored the coastal wetlands and seagrass beds of Trinidad and Tobago, determined coastal erosion rates along with the stability trends for the shorelines and developed erosion vulnerability index maps for the coast region.

Mr. Vice-President, the Institute of Marine Affairs research and monitoring capabilities have been enhanced by the recent acquisition of the teriscan remote sensing satellite ground station. This teriscan allows the Institute of Marine Affairs to access real time oceanographic atmospheric and terrestrial data for the entire Caribbean region. This kind of data dramatically improves Trinidad and Tobago's ability to proactively monitor weather conditions, fish stocks, the status of wetlands and other habitats, coastal erosion, the location of oil spills and a multiplicity of other atmospheric marine and terrestrial effects.

In the new fiscal year research activities by the EMA and other agencies will further advance through the acquisition of plant and equipment which will allow us to access and apply new technology to environmental management.

Mr. Vice-President, the completion of a new research laboratory and the institute of a new Doppler Weather Radar at the Meteorological Services Division which is funded through the European Union, should be completed in 2005. This radar will be an integral part of the country's early warning system which can mitigate the catastrophic effects of severe weather events such as tropical storms and hurricanes. It is important to know that the radar will be part of a Caribbean-wide system that can support regional disaster management and, therefore, next year we should be in a much better position to be able to monitor much earlier warnings related to tropical storms and hurricanes. In 2005, our Defence of Our Nation Forests and Watersheds will focus in the main activity of the Forestry Division and the National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme. The Forestry Division will be taking steps to employ an additional 20 foresters in order to strengthen the Division's capacity to apprehend forest offenders and recover the State's resources of timber and wildlife.

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The Division will also continue to upgrade its forest fire fighting equipment and encourage the involvement of the public in preventing forest fires through its Forest Fire Protection Education Programme. And while this year we have been very fortunate in that we have not had many forest fires, we want to ensure that come 2005 we are in a better position to deal with forest fires.

During the fiscal year 2003/2004, the National Reforestation Watershed Programme established by the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment—accelerated a response to the rapid loss of our country's forest cover approximately 5 per cent between 1995—2000—and the side effects which are normally the increase of flooding and the said issue of the water quality that was raised by Sen. Prof. Deosaran.

Since the inception of these programmes 33 sites have been identified and prepared for planting by 33 community-based groups which translate into improved protection of over 11,600 acres of forest land. Eighty thousand seedlings have been planted and some 1,000 persons have been employed in this programme.

Mr. Vice-President, the impact of this programme is very far-reaching. We all know that forests may be considered as the lungs of a nation. Our renewed forests will mean better air quality in the future. Moreover, we will have the benefits of increased quality and availability of water supply through the restoration of watersheds. At a time when the increasing shortage of potable water is acknowledged as a global concern therefore, in the ministry we recognize how important this programme is.

As I said earlier, the ministry will be taking steps to deepen our support of the community-based environmental initiatives. Indeed, my ministry sees the strengthening of civil society institutions and partnerships as fundamental to our efforts with respect to environmental management. In this regard, a major initiative will be to operationalize the Green Fund to ensure that community groups and organizations can be provided with much needed funding.

The Green Fund is one of the major funding mechanisms to encourage and enhance the involvement of community groups and organizations in remediation, reforestation and the conservation of our environment.

Mr. Vice-President, the fund was created in 2000, which amended the Miscellaneous Taxes Act, Chap. 77:01, to introduce with effect from January 01, 2001 a tax of 0.1 per cent on gross sales of receipts of any company doing business in Trinidad and Tobago. We know that the Fund was never

operationalized due to legislative conflicts with the Exchequer and Audit Act, Chap. 69:01. Accordingly, in 2004 legislative changes were made to facilitate the operation and administration of the Green Fund in a manner similar to funds established under section 43 of the Exchequer and Audit Act, Chap. 69:01 through the Finance Act, 2004. In 2005, the Minister will ensure that all other requirements are put in place to make the fund available to our partners in civil society.

Mr. Vice-President, yesterday the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment together with the Ministry of Finance, met to deal with the regulations that need to be put in place to ensure that the fund meets the requirement of the Finance Act, 2004.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has approached the Ministry with a view to assisting the ministry in operationalizing the fund and once we have completed our meetings with the Ministry of Finance in relation to putting the regulations in place for the Green Fund, we would then be ready to have the fund operationalized very early in 2005.

I would now turn to the utilities sector. In the new fiscal year, the ministry will focus its attention on initiatives for upgrading and renewal of the public utilities in keeping with the immediate needs and evolving demands of the population, as well as laying the foundation for a transformation that will service the medium- and long-term demands in respect of economic growth in achieving developed country status.

The availability of a reliable electricity supply is critical to the country's economic growth and development, and in this regard, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission continues to make a significant impact on Trinidad and Tobago's socio-economic development by ensuring a reliable, safe and adequate supply of electricity. Not only are the electricity needs of the citizens generally satisfied, but also the growth of business and industrial activity is facilitated leading to an increase in the country's gross domestic product and increased employment.

At the heart of the thrust in support of the national development is T&TEC's commitment to improving the quality and the range of its services.

2.45 p.m.

Last year, T&TEC focused its attention on improving services to ensure that supply was available to all customers, almost 99 per cent of the times. Eighty-four

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per cent of connections were completed on the same day and 99 per cent in less than three days. The average response time to attend to customers' trouble reports was 4.5 hours in 2004.

In collaboration with the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC), quality standards for the electricity sector have been developed and are now in effect, which constitutes another mechanism to protect consumers and ensure that electricity services are in keeping with national development objectives. We are aware that there are several penalties that are attached to T&TEC's failure to deliver certain services to customers within a particular time.

The Commission has also focused on reducing cost and improving its efficiency. Strategies involved in training, reduction of overtime cost, material costs, productivity improvement and setting new performance targets are to be intensified in the year 2005.

Most of the projects to be pursued by T&TEC in 2005 will deal with the development of T&TEC's distribution and transmission—their infrastructure—and these are critical to the Commission's continuing ability to meet the growing need for electricity throughout Trinidad and Tobago. In order to meet the increasing load demands, the Commission will:

- (1) continue the extension of the 132kv transmission into Port of Spain and the establishment of the gateway 132/33kv substation on Wrightson Road, with an estimated expenditure of \$99 million;
- (2) continue the extension of 132kv transmission system to Pinto Road substation;
- (3) continue and develop the Port of Spain underground distribution network, which will cost \$44 million.

The following substations are to be upgraded at a cost of \$59.5 million—San Raphael, Bamboo, Pinto, Mount Hope, Five Rivers, O'Meara, Barataria, San Juan and Abattoir. Other upgrade activities would include the south east transmission ring which supplies customer areas in Rio Claro, St. Mary's, Mayaro and Galeota, at an expenditure of \$10 million.

The Trincity 66kv transmission ring, which is to be reinforced to meet increasing demands will cost \$8 million. The south west sub-transmission ring which will supply customers in areas of Point Fortin, Fyzabad, Santa Flora, Guapo and Brighton, will cost \$1 million.

T&TEC also intends to establish several new facilities during the next fiscal year at a cost of \$44.5 million. New substations will be located at Edward Street, Tarouba, Invaders Bay, Lowlands and Malabar; a system earth at the Barataria 33kv substation to facilitate the introduction of 132kv into Port of Spain and the associated re-arrangements of the substation.

The 132kv substation will supply a proposed steel plant and similar substations to supply the new iron and steel plant, in addition to 132kv ring to include two new substations at the existing Desalcott substation. The estimated expenditure on these activities will be \$44.5 million.

Other projects rescheduled for commencement are the replacement of transformers and switchgears at \$5 million; the implementation of a computerized automatic meter reading outage management system that would promote more efficient meter reading, less estimated bills and the ability to provide instantaneous response to customer queries, while at the same time monitoring load research and supply—that would cost \$30 million—and the construction of the northern area distribution building at Beetham, which will cost \$24 million.

I now turn to the Water and Sewerage Authority. To this end, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance indicated in the 2005 budget presentation, that the three main pillars of the Government strategy are directed at:

- Maximising returns from the energy sector;
- Promoting the development of the non-energy sector specifically in the manufacturing, in the industrial, tourism, agriculture and small business areas; and
- ensuring an equitable distribution of wealth for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

This Government understands that the operations of the Water and Sewerage Authority impact each of these three pillars and I also know that several issues and concerns have been raised as they relate to WASA.

WASA is a regulated industry that significantly influences the economic and industrial survival of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the quality of life of all citizens. Furthermore, it will continue to do so in the year 2020 and beyond. That is why ongoing development of the water and waste water sectors is fundamental to Trinidad and Tobago in terms of its long term development.

Therefore, in fiscal year 2003/2004, \$174.5 million was invested for 30 kilometers of pipeline, 2 service reservoirs, 6 booster stations, two waste water

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treatment plants, a feasibility study of the sewer system along the East/West Corridor, water quality projects at three plants, as well as the procurement of ductile iron pipe materials for the LABIDCO project and other government projects at Mayaro and Wallerfield.

In the fiscal year 2004, a further investment of \$55 million was approved to assist WASA in its modernization of its infrastructure and \$30.5 million will enable WASA to continue improvements in the efficiency of its network for the transmission and distribution of water to areas in Trinidad which receive water less than two days per week.

The sum of \$7 million will assist WASA in the procurement of pipes and \$10.6 million will be used to rehabilitate waste water treatment plants that have been adopted by the National Housing Authority. Cabinet has also agreed to the recommendations of the energy sub-committee that was appointed to deal with the way forward for the Water and Sewerage Authority and the committee's major recommendation was the implementation of what is called a three-year investment programme.

This programme would lay the foundation for Vision 2020, the objective really being a 24/7 potable supply of water and of waste water access for the entire Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard, a master plan study for the water and waste water sectors will be undertaken with immediate effect.

This master plan has several deliverables such as the identification of new water sources, evaluation and upgrade and reconstitution of a water supply grid to provide for an integrated network that would support the Government's housing, agriculture, tourism and industrial development programmes at Wallerfield, LABIDCO, Mayaro, North Coast, Caroni lands and to reduce the dry season effect.

This master plan will provide a framework for the development of a customer-friendly and environmentally-friendly sector which emphasizes public and private participation. In addition, the Water and Sewerage Authority would implement strategic initiatives in the areas of local water resources development and distribution, looking in particular at leak detection, leak management, sewerage sector expansion and institutional strengthening of WASA.

Even as we speak, we are all aware of the challenges facing the Water and Sewerage Authority in continuing its provision of water and waste water services while improving its infrastructure.

In relation to WASA and its deliverables of water and the concern in the waste water sector, we know that there are absolutely no quick fixes in this matter, but

we recognize the importance of the infrastructural upgrade if we are to have sustainability in this sector. Based on our investments, there will be a gradual transformation of the level of service provided to customers over the next three years as it relates to this three-year plan and, as I said, it would be laying a foundation for the provision of water on a 24/7 service to all customers.

The establishment of appropriate tariffs and customer service standards is also critical and to this end the Water and Sewerage Authority has been working with the Regulated Industries Commission to ensure that customers receive quality service at an appropriate price. And as I indicated, the Regulated Industries Commission, similar to that of T&TEC, would also be launching standards for the Water and Sewerage Authority to follow.

I now turn to the postal sector. As we are aware, the postal reform process has been in progress for the last five years and during that time we have sought to build a world class customer responsive postal sector that will be able to survive in this highly competitive global environment .

Whilst we are aware that we have some considerable way to go, we do know that there has been some achievements in the postal sector. During fiscal year 2003/2004, which represented the last year of the five-year delegated management arrangement (DMA) which piloted the transformation of the postal sector in Trinidad and Tobago to this period, we are moving towards a long term design for the postal sector.

In this regard the postal reform project is being implemented with the support of the World Bank and at this time an 18-month transition period is in effect during which additional legislative, infrastructural and other requirements would be put in place to ready the sector for a new period of growth and development. This reform programme would include a capital expenditure component comprising of initiatives of modernization of the transport, rehabilitation of the facilities, the automation of post offices and the upgrading of information and security services.

Perhaps the most critical aspect of the reform process has been the transformation of the postal service to the establishment of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation. Fiscal year 2003/2004 represented the fifth year of the TTPost existence and in those last five years we have seen unprecedented renewal of the postal services.

In relation to its performance, the areas that were targeted were universal delivery, transit time, customer service, revenue growth and net income.

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Mr. Vice-President, we continue to witness challenges meeting the income targets, but we recognize and applaud achievements with respect to the other indicators. TTPost is now providing a nationwide delivery coverage of 96.8 per cent, compared to less than 50 per cent in 1999, at the start of the DMA. Ninety-two per cent of the mails are being delivered within two days of being mailed and customer satisfaction is at the highest, with an overall score of 81.4 per cent, based on this year's customer survey.

In addition, the mail volume has increased steadily, especially in respect of bulk mail volumes. The business is now reaching 16.3 million.

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

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

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, as I am on my feet, may I ask the hon. Minister at the same time to—

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Mark: I am sure the Minister would allow me to ask a question. I want to know whether—

Hon. P. Beckles: I thought that depended on my giving way.

Sen. Mark: Of course.

Hon. P. Beckles: I now give way.

Sen. Mark: Thank you very much. I am a lady's gentleman, in this regard. I would like to know whether the Government has taken any decision on the future of Transcend International? We had information here sometime ago that their contractual arrangement would have come to an end in June. I do not know if the Government has taken a decision as yet, concerning their continuance in Trinidad and Tobago. Please clarify that for us.

Hon. P. Beckles: As I indicated, there is an 18-month period of transition. The World Bank is supporting—in other words, in that period from that agreement to long term agreement. We have an 18-month period by which we are reviewing. We have indicated that we are looking at local management, as an option. There is a committee that is set up by Cabinet, which includes the

Ministry of Finance, TTPost and the Ministry that is looking at this transition period. We will have discussions with the union, as wide a consultation as possible, to decide what will happen after that transition period.

Mr. Vice-President, during this transition period, as I indicated, and into the future, the Ministry will continue to facilitate the transformation of the postal sector, so that it is able to support the changing needs of our society. To this end, Trinidad and Tobago has sought and won a seat on the Council of Administration of the Universal Postal Union, an agency comprised of 190 member-countries, which performs an advisory, mediating and liaison role and renders technical assistance where needed. The Universal Postal Union sets the rules for the international mail exchanges and makes recommendations to stimulate growth in mail volumes and to improve the quality of the postal service.

We believe that our position in the Universal Postal Union allows us to have some influence over the decisions and policy that will have an impact on Trinidad and Tobago.

In closing, I want to chart the way forward for the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment which, as I indicated is just two years old, however, associated with its many agencies, in some places, the Forestry Division and the Horticulture Division, which can boast of being more than 100 years old. We are looking very closely at working together with these institutions that bring to the Ministry, years and years of experience for us to deliver a better quality of service to Trinidad and Tobago.

In the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, in its current design, we are of the view that that Ministry has an amazing potential for synergy and for collaboration with the multiplicity of agencies that fall under that Ministry. In fact, the environment and utilities sector, I would want to suggest, is a perfect combination in keeping with international paradigms for sustainable and national development, which recommend an integrated and holistic approach to sustainable development.

In respect of integrated water resources management, the key stakeholders: the Forestry Division, WASA, the Water Resources Agency, SWMCOL and the Meteorological Services, are in the purview of the Ministry.

The drive to create a unified high-performing organization of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, is part of a reformed public service and is able to maximize its potential to positively impact and change the lives that led the senior management team to engage in the development of the Ministry's

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strategic plan. The focus being on customer and quality of service, as well as aligning to the wider reform process in relation to the Government's Vision 2020.

The last matter I would like to address is the issue of the CEPEP, which is always a matter that causes great excitement and concern. CEPEP is a project that falls under SWMCOL and by extension, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. There have been many criticisms of the project. The Ministry is in the process of looking at that project again with a view to taking on broad the multiplicity of criticisms that have been raised. Those criticisms, together with the successes of the project, will certainly inform the way forward. It is still a very young project. There is much room for improvement. I would not want to take away from the tremendous work that has been done by CEPEP, as it relates to the overall improvement of the environment of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to close by thanking my colleagues in the Upper House for the opportunity to have made my delivery. The Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment is responsible for delivering the basic needs to the people of Trinidad and Tobago: water, electricity and, most important, to ensuring that we protect and preserve the environment.

I look forward to the contributions of my colleagues here as they relate to constructive criticisms and suggestions for the improvement in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. I give the assurance that we are working steadfastly to continue to deliver the kind of service, both in the water and waste water sectors, which I think every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago will feel proud of. I thank you very much.

Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I am just a country vet. Perhaps, some of the goings-on in this Senate escape me and are outside the realm of my comprehension. I am sorry Sen. Sahadeo is not here. I do not understand how a letter, which has a valid signature, could be deemed as bogus if it suggests a chairman who is acting and not officially appointed. A letter is deemed invalid if there is no proper signature on it. The fact that the chairman may not have been officially appointed—somebody must be acting in the capacity of chairman in such a large organization. I do not understand how a letter could be deemed bogus and invalid, namely on that count.

Another thing that I would like to get clarification on from the Minister, is that it has come to our attention that WASA and T&TEC have been involved in the Landate project at Mason Hall, to the extent of the laying of infrastructure to the

value of 1.2 million, free of charge. We are just asking for clarification, whether or not the Minister has any information on that. As I said before, I am just an ordinary vet. My clients are hunting dogs in the main, but the more I see of the goings-on here, the more I love my dogs.

In the context of—

Hon. Beckles: You say you have information that WASA and T&TEC are doing work in Mason Hall free of charge?

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Yes.

Hon. Beckles: First of all, that information is wrong. I will deny that outright. I do not know where that information came from. If you have the source of the information I would—

Sen. Mark: Could you indicate to the Parliament whether WASA and T&TEC are in fact doing work and they have laid infrastructure on this particular project? Are you aware? Are you also aware of the value of this particular infrastructure that has been laid by both WASA and T&TEC?

Hon. Beckles: You are asking me if I am aware because of your colleague having said that it is taking place. You are making a statement of fact and then you are asking me if I am aware. [*Interruption*] Very well couched, seeking clarification, when she is making a statement of fact that it occurs. My information is that no such thing as to WASA and T&TEC doing free, not only on that alleged project, but any other project. That is not taking place.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. In the context of this debate here today and the concern of the national community with Landate, I think it is only fitting and relevant, a quote I would like to start my budget contribution with. This is a quote from José Martí, a Cuban statesman, poet and journalist.

“There are men who live contented, though they live without decorum... When there are many men without decorum, there are always others who themselves possess the decorum of many men. These are the ones who rebel with terrible strength against those who rob nations of their liberty, which is to rob men of their decorum. Embodied in those men are thousands of men, a whole people, human dignity.”

We on this side will rebel with terrible strength against this PNM regime, under which the cries and the tears of our citizens rise to high heaven every day. We

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will rebel together with the thousands of people of this country who understand that their very liberty and right to life are being snatched away daily.

Mr. Vice-President, extrajudicial killings in this country are increasing with frequency and brutality. They are killing youths in groups of four now—young men 15 and 16 years old.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, it seems that the justice system has collapsed in this country, and the police have abrogated to themselves the role of judge, jury and executioner. We on this side will rebel against those who purport to rob this nation of our decorum, liberty and human dignity.

There is consensus and alarm in this country over the manner in which the economy is being run. In spite of the revenues of billions of dollars and the expenditure of billions of dollars, this economy remains, essentially, a plantation economy, dependent on natural resources of oil and gas, and subject to the price and volume shocks that such an economy can experience. We have experienced this in the past. Therefore, all the economists and “pundits” are repeatedly saying that our economy is an open economy; it is a vulnerable economy; and nothing is being done to change that situation, except lip service.

Mr. Vice-President, in the aftermath of the budget presentation by the Minister of Finance, in the many fora of eminent economists and citizens and so forth on the talk shows and television programmes, there was a consensus with respect to certain economic indicators in this budget that supported the theory that this economy remains, essentially, a plantation economy.

Some of these concerns were, that the energy products represent 83 per cent of the export of this country and 41 per cent of the revenues; the petroleum sector constitutes 40 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of this country; and that the petroleum sector has shown growth of over 25.9 per cent while the non-petroleum sector has grown only by 4.4 per cent.

Economists have warned that we are losing competitiveness in the international market. In fact, we have dropped by 10 points. There is a high correlation of 0.93 between expenditures and revenues as expounded by an economist. We are spending as fast as we earn and that is dangerous.

Mr. Vice-President, there is concern that our expenditure is escalating at an unsustainable rate. For example, in 2004, our expenditure was over \$20 billion

and for 2005 it is over \$25 billion. The concern with respect to this unsustainable rate of expenditure is that we are setting up this society, especially the most vulnerable, the poor, for a big fall.

There is concern that the Government's social delivery programmes in this budget, which purports to spend over \$3 billion is being spread over 11 ministries amounts to over 78 programmes. With respect to the social sector delivery programmes, there is a concern that there is no sense of what value we are getting for money. How are we really transforming the quality of life of our citizens with all these billions of dollars that are being spent? In fact, that is a valid concern when I look at this document, which indicates the level of implementation of the different programmes that the Government has adopted under the different Heads like the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and so forth.

Under investment in the social capital programmes, there are a number of programmes indicated here. The headings are: The ministry, the promise and the implementation to date. Under the social capital programmes we have the existing Social Sector Investment Programme which was expanded to include the National Social Development Programme, which was allocated \$100 billion.

There are a number of allocations there. The curious thing about this document is that next to the implementation column, there is a blank. Therefore, it seems that the Government can give no indication of what sort of implementation value for money or the transformation of the quality of life that has been accomplished in the last budget.

For example, the Minister just talked about the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP). There was an increase in the allocation to CEPEP of \$225 million and there is nothing next to the implementation column. We have no idea what CEPEP has accomplished, or what it has been able to do, or how it has transformed the environment. The Minister said that CEPEP has improved the environment. I am not sure about CEPEP improving the environment. I know that CEPEP has certainly improved the bank balances of PNM contractors who were hired to plunder the Treasury of this country.

Mr. Vice-President, significant allocation increases were given to the Textbook Rental Loan Programme, the School Nutrition Programme and the Free Student Transportation Programme. There is nothing next to these programmes indicating: how many more students were fed; how many more students were given books; how many more students were transported; and how has this translated into progress or increased benefits to our citizens and so forth.

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Increased allocations were also given to the Sport Plus and Sport Training Enhancement Programme and there is a blank next to that. With respect to the Community Development Bursaries Programme, \$3.7 million were allocated and there was no accountability here, nothing. We do not know how many persons were given bursaries, and if they were given bursaries at all, what was the value of the bursaries. There is no indication; there is no accounting.

With respect to the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership (GAP) programme; Adolescent Mothers Programme; Community Improvement Services; Establishment of a Children Authority to fight for child rights; and establishment of a Child Indicator Monitoring System, there is nothing next to these programmes with respect to implementation. We do not know anything; there is no accounting.

There was also completion of a National Policy on Social Development and the establishing of a Monitoring and Evaluating System for the Social Sector Programmes and it goes on and on. In the last budget, very little was implemented with respect to these social sector programmes. There are a few things like the implementation of the Family Court; the new review of the Specialized Youth Service Programme (SYSP) was done and so forth. There is minimal accounting.

With respect to the Halfway House for Male Ex-prisoners; the Remand House for Young Female Offenders; Family Life Management programme; and the expansion of disability grant—well that came in this budget; but there is no indication as to how many persons were afforded relief by this programme. There was the Rehabilitation of Child Labourers Programme; the relocation of the Home for Socially Displaced Elderly Persons and so forth. All this was just talk, because they are unable to account for the implementation process.

Despite the protest that we have heard on the other side, during this budget debate, that people are unduly critical of this budget and critical of the provisions in the budget, people are worried, and they are worried with just cause because they are unable to get any sort of accountability for the myriad of social programmes where over \$3 billion have been spent.

Mr. Vice-President, there are concerns in this country that it is not enough for the Government to pay lip service to diversification. Sector policies must be developed. The annual budget must be an opportunity for the Government to account to the national community on how well the targets set in the Sector Policy Documents have been transformed into reality: what were the successes; what were the failures; and how do they intend to correct these failures and so forth, but there is no accounting.

For example, with respect to agriculture, every year they come with a new ad hoc programme for agriculture. The Sector Policy Document of 2001/2005 was never even mentioned. The programmes and targets set in that document were never even mentioned. Every year someone dreams up some new ad hoc plan that is not even being implemented. However, if it was ever implemented, it was implemented with no sense of reference to the sector policy programme.

Mr. Vice-President, in spite of all the clamour over the last three years, every year we have the same criticisms of the budget; we have the same concerns—all the citizens are concerned; and yet there is no sense that anyone is listening. The light is on, but there is no sense that anyone is home.

One of the indications that this society is dissatisfied with the way this country is being run is the innumerable number of marches and demonstrations which take place as a matter of course in this country. On last Sunday, the Inter-Religious Organization spearheaded a massive march with thousands of persons from different religious organizations because they are concerned about peace; they are concerned about the level of crime in the country; and they are concerned about the deterioration of the quality of life in this society. We have religious groups marching and demonstrating against this Government; we have community groups and opposition groups also demonstrating. You name it! This is what is happening in this society and there is no indication that anyone is listening.

Mr. Vice-President, given this, I was trying to come to grips with the enigma, which is the PNM. I could not understand why it is that a Government that has all these resources at its disposal—as Sen. Abdul-Hamid said, “it is a great time to be in Government”—they are enjoying the fruits of this country; all the moneys that this country is generating; and all the natural resources that this country is generating. According to the young people, “they are loving themselves”.

Mr. Vice-President, what is happening is that while they are enjoying the spoils of office—while they are busy plundering and looting these good times to their own benefit—hundreds of thousands of persons in this country are living below the poverty line; they are living on less than US \$2 a day. This is not just the Opposition saying that; this is in a UNDP report. This is a credible international body that has made this analysis. I had to look for some sort of explanation as to why this Government is acting in this particular manner.

I went back into our folklore and I realized that this Government is afflicted with a certain political condition. Mr. Vice-President, I am sure you are aware that in our folklore, when babies die before they are baptized, they are turned into “douens”. The “douens” appear normal but their feet are faced backward. They

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look normal and they are trying to go forward but their feet are facing backward, so they are going backward all the time, without being aware of it. What is happening here is that this Government is afflicted with the political condition of “douendom”. [*Desk thumping*]

These creatures operate in the dark; they operate in the forest. They lure victims—the unsuspecting, the innocent—into the forest with goodies and treats and so forth. If you are not careful you will follow them into the forest; you will follow these goodies, these treats and you will follow these “douens” into the forest. They are facing you so you are not aware that they are carrying you back into the forest, and you perish in the forest.

This explains perfectly the philosophy of this Government. It explains why every step this regime takes, it takes this country 50 years backward. [*Desk thumping*] It explains the remarks that Sen. Abdul-Hamid made yesterday with respect to over 400,000 persons accessing the social programmes in this country.

3.30 p.m.

The politics of “douendom” is luring 400,000 persons back into the forest of underdevelopment, dependency and poverty. [*Desk thumping*] The politics of “douendom” explains why we are still a plantation economy; why there is rampant poverty; why we are unable to protect our children and there is child prostitution. This did not happen overnight. It started in the 60s with the steelband riots with Renegades and Desperadoes. These guys felt a sense of alienation in the society and started rivalries that led to gang warfare. Renegades marched against the government demanding work. This is where the five-day project started.

The “douens” do not understand that even if they created this make-work programme for people in the society who needed work, they never enforced the work ethic and politics of ensuring that people do a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay. Do you know why? Because they employed these people to be their political supporters who would run through Barataria and beat people; run through San Juan and beat people and pelt eggs against their opponents in political parties. You cannot force people like that to do anything because when you want them to do your dirty work, they would do it. This is what the politics of “douendom” has created. It has created a creature that knows that once you are with the PNM you do not have to do anything. You go on a job site and sit.

I am sure that you know of the joke of this foreigner who came to the country and he was being driven around by a guide. He said, “There are many statues in

this country.” The person who was driving him around said, “Those are not statues they are URP workers.” That is how bad it was.

The ordinary people have no commitment to work because they see the revelry that takes place at the top and the favouritism with the contracts. Sen. Mark exposed the high lifestyles and jet-setting lifestyles that take place at the top. Why should they work? This ideology has come through generations. It did not take two or three days to do that. It did not happen under the UNC government. What can a young man or woman tell his children? Yesterday, Sen. Roy Augustus made the point that “long time” people did not think in terms of poverty. They thought about working hard and carrying their families from point A to point B. What can a young man or woman tell his or her son about discipline; working hard; values and ethics when he or she is sitting by the corner all day and collecting pay at the end of the fortnight? He has no sense of values and ethics.

This is inculcated in him deliberately by the politics of “douendom” that leads him to the forest to perish. Generations have perished under that ideology, not knowing what it is to give an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay. This is the result and they are boasting that 400,000 persons have to access social programmes in this country. Give the people the infrastructure; sustainable jobs; a sense of self-esteem that they can work and earn what they want in an honest manner and people will emancipate themselves from poverty.

I would like to quote an article from this author Bernard Edghill of St. Ann’s. This is the point that Sen. Roy Augustus and Sen. Prof. Deosaran made yesterday. This is from the *Newsday*, Tuesday, October 19, 2004.

“Poverty is really a state of mind

Money is not the only way to help the poor as the \$150 increase in old age pensions gives them more money to squander in Play Whe, Pick 2 and Scratch which the government’s NLCB has made readily available for them to play their dreams and throw away their money...

What the poor need is an organization to provide counselling in money management as the needs of parents and their children come before their wants and what they feel they must have...

Freeness, even if it is coupled with free education from primary school to university level, is of no value to the poor unless we give them a true feeling of good self worth and self-esteem, that will encourage and motivate them to strive for better quality lives.”

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In the '60s there was poverty and many young unemployed people. I remember that my brother was unemployed for a long time. These guys used to lime on the block, but the values of the society were different. There was a consensus with respect to morality, value and spiritual and family life in the society. This has totally broken down based on the economics that was fostered by the society. The economics of dependency; handouts; waiting on a SHARE basket and this and that, for them to mobilize you at election time to do whatever they require. The robbery of and raping of the self-esteem, human dignity and the pride of a nation are the basis of our problems in this society at this point in time.

The politics of "douendom" is clear in the Government's failure to address the question of the imminent destruction of the economic framework of our society, by the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). They are concerned with the frills and trappings of these rules-based organizations. They lobbied hard in Miami and the other fora for the headquarters of the FTAA but they have not promoted a debate that would enlighten the people of this country as to what the WTO means to the working class which is under clear and imminent danger. Very clearly, we are unable to compete. It does not matter how you cut it, the transnational corporations spend billions of dollars, and they are able to subsidize their farmers and economy. How will you compete with that?

In Third World developing countries, we have to band together to demand a New Economic World Order and rules that would take into account the fact that there is no equality of this playing field. There is massive inequality of size and power in the productive and technological capacity. There is no competition. In the Third World developing countries we are being relegated to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the multinational corporations. Nobody is saying that.

Many of the measures that the Government is taking, which I will deal with later with respect to the poultry industry, are in response to the globalized world and economics. They are not telling us that. They are hiding the truth. The kinds of expenditure and economics that this Government is practising, given our size, vulnerability and lack of competitiveness in this global society, are unsustainable.

I am convinced that what is happening in the society at the local level is a deliberate plot. The social instability; crime, kidnapping, total breakdown of the justice system and the extrajudicial killings destabilize us and have us under fear and terror, so that this Patrick Manning regime would be better able to impose all the fascist legislation that we have seen him bring to Parliament and which was rejected by the UNC party. They came to Parliament with the Police Bills which

we totally rejected because it sought to give them total control of the police force. We said that is totally undemocratic and against the Constitution of this country. Over the last few years, we have seen an assault on the Constitution of this country that has been unprecedented.

We are clearly heading down the road of another Haiti and Guyana. Whether the politics of “douendom” recognizes it or not, three out of every group of four young men in this country have guns. The people who have access to guns in this country are getting younger and younger. Yesterday, I was talking to the father of a young man who was killed recently in Gonzales. He told me that his son had told him that the first time that he had access to a gun, it was given to him by what the PNM recognizes as a community leader, all those who are being financed with ghost gangs under URP by this wicked Government. At 11 years of age, this child was given a gun to do robberies together with another 13-year-old. That was his first experience in this society under political “douendom”. Apparently, he was a brave little boy.

Sen. D. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. I have heard it said on several occasions and it started with Sen. Mark, but I am not going to allow it any further. She referred to the Government as a wicked government which by extension means that we on this side are wicked. That is completely improper and out of order. It should not happen here.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Dr. Kernahan, I advise that you avoid making these broad statements. Please continue with your contribution.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Mr. Vice-President, thank you. Three out of four young men in this country are exposed to guns. They are actually given guns to go out and do jobs. One of the experiences of the father of the same young man who was killed recently—he was only 22 years old. I saw the identification photo. He was a young and good-looking “fella” who was brave and under a different environment he would have fulfilled his potential in this society, as a person who would have been able to contribute to the society. It is so sad. Through no fault of theirs, they are being lured away by these “douens”, criminals and gangs to their death.

The father of this same child is a carpenter and his experience is that in big broad daylight at 10.00 a.m. on Belgrade Street, he and a group of men were working on a house and a group of five young men came to them. Three out of the five had guns. We are talking about 13-and 14-year-olds; young children with their mothers’ milk still around their mouths. They robbed these workmen at gunpoint and threatened to shoot them because they did not have enough money. One of them had only \$8 and the young man said, “I should shoot you for that. Only \$8 a big man like you have in yuh pocket.”

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That is the sort of creature that we are breeding in this society. The human dignity and self-esteem of people in the society to care for their families; to work and be productive and to pass on proper social values are being undermined. They do not understand the politics of “douendom”. When you undermine that, these people can teach their children nothing. Therefore, their children are free to roam. They cannot transmit values to their children. They have precluded that and made sure to use and exploit poverty.

3.45 p.m.

This is what this gentleman was saying here, that the poor must be helped and not exploited as is being done in T&T and in other countries. He understands that the poor is being exploited for the political gains of this regime.

Mr. Vice-President, until civil society gets up and has the courage and the intestinal fortitude and other types of fortitudes, to denounce the politics of “douendom” and not try to cover up; not try to apologize; not try to dismiss some of the acts that we are seeing in this country as of no consequence—I actually saw a *Newsday* editorial which said: “Why are they making such a big fuss about Landate, that is no problem. That is not a major problem at this point. Look at the nice things we are seeing in the budget.” Mr. Vice-President, if that were the UNC government, they would have called for our heads on a platter. They would not have been contented with the Minister alone. They would have called for the resignation of the entire government. But under the regime of the “douens”, we are seeing people apologizing for them: “Dah eh nutten man. Dah is just ah lil’ ting. Dah eh no problem.” Mr. Vice-President, the hypocrisy in this society is what is leading this country to its eventual destruction. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, I would like to understand this Government. How can we talk about poverty alleviation, when at the same time you are constantly attacking; constantly decapitalizing sectors of the economy that provide sustainable productive employment that would serve to keep the human dignity, the decorum and the self-esteem of the society intact? How can you do that? In the budget statement it says and I quote:

“Mr. Speaker, we believe the agricultural sector can make a significant contribution to the national development effort. Our goal is to increase the sector’s contribution to economic and social development, and employment creation while providing an increasing level of the food requirements of the nation.”

This was a sort of come down from the last budget. The 2004 budget was much more uptempo and upbeat about agriculture than this. In the 2005 budget on page 12 it says:

“We believe that we can make a contribution to the economy...”

The last budget said something like: “That agriculture sector would be given top priority, and the agro-processing would be given top priority...” and so on. I believe, therefore, that agriculture has been downgraded from a Category 3 hurricane to a tropical depression. This is my impression of the agriculture in this country.

Mr. Vice-President, agriculture is under attack. The productive elements of this society are under attack. I believe that we should look at what the economists in the society are concerned about, that there is a disconnect—as Sen. Montano likes to say—between what the Government actually says and what it does. It can be explained that under “douendom” you live in a surreal world, you know; the world of the undead, so you do not really have to account for anything you do in the real world because the real world is different. You live in a surreal world where everything is different, you are in another dimension; you live in a parallel universe, so you do not really have to account for anything in the real world. This is why, Mr. Vice-President, they can actually say one thing and do something else, all in the same breath with a straight face: nobody laughs, nobody grins, nobody looks slightly embarrassed. As I said, they do these things with a straight face.

Mr. Vice-President, they said that they were going to promote agriculture and so on, but promptly in the next couple of pages the Minister of Finance announces the abolition of the surcharge on chicken parts to 33 per cent, totally undercutting the poultry industry in this country. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources came here and he said something totally different with respect to the poultry industry. In that surreal world of the undead, it is okay, Mr. Vice-President, but we here in the real world are confused.

The Member of Parliament for Arouca North, Hon. Jarrette Narine gave us an extensive exposé on the poultry sector and the Government’s support of it. I would like to remind the national community and the Senate what Minister Narine had to say with respect to the poultry sector. He said that my figures were wrong. I had said that the poultry sector employed 6,500 people. He said no, you are wrong, your figures are from two or three years ago; the agricultural sector employs 10,000 people in five sub-sectors:

“...broiler/breeder, hatching egg production, hatching/broiler, growing/processing and feed manufacturing.”

I stand corrected. Mr. Vice-President, he went on to say and I quote:

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“It is estimated that the pluck shops, live markets, account for approximately 60 per cent of the broiler market and the remaining 40 per cent by the established processing plants.”

Mr. Vice-President, if dumped goods—goods which are produced under the cost of production; goods that are subsidized to the tune of \$360 billion, by the Farm Bill in the USA and in the European Union—are allowed to come into this country and undercut and undercost the agricultural producers here—The Minister said that 60 per cent of the chickens in this country are processed by pluck shops: that is the ordinary man; the pluck shop workers; the farmers who they buy these chickens from, who grow chickens in little 3,000 pens; 2,000 pens and little 500 pens, these are the people in the rural communities.

Mr. Vice-President, I live in a rural community; there are a number of chicken farmers in my community. I spoke to one of them recently and he told me that it really does not pay. To produce chicken is a high infrastructural cost: the pens, the feed, electricity bill, water bill; you have to pay workers; you have to buy litter, medication and so on. The poultry business is very difficult. He said he invested that money and he is staying in it because he does not really have a choice; he is trying to make it okay. It is very difficult to make a profit; you really have to work hard and try to do the best that you can.

What does the Government do, Mr. Vice-President, it undercuts these hard-working farmers in this country who are producing. They are in the productive sector. They are not people looking for handouts. They are people who get up 4 o'clock in the morning to feed the chickens and to give them water. When WASA decides to turn off the water and you have 3,000 chickens without water for a day that is real stress and real pressure. You would then have to go to the regional corporation to buy a tank of water for \$400 and \$500, and the chickens probably need two and three tanks of water for the day. Mr. Vice-President, these people undergo serious stress.

The Government is prepared to undercut them; bring cheap chickens into this country, but you give CEPEP \$225 million to stand by the side of the road to cut grass and so on. Mr. Vice-President, I have no problem with making work for people in this country, but give them productive, sustainable employment. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, with respect to NAMDEVCO in the sector policy programme for agriculture, there are millions of jobs that need to be created and people to be trained to fill these positions, to advance agriculture in this country.

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If you invest that same \$225 million—that you put into CEPEP—into the agricultural sector, we will be off and running. Agriculture will get a new lease on life. We will be a productive sector. We will be able to contribute to the foreign exchange. We will bring down that food bill from \$2 billion. We will supply the local market. We will supply the School Nutrition Programme. There is a tremendous amount of scope for investment in agriculture. Mr. Vice-President, this is for our own sustainability; this is not for somebody else to eat; this is for us to eat, in the context of concerns about availability of food in the next five years. They are not telling us that.

The demands of China and India and so on in the next five years will mean that less food will be coming to Third World countries at higher prices. Right now they are dumping the food at lower prices because they have the markets. When they get us in their clutches—they have these markets—will there be these low prices for food?

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Mr. Vice President, the Minister said:

“The poultry industry contributed approximately 11.24 per cent in agricultural GDP in 2002 and that is in the present CSO report, and may now be the largest contributor to agricultural GDP given the uncertainty of the sugar industry.”

The translation, Mr. Vice-President, in other words, is how they licked up the sugar industry. They licked up the sugar industry and called it “the uncertainty of the sugar industry”. They said what they did in the sugar industry was land reform; nothing could be further from the truth. That is politics of “douendom”. They are living in a different world. Mr. Vice-President, that is not land reform. How can you call that land reform when, in advance, you put 10,000 people on the breadline, starving in over 50 villages spread over this country? People are starving! People are unable to send their children to schools! People are unable to pay their mortgages! People are in danger of losing their houses, and they talk about land reform. That is a bastardization of that term. Land reform, Mr. Vice-President, evokes the vision of people’s lives being made better and people being given lands to increase their productive capacity.

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You do not bring people down to dire poverty and then give them land. How are they going to work this land? I do not understand what provisions they are going to make for people to access loans, seeds and fertilizers when they do not have a cent; when they do not have any income or capital? How are they going to work this land? You do not work land as the PNM says, just give them land and let them work it. As Sadiq Baksh said; you cannot just think about something and it would be done. There is a whole process that you have to go through that needs a lot of resources and support.

Mr. Vice-President, the Minister said:

“The broiler industry produced approximately 61.4 million kilograms of chicken in 2002.”

He is talking about the productivity of the poultry industry; the importance of the poultry industry and he went on to say that it is protected by a 40 per cent common external tariff (CET) and 133 per cent duty on poultry parts, which the Government has now reduced to 40 per cent and they are threatening that if the poultry prices do not go down they will further reduce these duties.

Mr. Vice President, he went on to say:

“The government is alert to several issues or concerns which impact significantly on the poultry industry...

- The threat of competition from lower priced imports of chicken and table eggs;
- The high cost of inputs;
- The poor state of farm infrastructure, including dilapidated conditions of poultry pens;
- The possible removal of the CET on imported hatching eggs;
- Insufficient diagnostic laboratory capacity for certifying poultry products”.

4.00 p.m.

The solution to this, he expounded, was that the Ministry had a Poultry Industry Working Group in 2002. The recommendations emanating from that group include (1)— and get this:

“to declare the poultry industry a strategic and sensitive industry.”

This is what the Minister came to this Senate and said that the Government will do, but because of the “douendom”, did the opposite because they are moving

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backwards they are not moving forward. [*Desk thumping*] He said that they would:

“...establish a Poultry Industry Competitiveness Improvement Working Group and develop a National Industry Development Strategy.”

He went on to say that they would:

“...endorse the Poultry Association of Trinidad and Tobago and the Table Egg Producers Association of Trinidad and Tobago Industry Development Strategy.”

I am sure the development strategy of these organizations did not cater for the undercutting and the undermining of this industry.

It went on to say that they would:

“...institute domestic support for the poultry industry re: fiscal incentives.”

Where is the domestic support for the poultry industry promised by the Minister? I want to quote him one more time. He said the reason he would introduce this domestic support system is because:

“The domestic poultry industry is critical to our national food and nutrition security in that it provides over 85 per cent of all meats and 95 per cent of all chicken meat consumed in this country. Poultry meat is the least expensive and the preferred source of animal protein in this country, which makes it an important and affordable source of nutrition especially to low income families.”

Mr. Vice-President, how much clearer can you be than this on the need to protect the strategic importance of the poultry industry to the nutrition of this country, to the production of this country, to the viability of the agricultural sector, which as he said, is one of the most important contributors to agricultural GDP in the country? The “douendom” has struck again. They have struck at the production capacity of this country, they have struck at the hardest working people.

While they are doing that they are using the URP ghost gangs. Persons who are mashing up this country are going home with millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of dollars every fortnight, and the people who are working hard are facing desperation and destitution. They are faced with the possibility of closing down their farms and not being able to send their children to school and losing their homes, losing their livelihood. I ask you: is this a country of “douendom”?

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Where are we going? We are going back into colonialism. We are not going forward into any developed country status. Those are watchwords. The “douens” can see developed country status but they can never attain it, because you know, they are going back.

Some of the domestic support policies in the poultry industry that have been asked for have not been addressed in this budget. Where is the commitment to the domestic support systems that the poultry association has asked for? They have asked for investment incentives programmes which deliberately encourage investment in areas which are strategic to the industry. They have asked for emphasis on research and development. Any society worth its salt would invest huge amounts of money in research and development. The research and development is where the future is. In our development programme in 2002, do you know how much money we spent on research and development in this country? We spent \$7 million. In 2003, we went down to \$2 million in the agricultural sector. In 2004, \$4 million and in 2005 they propose to spend \$8 million. Proposing to spend and what they would actually spend are two different things because we know about “douendom”. I explained that.

Research and Development: \$8 million; \$4 million; \$2 million. Negligible in the scheme of things. They have refused to establish the National Agricultural Research Council which we did under my watch in 2001, which was developed to coordinate all the research programmes in this country to give some focus to the agricultural sector, to make sure that all the technical advice and the relevant help that we could get from the European Union and different agencies and so forth, would come under one umbrella body, so we could direct them and focus them in the different sub-sectors so that we could understand what we are doing. Nothing like that has been implemented but they are spending \$3 million in YAPA.

I ask you, you take 10,000 sugar workers and send them home, the most valuable, experienced persons we have in this country in agriculture, people who have hundreds of years between them in farming experience. In farming you just do not get up one morning and be a cane farmer. Farming is something that comes through years, the generations. It is a science and it is also an art. It comes through generations of love in the land, of knowing the land, of living on the land and the advanced countries know the importance of their farming communities. That is why they subsidize them to the tune of over \$360 billion. What we are doing here, under “douendom,” we take them, we send them home and then we bring 1,500 “green” little children, give them a stipend, train them for three

months and say they will invigorate and they are the future of agriculture in this country. That is the politics of “douendom”, the politics of backward colonialism, carrying us back into the dark forest of under development.

They are extraordinary, and what is even more extraordinary is that we tolerate that in the society. We sit in the society and we look at that and nobody is concerned. Do you know why? As the NAMDEVCO document says here, there is a very strong import lobby in this country and the people who are in a position to influence government policy are not interested in productive agricultural enterprise in this country. They are interested in the buying, selling; the “comprador bourgeois” as we said in the days of the 1970s. They are only interested in making a profit and they do not care if the whole of Trinidad and Tobago starves because at the end of the day they would be able to jump on an aeroplane, fly out to Miami and live on the thousands of millions of dollars that they have spirited out of this country.

Mr. Vice-President, the poultry industry is very organized, very focused and they have asked for specific domestic support policies that have not been addressed, will not be addressed under this Government and would only be addressed when the UNC Government comes to power in the year 2007. The country is fed up of going backwards under the lure of the bittersweet pill of this budget, sweet on the outside and bitter on the inside. On the inside it contains the seeds of the destruction of this country. They have asked for technical support and training. They have asked for the establishing of a market intelligence. Market intelligence is so critical to the development of the agricultural industry on a whole. There is nowhere in this budget that speaks to these important policy issues.

Mr. Vice-President, it is interesting that while they are busy breaking up the poultry industry, the sugar industry and so on, and I did not hear the Minister, Minister Sahadeo in her contribution speak about this issue of the looting of Caroni, the open, blatant and repugnant looting of Caroni of all its productive resources in broad daylight. Caroni was looted and carried off by persons unknown and Jerry Hospedales, chairman of the board, said that was not important, it was only a few million dollars; that does not concern us. A few million dollars is neither here nor there in the scheme of things. That is the people’s money, that is the taxpayers’ money and that “few million” dollars could be invested in the agricultural sector and would carry the agricultural sector years ahead.

This is the hypocrisy of the “douendom,” on the one hand they say they are committed to transparency and to accountability and to a society where there is no

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corruption and so forth. But on the other hand, another Government spokesman said, “let them take it”; computers, tractors, important equipment, harvesters looted and carried away and nobody bats an eyelid. It is nobody’s problem and nobody shows a sense of outrage, a sense that under the philosophy of “douendom” this country is going back into underdevelopment.

We are going to be re-colonized by developed countries under the FTAA and the WTO. Nobody is talking about that. This Government is hiding the facts from the people and wants only to bring the FTAA headquarters here. They say that will give us 2,000 jobs but we are going to lose 100,000 jobs; the philosophy of “douendom”. I thank you.

Sen. Dana Seetahal: Mr. Vice-President, the theme of this year’s budget as we have heard from many Senators is, “Ensuring our Future Survival”. In previous budgets we have heard talk of the most serious problem we have encountered, crime. We were told to deal with those root causes we need to look at the breakdown of the family, unemployment, poverty, drug use, hopelessness and so forth.

This is the third budget of this Government and it seems to me as Independent Senators, and I speak for myself particularly here, but also, I think my colleagues would share my view that we have an oversight role in considering what the Government’s policies have been in the last two years and how they are going into the future. In the interest of what the Government itself has proclaimed, transparency and accountability, I think I will look back to see some of the matters raised in previous budgets; just a few because, clearly, I cannot go through the entire budget to see how that has worked out in the interest of the country.

If we are talking about our future survival, it seems to me that two of the most significant matters that today threaten our future survival so that we can be as our Prime Minister said, healthy, happy and well employed people—this is the vision he has: that people in a home should be happy people, healthy people and well employed. Two things that threaten that are HIV/AIDS and drug abuse.

HIV/AIDS and its spread is currently the topic of a regional conference in Barbados and it has been within the consideration of the world for the last 20 years or so. And why is that? The reason is obvious, because once you get the virus, you get AIDS, you die, and no amount of provision in any budget for food, for education, anything of that kind can matter. And if you have the virus and you do not have the AIDS as yet, then, you have to live your life in a certain way that will ensure your future survival. In other words, you are likely to die soon. So if there are no measures in place to protect that, then we will have no future.

Last year in the budget presentation it was said that \$500 million were allocated over the next five years to deal with HIV/AIDS, and I said then in my contribution that this was a great measure and it was good to see the Government seeing so far. Of course, that money came from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the European Union and other sources. The fact remains that this \$500 million were allocated.

Mr. Vice-President, when one looks at the current budget, one would see that there is only \$35 million allocated towards HIV/AIDS. Some allocations of that are: in health, some in the Office of the Prime Minister and some of that, \$8 million, is in Tobago. I had to look through the documents all hours of the night to try to find this because it was not easy to locate. Thirty-five million dollars in one year and we are supposed to be using up \$500 million in five years to effectively deal with HIV/AIDS because we are told that is the sum that could ensure the future survival of the generations that we have. What is the reason? Why is so little money being spent towards dealing with HIV/AIDS?

4.15 p.m.

I would like to now that because I understand—and I heard this in the news yesterday—that 500,000 people in the region are infected with the virus and that several hundreds die every year from AIDS. That is the first thing that militates against ensuring our future survival—no proper provision or allocation against the promise of that \$500 million we had for dealing with AIDS.

The second issue is drugs. I think Sen. Dr. Kernahan just talked about it. Everyone knows about the scourge of drugs. That is an oft-quoted phrase in the country. We have heard of the young people in schools being charged for trafficking drugs—10-and 12-year-olds. We know that in our prison 60 to 70 per cent of the inmates are drug addicts, therefore drug use is a serious problem. There are prison officers; two or three of them, who have been before the courts themselves charged with trafficking drugs in the prison. What is happening?

We know that the DEA has headquarters here. We are supposed to be working with international groups to deal with this drug problem. We are talking about a serious problem. Every week practically, down in Mosquito Creek, there are arrests of people from a nearby South American country who are bringing in hundreds, in some cases thousands of kilograms of drugs.

The reason we can have this profitable industry and why it is said that this is the biggest source of income in this country is that there is a market for it, obviously. There is a market for it and we continue to have a market for it. Do

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you know why we continue to have that market? Because there is very little being done to deal with the drug problem.

The Government of the day might say we have the Piparo Empowerment Centre. That is a only organization that has been funded by the Government and the budget this year has \$3.2 million going towards that centre. There was, last year, in respect of HEAL, \$45,000; in respect of Rebirth House, \$78,000; in respect of Hope, \$25,000; in respect of New Life, \$100,000. If this drug use is such a serious problem, if we are talking about our future survival, how can we not have a specific allocation in the budget? There is no money under the Ministry of the Office of the Prime Minister specifically allocated towards any of these voluntary organizations to deal with drugs. I looked through the whole budget and I did not see it.

There is mention in the *Social and Development Programme* of what happened last year and the amounts I quoted you are from last year—just mere thousands. If we compare that to free student transportation, \$56.7 million; to the provision of textbooks for primary schools, \$34 million; textbook rental, \$32 million; and we are talking about something as serious as a drug problem throughout the country—in schools—and we are not putting our money there? We are not putting our money where our mouths are? We are not dealing with substance abuse in any form in a significant or serious way in this country, it would seem to me.

Mr. Vice-President, if I can just share with the Senate one experience I had. Recently this came up in court. A young man—he was in his 20s—he was a drug addict and had gone to buy—I think it was called a “10-ball”. I understood what a “10-ball” was when I did the case. A “10-ball” is \$10 for a tiny ball of cocaine, presumably mixed with something else. He did not have \$10 because he had used all his money for drugs. He broke into the house of a 70-year-old woman that night and he looked for her money and found \$438 she had hidden. He strangled her and had sexual intercourse with her either before or after she died. That is the kind of thing we have when people are addicts.

In this country, we are not dealing with it properly. In this country we are not dealing with it in the prisons. I put forward some proposals and one of them was to have programmes in the prisons for drug addicts. I do not see that reflected anywhere in the budget. I have mentioned this time and again. I probably sound like a recurring decimal, but if we are talking about our future survival, we have to look at the people who are suffering.

Every one of us—I do not know about any particular individual here, but I know from my experience with the people out there—can point to a relative who

is a drug addict. Maybe 10 per cent of the population of this country are either addicts or have serious drug problems. Are we dealing with that? Are we serious about this? It is not only this Government—it is not even a question of governments, it is a question of perception and realizing how important this is. It is not going to get you headlines, but you need to put money; you need to have organizations; you need to have the State setting up things; you need to have a drug courts. I am not talking about a court to sentence people, I am talking about another kind of place—treatment courts where you send people if they are arrested instead of to prison, and they are treated. Some say 30 per cent success is high, but if you have 30 per cent over one year and 30 per cent over the next, there will be a reduction. Why can we not see that? That is the second point.

My third point is that it was said in the budget statement that in dealing with our misguided youth, that we have strengthened the Civilian Conservation Corps and we have established three new programmes for youth development. They are the Military-Led Academic Training Programme (MILAT), the Military Led Youth Programme of Apprenticeship Reorientation Training (MYPART) and the National Youth Service. There are different ages—15 and 20, 14 and 22; all sorts of training and that sounds well and good. How many of us have said to put those youths in boot camps and let them get some training, then they could change? We have seen movies where some strict sergeant drilling them and people actually turn around, so I think there is merit in it.

Mr. Vice-President, that statement in this year's budget mirrors a statement in the budget speech of the then Minister of National Security, on October 10, 2003 the year in which he also announced the National Youth Service was carded to begin January 01, 2004. MILAT was supposed to start in July 2004, and for MYPART no date was given. In other words, in 2003, the same three programmes were announced and dates given. There was one date in January that went; one in July, that went and another, no date. There were very good programmes yet no money was allocated. Now it is announced in this year's budget and, in my oversight role, I need to point out that now moneys are allocated but it is stated as if it is something new.

In one of those documents, Public Sector Investment Programme, it is said that MILAT is supposed to come on stream in Tobago on September 13, which has gone; in Trinidad in November, for which I do not know if there is any provision really. Perhaps the Minister of National Security would address us in this regard soon. MYPART was supposed to start on September 30, 2004. After they realized it had not started, they gave these new dates. The National Youth Service was to have started September 06, 2004, a new date.

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Why do we pretend that these are new things? What is the benefit to be gained, stating it as if we have established these things? When you do not do it, tell us why. Give us some accountability. Let us know that these are really going to deal with misguided young people and it is not going to remain there flat with nothing happening. It is very disappointing because I had hopes for them. It looks like this might be another pipe dream.

A Special Crime Unit sounds good because there is a lot of crime. You might not have the thrust in all the agencies; you want to get the best together. This is the idea, but first of all when that was announced subsequent to the budget there was no allocation, then there was an allocation of \$45,200,000. It took a long time to get off its feet. In this budget it is \$68.34 million for the Special Crime Unit as compared to \$25 million for the maintenance of the entire fleet of police vehicles and equipment and for new vehicles and \$12 million and a little bit for construction work in all police stations. Look at that—25:25:12. They are talking about \$62 million practically for all the development work, vehicles old ones, and new ones—and stations and they are talking about \$68 million for Special Crime Unit. I would like to know what they have done. Let us have some accountability. Why do they have this much money? It may not be much, but it is certainly much when you compare what the other arms of the police have been getting.

Fifth, DNA. Everybody and his cousin by now should know that the Deoxyribonucleic Acid Identification Act has not been proclaimed. This is the Act, Mr. Vice-President, which was passed in July 2002. It provides for the police to get a sample of body tissue from the suspect and from a victim and if there is no consent from the accused, then you go to a judge and get the Order and you can use that for your investigation. Everyone who follows the news would know that thousands of people have been cleared in the United States from the use of DNA. It is obviously something that we need and in October 2002 the Government said that:

“The Government is placing great emphasis on technically modernizing the operations of the Forensic Science Centre. It would be world class”.

Remember those words:

“And we will provide training in DNA analysis”.

In the the year 2003:

“We anticipate that the DNA testing will begin within five months and that the regulations will be passed”.

I asked a question and I am sure the Minister of National Security would remember. This was subsequent to the Budget 2003—2004. The budget was in October, the question was asked in March. The question was: Why has it not yet been proclaimed? When would it be proclaimed? I was told—and this gave rise to a headline “DNA to be proclaimed in April”—that the exercise of regulation making would be completed by the end of March, 2004; that the proclamation would take place on completion of these regulations and that the Forensic Science Centre would be in a state of readiness by April 2004.

Everybody reads of cases like Akiel Chambers. We have a host of undetected cases, meaning that there is no one charged: for murder and for many serious offences like kidnapping. It is obvious that DNA would be of assistance. I am sure that the Government has the best will in the world, but a will alone is not good enough. We want some action. We want to know more. People have been talking. Families have been saying that if we have DNA this would happen. What is the point? These are voices crying in the wilderness? Is that what it is? Is it that the Government accounts to the public only when there is an election every five years? I really would like to know, after all these promises over the last two years, where are we with DNA and why has the Forensic Science Centre not been given the capacity it has been said that it would be given to carry out the work—tool marks and all of these things?

Do you know that there is a dearth of any forensic evidence in the courts, Mr. Vice-President? Do you know what the evidence is usually? If you do not have somebody who witnessed a shooting, you have to depend on a confession and you know the whole issue with that? People of the country do not trust police confessions generally, for obvious reasons. They feel that if someone does something, why would he confess and afterward renege on that confession. Can they rely on that to convict? The answer is obvious.

Every week, up to yesterday someone was let off because of confessions. You have come to court—confession—and hopefully, if you have investigated, you might have a little piece of other evidence. The Minister had said that 750 detectives would be trained. He said that detectives would receive advanced training in sample collection and preservation of exhibits. Out of a police service of 5,000, 750 detectives to be trained and 87 crime scene officers, where are they and what are they doing? Obviously they are not transposing that knowledge into detection.

We have the equipment—I am told that we do—but what is happening? I cannot blame the Minister necessarily for this, but if we are told this, I want to know why. I am told other things that are not so.

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I will come back to my next point after the break, but that is what I want to say about DNA.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is now 4.30 p.m. We shall now take the tea break and the Senate will be suspended until we return at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. D. Seetahal: Mr. Vice-President, continuing where I left off, in terms of accountability, I move on to my seventh point, prison reform. The last year has seen a push for penal reform and prison reform, which are two different things. One is punishment and one is reform in our prisons. The latter stemmed initially from questions posed in this Parliament from Amnesty International's report that we have prisons like those in Russia and from reports of visits by lawyers behind the prisons facilitated by the Minister. We heard about a report of sexual misconduct, alleged, against some prisoners, by prison officers. That was an allegation that was to be investigated.

We heard from the Deputy Commissioner that two-thirds of our prisoners are drug addicts. We have seen three prison officers charged with pushing drugs in prison. We have had deaths in prison. More recently, the Chief Justice in his address at the opening of court talked about the need for prison reform and why the Judiciary must get involved in the whole thing, because of the continuous allegations of inhumane treatments. Tie that in with the talk of the prevention of recidivism, which we have seen and heard in the budget, in relation to a report.

It was said:

- the prison service is being transformed with rehabilitative and restorative programmes;
- prison reform is an integral part of our crime prevention programme and are committed to transforming the service to be in a rehabilitative and restorative mode;
- to ease the overcrowding of the facilities at the maximum security prison; the maximum security prison is being upgraded to house 2, 400.

I would like to know if that is really the extent of the prison reform. That is the only mention in both the budget statement and the Appropriation Bill in the Senate.

In 2003, mention was also made of the need to upgrade maximum security. There were \$4 million allocated to maximum security, but we do not know what for. There has been no upgrading in the sense of improving the prison to house these additional prisoners. As everyone in the industry, so to speak, ought to know, that prison was built to house 2,400 prisoners more than 10 years ago. At present, it houses between 800—900 prisoners, which means two-thirds is underutilized.

For the last two years we have heard from this administration that the MSP will be upgraded. I do not know what “upgraded” means. As far as I know, it is really the water and sewer system that needs to be corrected. I asked the question and all I heard is that they are upgrading it. I have also been told that you need to have more prison officers to man the locks, which to me is not any serious problem.

What I am seeing in the budget is \$14.4 million, total, for all work to be done in the prisons. I just called out figures of millions for all kinds, of what I consider, minor things, as compared to the serious situation of prison overcrowding, against which the Chief Justice has warned that we may have some kind of riot if we continue with that situation. Look at the state prison is enough to make us aware of that. Look at what has happened in Brazil and other countries, if we do not get lawsuits before that.

I see in the budget for improvement work on prison building the sum is \$1.5 million. That is a drop in the ocean. Golden Grove Workshop—these are small things. The sum of \$14.4 million is not going anywhere, in terms of rehabilitative and restorative mode. The secretariat for penal reform and transformation is allocated \$2.3 million. If the secretariat needs that, one would imagine that the greater work, in all of the six prisons we have, would need significantly more than \$14.4 million in order to have any kind of impact. I have read all the budgets previously and have seen this “ol’ talk”. The same amount of money is allocated and nothing more.

Why should I and other citizens who have an interest in prison reform, as everyone should, if we want to prevent recidivism, really reasonably believe that \$14.4 million is going to make any difference? There is nothing in this budget to deal with the state prison. The State prison is a shame. It is up the road here. It has been there for 100 years. It should be condemned. Nothing about it.

The question has been raised time and again. We are told that there is an action plan but nothing more. I really want some answers on this question, on my own behalf and on behalf of the prisoners and the country. No provision was made for drug rehabilitation in prison. This was something I proposed to be included in the national

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budget. This was nothing in goods and services. We know that there is a problem. How do we know that? Prison officers have been arrested and charged for trafficking in the prison. I know it as a fact that there are drugs, because I have clients who tell me so. I have interviewed them and I have smelt their breath right from across me. We know that there is a problem. How are we dealing with it?

I now come to Parole. In 2003, we were told that the parole system would be operational by September 30, 2004. I questioned it then, in October 2003, in my budget contribution. It has disappeared of the budget statement this year. But, in the *Social Sector Investment Programme Report* from what is mentioned is that no longer is it going to be operational, but membership of the committee was appointed and they are still to develop a policy and action plan. In 2002/2003, parole was touted as “an integral part of the measures to reduce recidivism”. If it is not on stream it follows that an integral part of reduction of recidivism is no longer important. We are not going to have it. Recidivism, we keep hearing from the Government, is a serious problem.

Those are the real issues in respect of the general matters. A few of them, I think call for accountability by this administration. Let us know where we are going and show us that there is hope for what has been said to be ensuring our future survival and a happy healthy country.

Finally, there are some questions—the Attorney General is not here, but I would ask of him—in terms of what his predecessor said—and personality does not matter. His predecessor announced certain legislative packages in the Ministry of the Attorney General over the last two years. Government is to bring new foreign investment promotion legislation. Government is to bring anti-dumping legislation. This was in the 2002/2003 budget. Government is to bring a fair trading Bill; it was already in draft before a committee more than a year “ago” and a Terrorism Bill, since 2002. We were told in 2003 that it was sent to stakeholders. It is staying a very long time, Mr. Vice-President. It has been a year now.

The Commission of Enquiry Act, since 2002 has been coming back and forth on the Order Paper, has gone nowhere. It has never been argued. Nobody has pushed for it. The others are the Revenue Stabilization Fund Bill, the UTC of Trinidad and Tobago (Vesting) Bill, the Wildlife Bill, the Environmental Trust Fund Bill, the Enforcement of Maintenance Orders, very important, so people would not be arrested and taken down somewhere, lost in the prison, beaten and killed for not paying their maintenance. The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Bill was proposed in 2002. We have heard nothing of these things.

Any government comes and lays down all these plans and says, we are doing this and we are all happy too bad. Like the Minister said a while ago, we are going to have private cesspits in the future. It is going to come, so we feel good. Two years passed and there is no accounting, nothing. Nobody is telling us what is happening. To me at budget time, we should hear specifics: why this has happened, give us the plan and some commitment. If you do not put out, then pull out.

Finally, I come to something that is close to my heart. Last year and the year before that, it was said that there will be modern buildings constructed to house the offices of the Director or Public Prosecutions: More than 20 years ago I was in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions—this is my 25th year in practice, so it is 24 years ago or more—we were moving from office to office. We, as in state lawyers working in that department, had no place. Eventually, they are housed in Henry Street. That is a very high-risk department, for obvious reasons. The Clerk of the Senate worked there, so he would have an idea. We are told that they would be housed, that they would have proper accommodation. My information is that something was allocated to the DPP but that has been taken away to give to the Caribbean Court of Justice. What is happening there? These are matters and all of the other matters, I think the Government should account to us and tell us what is happening.

In respect of the earlier matters, how are we going to deal with all these things: AIDS, drugs, prison reform and the kind of prisons we have; all these things, if we are to have a proper future or even survival? We are talking about Vision 2020, where we can all be happy and healthy. In that vision we are not quite a Utopia, but we are almost there because we have the resources, the people and the will. This is not a question of any attack. It is a question of let us not laze around and say we have these ideas. I am not saying any specific body is lazing around, but we have to get people to do what they are supposed to do, and deliver. That is what I wanted to say, Mr. Vice-President. Thank you very much.

The Minister of Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Howard Chin Lee): Mr. Vice-President, I rise today to enter this debate on the 2005 budget, presented by the Prime Minister, a Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year October 01, 2004 to September 30, 2005.

As stated in the Minister's presentation, the tourism sector is becoming a major contributor in our economic diversification drive and there is need, therefore, for expanded infrastructure. For this reason we have created a new company called the Tourism Development Corporation, with the responsibilities for tourism, investment promotion, product development and marketing.

Today, I also rise to inform the Senate on the initiatives taken by the Ministry of Tourism, in the past fiscal year, as well as the trends in the world tourism, what is happening in the tourism industry and how the Ministry of Tourism plans on effectively positioning itself to become part of this growing trend.

5.15 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, the travel and tourism industry today is, perhaps, the largest industry in the world. It contributes to some 10.2 per cent of the world's global domestic product. Apart from that, the trend shows that in the year 2004, the tourism industry will grow by some 6 per cent. Despite popular belief that the tourism industry is one that is for developing or less developed countries, recently, I read something quite interesting on the Internet which states that the largest economic sector in the United Kingdom, Spain and France is the tourism sector. Therefore, it is imperative that the Government focuses on diversifying from the oil and gas sectors, to the tourism sector.

Added to that, the tourism sector employs almost 11 per cent of the world's population and, therefore, could be considered one of the greater contributors to employment, not only here in Trinidad and Tobago and in the Caribbean, but, certainly, in the rest of the world.

Today, I also want to talk about the trends in terms of what has been taking place within the last 10 years in the industry, from where we were in 1995, to where we are now in 2004 going into 2005, and to paint a broader picture on world trends as they apply to tour operators; the effect on world travel; what is happening in the cruise ship industry; and other industries that apply to tourism.

On my recent trip to the United Kingdom and, in particular, Germany, we learnt that there are one or two tour operators that are basically monopolizing the world travel market in Europe. Those companies are Towe and Thomas Cook. With this globalizing of tour operators, what we are witnessing is certainly a vertical integration in the industry. The tour operators are now controlling airlines and hotels. The point that I am making is that if in Trinidad and Tobago we are not part of that globalizing of the tourism industry, we are certainly going to become ineffective. Therefore, it is important to understand the trends in the industry if we are to take full advantage of what is happening.

We also learnt that the effects of the travel agency are no longer the same as they were 10 years ago. With the Internet and the ability to book online, and the ability to gather information about countries and tours online, they are now

becoming a prominent force in the way things are being done in terms of marketing, booking and for other reasons.

Recently, I also learnt that there is a company by the name of Intercorp, which controls three of the largest companies in the travel industry, companies such as Travelocity.com, Hotels.com and Intercorp. Single-handedly, these companies are now controlling where people travel; where people stay at hotels; what airlines they fly on. So, once again, if we are not part of this trend, we are outside of what is taking place.

My understanding is that by the year 2010, 50 per cent of persons who book for travel will book on the Internet. I was also reliably informed that the thing that is called a "travel agency" may well become obsolete, and may well be referred to one day as a "call-centre". Senators who know about telecommunications know that is the ability to transfer voice to data. It is just a form of transferring information, where in the future people will get all their information about countries, travel and hotel online. And, therefore, if we are not part of that revolution, certainly, we will be left behind.

This trend is also taking place in the cruise ship industry. Having just returned from the FCCA conference in Barbados, 10 years ago we had individual cruise ship companies such as Royal Caribbean, the likes of Conard and PNO, Princess Cruises, Carnival Norwegian, Seaborne, Windjammers and so forth. Today, in the industry, there is one company that has bought up the rest and that is Carnival Cruise Line. They are now the owner of Conard and PNO and Princess, so that industry is also becoming monopolized by one giant.

Added to that, the cruise ship industry is also growing by leaps and bounds. It is said that by the end of 2004, there would be some 10 million persons who would have either taken a cruise for the first time or who would have repeated a cruise. So, if the Hotel Association or other members of the hotel industry in the Caribbean are not mindful of the fact that the cruise ship industry is growing at a much faster rate than the hotel industry, it is either you work with them or you are out.

One of the reasons that I am highlighting some of these trends in the world of tourism today is for Trinidad and Tobago to position itself in such a way that it could ride this particular wave. For that reason, the Government took a recent decision to form one entity that will focus specifically on tourism in both Trinidad and Tobago. That company is referred to as the Tourism Development Corporation.

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Just to give you a quick history of the Tourism Development Corporation, in 1993 when I sat as the Chairman of the Tourism Development Authority, the industry was different from what it is today. That is why I am referring to all of these trends that are taking place today. Because of all of these changing trends, we feel that it is imperative that the Ministry of Tourism focus on using one company called the Tourism Development Corporation to apply all of its technical skills and to have all of the human resources in place to attack and to become part and parcel of this process.

Previously, there was an industry called the Tourism Industrial Development Company (TIDCO) whose focus was specifically on industry, trade and tourism. Because of that, there was a lot of overlapping, and in some cases conflict of what were the priorities within that entity. There were persons focusing on investment going on trade seminars; and some focusing on tourism. So all that we have done by forming the TDC is to take all of the specific resources—the human and capital—and to use that company to focus specifically on the tourism sector.

I just want to talk a bit about what will be the TDC's role and responsibility, because that is a newly formed company. The TDC's responsibility will be for investment promotion; its responsibility will be for product development and marketing. I want to talk about each one of these sectors and what they mean to Trinidad and Tobago.

In the area of investment, we recognize that in Trinidad, there are about 3,000 rooms available and in Tobago, probably, another 3,000 standard rooms. If the industry is to grow, then we will require more rooms. If there are more arrivals in Trinidad and Tobago, we will need more rooms, so one has to go with the other. Marketing has to go with investment and investment has to go with product development.

Just to give you an idea of our room stock in comparison to other Caribbean islands, in Barbados, their room stock is about 12,000 rooms. I understand that in Cuba their room stock is about 40,000 rooms; in the Dominican Republic, there are some 50,000 rooms. The arrivals per year in Cuba are two million arrivals; the Dominican Republic is probably 2.5 million arrivals. Last year, we recorded about 407,000 arrivals. So when we compare ourselves to other parts of the Caribbean, we are still behind in terms of arrivals. This also indicates that there is a lot of potential in the area of tourism.

Sen. Seetahal: May I ask a question please, Minister? When you say “arrivals” do you mean people who land here or foreigners?

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: When we use the word “arrivals” we speak of foreigners. The idea of encouraging investment is to increase our room stock.

How do we increase our room stock? To do so will require the following: it will require the necessary incentives for the private sector in the form of legislation; it will perhaps require a climate in which one can invest in the tourism sector—a climate that the Government is serious about tourism—and there is a budget in place to deal with the marketing of tourism; as well as an intention by the private sector to get involved in the industry. Later, I will outline different investments that are now taking place in the tourism industry.

With regard to the tourism investment and the legislation, I just want to announce that recently we received approval to amend the Tourism Development Act of 2000, and that amendment will be brought shortly to Parliament. Sen. Mark, I will be seeking your support in that regard. That legislation will deal with accelerated depreciation; it will deal with capital expenditure; as well as one of the most important sections in the Act, which is section 38 of the Tourism Development Act. This will allow the exemption from tax on interest received on approved loans for construction of approved tourism projects. What that effectively means is that persons who are investing in the tourism industry and investing in tourism plant will now be given the benefit of having tax-free interest loans from banks, thus effectively reducing their rate of borrowing. We feel that some of these incentives are not only necessary, but will send the right message that the Government is serious about ensuring and encouraging investors to invest in the tourism plant.

Just to give you a quick overview of the legislation, the Hotel Development Act was first done in 1965. At that time, the Act only allowed incentives for persons wanting to invest in the hotel industry. When the new Tourism Development Act was written, it increased the definition of what is a tourism project; it referred to other projects apart from hotels such as tour operation, tour boats, conference centers and restaurants attached to hotels; dive boat operations and other areas apart from simply hotel development.

This Act also referred to integrated resort developments (IRDs) and gave them special incentives. An IRD is a project that includes villas, condominiums, hotels as well as golf courses. With the amendment to the Tourism Development Act, 2000, we are going to put more incentives in place, not only to encourage IRDs, but also to encourage persons who want to invest in this particular industry.

Mr. Vice-President, the other area that the TDC will be responsible for is the area of tourism development, and that is to say how can we have tourism in Trinidad and Tobago, if our facilities are not up to standard; if our beaches are not up to standard; if our signs are not in place; and if certain facilities are not available. Part of the tourism development drive would ensure that some of our

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beaches such as the Manzanilla Beach, the Las Cuevas Beach and the Maracas Beach facilities are improved. We all understand and we all know that at this time there is dire need for the improvement of the Maracas Beach facility. That is perhaps one of the first projects that we in the TDC will be working on and that is how to reduce the congestion; how to increase parking facilities; where to put vendors; and how to improve the standard of the beach facility.

5.30 p.m.

Sen. Anmolsingh-Mahabir: Mr. Vice-President, I want to ask the Minister if it would provide for lifeguards. You might be aware of the drownings at Toco.

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: Lifeguards now fall under my portfolio. There is allocation in the budget for lifeguards. There is a plan to increase the number of lifeguards to ensure that there is a certain ratio of lifeguards per beach and the facilities and equipment provided are adequate. I will address that at a later point in time. Right now, I am dealing with the development of the Maracas Beach facilities.

Sen. King: Could I ask the Minister if within this tourism plan, he is planning to increase casinos? They bring many tourists.

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: That is not on our list of priorities. I will go to our list of priorities shortly, which would be in the area of leisure and conference tourism. We see that as an ancillary service to those priorities.

Let me continue in the area of tourism development. The idea is to see how we can bring Maracas Beach back to an acceptable standard to all, not just the nationals of Trinidad and Tobago, but also the international arena. Added to that, marketing will be one of the priorities for the development of tourism in Trinidad and Tobago. Many of you are aware that when you travel abroad and say that you are from Trinidad and Tobago, people ask you if that is near to Jamaica, or where is that? One of our main drives will be to make Trinidad and Tobago a recognized name abroad. How do you do it? What do you attach it to? How do you brand it? How do we distinguish ourselves from Barbados or Jamaica? Certainly, we will highlight our festivals such as Carnival; our musical instrument, the only one invented in the last century; our people, music, calypso and culture. To do so we will require the ability to package and produce the right material to send abroad. You do not want to produce a C-rated programme and show that internationally. It will not have the kind of effect that one desires. It is imperative for us to ensure that the production of whatever we show abroad is kept at the highest standard.

In the last couple of months, we have been discussing with major media abroad, the likes of Travel Channel, BET, ViaCom and BBC to have strategic alliances of how we can take some of the content in Trinidad and Tobago and have it seen by millions of people around the world. It is no sense having a great message; standing on a soap-box and speaking to 10 persons, like one of those UNC public meetings. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Mark: “Boy yuh going good all de time. Doh trouble trouble.”

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: Or vice versa, not having a good message; going on a platform and speaking to thousands of people with nothing to say. That also applies to the UNC. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] The idea is to have and build strategic alliances with major platforms as we call it in the media circles, where we can take our material and music to broadcast to 80 million people around the world. For that reason, we have applied for a budget to market Trinidad and Tobago and to discuss with these media and platforms and ensure that whomever we market towards, it reaches our source destination, places that people can fly from to Trinidad and Tobago. It is no sense marketing to a country where there is no airlift, or a country that is on the other side of the world, that it is impractical to come to Trinidad and Tobago.

We have been looking at the various platforms and we are now discussing how we can look at Carnival 2005 and beam it to the rest of the world. The budget for marketing will be used to do just that. This year, I am pleased that in our budget for tourism—to give you a reference for last year, Tidco’s budget was the sum of \$61 million of which the sum of \$24 million was spent on marketing. This year for tourism, we have been allocated nearly \$50 million for only marketing. We are pleased to have this allocation. This is to let Parliament and the wider population know that this money will be spent wisely and we will have Trinidad and Tobago as a recognizable country in the rest of the world.

In terms of what we have as ongoing investments in the tourism sector, this year, we will see the completion of the construction of a 120-room hotel, referred to as the Marriott Courtyard which many of you may have seen by Movie Towne. That should be completed by December 2004. That would add 120 rooms to our room stock. There is also the Trincity Millenium Development Project which would also add to the number of rooms.

The Prime Minister spoke about the Waterfront Development Project which will take place on the Waterfront in sheds I and II. The intention is to construct two or three buildings, one being a conference centre and another one being a four to five star hotel with roughly 340 to 350 rooms. You know about that?

Sen. Mark: That was our plan. We are glad that you are carrying on with it.

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: That project will revolutionize the way we can now market Trinidad and Tobago. With an international conference centre we can host international business conferences. We can create Trinidad as the meeting centre for not only people within the region but also Europe and South America. We hope that that project will be completed by 2007, and we will see an influx in the area of tourism. There is the refurbishment of the Trinidad Hilton Hotel and centre. That will take effect next year and should be completed in 2007.

In Tobago, there is an expansion project with the cruise ship port where the jetty can now facilitate vessels larger than 312 metres in length. In the cruise ship industry Trinidad being south of where most of the cruise ships ply, sometimes they miss Trinidad and Tobago. The industry is changing. The ten-day cruises are now increasing. We are witnessing an increase in the Southern Caribbean. One of the problems that Trinidad and Tobago faces in the cruise ship industry is that some of our jetties and the depth of water are insufficient. Not only an extension of the pier will increase the voyager class vessels to use the facility, but also dredging the port. When the cruise ship industry expands in Trinidad we will witness an increase in employment with taxi drivers, tour operators and guides when 2,000 arrivals per cruise ship become a reality.

We are seeing trends in Trinidad and Tobago. I want to give a quick overview of what is happening here. We have seen an extremely good year for tourism arrivals for 2003 and 2004. According to the Central Statistical Office (CSO), during January to June 2004, a total of 215,727 visitors arrived in Trinidad and Tobago. That reflects a 9.3 per cent increase over the same period for 2003. This increase is significant because our Carnival arrivals for this year were at a record high of 47,000. In 2005, we expect 10 per cent increase from this year. We are seeing an increase in terms of the total number for Trinidad and Tobago for Carnival.

Mr. Vice-President, the better news is what is taking place in your country, Tobago. The number of visitors to Tobago for the period January—June, 2004, is 31,895. That reflects 16.8 per cent increase for this same period last year. The figures from January—June, 2004, reveal that 78 per cent of the visitors to Tobago were mainly interested in leisure and beach activities. The future looks bright and I will explain why.

We are anticipating an increase in the airlift capacity into Tobago. Next week, we will be celebrating the inaugural flight of Lauda Air and Martin Air. Those are new source destinations coming from Holland and Austria. Previously, for those

of you who are not aware, the source destinations for Tobago were from the United Kingdom and Germany. The English market in the form of British Airways and Virgin Atlantic are increasing. Virgin Atlantic will put on a second flight next year. The flight out of Germany is doing well. With the new source destinations starting next week out of Austria and Holland, we are opening Europe to Tobago. When we talk about Austria we talk about KLM having flights to other parts of Europe. Suddenly, Austria becomes a hub for Eastern Europe. For those reasons we are looking at the possibilities of waiving some of the visa requirements for some of these countries. That market is increasing.

In Tobago, visitors from Europe in 2004, recorded 23 per cent increase. There was a 4 per cent increase in arrivals in 2004, over the 2003 figure for visitors from North America to Tobago. According to the projection of the World Travel and Tourism Council, the direct contribution from tourism and the travelling industry in 2004, will be TT \$1,560.1 million, or 2.3 per cent contributed to our GDP and indirectly, 10.4 per cent to GDP. We are working to increase the contribution to GDP. There are 10,000 persons who are directly employed and 40,000 persons who are indirectly employed in the tourism industry. That is sustainable employment. As we increase the investment, marketing and product development, we know that that will create more sustainable jobs and contribute to the Prime Minister's wish to reduce the unemployment level to zero.

5.45 p.m.

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, may I ask my colleague: Out of each dollar that is spent by a tourist when he comes to Trinidad and Tobago, what amount of that is leaked, and what amount is retained? The reason Cuba is so competitive is because almost 80 to 90 per cent of the goods and services that are required by the tourists are produced within Cuba so they are able to retain between 80 and 90 per cent of the dollar. I would like to find out, in Trinidad and Tobago what percentage is retained and what percentage is leaked?

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: What you are asking is: What contribution is the disposable income by a tourist being retained in our economy? First of all, your figures on Cuba are totally incorrect, as many of the other things that you say are incorrect. In Cuba—and this is from the Minister of Tourism in Cuba—one of their concerns and one of their problems is that not enough of the money was being retained; therefore, it is a very real problem. Their aim was to increase their—I think it is about 35 to 65 per cent so that the country benefits from what we refer to as arrivals.

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Mr. Vice-President, even today when we meet in tourism seminars, and meet with the Caribbean Tourism Organizations (CTO), we are trying to move away from the term “Arrivals”—because arrival is a number—but to talk more specifically about what these arrivals are contributing to our GDP, which is a very real and relevant issue.

I do not have the exact figure in terms of what each one contributes to our GDP. What I can say is that I know that our own is quite high, relative to the other Caribbean islands. Many of the things that we produce for the hotels, in the form of food, agricultural produce, even toilet paper is produced here in Trinidad and Tobago, and those are referred to as inputs into the industry. It is always our aim and objective—that is why we refer to it as indirect jobs, people who produce: the agricultural sector, the manufacturing sector; they are all part of the tourism industry, indirectly. The more arrivals that we have are the more supplies and goods that are necessary for the hotels: more food is consumed; more services are rendered in the restaurants and, therefore, the manufacturing and the indirect jobs are increased.

Sen. Mark, that is a very relevant point and that matter is being discussed in the world tourism organization, especially at the CTO level: How do we increase the input?

Fortunately, for Trinidad and Tobago, because of our manufacturing base, we supply a lot of materials to the rest of the Caribbean. In fact, we benefit from the Caribbean Tourism Industry. We supply goods to Barbados and Grenada, which all report higher figures in this particular sector.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to go into a little more detail with respect to the investments. I gave a quick overview of what investments are taking place but let me go into further detail. In the both islands, in 2005, several initiatives were undertaken in terms of investment, and I go back to the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre that will be completely refurbished to provide rooms with state-of-the-art technology; with internet connections; it will also have more modern rooms that would suffice the needs of the businessmen today.

UDEcOTT also has a plan to begin the construction of a 300-room business hotel as part of the waterfront project. That is a project of UDEcOTT; are you aware of that? The construction of this hotel is scheduled to begin in March 2005 and to finish in time for the Cricket World Cup in 2007.

Plans are also in the pipeline for the construction of a five-star resort hotel in Tobago. Additionally, the Ministry of Tourism is currently reviewing the measures

that should be implemented to encourage and support investment of the integrated resort developments (IRDs), as I mentioned earlier.

We expect to make certain recommendations to Cabinet, shortly, as to how the Government could partake with an equity position. That is a recommendation that is now being prepared by a specific committee to deal with equity participation in IRDs.

Mr. Vice-President, today I want to give a quick overview of where the tourism sector is heading. The fact that in our budget for 2004/2005 we have been given an allocation that could certainly give us teeth to market Trinidad and Tobago; that our focus on the investment, our focus on tourism development is in place and that we are very confident that in the year 2005 that the contribution to the gross domestic product in the tourism sector will certainly increase. We are also confident that the tourism sector will produce a higher percentage of employment to our nationals.

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, the hon. Minister did speak to the issue of attracting tourists from abroad and maybe regionally but I did not hear much from you on what you are doing to develop internal tourism between Trinidad and Tobago, particularly, and even within our twin-island state. In terms of the air-bridge and sea-bridge services between Trinidad and Tobago, what plans are there, coming from the Ministry of Tourism, to improve on these services so that Trinidadians can get to Tobago easily and vice versa? Could you clarify that for us?

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: Mr. Vice-President, as you know, recently the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) leased two aircraft to work alongside the existing service. My understanding is that since those two aircraft have been in place, it has certainly eased the congestion and has improved the service between the twin islands. I am sure that the persons who are here from Tobago can give testimony to that.

My understanding, as well, is that the reservations system, the waiting time, the number of persons left stranded has been significantly reduced, if not, now negligible. The initiatives taken by the Tobago House of Assembly have certainly reduced the downtime of persons travelling between Trinidad and Tobago. Are you aware of that Senator?

Sen. Mark: I am aware, but I would like to find out from the hon. Minister: How long is this wet lease arrangement going to be in place? I have travelled to Tobago recently and I saw foreigners, who speak foreign languages in charge of the aircraft. How long are we going to allow foreigners to dominate the skies?

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We have had almost 1,000 workers retrenched from BWIA! We have pilots here! We have flight attendants! We would like to know from you, through you, Mr. Vice-President, what it is costing the taxpayers to maintain these two aircraft here and whether that same money could not be sent to BWIA to buy aircraft for the particular route, so that we could have our own pilots and flight attendants flying to Tobago.

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: Mr. Vice-President, as you know, there is an existing service: BWIA and Tobago Express. What we have found in the tourism sector is that we have been getting a lot of complaints about the ability to use Trinidad as in-transit to Tobago and, more importantly, is the problem with the people who reside in Tobago, as well as the people who reside in Trinidad to move between the two islands.

Mr. Vice-President, because of that what was necessary, immediately, was to come up with a stopgap measure to deal with that problem. That stopgap measure was to wet lease—a wet lease, as you know, is to provide an aircraft together with the pilot and the crew—to immediately deal with that problem. Whilst that has handled and dealt with the matter in the short term, the Ministry of Works and Transport is looking at the situation to see how it could be dealt with on a more sustainable level.

To say right now, Mr. Vice-President, whether we should continue with the wet lease or get into a dry lease and use local pilots, the Ministry of Works and Transport would determine that. But the fact is that the Government has taken initiatives that have eased the plight of both Trinidadians and Tobagonians flying between the islands and because of that we have a very comfortable inter-island service at the present time. As I said, I am sure that the persons who came from Tobago can testify to that.

With respect to domestic tourism, the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) through the Secretary of Tourism in Tobago has been spending large sums of money in Trinidad marketing Tobago. They have seen that as being an integral part of their tourism development. Right now Trinidad contributes, to a great extent, to their earnings in the tourism sector. So we continue to look at the whole idea of domestic tourism between the islands.

Sen. Mark: In what form?

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: In the form of advertising and in the form of packages.

Sen. Mark: What kind of packages?

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: You need to watch TV.

Mr. Vice-President, before I waste any more time on Sen. Mark, I wish at this time to indicate that we hope to develop the tourism industry: to increase our contribution to our GDP; to increase sustainable employment in this industry by expanding the investment and by increasing the marketing; to ensure that the tourism industry will not only play a major role in terms of our future development, but to certainly meet the mandate of the Government, which indicates that in order for us to become a major contributor to our economic diversification drive, the Tourism Development Corporation would become responsible for that endeavour.

I give the assurance that certainly under my guidance and this Government that we will focus and ensure that the Tourism Development Corporation has the right tools to invest in the industry and to expand what we consider to be a growing potential area.

I thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

Sen. Brother Noble Khan: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, for allowing me these few moments in which I will share some thoughts on what is before us.

Firstly, let me extend my congratulations to—and he seems to be popular in the Senate—the hon. Minister of Finance and the Ministers in the Ministry of Finance, and more so to the staff of the Ministry of Finance and the other ministries which were responsible for the preparation of this most important document.

As I have said in the past, I feel this document, which is before us, provides an opportunity to pull everything together as far as our country is concerned and as you know this occurs every year.

The Bill seeks to provide, to expend over \$27 billion, Mr. Vice-President; that is a substantial sum. I do not think we have ever had any sum like that before. From my arithmetic it seems to be about \$5 billion more than the revised estimates for the end of the preceding year.

6.00 p.m.

This high amount of inflows apparently has been through the monetizing of our natural resources, chiefly gas and oil. I would say we are fortunate. This is important in that it affords an opportunity for us to look at a particular indication which I refer to, as putting aside some of the resources for further use later on. I

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think this is where the Revenue Stabilization Fund and what has been referred to as providing for intergenerational equity—and this forms part of that strategy so to provide. I think this is good. If we were to take the example that took place in the last windfall, we are actually putting, to use a metaphor, ‘a horse in a stable with the doors open’ in that there is really no check as to what goes in and how it would come out. The example we had the last time is that what went in, as soon as there was need for more, we just took it out. That is from the long term funds and I think even the old system of establishing long term funds is the same system that we used to establish this Revenue Stabilization Fund.

We have heard some remarks being made about the provision of particular regulations for this but in order to provide some element of what I would call an adequate control with respect to expenditure that would be coming out of the resources in that fund, I would like to see some form, possibly by a vote in this Senate, not a simple majority vote, but by some proportion. There may be need to change the Constitution but if we want to put controls we have to put controls. If we really want to think in terms of intergenerational equity we cannot, as we have been accustomed to and as mentioned before, just pay lip service to it. There is need to put proper systems in place.

As far as the social implications are concerned, my humble view is that we are dealing with some palliatives, putting plaster on sore foot and it still remains. If we were to think in terms of the last budget, for two years, there has been substantial funding being invested in our country and what is hoped to be achieved. I do not know if there is some secret motive of keeping people in that way then they would have done it efficiently. But insofar as what I think are the hopes and aspirations of our nation—to build a growing and developmental society sustained at that—we have failed to achieve that and obviously, there is need definitely for some fundamental change insofar as our conceptualizations are concerned and how we apply these by way of techniques and methods.

I strongly suspect that what is taking place is highly irrelevant at the moment and there is need to address this. I would like to think that the pattern we are following is one like a “coin falling here” as we are in the light. But if we do not find the coin in the light we continue to look for it where the light is when the coin might very well be beneath a chair. This is some way that we could think in terms of money is flowing and where is it going? The poor man is saying he is not getting. We have heard a very sterling and emotional contribution made here by our colleague that definitely I saw it coming from the heart—he is not here at the

moment—our colleague, Sen. Roy Augustus when he made a plea on behalf of the poor man in his own inimical way and this extends throughout the country.

There is also the need to overlook the financial system which stands at the core of the matter when we think in terms of the delivery system, the public service being the chief vehicle for delivery in an efficient and effective way. Year after year we have heard in this house and in the other place what is being done by way of public service reform but apparently, I strongly suspect, we are not on line with that because the deliveries are not coming. Perhaps, when we review our methods of problem solving there might be need to watch at that and this is a suggestion, that there may appear to be a fixation, that of rising above to the point where strategies could definitely be used, it seems that these have all failed so far. There is need for a fresh and new perspective, the mindset that might be lacking in motivation and that may be persistent.

Insofar as the social ills, I have touched briefly on that. We all know about that. Many of our colleagues have mentioned that and I would not go too deep into that. Perhaps I will touch later on, the question of crime and peace.

Housing: We must think in terms of the initiatives that are taking place insofar as housing is concerned, are commendable. We are hearing about 100,000 houses and this is good. I think the requirements might be more than that when we take into consideration the need for housing. What strikes me insofar as what is being given for housing is some of the places where these houses are being located and the type of houses. We seem to be strapped in a fixed position.

Last week I was in San Fernando, just coming into San Fernando before you enter the Tarouba area, I saw some houses on the hillside. It reminded me of slavery days, of what our old mines would be, like Uncle Tom's cabin. These little spots stuck on the hill and it seems to me we are stuck again to what is taking place in the barrios in South America. These are old cane lands. I do not know how far the drilling has gone in, if that has been the piling so to speak, to hold these houses, but one gets the impression that at the next shower they would all be coming down. I do not know—the person at the lower end usually is the one that holds the other end of the stick and it seems that here we are doing it in housing again.

I heard earlier speakers, particularly our dear Minister Rennie Dumas make a very important contribution in that he is providing facilities in some of these places, but I strongly suspect thinking in terms of what happened in previous housing estates, that there were no leisure facilities, no sporting facilities, possibly

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in some of them there were no educational facilities when these housing estates were being established. Here again, we are just regurgitating the system again. I think that possibly, I do not know, it might be time to come to grips with this situation and to put in facilities.

Sometimes when you look at magazines depicting countries in the North and what have you—I come back to an experience that I had. You do not see for very simple people at the end of the other line—in these countries you see there are facilities, a park and what have you, and places where parents could go, and the children could go. It seems to me that is not our mix at all, that is not in our psyche. I do not know how we could break this cycle, particularly in housing. That is a core area if we do not put in the facilities, if we do not put the soul of that into it, it would be barren and it would seem that we are going that way again.

I do not know if the real reason is to provide housing so that they would be merged into homes or if it is just another place to put people under another situation, so to speak, but definitely there is need to look at that point. It would cost us more in the long run, as our goodly Minister of Local Government is going through the process of putting in facilities, which should have been there in the first instance.

Insofar as transport, I think that the grid system which, if you go to any part of Trinidad and Tobago, with which we are faced—and perhaps that might be a spin-off from the inflows that we have and I understand that our ratio of car to population has been very similar to what might exist in America which is very high if we were to use America as a yardstick—one could definitely say we are a first-world led by that yardstick. But the facilities for it are totally not there and there seem to be no attempts being made to meet the challenge.

We have been hearing plenty talk for quite some time and if our memory goes back as early as 42 yeas ago when there was talk about a train system, mono rail or dual rail or what have you, but a rail system taking us from Diego Martin to Arima, we are also hearing that being regurgitated again. If we were building a mile a year, we would have had our system and that problem that we have along the East-West Corridor, that challenge would have demit to some extent I would say, insofar as that transport is concerned. Of course, we know there has been talk for quite some time and we strongly support using the sea. In the old days that was how we used to go around Trinidad and Tobago. Some of us could remember that. The boat used to leave and there was a trip that took us around Tobago and used to go right around Trinidad. We may have to consider some of these methods of transportation.

Insofar as the youth, an important aspect in our society, an important element, I think it was last year we had “Year of the Youth” when there was opportune time to put the youth up front. None of them were in this Senate here where one could have had—none downstairs—I think very little if any at all that represented us and one gets the impression that the youth was at the other end of the line. Of course, while the youth continue to make their contributions within all the fields of endeavour, in terms of if we were to look at the ratio of population, you know we always come up with some kind of statistical measure and what have you, that those of our youth who come up and I would think by far the substantial numbers of our youth far outpace any of the other youth as far as the world is concerned. This I think I would strongly suspect. I think we have had yardsticks as far as passing examinations and some of these things. In the swimming, we have had that and cricket and the sporting world in other areas. But what have we put in place to really propel?

These are questions—and do not think for a second, though it is alleged that we have plenty “uneducated,” as far as the system is concerned that they are not wise. They might be far wiser than we who are here or who may claim to be wise. It does put a back pressure on the whole system when we think of the youth and what we hold out to them. Of course, we are hearing much of the systems of education I would come back to that a little later.

Our womenfolk. Half of our world is left out. Perhaps, this has back pressure too, if we do not think in terms of our womenfolk and deal with them correctly. Because that back pressure will have effects in what we may think as a problem as far as crime is concerned. This could go far back when we talk about slavery, feudalism, exploitation but this unjust domination of more than half of the human race which we find and hear about—and going to China in the past—and I know that there are some attempts definitely being made towards the alleviation and upliftment of our womenfolk.

6.15 p.m.

To that extent I think, both in the area of culture and women and gender, et cetera, the present minister who handles that portfolio is doing yeoman service. I strongly feel that way. I credit her and I feel confident in having someone there. However, if we do not come to grips with some of these problems that emerge because of that pattern of ancient history, the pulling up together and moving will not be achieved.

If we want to think in terms of a more efficient society, from my own tradition, there is a saying that paradise lies at the feet of mothers and we know

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that each mother is a woman by gender and it is important therefore, if we were to give any credence to that—and I think our sociologists and psychologists, our modern-day thinkers will see some wisdom in that statement. I myself feel that if at a very young age if the groundwork for that is put in place and, if we concentrate more on our womenfolk, we will definitely be in a better position insofar as forging a society.

I know on this side, as far as numbers are concerned, and definitely as far as quality is concerned, on the Independent Bench, we are almost equal as far as womenfolk are concerned. If we are looking at absolute numbers, it does not extend too far in the other areas that comprise this Senate. Possibly we can look at that. I suggest that those responsible can look at that.

It may have been an effect on the type of society we have. I recall, some years ago, there was a young boy who was involved in the shooting of a commissioner of police and the utterances of that mother when the news was brought to her. She sought to put it against a background of: “Well, he went to see what he could get.” I take it to mean a work situation, and look at what it turned out to be. That system seems to be more embedded in our society. These are some of the things I would like to bring before our mind's eyes.

There is the question of foreign affairs. In the area of foreign affairs, our country, I had mentioned before, is ideally poised; I think we are well geared to move. When we think of this global village we are in and the position our country occupies in the region and even on the world stage, there are many areas in which we can deepen our processes. Definitely we have to participate in the changing of the world's power structure, and I would think that one of the areas to start is within the United Nations.

We know that there is one super power at the moment that seems to be running all over the place and doing as it wants. So there is need to form those international alliances. Though we are small, we have made substantial contributions on the world scene, for example in the world of law. One can think of the contribution made by one of our former Prime Ministers and President, Mr. ANR Robinson, insofar as that is concerned.

I know that in the area of the World Bank and the IMF, those instruments which preceded the foundation of the UN and which takes such an important part in setting the pattern of which way the world—

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams): Mr. Vice-President, I move that the session continue until 8.00 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

Sen. Bro. N. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, and Members of the Senate for affording me this opportunity.

As I was saying, the two major bulwarks off-setting the world economy—the World Bank and the IMF—were instruments that were established when the UN was not in existence, likewise our country. At that time the patterns that were set for the running of the whole world economy did not envisage us. I strongly suspect that the countries to the north still continue to benefit from whatever decisions they may make. There may be need to use whatever techniques or elements within the world system to see how this world system as far as the economy is concerned we can have it changed or amended—it might be a very difficult task—so that the not-so-advanced countries could get a better place in the world economy system.

I am sure that this matter has not been without thought as far as we are concerned, but I would like to keep it on the burner insofar as the economy is concerned. It has implications for our economy. If we did not have this windfall, God help us. If we do not manage it properly, God help us.

These are some of the areas insofar as foreign affairs are concerned—the diverse perspectives we have to think in terms of; the need for letting our voice be heard as far as international peace and security are concerned; the question of a just world order. I think that we are ideally suited to that. We have the people capable of it. I myself have confidence in our present Minister of Foreign Affairs. I think that he has a powerful pool of officers. We are fortunate for that and I think definitely there is an area on which we can make an impact on the prospects for a secured world.

As far as the elements of culture are concerned, I would think that the arts have, to a great extent, no matter what we have done, the every elements of culture as far as the economy is concerned I think it is the second after killing people in the world; maybe after the arms to which I refer as the technique of

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getting rid of our own species or maybe the drugs. They might be close by but I strongly suspect that culture might be second, when you think in terms of the broad elements of culture.

In our country I would like to see some place for the young artistes. I always try, when I come in contact with people, that there be some support for their work. In the last budget, I know that some elements were put in place so that the private sector would get into action as far as support is concerned. I would like to see the process deepen as far as the Government and its agencies are concerned; where we can buy works, have a committee to overview so that they meet some standard and have these displayed in your offices and different parts of the government system. It will be an element of value; have them properly ensured. This takes part in the wider community.

There is another part of art, which I will speak about later on as far as diversity is concerned. We are a diverse country and I will touch on that at a later stage.

Insofar as agriculture is concerned—some of the Senators have spoken on this already—it is important enough for me to add my two cents to it. The budget has a big social input, has a big thrust in the area of development based on the price of gas and oil. Also, the question of agriculture seems to be outside the realm of consideration. This has been going on for quite some time under successive governments.

I remember in 1976; it was a period such as this; it was in the month of Ramadan. I was at the corner of Pashley Street. There was an election taking place and there was a stop at that corner and the late Hon. Dr. Eric Williams mounted the truck, which was the stand at the time; they were making stops, they had raised the question of agriculture and he said, “You are talking about agriculture. Who is planting?” That was his comment and possibly that still is taking place.

What is important here is that agriculture has been the major input insofar as labour is concerned. It is an honourable occupation. I saw recently an article talking about the price of chicken and those countries that had some sort of local agricultural input—I think it was rice and some sort of grain. I think it was Suriname and some other country. The price of chicken in those countries was lower than any of the prices where they were adding the feed into the input in the production of the chicken.

At one time I understand that the process of our rice production—I am subject to correction—was not one that had a good end product. I think this could be

corrected and maybe now, if we are thinking in terms of rice, there is some rice — I passed on the highway the other day, I saw that they were cutting some—so there is still hope for agriculture. One wonders if there is a political will to make inputs into it.

I know if there is one thing that binds the Caribbean people, it is agriculture; even in our eating habits. I was looking at a publication around the same time that Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano had suggested that as an alternative to whatever it was—and he had mentioned the use of cassava. I strongly support that. The price at the moment might be more, but if we get into production as in the other types of food—it is a good food. It is referred to on the diet sheets as complex carbohydrate. It is one of the products that bind us as a people. We find it all over and it is still being kept.

From my understanding, it is a Western Hemisphere crop and has sustained people for quite some time so there might be some way of looking at this. I understand that Santo Domingo is a country that has quite a bit. At one stage I saw my wife with some cassava in the fridge. I know that long ago we never kept cassava long; that was a Trinidad habit; but she said it was good; that they had processed it over there and we had used it. It tasted good. So there is a way of exporting it, too. I strongly support the suggestion of Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano. This is only one crop, but there may be others. There is need if only for food security. I do not want to get too much into the economics of it, but if we were to produce a crop in Trinidad and Tobago no matter the price and that money stays in Trinidad and Tobago, it still spins among ourselves.

6.30 p.m.

The price in the market forces will carry it down. Once it remains among us, the cash that would have been spent would remain in our country. There is still need for that, from that point of view. Again, I bring to your attention the question of agriculture.

With respect to the environment, we had the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, a lady whom all of us, I would suspect, think a great deal of and expect much more. We hope that will be coming, insofar as the environment is concerned. The environment has been high-profiled for quite sometime, not only in our country, but at the worldwide level. She gave me comfort when she mentioned the improvement in the monitoring levels. It seems to me that the question of the environment is a little more complex than what has been explained to us.

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One would expect what is taking place, because we are in the middle of an industrial push. We have heard it here. I do not know if it is true, but mention was made of the project in Tobago, because there was no planning approval. I do not know if that is correct. One would think, in a massive project such as that, the question of environmental assessment would have been taken into consideration.

To some extent, as far as cost is concerned, there is the need for this type of input. Environmental-friendly input for manufacturing and industry could be very costly. Apparently, this had been one of the major reasons many of the offshore companies are coming into countries such as ours. Some countries are China and India. They are coming to the Third World countries to do their own thing, because our environmental laws are not on line. This is an important aspect. How far have we gone? I know much work has gone into this. One wonders if we had an audit of the environmental health and safety and the effects of our natural resources.

The loss of our technologies is something we have to look at with respect to the building of our scientific capacities. These are important aspects, especially against a background in which, obviously, there is a dysfunctional administration, with respect to many things that we hope to do. How could we go about mitigating risks? These bring implications for our human rights and those at the lower end.

You heard the Minister say that there is an extra plan taking place in Demerara Road, in the Wallerfield area. One wonders if it is because of the people who are living there, or because they hope to establish an estate? You see where our priorities lie? These messages reach our young people and those at the other end and they breed a bitter society. We have a responsibility here in the Parliament; we have to think in terms of how we put our environment-base and our health at risk. Recently we heard what took place in the Barrackpore area with the children.

After we sell out our country, we might think what now. What about the OSHA law and the National Heritage Act? These are all things that have implications. One would think that modern thinking would question whether we should establish a statutory authority as far as planning is concerned, move it away to an area where there will be an element of flexibility and, what people scare so much, the political directorate. I do not know.

I wonder if the budget has ever set up sub-regulatory mechanisms. The question of accountability does not only rest with the money that we spend. There is a higher accountability. We must never forget that. Every time we start a meeting here, we appeal to the Creator. I do not want it to sound too much like a

criticism of the budget, but I think it is my function to share what I feel. I strongly feel that all those who have that responsibility to carry out, are doing it with the best intentions. One must also not lose track of the important fact that the accumulated wisdom of our people far supersedes whatever may reside in this Senate, the House of Representatives, or both of them together. The need for economic planning, against that type of background, is very important.

There is definitely need to invest in the legal framework. I am still on the environment. Investment in technical human resource development is important. We could talk a lot about that. I remember it took approximately one year—when I raised a question, with the machinery of the Government, trying to get some forestry officers—before they came on board. These might be some of the dysfunctions that we have to address, if we are to achieve First World status. That is policy and management in an integrative way.

With respect to putting the ecology balance on the line in the world there has been work done on it. The question is the world charter for nature against the struggle for the just world. Again, these are all matters which we have to take into consideration. Our country has definitely committed itself to a path of sustained development, by statements and international connections. There is a commitment to do it. We are aware and it has been brought to our attention.

I would like to touch on the question of implementation. We are a very small island, 2,000 square miles, surrounded by water, with diminishing values, as far as the resources are concerned. We are fortunate to have a young, healthy and strong people who are God-fearing. These are some of the things that we could think of.

As has been announced, there has been a growing loss of our natural ecosystems. There is the question of risk assessment. How are we addressing these questions? We have heard of the North Coast Road, where there are strong scientific areas. I heard the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment say that some of these places have just been declared. The declaration is one thing but the monitoring and curing are very important. Having our resource people aware of this are all challenges for our nation. These are some of the things that we would definitely have to address and keep before our mind's eyes.

I mentioned before that the ice is melting, figuratively; I do not know how that will affect us. On the social inputs, there was the question which we have been hearing for some time. We mentioned that under no unequivocal terms should it find the daylight. I am speaking about the legalization of abortion. You will find

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strong resistance to that. I would hold on that. We have had consultations with some of our Ministers and people in high positions. One has had some element of confidence that we will not see that. This is still on the national agenda. I share those thoughts with you, as far as we are concerned with respect to the legalization of abortion.

Insofar as education is concerned, I strongly support what our Minister of Education is doing. I know it has been a very hard job. The nation knows that. It is a long term thing. When one thinks in terms of education, one thinks in terms of the transference of the accumulated knowledge of humankind from one generation to the next. This may appear to be a very big task. All of us are involved, both within the family and the home. I am speaking with respect to the area of the formal systems, preschool, primary, secondary, tertiary and beyond. Even in my tradition, we are taught that learning is a process; we say from the cradle to the grave. This is an important aspect. I know it is a very difficult task. Again, I have that confidence that we, as a people, are standing close behind those who are in charge and giving them that support and guidance, and much will come out of it.

I know there are certain negatives that have emerged, but this is possible. If any negatives emerge within our children, it is not the mother, father or parent; it is the whole nation. That is how I look at it, because every child belongs to all of us.

I am of a group that is addressing the concerns, that is, against my own background of participation, collaboration and co-operation. I think they are making a very big and important intervention, insofar as coming to grips with some of the negatives that have emerged within our society, our young people. That is a group in Marabella, called Marabella Concerned Citizens Committee. They have mounted a Parent Empowerment Programme. I look upon this programme as a pilot programme. The rationale for it has been that, based on the increasing outbreak of indiscipline in schools, it has invoked much concern from several sectors of the society. The Marabella Concerned Citizens Committee came into being with the intention of using its resources to make a contribution to address the problem. Our commitment is to research, identify issues and offer solutions in a workable format. We recognize that the approach must be multifaceted, targeting parents, teachers, students and the school system itself. This is basically the rationale. It has established objectives, et cetera.

I would like to place on record some of the people who have responded to that initiative and pay tribute to one of the architects of that programme. They are people who responded and have committed themselves to it. I will call some of

the names because it is important to know that they are people who will reach out, as far as community is concerned. From the NGO, we have our own Prof. Ramesh Deosaran; Prof. Kenneth Ramchand; Mr. Errol Fabien; Mr. Loutan Patterson; Mr. Don La Foucade; Dr. Lennox Bernard; Father Louis Gutierrez, and your humble servant happens to be one of them. We have been brought together to meet this challenge as resource personnel.

This has been going on. From the statistics, which this small group has brought about, 50 parents were selected to be the stock for this group. So far, the attendance has been 46. These are parents who are attending these courses. The courses cover a ground. I would quickly touch on that. The subjects are communication for better relationship, violence, moral and spiritual value and befriending your anger. These are the subjects which handle—Dr. Eugenia Springer and Mrs. Julie Peters are also part of it. These are all outstanding people in their own academic field.

The feedback I am getting on this is that people in the area are sold on the idea and it could act as a prototype to feed into the other systems. I look forward, at the end, to the assessment, that could definitely go to the other communities. Again, on the question of reaching out, there is need for people's participation, which I think is a good thing. Insofar as the programme is concerned, it received the support of Members of the Senate, our Ministers of Education and Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs.

6.45p.m

Mr. Vice-President, even in the reaching out exercise, this House is well represented on both sides, by high professional people. In my view, this is definitely one of the gems and one of the diamonds that the nation could look forward to a substantial contribution. The negatives that arise in our society have to be met in a multifaceted way, if we are to definitely overcome them. This is one of the good ones that I see.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Bro. N. Khan: Mr. Vice-President, thank you. I would like to make reference to the area of culture. I speak about this area in the wider expanse. We

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are a pluralistic and diverse society and this is part of our strength. The destination is to co-exist, to agree, to participate and to cooperate. We have to recognize that we are a multi-society. The world is that way; it is a global village with some of these instant communications like the Internet, computer and so forth—the need to integrate all interests.

People must be able to express themselves; to give their opinions and feel free to do that. What could be the greater strength than this good as a people that we do not allow ourselves to fall to any fatal weakness? This is one area that I would like to deepen the process insofar as that is concerned.

There is a crying need throughout the world to invoke the principles of brotherhood of mankind. This has been laid down in some of our great scriptures and it forms the basis for all our faith-based organizations. There is need to address the fundamental qualitative aspects of human development. There is need to bring out the beauty of which we are capable and not just the animalistic elements that are in us.

We know that we are under heavy stress, as far as the economic criteria are concerned, and these form part of our conventional wisdom. This question of the economic criteria which seems to guide us so far in theory is flawed. Therefore, in practice it is worse. We have the examples like the high incidence of the imbalance between what is in this world and what is part of the spiritual world, and the economic systems that we follow. This defines expression in an unjust society being inequitable.

There is definite need for self-development based on spiritual wisdom, values, positive attitudes and practices, and what appears to be emerging especially on the international scene. This is again for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs intervention where there are elements of the transcendental taking place as far as elements like justice, love and peace are concerned.

The question of multiculturalism or our diversity could be harnessed. If this is harnessed and used to promote harmony, there would be need for it. What else can we do? Every human being is made individually separate. There is no one like me or you, ever or now or will be. So, there is individuality and we have to recognize that. If we could build harmony through that diversity, I think there is where our relationship could be elevated into one of dignity and nobility. This is one of the gifts that we have—the differences among ourselves, our nations and our families. It happens at every level. So there is this element. Diversity itself could only be treated as good, and this is the way that we should treat it. It has been created so. This does not mean exclusiveness, selection or particularism.

This means inclusion; this is universal to everyone—fairness, equity, justice, love and peace. I do not think that the creator had meant for us to live barricaded and insulated.

The recognition of this interdependence and respect and understanding must be meaningful, and make for participation, cooperation and partnership. I had mentioned before that you would be hearing these words from me all along, not only today but even before.

The role of the family is most important. There are no barriers or frontiers in this. We hear talk about ethnicity, nationality and culture. These are all elements used against a background of knowing our differences, and this should be used to make a better nation.

Within recent times we have been hearing things on the international scene about clash of nations, and other nations want to set the agenda for other people. This has implications for our people at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our foreign thinking, when we interrelate outside of the society. There is much that we have been able to bring to bear in our society which we can share.

This week we had “Walk for Peace”. I do not want it to be felt that this walk was against any government or so, because the Prime Minister was there; the President was there; and many people from across the board were there. There was an outpouring of our spirit; a crying out for a better nation and a better people. This was done through what was referred to as our “National Day of Prayer, Repentance and Healing.” These are not things that are strange to us as a people. We are all a prayerful people—repentance across the board and seeking forgiveness. “Who is without sin let them cast the first stone”.

In my own tradition, we are always inviting and building in our prayer system to seek forgiveness. When we speak about healing, we are not only speaking about health, but we are also speaking about the physical health which is important and the spiritual health. So these are important aspects which came to bear and which our nation came out on.

Mr. Vice-President, they touched on a few points which we had sought to highlight within the framework of the IRO and the rest of the nation. I had shared some of these pamphlets around and I did not meet anyone, not one person—I have shared out thousands of these pamphlets—who had any objection and did not feel the connection. I think it was good highlighting the social ills of Trinidad and Tobago. It was not that we were condemning anything; this is what we are. We pray for repentance and healing in our nation. We came together to demonstrate national pride and patriotism; and, most importantly, to promote the dignity of every human individual and respect for life. Again, watch it.

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When life starts, even before birth, it is an important aspect to pledge solidarity, to build together a just and peaceful society in which there are right relationships to promote intergenerational, interfaith and secular communications; to foster neighbourliness, love and respect for self, for each other, and for all God's creations; to promote a new culture of leadership at all levels in the society; to share positive developments in our nation. The question with respect to a new culture of leadership, in my own tradition, each day brings a new world and even within ourselves that leadership emerges.

These are some of the things that I would like to share. I know there is a "Principle of Fairness" to which the IRO and many other persons have subscribed. The hon. Prime Minister mentioned that he would take to Cabinet the "Principles of Fairness" which forms part of that input. We are in a position here where we are responsible for quite a bit of our physical resources and, by extension, what have implications for our spiritual forces. If we cannot keep body and soul together through living, then we are in plenty trouble.

I do not want to think in terms of our involvement in a user-factory way. That is a way where we think we could just use up people's things, and at the end that is the end of it. I would also like to think that our position is one of a trust and that trust should be honoured. Each day as we come to pray that trust is further bonded together. Until there is commitment, there will be hesitancy. We must not give any chance to draw back. What we can do, or dream we can, we can begin it. These are important things.

I would like to read a quotation from a book given to me by Bishop Rawle Douglin. I look upon him as a friend and a brother. These quotations are not originals. This is from a great thinker and a great spiritual person and it says: "Pray as if everything depended on God, work as if everything depended upon you."

I would also like to leave a quote from Goethe, the famous German scientist:

"Until one is committed there is hesitancy that the moment one definitely commits then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never have otherwise occurred. Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it, begin it now."

If we could remember the old Latin proverb, "When there is no wind row"

There is an old expression from among the Beh Beh people, that is a "newanitic" people from North Africa and it goes something like this: "When you

assist a man to mount the back of a camel there is no need to tell him to hold tight.” One could infer from that the need for applying ourselves and having that faith with our creator. As I said the last time, we have hope in what is before us and, more so, in ourselves and our people. I look forward to the realization of this. So much has been said and even some suggestions have been offered in this Senate.

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

7.00 p.m.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift): Mr. Vice-President, first, let me congratulate the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for what is obviously an excellent budget. I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate my colleague on the left, Sen. Conrad Enill, and his able and hard-working staff for presenting us with such a magnificent document.

Mr. Vice-President, I am satisfied with the excellence of the budget by reason of the comments made by Sen. Wade Mark. One could detect, in Sen. Mark's intervention, his wailings, his gnashing of teeth, air of desperation and fear that something positive would come of this budget, as it did in the previous one. [*Desk thumping*] When I say, wailings of desperation, I would just take this opportunity to remind colleagues of the vocabulary terms used during his contribution: “The budget is a cunning exercise in political deception. It lacks vision, coherence, depth and strategic direction. It shows a yawning disconnect between the infamous Vision 2020...” It talks about “incompetent administration; grinding and persistent poverty and destitution; harassed, tormented and a frightened nation; brutality.” He even describes it as “a weapon of mass destruction”. He calls it “inefficient, wasteful”. He calls the Government “reckless and absolutely corrupt”. He talks about “unprecedented deterioration”. And it goes on and on. He says we are a “visionless administration”. He even refers to our social programmes as “failed social programmes”. He talks about the budget being a “hoax of the decade”. These are really the rantings of a desperate man and I believe that feeling is not common to him alone, but naturally, I would suspect, to all on the other side.

I would have left these comments unnoticed. It was not until he ventured with an onslaught on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that I thought I had to set the record straight. I do this from the perspective of the term he kept using: Transparency, transparency, transparency, as though we were covering up something; we have something to hide. But many a time, I remind this House,

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sometimes things are so transparent that you do not see it. Many a man has been known to walk through glass doors. It is too clear; they could not see it. So I believe that this is the imagery that is besetting the other side and I know they will recover.

Sen. Mark raised a number of questions regarding the accreditation and deployment of diplomatic personnel to a number of our missions overseas. He referred to the High Commission in South Africa and raised some questions there. He referred to the mission in Canada, also Miami. I want to take this opportunity to set the record straight. Sen. Mark challenged the accreditation of the High Commissioner-designate to South Africa on the grounds that it lacked transparency and, indeed, that to some extent it smacked of corruption. He enquired as to her state of health and when she intended to assume duties there and, indeed, as is his wont, quoted some erroneous figures in respect of her entitlements and emoluments.

I want to make it very clear for the record that the allowances that Sen. Mark claims the High Commissioner is receiving are far from the truth. Let me hasten to point out that the High Commissioner-designate does not receive, while she is here in Trinidad and Tobago, a foreign-service allowance or head-of-mission allowance. Until she assumes duties in South Africa, she will not receive an outfit allowance. Until she arrives in post, she will not receive a hardship allowance and until she arrives in post, she will not receive an entertainment allowance. This is for purposes of setting the record straight.

Sen. Mark also referred to the accreditation of some Information Attachés, one in London, one in Miami and one in Canada. Indeed, when he questioned the appointment of their eligibility, I remembered the response from our colleague, Minister Dumas, as not very charitable. Sen. Dumas replied: "You do not have any respect for local government people", because Sen. Mark was wondering how was it that former mayors and councillors, among the three appointees, were out there doing the job that they were sent there to do.

Indeed, it is not unusual for the Prime Minister who has the sole faculty, the authority and the prerogative of accrediting and appointing his diplomatic personnel, to see and detect the people who are most likely to serve, and serve this country best abroad. We would not challenge that. Indeed, the accreditation of former mayors and councillors may be the direction that we ought to go, because here we have, coming up very soon, the World Conference of Mayors being hosted by Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, that conference is being hosted in Tobago

and if we look at the main themes of the World Conference of Mayors, we see the concentration on the promotion of dialogue among local government international fraternities with respect to business and local governance. We see another objective is to facilitate meetings among the groups of corporate sponsors of the World Conference of Mayors, local Chambers of Commerce and business representatives and, thirdly, to promote Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean as the preferred centre for trade, business, tourism and technology. So here we see complete relevance, complete connection, I should say, between the aspirations of the Government insofar as promoting Trinidad and Tobago in the widest possible term. I hope that Sen. Mark and his colleagues would have the right perspective now regarding the accreditation and the appointment of these three gentlemen.

This brings me, in all of this, to the role and function of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Our Ministry lends tangible support to the three main pillars of Government's economic strategy in furtherance of the social and economic development of Trinidad and Tobago. Through its staff in Port of Spain and at its overseas missions, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to promote and protect the political, socio-economic, energy, trade, security and cultural interests of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago at the regional, hemispheric and international levels.

The enhancement and development of bilateral relations with strategic countries and in multilateral fora are significant elements in advancing trade and investment opportunities, promotion of the country's culture and tourism product and seeking support in international fora to advance the social, economic and political priorities underpinning our national development.

Towards this end, the Ministry and its 14—and this is soon to be 15—overseas missions, undertake to identify, develop and promote strategic linkages at both the bilateral and multilateral levels to assist in advancing the national agenda. These strategic linkages are essentially tangible activities to implement national policy. For example, we would facilitate the negotiation of legal agreements to encourage investment by foreign countries in our industries; source scholarship and training opportunities for our nationals to strengthen the national human capital; facilitate agreements to encourage the exchange of skilled workers, such as engineers, doctors and university professors, to enhance all our economic sectors and raise the benchmark in Trinidad and Tobago.

We would also identify successful foreign industries that could assist in developing our own sectors, be it energy, health, transport, sport or construction. In the international arena, we work to advance Trinidad and Tobago's concerns

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on priority issues, such as the vulnerabilities of small-island developing states, the environment, and fair international trade rules. As the aforementioned would indicate, the Ministry is involved in every aspect of the country's development and is essentially the country's portal to the outside world.

The priority areas in the medium term that have been identified in the 2005 Budget for achieving sustainable employment deal with positioning our country in the global knowledge-based industry, intensifying diversification of the economy through light manufacturing and the services sector, as well as increasing local productive capacity in agriculture and construction. These are areas of action that are closely associated with the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We touch now on the field of energy. In the area of energy, the Ministry has played an instrumental role in the negotiation and realization of a wide range of positive developments specifically in respect of the following:

- Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding and Letter of Intent between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Venezuela with respect to the exploitation and development of cross-border hydrocarbon reserves between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. The signature of this agreement took place on August 12, 2003.
- Establishment of PetroCaribe at the first meeting of Caribbean Ministers of Energy held in Caracas, Venezuela in July 2004.
- Venezuela's commitment to support Trinidad and Tobago's planned Caribbean pipeline project with the supply of gas from Venezuela.
- Support for the ongoing work of the joint Trinidad and Tobago/Venezuela Steering Committee for the unitization of gas reserves of the Plataforma Deltana region.
- In conjunction with the Venezuelan Petroleum Chamber, Trinidad and Tobago's embassy in Caracas coordinated seminars on oil and gas development in Trinidad and Tobago, with presentations by officials of the National Gas Company and Petrotrin to international audiences.
- Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Spanish company REPSOL YPF S.A., to explore the latter's further investment opportunities and increase its social commitments and involvement in Trinidad and Tobago. This was signed in December, 2003.

Trinidad and Tobago's diplomatic representatives in *inter alia* Washington, Ottawa, India, Nigeria and the United Kingdom, continue to interface with the relevant public and private sector officials of the host country on the investment climate in Trinidad and Tobago and in the energy sector particularly.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also focused on promoting trade and the potential for investment in other areas such as port development, tourism and housing. In this vein, this country's Embassy in Washington, United States, has held discussions in March with the Vice-President of UBS Financial Services Inc.—a management asset business group formed after the merger of Union Bank of Switzerland and the Swiss Bank Corporation in 1998 and now including Paine-Weber—and the Vice-President, Choice Hotel International, on the proposal to construct a 70-plus room hotel near the Piarco International Airport, using Choice Hotel's Sleep Inn brand. UBS has estimated the investment value at US \$2.7. Follow-up action is being undertaken by the Tourism Development Authority. My colleague, Minister Chin Lee, referred to that in his earlier contribution.

Our embassy in Washington was also instrumental in facilitating the visit to Washington in June 2004 of a Tobago seafood promotion mission aimed at securing markets for flying fish. As a result of this mission, the All Tobago Fisherfolk Association selected two seafood importers to represent its Tobago exporters of the product.

Trinidad and Tobago's Washington representatives are currently assisting Angostura Limited in lobbying against a recent Bill (S.2765) that was introduced in the United States Senate by Senator Charles Grassley, a Republican from Iowa, that would limit the amount of ethanol that can enter the US duty-free unless it contains significant amounts of domestic contents. The embassy continues to work with Angostura Limited, Manchester Trade Limited and Caribbean Central American Action (CCAA) and other interest groups and agencies of the US administration to press for an amendment to the proposed billing date of July 2004 to January 2005.

In Canada, the following projects have been promoted by our diplomatic missions during 2004:

- (i) Conceptualization of a waste treatment plant model for Trinidad and Tobago, based on the processing of solid waste in such a way as to:
 - (a) produce commercially useful products and by-products;
 - (b) create backward and forward linkages with other industries and sectors of the Trinidad and Tobago industry;

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- (c) create employment opportunities for unskilled and skilled workers;
 - (d) use and re-use heat and energy during the course of the processing;
 - (e) practically eliminate any possibility of land, air or water pollution during the course of the processing.
- (ii) We are also looking into the construction technology with applications that are particularly suitable for cost-effective housing and office building.
 - (iii) Successful approach on behalf of the Founder/Chairman of the Hamilton Mardi Gras Festival, to have Carib Beer listed as the official beer for that festival, which features cultural performances and display and sale of arts and crafts.
 - (iv) Facilitation of research required by Jonah Transportation Limited for the establishment of high-speed transportation between the islands of Trinidad and Tobago as part of a wider proposal to link the Caribbean islands through a cheaper mode of transportation.

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- (v) There is the acceptance of the proposal for welders from Trinidad and Tobago to be provided on a seasonal basis to Fabspec, a custom metal fabricator and standard equipment manufacturer based in Montreal. The first group of welders is expected to arrive in Canada in January 2005.

Presentations on trade and investment opportunities in Trinidad and Tobago have been made at the Palace of Westminster, Houses of Parliament, London; the Chambers of Commerce in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, Scotland, Germany and Finland. A business programme scheduled to be launched on December 06, 2004, has been developed by Trinidad and Tobago's High Commission in London to encourage and facilitate enhanced trade and investment and the development of concrete business projects in the non-energy sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

Trade and investment activities are also being promoted through this country's High Commission in New Delhi, India through its initiation of and participation in business facilitation seminars with private and public sector entities. A number of trade delegations from medium-sized businesses are expected to visit Trinidad and Tobago in 2004/2005.

In March this year, trade and investment opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago were pursued at a Trade and Investment Convention held in Rotterdam, the Netherlands where promising business initiatives are being followed-up,

including the conducting of a feasibility study on the possible establishment by a Dutch firm of a health resort facility in Tobago worth about Euro 80 million.

My colleague, Sen. The Hon. Chin Lee, touched on tourism. I will not spend too much time on that sector considering that he has expanded on some of the plans and projects envisaged in the very near to medium-term. The promotion of tourism is also another major aspect of the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its overseas missions. Promotional material prepared by our High Commission in India has been included on compact disc for an IDB group of Latin American and Caribbean countries project in Tokyo, Japan, aimed at boosting tourism opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean countries.

Discussions have also been held with tour operators in India interested in developing packages for tourism promotion in Trinidad and Tobago, given that over six million Indians travel annually out of India, hence representing a significant potential market. Fruitful discussions have already been held with local Indian carriers able to source economical fares through Sri Lankan Airways and BWIA and it is proposed that discussions on negotiations for a bilateral air services agreement with India will commence in 2005, and that one of the largest outbound tour operators will be selected to market destination Trinidad and Tobago. Indian hotel chains are being identified which have the potential to invest in tourism infrastructure ahead of World Cup 2007. You also heard this from my colleague, Sen. The Hon. Chin Lee. Building awareness and infrastructure ahead of World Cup 2007 is being organized through tourism road shows and expanding Carnival and Indian Arrival Day celebrations—carried out with success for the first time this year—are high on the agenda.

In respect of the nascent film industry in this country, active promotion of Trinidad and Tobago, as a film destination for Bollywood films is being pursued. To this end, discussions have been held in Mumbai with the Governor of Maharashtra and film producers.

Introduction of weekly flights between Vienna and Tobago by Lauda Air has also been facilitated through negotiations between Trinidad and Tobago's Honorary Consul in Denmark and the President of Austrian Airlines. Successful discussions held by the THA, Tidco and diplomatic representatives in Caracas have also been held with Aeropostal of Venezuela for increased airlift into Trinidad and Tobago from Margarita and Maturin.

Through this country's diplomatic representatives in Venezuela, a video on the beauty, culture and entertainment sectors in Trinidad and Tobago was

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produced in Spanish and promoted on Venezuelan National Television and Cable TV “SIN FLASH”. This was facilitated by the visit to Trinidad and Tobago of the Venezuelan TV production company “SIN FLASH”. Pictures taken during the production are displayed on the company’s website WWW.SINFLASH.COM. The programme reportedly received one of the highest ratings for the station and has been re-run on national television.

I wish to turn now to the work being done on other bilateral and multilateral issues which support national development priorities. Caricom continues to be the main pillar of Trinidad and Tobago’s regional involvement. As a market, Caricom is the country’s second largest export market behind the United States of America. Regional integration therefore remains a high priority for Trinidad and Tobago and the Government has embraced and clearly assumed the mantle of leadership within the region and, most importantly, within the Caricom family over the past year. Undoubtedly, the commitment of this Government to the development and integration of the region has been incomparable in 2004.

Trinidad and Tobago has played an active role in exploring options for governance of the community. At the initiative of the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, there have been consultations on options of governance for Caribbean Regional Integration and it is anticipated that decisions on this issue will be made in the near future. Trinidad and Tobago has also been at the forefront of activities related to the implementation of the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME). This country was among the first to establish, in keeping with a community decision, a dedicated unit to oversee the implementation process. As we forge ahead in preparation for a single regional market, we have sought at every level to involve both governmental and non-governmental agencies in consultation on the CSME.

In seeking to strengthen the productive capacity of the region, Trinidad and Tobago has not only proposed the construction of a gas pipeline up the islands chain but, most recently, has provided an energy facility to help sister states to deal with the adverse effects of rising energy prices. Trinidad and Tobago continues to be cognizant of the fact that a strong regional market will redound to the benefit of the Trinidad and Tobago economy. In this connection, I must reiterate that the balance of trade with the Caricom region currently weighs heavily in favour of Trinidad and Tobago.

Trinidad and Tobago, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, continues to play an active role in seeking a resolution to the Haiti crisis, precipitated by the

departure of Jean Bertrand Aristide from office and the ascension to power by the US-endorsed interim Prime Minister, Gerard Latortue. This country was thus a member of the five-member delegation of Caricom Foreign Ministers appointed by Caricom Heads to visit Haiti from July 13—14, 2004. We recommended to Heads the way forward with respect to Caricom's re-engagement with Haiti.

Although Caricom Heads are yet to adopt a final position on re-engagement with the interim administration, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to providing humanitarian support to the people of Haiti. Consequently, in response to requests from the Chief Coordinator of Caricom's Task Force on Haiti, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has facilitated Trinidad and Tobago's capacity to provide assistance to Haiti, particularly, in the energy sector and in ensuring that Haiti is ready for elections in 2005.

In accordance with our commitment to the deepening of bilateral relations with our fellow Caricom states, Trinidad and Tobago, upon the request of the Government of Grenada, provided technical assistance in the field of legislative drafting in August 2004, with the visit of the Chairman of the Law Revision Commission to St. George's.

Expanding on the subject of bilateral relations between Trinidad and Tobago and its fellow Caricom Member States, it is by now, a matter of public record, the pivotal role this country played in assisting Grenada in the aftermath of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Ivan in early September 2004. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs played an important role in the provision of consular assistance by establishing a helpdesk to ensure that there was a local focal point where information on missing nationals in Grenada could be collated. This service was also extended to our nationals in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, where in each case, the ministry assisted in the coordination of the airlift of nationals back to Trinidad and Tobago.

Additionally, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago hosted the emergency Heads of Government Meeting held in Port of Spain on September 15, 2004, to address the Caricom response to the regional devastation caused by Hurricane Ivan. In total, the Government committed the sum of TT \$30 million to affected Member States, with an additional TT \$5 million to Haiti in the aftermath of the deadly floods caused by the passage of tropical storm Jeanne in mid-September 2004.

Trinidad and Tobago was among the first four Caricom countries to establish diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1974, and in the context of further enhancing our relations, the Government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was represented at the first Caricom/Cuba Ministerial Meeting held in Havana, Cuba in July 2004.

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The Government has agreed to host the next meeting of the Caricom/Cuba Joint Commission which will be held in the last quarter of 2004, and it is anticipated that the second meeting of the Trinidad and Tobago/Cuba Joint Commission will be attached to that meeting. Among the important areas proposed for discussion are health, trade, investment, agriculture, education, technology, tourism, transportation and natural disaster management.

In 2003, Trinidad and Tobago assumed chairmanship of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD), an important element of Caricom's work. COHSOD is one of Caricom's four councils and works assiduously to promote improvements in health, education, labour, the environment, gender equity and advocates, particularly, on behalf of the more vulnerable sectors of our societies, including children and the poor. In this respect, the Eleventh Meeting of COHSOD that focused on health, was hosted in April 2004, in Tobago. Chaired by the hon. Minister of Health, one of the major achievements of COHSOD was the signing of the Caricom/World Bank/International Development Association (IDA), Grant Agreement valued at US \$9 million for the Caricom-led Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS.

As chair of COHSOD, Trinidad and Tobago was one of five Caricom Member States to sign the Agreement on the Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and other Health Professions in November 2003, thus bringing it provisionally into force and allowing for the establishment of the Authority. That Authority is now operational in Kingston, Jamaica and this clearly demonstrates this Government's commitment to ensuring that our health professionals are recognized and are not denied access to employment on the basis of non-recognition of their qualifications.

As host country of the Headquarters of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Trinidad and Tobago has always played a central role in the execution of the Association's mandate. Currently, this country holds the positions of Chairman of the Special Committee on Trade and Development and External Relations. That position is held by the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Hon. Kenneth Valley. We also hold the Vice-Chairman of the Special Committee on Budget and Administration and Second Vice-Chairman of the Council of National Representatives of the Special Fund Sector.

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Mr. Vice-President, additionally, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in collaboration with the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), commemorated the

association's 10th anniversary in July 2004, an event highlighted by the signing of a Memorandum of Multilateral Air Transport Agreement, a Tourism Convention, and the Protocol to the Tourism Convention as well.

As part of the drive toward deepening and strengthening its role at the hemispheric level and its ties to our Latin American neighbours, this country will also be represented at the 5th Greater Caribbean Business Forum and the 16th Meeting of the Special Committee on Trade Development and the External Economic Relations of the ACS, to be held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic from October 26—29, 2004. That delegation is going to be led by the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry, Kenneth Valley.

Continuing in the vein of building alliances to support trade development and enhancing our economic relations with our regional partners, the Government has committed TT \$100 million to the CARICOM Trade Support Programme that was launched in September 2004 in Port of Spain. Anticipated to be operational over three years, from 2005—2007, and to be disbursed in three tranches, the programme seeks to provide support for building the trade capacity of our fellow CARICOM member states, cognisant that adverse economic performance in CARICOM countries could have a detrimental impact on our economic well-being.

I am therefore pleased to inform, Mr. Vice-President, that the programme will become operational from October 29, 2004 and mid-November 2004, when it will be launched in Jamaica and St. Lucia, respectively.

Sen. Mark: Hon. Minister, could you give us some details as to how this programme—could you also tell us what had been the precedent in the Caribbean where a government deals directly with private sector firms involving taxpayers' money? What mechanisms are going to be put in place to avoid the possibility of nepotism, favouritism and racket in this arrangement?

Sen. The Hon. K. Gift: Mr. Vice-President, that is a very relevant question. I can assure the goodly Senator that with the arrangements in place for the operation of this facility, there is hardly any likelihood that there would be nepotism, favouritism or any such thing. Indeed, that facility is to be operated by the Caribbean Development Bank.

If we look now to the Americas, increasing international competitiveness in the goods and services of this country, both the regional and international markets, necessitates the formation of alliances with friendly states at the bilateral level and at multilateral fora. To achieve the country's overall development objective of economic growth with equity, the Government's foreign policy has

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been directed at developing stronger and closer south-to-south bilateral co-operation with countries in North, South and Central America. A number of our Latin American neighbours have shown interest in developing greater collaboration in the energy sector of Trinidad and Tobago.

Trinidad and Tobago has joined other countries, politically, and through financial contributions, to support efforts against the scourge of terrorism. This country became a signatory in 2002, to the Inter-American Democratic Committee against Terrorism (CICTE). Through participation in the Organization of American States (OAS) and its related agencies, we continue to seek opportunities for our nationals at those international fora. Trinidad and Tobago is expected to chair, in 2005, the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism. Through the OAS, this country has been the recipient of development funding for projects in areas such as teacher training in education, HIV/AIDS, information technology, Spanish language curriculum and training, and in civil society.

Trinidad and Tobago has also secured bilateral technical, scientific, and educational assistance from the countries of the Americas in a range of areas including nutrition, agricultural biotechnology, fisheries development, maritime services and Spanish language training. A number of scholarship opportunities for degree programmes for our nationals have also been obtained from countries such as Venezuela and Mexico.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the eyes and ears of the Government abroad, has been conducting a rigorous campaign aimed at securing Port of Spain as the site of the headquarters of the Secretariat of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). A number of productive and positive missions were undertaken in collaboration with our CARICOM neighbours during the period January to September 2004.

Mr. Vice-President, even as efforts are being made to restart the actual negotiations on the agreement, Trinidad and Tobago has maintained its lobbying exercise. Trinidad and Tobago remains a front-runner among the candidates who have been proposed to host the FTAA headquarters. Trinidad and Tobago has secured support from all CARICOM member countries: Costa Rica, Venezuela and, most recently, Peru at the recently concluded United Nations General Assembly.

Consolidation of existing support and intensification of the campaign to those States that are yet to make a commitment will continue to engage the attention of the ministry. Indeed, at the moment there is a headquarters promotional team that is engaging the government of Canada to see if we can elicit and receive from them additional support which would push up our numbers.

It is to be noted that Trinidad and Tobago is seen as ideally located to be the centre of the Americas. In this regard, the Government is exploring the feasibility and possibility of the extension of air service links from Trinidad and Tobago to southern South America. Scheduled air services to Costa Rica have also been identified as strategic as they facilitate communications between this country and Central America.

Mr. Vice-President, I am pleased to report that at a recent meeting between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Ambassadors of Argentina and Brazil, there is great expectation that there would be the resumption of air coverage from Port of Spain to those two countries. Indeed, they are hoping that the arrangements could include just a hop over from Caracas since both countries, nationally aligned, do ply their routes ending and terminating in Caracas, Venezuela.

Such enhanced linkages would facilitate the freer movement of goods and services and this could be seen in the light of efforts to diversify the economy. In his budget presentation, the Hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance identified six main features which would be at the centre of the diversification strategy, namely:

1. traditional manufacturing;
2. new technology-based industrial sector;
3. tourism;
4. financial services; and
5. small business sector.

The various missions to promote Trinidad and Tobago's FTAA bid provided an opportunity to discuss possibilities for future collaboration in some of those areas with senior officials of the Latin American countries visited. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is now actively involved in following up those discussions with concrete proposals. That is what I just referred to, Mr. Vice-President.

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, may I seek a clarification? With respect to the FTAA—Mr. Minister, you know both of us cannot stand at the same time.

Sen. The Hon. K. Gift: Mr. Vice-President, this administration likes to give credit where credit is due. This initiative started on your side, and being a good initiative, in the national interest, we thought we could pursue it and run with it. Indeed, I think, you would be doing well to associate yourself in the campaign effort.

Sen. Mark: Hon. Minister, what has it cost Trinidad and Tobago, to date, in seeking to market here as the destination point for the headquarters?

Sen. The Hon. K. Gift: Mr. Vice-President, to date, we have had four missions on the road to a number of Latin American countries. The Foreign Ministers of Barbados, Guyana, Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago are heading these missions. Naturally, the expenditure on those missions is being borne by the respective countries mentioned. The marketing is a Caricom effort; it is not Trinidad and Tobago. Port of Spain has received the full and unanimous endorsement of Caricom Heads, so that, indeed, the sharing of obligations; sharing of responsibilities; and as a matter of fact we have expressed great pleasure at the spirit of cooperation among the other governments that headed the promotional team. The next two missions going out are supposed to be headed by the Foreign Minister of Jamaica and the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The Caribbean image and effort of solidarity is very present in those countries that we have visited.

In Europe, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has advanced Trinidad and Tobago's interest in the bilateral and multilateral fora.

In the bilateral arena, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago and the Russian Federation entered into a protocol on political consultation on September 23, 2004, to facilitate exchange between the two countries in the area of international relations. This protocol is of importance in the context of developing our relations with the oil-rich Russian Federation that is recognized as the future growth market of the continent. I must say that I had the honour of signing that agreement while I was in New York recently attending the United Nations General Assembly sessions.

With regard to promoting bilateral investment between Trinidad and Tobago and European countries, the Double Taxation Agreement signed by Trinidad and Tobago and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg entered into force in November 2003. Two bilateral agreements between Trinidad and Tobago and the Kingdom of Spain also entered into force and the Framework Agreement on the Technical, Cultural and Scientific Cooperation and the Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement in April and September 2004, respectively.

In addition, the Ministry commenced negotiations for a Reciprocal Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement with the Netherlands and Belgium.

Relations with the Kingdom of Spain were given an added impetus with the visit of the Hon. Prime Minister in December 2003. Matters related primarily to

energy and investment were discussed and a commitment made by both parties to revitalise the bilateral agenda, marked in the first instance, by the commencement of negotiations for an agreement for the avoidance of double taxation.

In March 2004, our Honourary Consul to Denmark, Mr. Kurt Brusgaard, organized a visit of the Surgical Eye Expeditions (SEE) to Tobago. Mr. Brusgaard received assistance from SEE and the Charloteenlund, Denmark Rotary Club to bring 10 doctors and medical equipment to Tobago to conduct eye surgery for low-income persons. The surgery was conducted free of charge to 120 patients. Mr. Brusgaard hopes to conduct a follow-up visit in 2005.

With regard to our multilateral relations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, working in tandem with the European-based missions, succeeded in advancing Trinidad and Tobago's interests in the regular meetings of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP), the Caribbean Forum of the ACP (the CARIFORUM), the European Union-ACP Forum and the Latin American and Caribbean-EU consultative process.

The most significant development was the launch of negotiations for new Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the European Commission, in Brussels, in September 2003. The second phase of the negotiations, which concerns itself with the regional CARIFORUM-European Commission EPA, was launched in April 2004. Trinidad and Tobago is represented on all levels of the negotiating framework, including the CARIFORUM Core Group Task Force and the Regional Preparatory Task Force.

Within the Latin American and Caribbean-European Union (LAC-EU) bioregional consultative process, the Third LAC-EU Summit of Heads of State and Government was held in Guadalajara, Mexico in May 2004. The Hon. Prime Minister led Trinidad and Tobago's Delegation to that Summit. The primary objective of the third LAC-EU Summit was to reaffirm LAC-EU relations and to update the framework of the bi-regional partnership. The Summit was successful in the sense that the forum attracted a significant number of heads of state that endorsed a renewed focus of bi-regional efforts on a number of key global issues. In terms of gains to the Caribbean region, for the first time in the LAC-EU process, the Caribbean region obtained specific recognition of the region's concerns and priority areas.

In the 2004/2005 fiscal year, the ministry will give priority to:

- A comprehensive review of diplomatic representation in Europe in view of the enlargement of the European Union from 15 to 20 members, including the establishment of diplomatic relations and the accreditation of ambassadors;

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- Trinidad and Tobago/Caricom role in the LAC-EU process;
- Cariforum-EC EPA negotiations; and
- The promotion of Trinidad and Tobago strategic growth sectors in Europe—

Sen. R. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, I think it is time that somebody from this side moves the motion to extend the hon. Senator's speaking time, and with your leave, and the leave of the Senate, I ask if it would kindly extend the hon. Minister's speaking time for another 15 minutes.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, I want to apologize to you. I was out of the Chamber as I was out attending to another matter but I think there are some matters in my contribution which I did raise. I wanted to ask my hon. colleague if he can give me a kind of synopsis on the status of Donna Carter. Is she ill? Has she taken up her position?

Sen. The Hon. K. Gift: Mr. Vice-President, I thank Senators for the extension and I extend my personal thanks and gratitude to Sen. Montano.

- —Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Pacific.

Bilateral relation with Trinidad and Tobago and countries of the African, Asian, Middle East and the Pacific regions of the world are very healthy and this augurs well for future growth and co-operation. Relations are characterized by close and constructive linkages between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and resident diplomatic missions in Port of Spain. An overview of the bilateral ties is summarized below.

India: The traditionally close historic ties with India have received a fillip in the appointment of His Excellency, Pundit Maniedeo Persad, Trinidad and Tobago's High Commissioner to India. Having arrived at the post in New Delhi in December 2003, he immediately set about the task of attending to raise the profile of Trinidad and Tobago by highlighting aspects of our culture, tradition and people.

Sen. Mark: On a point of clarification. Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, through you, Mr. Vice-President, are you aware that this High Commissioner

whom you have appointed to India has a private travel agency located in Aranguez, Trinidad and he utilizes that agency to promote himself using our High Commission as a destination point? And I understand, he is a disaster and an embarrassment to Trinidad and Tobago. [*Cross talk*]

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, in any case, I feel that is a question you could pose under Standing Order 15.

Sen. The Hon. K. Gift: In response to Sen. Mark's question, I am not aware.

In May 2004, an Indian Arrival Day celebration and the Food Festival to highlight the diversity of the cuisine of our country were held at the Maura Sheraton chain of hotels in Delhi. A programme of events to commemorate Emancipation Day was also staged in August 2004.

The healthy state of bilateral relations is further reflected in the offer of technical assistance and training received from the government of India. Nationals of Trinidad and Tobago have pursued short-term training courses offered by India and these courses have proven to be useful in developing the skills of the relevant public officers.

China: Bilateral relations between Trinidad and Tobago and the People's Republic of China are quite good. Earlier this year both countries celebrated 30 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

One feature of the bilateral relationship between Trinidad and Tobago and China is the regular visits by Chinese dignitaries. In August, 2004 the Vice Chief of General Staff from the People's Liberation Army visited and held discussions with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of National Security and the Chief of Defence Staff.

Another feature of the relationship is the provision of technical assistance to various entities in Trinidad and Tobago.

In January 2004, the Ministry of Planning and Development and the National Library and Information Systems Authority were the recipients of a donation of computer equipment. In June, the Ministry of Education also received equipment to be used in further computerization in primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

Nigeria: Diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Nigeria received a boost when His Excellency Mr. Manniram Rambissoon, Trinidad and Tobago's new High Commissioner to Nigeria presented his credentials early this year. The High Commissioner is actively engaged in establishing commercial linkages for

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business between the two countries. Traditionally, he continues to enquire from the Nigerian authorities their readiness to sign the Bilateral Air Services Agreement between the two countries. Trinidad and Tobago has long signalled its intention to sign the Agreement.

Japan: Trinidad and Tobago and Japan have always enjoyed close bilateral relationship. In June, both countries celebrated 40 years of diplomatic relations. To commemorate the event, three Japanese naval vessels from the Self Defence Forces visited Trinidad and Tobago.

South Africa: It is anticipated that by mid-November 2004, Trinidad and Tobago will have established a resident High Commission in Pretoria South Africa. Such a mission will serve to represent this country's interest in Southern Africa. There is considerable interest in South Africa in Trinidad and Tobago establishing a presence there.

Australia: In 2004, the Australian High Commission relocated to Trinidad and Tobago from Barbados. With this relocation there are significant opportunities for the development of bilateral relations.

Mr. Vice-President, from the report so far, it is self-evident that the foreign policy of Trinidad and Tobago must be doing something positive. Here you are, countries are relocating from long established locations like Barbados and coming to Trinidad and Tobago to set up their embassy. This must be good. We look forward to the UNC, the Opposition, banding with us to service this country as it is our responsibility and obligation to do.

I thank you.

Motion made and question proposed, That the Senate do now adjourn to Monday, October 25, at 1.30 p.m. [*Hon. J. Yuille-Williams*]

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.55 p.m.