

Leave of Absence

Monday, October 25, 2004

SENATE

Monday, October 25, 2004

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift and Sen. Roy Augustus from today's sitting of the Senate.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from Her Excellency Dr. Linda Savitri Baboolal, acting President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Her Excellency DR. LINDA SAVITRI
BABOOLAL, Acting President and
Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of
Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ Linda Baboolal
Acting President.

TO: MS. BONNIE-LOU DE SILVA

WHEREAS Senator Knowlson Gift is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LINDA SAVITRI BABOOLAL, Acting President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, BONNIE-LOU DE SILVA, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 25th October, 2004 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Knowlson Gift.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President
of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at
the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this
25th day of October, 2004.”

Senators' Appointment
[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT]

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“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Her Excellency DR. LINDA SAVITRI BABOOLAL,
Acting President and Commander-in-Chief of
the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ Linda Baboolal
Acting President.

TO: DR. TIM D. GOPEESINGH

WHEREAS Senator Roy Augustus is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LINDA SAVITRI BABOOLAL, Acting President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, TIM D. GOPEESINGH, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Roy Augustus.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President
of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at
the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this
25th day of October, 2004.”

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Bonnie-Lou De Silva and Tim D. Gopeesingh took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

WELCOME

(ST. LUCIA AND BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS CLERKS)

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I would like to extend a hearty welcome to the Clerk of the Parliament of St. Lucia and the Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Council of the British Virgin Islands, who are visiting with us today. They are Miss Alva McCall and Mr. Kurt Thomas.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[Third 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: Hon. Senators, those who have already spoken on the Bill are: the presenter, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. Wade Mark, Sen. Mary King, Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas, Sen. Roy Augustus, Sen. Basharat Ali, Sen. The Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid, Sen. The Hon. Satish Ramroop. That was on Thursday, October 21.

On Friday, October 22, those who spoke were: Sen. Robin Montano, Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran, Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo, Hon. Penelope Beckles, Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan, Sen. Dana Seetahal, Sen. The Hon. Howard Chin Lee, Sen. Bro. Noble Khan and Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift.

The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning): Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. I rise to enter this debate on the budget for fiscal year 2005 as presented by the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and by the Minister in the Ministry of Finance.

I extend congratulations for presenting a very historic budget. It is historic because of the amount of funding provided—over \$27 billion. It is the highest figure ever allocated to the development of this country. It is also historic because of the large amount of funding allocated to breaking that cycle of poverty and hardship endured by so many of our citizens.

I rise to enter the debate with a feeling of excitement and anticipation, to share with this honourable Senate our plans for fiscal year 2005 and to illustrate to this Senate the successes of the Ministry of Education under my stewardship—successes based on the investment that this Government has made to ensure that every child has access to quality education; to quality schooling from early childhood, to primary school, to secondary school, to adult education, including teacher development.

Mr. Vice-President, as indicated by the hon. Prime Minister in the budget presentation, we are in the process of revamping the entire education system to deliver total quality education. We continue to be guided in this process by the *Education Policy Paper 1993—2003*, our *Strategic Plan 2003—2006* and the goals of Vision 2020, to produce a peaceful society of citizens who will be self-fulfilled and productive.

We strive continually to align the goals of our *Education Strategic Plan* with those required for our nation to achieve developed country status by the year 2020. To achieve this goal of quality education, we remain dedicated to curriculum reform, policy reform and the provision of new or upgraded schools

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and equipment. We are steadfast in our resolve to manage effectively the cost of education through remedial and motivational programmes as we win back our students and as we win back our classrooms.

The main emphasis, therefore, of the Ministry is to lead in the holistic development of the child and to create children who are all rounded in their development. When we talk of that, we talk of academic development, emotional intelligence, critical thinking skills, lifelong learning skills, social development and team building. The child must be a team player with attitudes and values that lead to improved levels of responsibility and improved discipline.

We know that a successful education system means that our citizens can productively take part in the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and any other economic community that would lay the world at our doorsteps and provide, not only jobs, but also provide business development as we market our ideas and skills and talents on the global arena.

The movement to successful growth and development reminds me of LeRoy Clarke, a great son of the soil, an artiste, a poet, a painter, a great product of the education system. I have researched that he was a teacher at St. Phillips Anglican School, John John. I make reference to him because he is a prolific thinker, whose concepts and philosophies have evolved from the culture of this country and undergird his world-famous trilogy.

In Movement I of his trilogy, he spoke of fragments of a spiritual as he described the people fallen from grace. As I have said before to this honourable Senate, I love to read. I want to talk about LeRoy Clarke's Movement II.

1.45 p.m.

In Movement II, he moved from fragments. This, gave birth to a second movement called "Douens". Then there was part III, which he called "El Tucuche". It is here that he dealt with man's choices and his decision to overcome distraction, "doudenism" and "douendom"; to overcome confusion and "dreadness" and to look into a clean pool, at a reflection so pure, the vision is so clear, it is a reality. While others may stick in "doudenism" and "douendom", we on this side of the Senate will move on to El Tucuche. [*Desk thumping*]

I would like to sum up, as LeRoy Clarke does, "I am ready to arrive in my other self", he said, "to heave behind the ordinariness and the trollness, the

opinionated confusions of the douens and to move towards El Tuchuche.” Believe you me, this Government has already begun to climb the slopes of El Tucuche and intends to look across from that mountain top to new heights to view Aripo which, according to LeRoy Clarke, is the ultimate, because it holds an ecstatic vision of unity.

To this end, let me outline some of our major achievements to date, to demonstrate that we are well on our way up the slopes of El Tucuche. Our mandate for early childhood is to achieve universal quality education by 2020, so that all preschoolers will be socially and cognitively prepared and ready for primary education.

To this end, we have developed a *Green Paper on Standards for Regulating Early Childhood Services*. We have established a committee to develop a strategic plan for universal early childhood care by 2010. We have reconstituted the National Council for Early Childhood Care. We have held a colloquium with key stakeholders and providers, to discuss the way forward for early childhood care. We have held a national consultation on a *Green Paper for Early Childhood Care*. Over 1,600 persons attended that consultation. We have procured the services of an architect to design and supervise the construction of 43 new centres, which would be completed by August 2005. These were substantial achievements for fiscal year 2004, when you consider the dismal record of the previous administration.

Let me now put the record straight. Under the fourth basic education project, 50 new early childhood centres were to be constructed. Only 25 were constructed; a mere 50 per cent success rate. Fifty existing centres were to be refurbished; only 32 were refurbished. Six hundred and fifty teachers were supposed to be pre-service trained, only 350 were trained; a mere 55 per cent success rate. I call that a basic pass. It took them that long to do that. We had to pause in 2002, to assess this early childhood policy of the previous administration, especially since the *ICR Report* of the World Bank had rated the performance in 2002 as unsatisfactory. [Interruption] I have a copy of the report. I would make it available to you. [Interruption] It is the last administration, 2002.

The Early Childhood Programme was indeed poorly conceived when I inherited it in 2002. There was an absence of clearly defined quality standards. There were no quality standards for the care and education of the children of the country. The designs were inadequate. They were not created by architects. There was a lack of social equity in the programme. It was geographically biased and did not necessarily target the poor communities of Trinidad and Tobago. There

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was poor construction. This is very dangerous for children. The structural integrity of the buildings is questionable. We have begun an assessment that tells us that at least 15 of the 25 centres that were built may need to be reconstructed. I want to extend an invitation to all those on the other side, including those in the other place, to join us to visit the early childhood centre at La Fillet. We are urgently taking steps to have these centres completely overhauled. There was poor site selection for the construction of these centres. The programme required poor communities to provide land for construction. Mr. Vice-President, do you know of any poor community that owns land? This is part of their policy.

The administration has now placed the early childhood programme on a sound footing. We have collaborated with private sector providers and have been able to facilitate an increase in enrolment from approximately 22,700 in 2002, to 27,262 in 2004; an increase of 20 per cent in a two-year period. From this year, 2004, we provided furniture, equipment, books, teaching aids, learning materials and toys that will boost cognitive development.

We have begun the development of a curriculum, working closely with regional early childhood specialists. Trinidad and Tobago has taken the lead in the creation and production of a Caribbean Sesame Street, to further enhance the development of the curriculum.

As you can appreciate, we have, in just two years, turned around an unsatisfactory performance by the last administration, in a programme that is standards-based, equity-driven, has community involvement and is regarded by the region as best practice. [*Desk thumping*] That is world-class performance. Did someone on the other side not ask “Are you better off today than you were two years ago?”

As we continue on the slopes of El Tucuche, let me present the status— [*Interruption*] We would not slip one bit. We will get to the top and we would see Aripo. Let me now turn to primary level. I now turn to our achievements at the primary school level. The issues at this level revolve around the upgrade of the physical conditions of schools and the assessment of the curriculum, to ensure the delivery of quality primary education. Mr. Vice-President, under my watch, in just two years, 12 primary schools were started and completed. I would tell the Senator what they are so he can look at them— [*Interruption*] Not at all!

They are Caratal RC; Princes Town Presbyterian No. 2, the Senator could go and check them out; Moulton Hall Methodist; Western Boys’ RC; Nelson Street Boys’ RC; Couva South Government; San Fernando Girls’ Government; Princes

Town Methodist; Iere Government; Buccoo Government and Castara Government. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Vice-President, they were started two years ago and we finished them in two years. El Socorro South Primary School is also completed and is at present undergoing a detailed quality snag check and will be handed over shortly to the principal. The consultant and the contractors handed over the twelfth school, Ste. Madeleine Government Primary School, to the Ministry of Education on Thursday, October 21, 2004. The Ministry and the principal viewed the school in preparation for classes to start anytime this week.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to make mention of the South Oropouche Government Primary School, which was started seven years ago, under the previous administration. We have now completed it and WASA approved the sewer system on Friday, October 22, 2004. The design of this school was scandalous, to say the least, with the pre-school located on the second floor, with no security. We relocated this to the ground floor to protect the infants. Furthermore, the septic tank was designed for \$2.5 million with 250 piles. We have now completed a new design for the sum of \$900,000. Mr. Vice-President, it would provide interesting conversation to know which contractor completed the design for \$2.5 million. [*Interruption*] Not at all.

Our next concern is improving the performance of students in primary schools. A comparison of the performance of students in the 2002 and 2004 SEA results showed the following: in the creative arts, in 2002, 4,176 students or 19 per cent of the candidates scored 30 per cent or less. In 2004, this figure dropped to 2,720 students or 13.1 per cent of the candidates scoring 30 per cent or less in that subject. This performance reflects an overall decrease of 34.9 per cent. In mathematics, while in 2002, 5,964 students or 27.8 per cent of the candidates scored 30 per cent or less in the examination, in 2004 this number dropped to 3,215 students or 15.4 per cent of the candidates scoring 30 per cent or less. This performance showed a decrease of 12.4 percentage points. In language arts 3,902 students or 18.2 per cent of the candidates scored 30 per cent or less. In 2004, this figure remained the same.

This budget provides funding to strengthen the performance of these students. We have begun implementing a reading literacy programme, through the Centre of Excellence for teacher training. We are now piloting this programme in 60 primary schools, which are most in need. Teachers are being trained at two teachers' colleges and also the Caribbean Union College. They are being trained in the teaching of reading. Reading specialists are being hired in each education district and in the selected primary schools in the programme. Teachers are being

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trained to improve their competencies and skills in the classroom management and diagnostic assessment. We will continue to monitor the effect of our remediation and motivation programmes, as we work towards our goal; one which will see less than 10 per cent of the SEA candidates scoring 45 per cent or less in the examination.

Mr. Vice-President, I take the opportunity to inform this august body that the improved performance of our students at the SEA Examination is the result of two years of positive action to enhance education quality at the primary level through the following programmes and initiatives.

2.00 p.m.

The Continuous Assessment Process: This process is designed to track and monitor students' progress throughout their school career. In 2002, only a limited number of CAP manuals were produced, and there were no monitoring instruments. However, by 2004, 10,000 mark books were printed and are now being distributed to the 487 primary schools. We are also distributing standardized report books for Standards 1 to 5, and infant report books which have been refined and updated, so that a record of the students performance for two years can be kept.

In addition, we have piloted a monitoring instrument in 30 schools, to assist in the collection of data on students' performance, district by district. When the data are collated, it will allow us to identify the specific needs of the districts, putting us in a better position to plan for, and support the needs with respect to the curriculum supervision and any other area that is in need.

During the period 2003 to 2004, we worked to revise the system of cumulative record cards which were in place in 2002. These cards now reflect changes in the core subject areas for assessment at the primary level. These cards are designed to be consistent with the mark books. We have begun distribution of these new cards.

Mr. Vice-President, I now move to the National Tests. The National Tests will track and monitor students' progress, in addition to benchmarking performance at different levels. The National Tests are now being carried out at Standards 1 and 3, and would form the basis of international benchmarking which will begin shortly.

In 2002, 10 per cent of the test scripts were marked, and this marking of scripts was done by individual schools and administration was not standardized.

However, by 2004, I am pleased to inform the Senate that 100 per cent of the scripts were marked for the first time. The marking of scripts were standardized at a centralized location. Results were generated and shared with all schools at district caucus meetings. The National Tests are now administered in a standardized environment and monitored.

Then we have the school improvement plans which encourage school-base or side-base management, as we decentralize local school boards which will form the basis of management teams, along with the principals, the heads, the deans and senior teachers to guide school improvements and projects.

The School Improvement Plans (SIP) in 2002: 253 primary schools benefited from this programme receiving round one cheques. In 2004, the number of schools benefiting from this programme has almost doubled. Four hundred and fifty schools now benefit, with 224 schools receiving round one cheques, and 226 schools receiving round two cheques.

In 2002, there was no provision for clerical workers at primary schools. By 2004, I am pleased to state that 482 contract posts of School Clerical Officers have been allocated for public primary schools; 449 in Trinidad and 33 in Tobago, to assist principals with data entry and clerical tasks, thus improving the efficiency of the staff and the administration of primary schools.

In fiscal year 2004, we procured design and supervision consultants for nine government primary schools. Designs have been completed for eight denominational primary schools.

In fiscal year 2005, we intend to build 15 primary schools: nine government schools and six denominational schools. We will also complete designs and start up construction for an additional 20 primary schools. All these schools will be replacement schools. Our construction and maintenance programme for primary schools will ensure safer and more secure surroundings for the conduct of education at this level.

Now, I want to move on to the secondary level. In the secondary level, we have begun to de-shift 19 junior secondary schools, and to convert them to five-year schools, and to convert senior comprehensive schools to seven-year schools. [*Desk thumping*]

We have begun to expand the Sixth Form level enrolment to 12,000 spaces by 2007, in alignment with the increased spaces at tertiary level. Already, between 2002 and 2004, the number of A'level students has grown by approximately

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1,000. We have begun collaborating with private schools to purchase A'level places.

We have begun the process of modernizing the Teacher Professional Development and Retraining Programme to provide a supply of quality teachers for the education system. We have developed a plan to introduce a substitute teacher system for secondary schools, to ensure a stable supply of teachers in the classroom, and to mitigate the effects of absence from the classroom. We have received the approval of Central Tenders Board to begin the physical and technical upgrade of secondary schools, to deliver a modernized curriculum that was introduced in September 2003.

Mr. Vice-President, a member from the other place has commented on the slow pace of the de-shifting programme. De-shifting is but one element of the secondary school construction programme. It entails construction work at all government secondary schools.

Let me bring you up to date with respect to this matter. At present, the Central Tenders Board has awarded contracts for the designs of 67 schools to undertake rehabilitation, technical upgrade and expansion works for the delivery of the modern curriculum. The 19 junior secondary schools and the 15 senior comprehensive schools for de-shifting and conversion are part of the 67 schools for this rehabilitation, technical upgrade and expansion initiative. Construction works on these schools will commence in 2005, and will be completed in 2007.

Again, I would like this honourable Senate to know that the programme which the Member spoke of, was a programme without any direction. This Government inherited an intention to de-shift 19 junior secondary schools and to convert 11 senior comprehensive schools under the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP). There was no de-shifting plan. However, in the interest of equity, the ministry had to refocus to take account of the new requirements for the CXC curriculum which impacted on the physical facility requirements. Architects and user-briefs had to be prepared to modify the designs to accommodate these new requirements.

In 2002, we began the preparation of a comprehensive de-shifting plan which was completed and approved by Cabinet this year, 2004.

Accordingly, in 2004, we had preliminary master plans completed for eight schools. In fiscal year 2005, we will see the mobilization and the start up of rehabilitation, upgrade and expansion of all these schools. The projected cost of these projects is \$143 million.

In 2003, the Marabella Junior Secondary School had been de-shifted and converted to a five-year school, while the Marabella Senior Comprehensive School had been converted to a seven-year school.

In 2004, the Siparia Junior Secondary School had been de-shifted. The other schools for de-shifting and conversion, according to the plan, are programmed for completion by the end of 2007.

Mr. Vice President, allow me now to turn to enabling factors and support services to education. It has been well documented that the three outstanding enabling factors of education which support schooling are nutrition, transport and the availability of textbooks. With respect to nutrition, a well-fed child is much more receptive to schooling. In 2002, 94,258 meals were provided to school children; in 2004, the meals provided totalled 125,934, and the number of schools receiving service moved from 645 in 2002, to 797 in 2004.

Transportation: Children who use a great deal of energy and effort to get to school are normally very tired throughout the school day. In 2002, 3.2 million seats were provided to school children at a cost of \$20 million. *[Interruption]*

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: What about the Biche High School?

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: In 2004, that figure grew to 3.6 million seats at a cost of \$22 million. For the Biche schools we provide maxi-taxis and transportation to the children going to another area.

The availability of textbooks: Children who have access to texts are in an advantageous position. In 2002, approximately 50,000 secondary school children benefited from the Textbook Rental Programme, and in 2004, that figure moved to 75,000 secondary school children. As you know, all primary school children are provided with school books.

Whereas in 2002 this programme cost \$38 million, in 2004, this programme cost \$22 million as the system starts to steady out. The Book Grant Programme is a more efficient and cost-effective operation, and funding has moved from \$100 million to \$19 million as we began to replace book grants with the Textbook Rental Programme. As more and more books are procured, the Book Grant Programme will be phased out.

Mr. Vice-President, what about the curriculum? Let us continue this climb to the top of El Tucuche. *[Desk thumping]* After all, we will not fall, we will reach the top and we will see Aripo. The curriculum is a conduit through which the philosophy of education is translated into reality. *[Interruption]* I like to read.

While in 2002, the Secondary Education Modernization Programme curricula for Forms I and II were written in eight subjects and tested and distributed; in 2004, the ministry made considerable progress. The curriculum writing teams were appointed at the end of 2003, and they have completed the first draft of six out of eight subject areas for Forms IV and V. So, throughout the system, we are updating the curriculum. The curricula for Forms I to III have been written, printed and distributed to all schools. In September 2004, the curricula for Forms IV and V would have been sent to all schools. Currently, the curricula for Forms I and III are being evaluated.

Teacher Development: Moreover, the drivers of the curriculum are the teachers, and their developmental needs continue to figure significantly in our ongoing plan.

2.15 p.m.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education established a Professional Teacher Development Unit whose mandate was to ensure the execution of appropriate programmes for teacher development. This unit has completed the development of a database of all teacher education providers, at all levels of the education system, and the establishment of an executive team of stakeholders involved in the development of a policy for teacher professional development. In 2005, this unit will mount a number of relevant teacher development training workshops and programmes to support the primary as well as the secondary sector.

Mr. Vice-President, I now turn to the GCE advanced level examination and the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) performance. At the Advanced Proficiency Secondary level the marked progress continued. The number of entries for GCE A'levels and CAPE was as follows: In 2002, the number of subject entries stood at 14,454; while in 2004, that figure climbed to 21,106, representing a 46 per cent increase in the number of subject areas entered. Moreover, gauging from the world rank order at the Cambridge and advanced level examinations, we are inclined to believe that our standards are on the increase. In 2002, 22 students topped the world in 13 subjects; two students were from government secondary schools. In 2004, 37 students topped the world in 15 subjects; 10 students were from government secondary schools. We are strengthening our capacity at the advanced level and CAPE, for better alignment with the national goal of 60 per cent at the tertiary level.

We had introduced the National Certificate of Secondary Education (NCSC); this will be finalized in 2005. The aim of this examination is to ensure that all

secondary school leavers are certified and it is an opportunity to give all students the opportunity to gain a valid school certificate, based on continuous assessment. This year, we will work towards the development of green and white papers on the National Certificate of Secondary Education. Towards this end, the Ministry of Education, during 2004, completed the following: performance assessment workshops; the production of assessment videos, which were shared with schools and development of draft assessment manuals for Form II. Preparations are ongoing for a national consultation, so that the Green Paper on NCSC can be submitted to Cabinet for its approval. A strategic quality plan for the policy system is being developed and will be finalized by December 2004. It will ensure the adoption of total quality standards across the system. *[Interruption]*

Sen. R. Montano: Will the Minister give way to a point of clarification? Would the Minister please explain to the honourable Senate how an individual can get a school leaving certificate if he or she does not pass the exam? What is the value of that certificate?

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: Mr. Vice-President, I will like to continue my contribution. When I bring that document as a White Paper to the Parliament, I will then engage in the debate.

Indicators have been drafted to cover leadership in schools, teacher professionalism, parental involvement, student discipline, academic environment, technology infusion in the curriculum, student assessment and evaluation, physical plant accountability, transparency and professionalism across the system. *[Desk thumping]* This plan will be used as a blueprint by all schools for the development of their individual school improvement plan, under the system of school-based management. It will also be the basis for the development of comprehensive standards for an inspectorate.

I am sorry that Sen. Augustus is not here, because I would have liked to explain away his fear of what an inspectorate is. The Inspectorate or Quality Assurance Agency, as we intend to call it, will be responsible for biannual school inspection. It will address evaluations; appraisal; curriculum implementation; organizational leadership; the school itself; the plant; management of the school and the optimal use of resources by staff and students. The Inspectorate will be designed to support and assist in quality improvement and maintenance of standards, with great emphasis on monitoring and evaluation.

I now move on to Project Peace. In 2002, the Ministry of Education recognized that there was a problem of indiscipline and violence in schools.

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Indeed, one may agree that this is a worldwide phenomenon. Contrary to the haphazard approach adopted prior to 2002, in 2002 to 2003, we commissioned a scientific study to understand the root causes of violence and indiscipline in schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry of Education commissioned Prof. Deosaran of the Centre for Criminology and Justice of the University of the West Indies (UWI), to conduct studies on this phenomenon. A pilot study involving 10 secondary schools was conducted and a report presented to the ministry in May 2004. That report has been well publicized. The Ministry of Education has accepted the recommendations of that report and is engaged, at present, in a roll out of the findings in all the relevant schools.

As we deal with schools, we are shaping a model for management of discipline. The consultant, the schools and the Ministry of Education are working together to implement this programme. Similar programmes are to be conducted in 2005 in a phase II programme involving over 20 schools. In terms of the programmes under Project Peace, there have been major successes. Statistics on the performance of this unit have revealed that the number of students benefitting from these programmes at 60 secondary schools is 33,000 and at the primary schools, it is 3,015.

Parenting education—approximately 10,000 parents of students in Forms I, III and IV were exposed to sensitization programmes. Specialized group guidance sessions were conducted for at-risk students in 24 secondary and 11 primary specially selected schools. Counselling was also conducted for 106 at-risk and suspended students. Five thousand students were exposed to group sessions on sexuality and self-esteem. In 2002, 207 suspension notices were recorded. In 2003, this figure fell to 123 suspension notices and in 2004, we tallied 103 suspension notices; an overall reduction of 50.24 per cent. We know that our peace initiatives have been working well, because we are aware of an increase in the display of appropriate behaviour among students in our schools. Our principals are telling us that schools are less restless. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Vice-President: The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

We have introduced a School Discipline Unit which works with a joint task force comprised of members of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of

National Security. That task force has come up with 14 goals and objectives, including the implementation of a national school drug programme; the introduction of civics education in the curriculum; institutionalization of parent/teacher associations in the school system and the introduction of homework centres in schools, just to name a few.

School security and maintenance—today, 247 primary schools enjoy the benefit of school security measures. In 2004, the figure climbed to 284 primary schools. These included schools with urgent security needs and newly constructed schools. In addition, all school security services were increased to 24 hours. This represents an increase of 55 per cent over the figure for 2002. The cost of these services, per annum, now stands at \$125 million. For fiscal year 2005, the sixth and final phase comprising 93 additional schools will be implemented; at the end of which, all primary schools will enjoy a 24-hour security service. [*Desk thumping*] With respect to secondary schools, a revised contract for the provision of school security services was agreed to in 2004. This actually entailed an increase in the number of security guards attached to schools, especially at schools which were at higher risk to violence and intrusion. Approximately \$84 million per year is expended on this contract.

At the level of the school, an administrative support structure has been put in place for the support of principals. In addition to deans of discipline, we have introduced safety officers. A total of 182 school safety officers are to be hired; two officers per government secondary school. Training is to be conducted with these officers. Phase one has begun with the hiring of 51 officers and training is being conducted, at present, before they are deployed at the schools.

Special education—I am concerned that no sector of education is left behind. It is the policy of the Ministry of Education to integrate or mainstream and upgrade the facilities of special education. This has been a neglected area. For the first time in the history of this country, special attention is being given to these special schools. In this context, the Ministry of Education in 2004 has been vigorously pursuing the upgrade of the following special schools: the Audrey Jeffers' School for the Deaf in Marabella; the Lady Hochoy Centre in Penal; the Lady Hochoy Centre in Gasparillo; the Pointe-a-Pierre Special School; the Princess Elizabeth School; the School for the Blind in Santa Cruz; the School for the Deaf in Cascade and the Wharton Patrick Special School.

2.30 p.m.

To date, the procurement of design and consultants is in progress. Technical proposals have been evaluated and preferred consultants selected. I pause to

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mention that earlier this month we obtained braille machines and other special teaching aids which have been distributed to these schools.

Mr. Vice-President, any civilized society makes provision for second chances and in this context we are happy to highlight our Adult Education Programme that provides a second chance for school leavers to gain the necessary qualifications and knowledge for life-long learning. Our programme is all inclusive, all-embracing, and total in outlook and quality orientation.

In addition to pursuing our agenda for quality education, we have signed on to several international agreements as a means of benchmarking our progress. We have already received approval for Trinidad and Tobago to participate in the progress in reading literacy study in 2006 which is an international benchmarking assessment that involves the collection of baseline data about students, their level of reading achievement as well as their home, school, and classroom influences on learning.

The Ministry of Education is cognizant of the fact that in order to have sustained development, the ministry itself as an institution will need to be continually developing, and so in 2004, it engaged consultants in various areas to reorganize and strengthen the different divisions of units in the ministry. These are ongoing projects and so far, the Education Facilities Management Division has been fully restructured so as to manage our school building programme.

In order to effectively manage and contribute to the operation of these enhanced divisions, the ministry has now put in place a training programme for managers, leaders and technical officers. At present, almost 100 members of staff are pursuing training. The Ministry of Education has also established a decentralization unit to focus fully on decentralization of the Ministry of Education in its efforts of effectiveness. In a world of technology in which business and organizational transactions are being conducted, the ministry has been on the move in management information systems and information computer technology.

We have expanded the information technology unit of the ministry from two to 10 members, we have allocated over 1,000 computers to schools and at the Ministry of Education offices and we have provided high-speed internet access to head office, teachers colleges and schools. In fiscal year 2005, we will be accelerating the school net programme through the e-Government backbone; we will be networking all our offices and our schools.

Mr. Vice-President, in its reform and modernization drive, the Ministry of Education avails itself of every opportunity to attend workshops, seminars, and regional and international conferences. Moreover, Trinidad and Tobago is a

participating member in the United Nations bodies such as UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM and also in the Commonwealth and its operating arms such as COMSEC, COL and CAPAM.

Regionally, we are committed to Caricom, CARICAD, COSHOD. The calendar of activities from all these agencies is extensive and their programmes seek to bring the family of state together to dialogue on current issues in education and share best practices.

The policy of my ministry is to expose as many of the employees to these so that they can keep abreast of the innovations in education and benchmark their work with other countries. These events are not necessarily attended by the Minister, but at times, by the Permanent Secretary, the Chief Education Officer, or other senior officers in the ministry. We aim to get value for every dollar spent on these missions.

We will continue to climb the slopes of El Tucuche, Mr. Vice-President, having moved from the confusion and dreadness of the “douens” to look into the clear pool at a reflection so pure that the vision is clear, the vision is reality.

We know that El Tucuche is achievable. We wait to move on to Aripo. The education system on which we continue to work is a seamless and well-articulated one. It is a system in which every child will have access to early childhood care, to primary, secondary and tertiary education and, therefore, we will keep on striving for teacher education, early childhood care, and secondary education.

The estimated capital expenditure for fiscal year, 2005 is \$10 million for early childhood. Every citizen will enjoy at least seven years of a modernized, primary education. The estimated capital expenditure for primary education is \$82 million, and for fiscal 2005 it is \$300 million.

Mr. Vice-President, the Ministry of Education will continue to work on all fronts to ensure the highest quality of education for all our children. No child will be left behind. Total quality improvement will be our goal and I am pleased to inform this honourable Senate that for the fiscal year, 2004, the ministry made full use of its Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) allocation and at the end of September, 2004, we had expended over 100 per cent of our PSIP allocations; our expenditure and commitments amounted to \$372.3 million.

We intend to better that performance in 2005. We have the will, the commitment and we have the dedicated and committed staff to achieve our targets. We also have a clear vision and we will do so. We will achieve our El Tucuche and begin our climb to Aripo.

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President.

Sen. Parvatee Anmolsingh-Mahabir: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, for extending to me the opportunity to make my contribution in the 2004/2005 budget debate. In the course of my contribution, I will be highlighting a few issues such as our national debt; the new tax relief, agriculture, culture and of course, NIS.

I begin by complimenting the Government on what appears to be a good budget. The theme: Ensuring Our Future Survival is quite fitting at a time when the country is in a good fiscal situation.

The funds allocated to the various ministries and sectors provide a very good indicator of Government's interests and priorities, and to a considerable extent demonstrate the philosophical and ethical values and orientation underlying the socio-psychological pattern which informs Government's thinking on the economic, social and cultural development of the country.

Let us look at the national debt. Mr. Vice-President, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance presented a \$28 billion budget. The budget speech indicated that the sum of \$6,742,248,840 will immediately be creamed off to repay national debt which stands at \$37.125 billion in September 2004 as indicated in Appendix 23 of the *Review of the Economy*, 2004.

What do all these figures mean to the taxpayer, the man-in-the-street who pays his VAT, income tax and other innumerable taxes? It can be simplified and translated to mean that we now have a remainder of about \$21.175 billion left to spend in Trinidad and Tobago. Any monetary expert will analyze and explain further that out of every \$100 we pay in taxes, the sum of \$24.15 immediately goes to repay the national debt of over \$37,125 million.

Mr. Vice-President, I must bring to the attention of this honourable Chamber that, according to the *Review of the Economy*, from 1994 to 1996 the national debt stood at \$18 billion. From 1997 to 2000, it increased from \$19.9 billion to \$29.7 billion; from 2001 to 2004, it increased from \$32.7 billion to \$37.1 billion. In other words, in just eight years, the national debt increased by \$19 billion to the figure of \$37.125 billion. This is 100 per cent increase.

Mr. Vice-President, one wonders whether this 100 per cent increase in the national debt is not one of the root causes for the IMF and the Washington consensus to question the sustainability of our foreign exchange rate. Therefore, the questions must be asked: Where did this \$19 billion go? How was it spent? What tangible improvements can this country show for it? It is no wonder that Transparency International has started expressing its concerns.

I now move on to the low income wage earners on page 47 of the Budget Statement 2005 and I quote.

- “To provide relief to low income taxpayers, we propose to increase the personal allowance for tax purposes as follows:
 - (i) For individuals with a gross income not exceeding \$30,000 per annum, the personal allowance will be increased by \$5,000 from \$25,000 to \$30,000 per annum;
 - (ii) For individuals with a gross income exceeding \$30,000 per annum, the personal allowance will be increased by \$5,000 less \$1 for every dollar of gross income above \$30,000.”

Mr. Vice-President, let us examine this carefully. Where a person’s gross income is below \$30,000, the personal allowance is \$30,000, where the income is between \$30,000 and \$35,000 the allowance is \$30,000 reducing to \$25,000 incrementally. However, for those just above the \$35,000 income, the allowance remains at \$25,000, and \$35,000 per annum is just about \$2,916 per month.

Do you honestly believe that these persons are not low income earners? There are thousands of single-income families in this bracket who are struggling to make ends meet, yet there is nothing, nada, nil, for them in this huge budget. There is a need to revisit this measure because it does not bring relief to those for whom it is intended—that is the low income group.

2.45 p.m.

I move on to agriculture. The Government has outlined a broad panoramic sweep of what it has achieved in agriculture over the past year. On the surface, it sounds impressive, but under clinical analysis one is constrained to point out that the reality does not match the rhetoric. This is the third budget of this administration and one is hard-pressed to discern meaningful strides in the advancement of our agriculture and our agro-processing sector.

The Minister of Finance in his budget speech, page 8, stated that the agricultural sector can make a significant contribution to the national development effort, and goes on to state that the goal is to increase the sector’s contribution to economic and social development, employment creation and increasing the level of food requirements for the nation. But when we scrutinize the 2005 Draft Estimates of the Development Programme, of \$2,075 million, it reveals that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is allocated only \$52 million. According to Government’s priority listing in this budget, the agricultural sector is relegated to 12th place in development.

Mr. Vice-President, \$52 million out of \$2,075 million represents 2.5 per cent of the development programme. Allow me to further clarify. In other words, for every \$100 spent in development, the Government is investing only \$2.50 in developing agriculture, land and marine resources. This is unacceptable. Agriculture should rank much higher in our priorities. Look at this chart. [*Senator holds up chart*] Look at the pie chart. Look at the minuscule amount allocated to this sector. I am sure that no one in this honourable Chamber will dispute the fact that we are importing the inflationary spiral from other countries where our food consumption patterns are concerned.

The food import bill is reported to be draining over \$2 billion in foreign exchange. Our citizens are reeling from increasing prices. The Supermarket Association is predicting a shortage in food supply in two to three years. The Government has become the biggest mortgagor in the country by mortgaging our future food security. It is clear that unless we produce our own food supply, we will remain at the mercy of the international producers. The only thing we would be cultivating is a foreign dependency syndrome. Is this the way forward in ensuring our future survival? After 42 years we still cannot feed ourselves. Can we not borrow a page from the successful “Green Revolution” in India and implement programmes which would enable us to enjoy a measure of security?

A closer look at the trends from 2000 to 2005, reveal that the agricultural sector would have received a total of only \$129 million to develop this sector, while the total development plan for the same period produced a figure of \$4.953 million. That is from page 8 of the Draft Estimates of 2005. In other words, for the past three years, out of every \$100 invested in the development of the whole economy, the Government has been spending about \$2.60 in agriculture.

When we look at the *Public Sector Investment Programme 2005, Vision 2020*, it is even more revealing, as can be seen on page 145, Appendix III, where there are allocations by sector. Out of a total of \$2.1 billion to be spent, the social infrastructure is allocated \$1,123 million or 53.5 per cent; the economic infrastructure gets \$570.2 million or 27.1 per cent, and so on, and way down you have the productive sector, which is agriculture, getting only \$1.3 million or 0.062 per cent. In other words, agriculture is getting less than 1 per cent of the total \$2.1 billion, and this is taken from PSIP, Vision 2020.

Is this vision ensuring our future survival? Is it a vision of a national economy without local food? We only have to look around to notice the disappearing citrus orchards and the buffalo herds at the La Gloria Farms to see what is happening. My colleague is saying it is a myopic vision.

In its poverty eradication drive, the Government has allocated \$60 million annually to alleviate the distress of the less fortunate in our society by distributing food hampers. This is a commendable and noble gesture, but it would have been more meaningful if we could have said that the contents of these hampers were produced by our own farmers. Through you, I call on the Government to ensure that these food hampers contain as far as possible, maximum local content. You will then be achieving your objectives, as well as stimulating the economy.

But, you know, despite the fact that agriculture is low in the Government's list of priorities, the GDP figures in Appendix 3 of the *Review of the Economy 2004*, shows that from the year 2000—2004, domestic agriculture increased from \$377.6 million to \$501.1 million. So this sector is performing. Therefore it is time that this country receives, not only a well thought-out and properly articulated structure and policy for agriculture, we must match the intended policy with the required funding. Only then we can claim to ensure our future survival through food production.

I will now proceed to say a few words on culture and I quote from page 10 of the *Sunday Express* editorial, October 17, 2004. It states:

“It is somewhat astonishing that, to date, no government in Trinidad and Tobago has ever enunciated a cultural policy that testifies to an understanding that this is a multi-cultural society in which, as a result of history, there are two dominating cultures that, on their own volition, not only tolerate but, often embrace each other in what must be a heartening development not only for Trinidad and Tobago but for an increasingly multicultural world.”

After 42 years of nationhood and independence, we are still without a plan to manage our rich cultural and human diversity. There have been strident and sustained calls for Government to issue a white paper on managing our diversity, but no response appears to be in sight.

In the very last paragraph of the budget statement on page 52, there are only two sentences, I believe, referring to culture, and I quote:

“Let us practice equality of treatment and respect for all. Let our spirit be always nourished by our rich diversity.”

These are ideals and will always remain mere ideals, since nothing in the budget informs us how these objectives will be attained. It therefore behoves the Government to pay particular attention to the culture and values in our multicultural society, to help stem the rising tide of racial and ethnic intolerance.

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The culture and ethnicity subcommittee of Vision 2020 must take on board ideas derived from a widespread, transparent and credible consultative process and not foist its own agenda on an unsuspecting public. Harmonious ethnic relations which are based on cultural and social policies that take into consideration our multicultural society and the dynamics of social interaction, are critical to charting the way forward. This budget fails to pay any attention to the imperatives of culture and ethnicity in our society and it is critical that this fundamental deficiency be rectified urgently.

As I said before, I must mention some aspects of the National Insurance Scheme. In conclusion, I wish to make a plea on behalf of thousands of NIS pensioners, to increase the minimum NIS pension to \$1,150 to be on par with the old age pension, of \$1,150. In the national budget presentation of 2003/2004, the Minister of Finance, the hon. Patrick Manning, announced that the minimum national insurance pension would be \$1,000 per month from October 01, 2003. At that time, the rate of the old age pension was \$1,000 per month, and I must commend the hon. Prime Minister for his foresight in bringing the NIS pension on par with the old age pension at that time. However, in this 2004/2005 budget, the Prime Minister made the welcome announcement that the old age pensioners would have their pension increased by \$150 per month, effective October 01, 2004.

No change in the rate of NIS pension was mentioned, which means that the monthly pension rate for NIS pensioners remains the same, \$1,000, while the old age pensioners are getting \$1,150. NIB can easily increase the minimum pension on par with the old age pension, to \$1,150. This is not asking much from NIB. It is mere crumbs, but it can make a great difference in the lives of our pensioners. Under no circumstances should a contributory scheme pay less than the rate of an old age pension. It is time that the Government and NIB get together and harmonize the payment of old age pension with NIS pension in order to provide every person, regardless of his/her financial standing, with a pension on attaining the age of 65 years. This does not mean that the NIS retirement age would cease from age 60. NIS pension can continue to be paid from age 60, until age 65, when the harmonized scheme will take effective.

Before I close, I wish to support Sen. Mary King's plea for resources for the Joint Select Committees. I remember she had mentioned that the Chairmen of the Joint Select Committees have been asking for resources and we have not yet received any. We are making a plea to the Parliament to please allocate the required amount.

I thank you.

Sen. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Vice-President, I am pleased to make my contribution to this year's budget debate for the fiscal year 2004/2005. Once again, there has been much debate in the public domain as to the intent of this year's budget statement, like previous years, and the role of the proposed measures in this budget towards transforming this economy into one that is knowledge and technology-driven, leading to sustainable and equitable distribution of wealth in the context of our current dependence on wealth generated from the depleting and non-renewable natural resource. But what are the expectations of a budget? Borrowing from the corporate world, a budget is a detailed operational plan representing the first year of a three-to five-year strategic plan that continuously rolls over, which is what we refer to as the corporate plan.

Therefore, in order to place this year's budget statement in context, I looked for some insights into the Government's strategic plan with a view to identifying its strategic goals and objectives and hope to analyze the role of the proposed measures in achieving the goals and objectives aimed at the radical transformation of this economy. Similar to last year's analysis, I was directed to the *Social & Economic Policy Framework*. Page 31 of this document states, and I quote:

“The National Strategic Planning Framework (Vision 2020) will articulate an agreed Vision for the country's future development for the Year 2020.”

Reading further down, it says:

“The Planning Framework will identify the projected levels of development to be achieved in relation to economic, social, technological and institutional performance required for Trinidad and Tobago to attain a standard of living comparable to the developed countries. It will establish the priorities and provide the parameters for the Public Sector Investment Programme, guide investment in the private sector as well as the mobilization of international financial and development support. The Framework will also inform the development of sectoral reform initiatives by Government Ministries and Agencies to address deficiencies.”

3.00 p.m.

This sounds very much like what we read in last year's *Social & Economic Policy Framework*. Like last year, I asked: What informs the sectoral reform initiatives enunciated in this budget? What informs the Public Sector Investment Programmes (PSIP) announced in this budget? What informs monitoring and implementation? It is clear that the plan, Vision 2020, is yet to be finalized and implemented.

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There is a clear disconnect between the budget promises and Vision 2020 policy framework. This is why the last Senator could speak with such energy. This is no different from the previous three years since this administration took office. Once again, we have budgets filled with statements of intent, most of which have been repeated budget after budget. Over 600 persons have been involved in the Vision 2020 exercise.

Vision 2020 is now an excuse to set distant time frames and not account for actions and tasks that should be accomplished today. The gap between promises and delivery is getting wider and wider with each budget presentation by this administration, dreaming the dreams, “douens”.

Members of this Senate would have heard me say time after time, that this second boom is a boon, a gift from the gods to once again test us to determine if we have learnt from the lessons of the first boom. By now, the gods must have concluded that we have failed the test. This is Trinidad and Tobago’s last chance to build a prosperous economy, a statement by the Inter American Development Bank (IADB), not the UNC, although Members on this side shared the sentiment over and over with the citizens of this country.

Permit me to join with our esteemed Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Basdeo Panday, to once again emphasize the importance of creating a competitive advantage as opposed to defending our comparative advantage. To remind Senators of this House, as this was articulated during the last budget debate, Trinidad and Tobago has a comparative advantage as we are blessed with an abundance of natural resources. Trinidad and Tobago can only achieve a competitive advantage through technology, innovation and creativity, and hence, by leveraging the human and intellectual capital of this nation. It is noteworthy that the IADB has expressed the concern that Trinidad and Tobago continues to depend on its comparative advantage and no attempts are being made to create the competitive advantage.

This is what informed the Wallerfield Science and Technology Park under the UNC administration. This Government in its first budget statement prematurely cancelled this initiative, and has since made full circle, although still not close enough to understanding the concept with respect to how to use it to develop a competitive advantage. I will revisit this issue again in my contribution.

The Members of this Government judge their performance by how much money they spend and not by the benefits from this expenditure. This Government has spent over \$90 billion during its three years in office. Are we any

closer to achieving a diversified economy that is knowledge-based and technology-based, in order to ensure sustainable wealth well into the future, after oil and gas run out? This is because there is a lack of planning while we wait on Vision 2020. There is no project planning; process monitoring and evaluation, therefore, there is no mechanism to determine how expenditure is translated into the benefits and value-added-created.

This administration equates expenditure with performance. Under the UNC administration, we equated performance with value-added-created. This is why we articulated the total quality nation. What do you expect when the excuse of the Minister of Planning and Development, the hon. Camille Robinson-Regis is that she is an attorney and not an economist? Where does that leave us? God help us! They feel that all that is required is to produce fancy, nice, glossy documents; think about it and it is done.

Sen. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid in his contribution spoke to documents. Document for monitoring and evaluation and throughout his contribution, he kept saying that this document will do this and this document will do that. I am wondering if he understands that documents do not do anything. It is people. You have to do it. That is why they will also remain in the design stage and never get to the building stage. I always remember when I was a young child growing up, my father used to say that with a PNM administration, it will take 20—30 years to see a building built. I can understand why. They are forever analyzing and designing. Everything is in design. That will be designed.

By the way, Madam Minister, I remember that the San Fernando Girls' R. C. School was being built under the United National Congress. It was almost complete when you came into office. Please do not make that mistake with me. I have no problem with you climbing to El Tucuche. Just remember that at the top there is no running water, electricity, sewerage system and lots of landslides. This sounds like the politics of "douendom"; the kingdom of "douendom".

Permit me to take a look at the *Review of The Economy*. This Government continues to pat itself on the back with respect to the performance of this economy. According to Sen. The Hon. Dumas, no one should dispute this, given the contents of this *Review of the Economy*, this fancy document. In light of this, permit me to touch on the GDP growth; the unemployment rate and the performance of the non energy sector. Let me start with the GDP growth. Let me take a look at page 45, Appendix 2 of this document. I agree with Sen. Dumas that this shows a beautiful picture and there is this excellent performance especially when we look at the year in review, 2003, where we see 13.2 per cent

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increase in GDP. It is also true that a large portion of this high growth rate for the year in review is as a result of Train 4, causing the petroleum industry to record a rate of 31.2 per cent compared with 10.5 per cent projected for 2004. Out of all the years where you will see the trend of 12.5 per cent; 5.6 per cent and 13.5 per cent, for the year 2003, there was 31.2 per cent because of LNG Train 4.

These are rebased figures using 2000 prices. This is how this Government misleads the nation. I have no problem with rebasing the quarterly GDP index. It allows the structural changes in the economy to be captured, such as the increase in the input of the fiscal sector; changes in real output from natural gas-based industries such as petrochemicals and LNG. No one can argue with this.

We must compare apples with apples. I set about to do some research and I came across a research document from the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, entitled *Rebasing the Quarterly Gross Domestic Product QGDP Index from 1985=100 to 2000=100*. This report on page 11 states the effects of the rebasing. For comparative purposes rebasing at 2000, the Central Bank performed the analysis for the years 1995—2002. I will read from this table because we must compare apples with apples. The Central Bank rebased all the figures from 1995 coming forward. Whereas you are recording the following years and percentages:

2000	7.3
2001	4.3
2002	6.8
2003	13.2 (LNG Train 4)
2004	6.2 (projected)

when they redo the figures from 1995, you will see the following:

1995	4.3
1996	4.1
1997	3.6
1998	9.5
1999	9.9
2000	9.5

In accordance with these figures, if the UNC government had continued in governance we would have achieved Vision 2020 already. Terrence Farrell has always indicated that a growth rate of 7 per cent was required. Let us be fair.

Let us look at the growth rates based on rates at 1985=100. I hope that Sen. Dumas understands the importance of this analysis. Based on the same table we will note that the sector is as follows:

Year	Percentage
1995	3.3
1996	2.6
1997	1.2
1998	4.6
1999	5.8
2000	5.7
2001	4.2
2002	2.7

I did this because in 1997, 1998 and 1999, the UNC did not have any LNG train. We did not have Train 1 as yet, and this was the performance of the economy. I wish I could go into more details with this table because it highlights an increase in the non-energy sector in terms of GDP growth. When we look at the non-petroleum sector we will see some very nice figures using 1985 and 2000 figures.

Let me put it on the record. For the non-petroleum sector if we use 2000 prices, we would have had a GDP growth of 6.7 per cent; 5.6 per cent in 1999, and 9.7 per cent in 2000. I wanted to put that on record because we hear so much about how we are doing so well and we have such an excellent performance. I hope that this sets the record straight.

In terms of full employment, the Minister stated that the full employment level for this economy is at an employment rate of 5 per cent. According to the Government, the unemployment rate is 7 per cent which means that we are close to operating to full employment potential. Why is there a need to continue to implement more and more welfare programmes if we are operating close to the economy's full potential? There should be no need to increase expenditure year after year on social programmes.

If Government's expenditure is in line with expansionary fiscal policy, which is the justification given for the high expenditure of \$28 billion, then according to fundamental economics, when an economy is operating at full potential,

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expansionary policy would only lead to an overheated economy and inflation. According to Prof. Deosaran, are we manufacturing poverty in this country?

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, it appears that the more people that are employed—because we are now down to an employment rate of 7 per cent—the more poverty that is created. It is only the PNM economics text that could explain this. I will leave this to the PNM economics text.

Let me now turn to the deficit of the non-oil and gas sector. This country's revenue stream is now heavily dependent on the energy sector with income from this sector representing one-third of GDP. It is well established that the energy sector does not create jobs and is not an employer of the workforce. Therefore, if the economy is operating close to its full employment rate then the non-energy sector must be booming. The IMF Report of July 2004 indicated that excluding oil and gas revenues, the budget deficit increased from 7.4 per cent of GDP to 8.1 per cent. In the '90s it was 4 per cent; today it is now at 8 per cent.

Over the last three years, consecutive Central Bank Monetary Reports have continued to highlight the languishing non-energy sector. If our fiscal measures are being used to diversify this economy, growth rates in the non-energy sector should follow the energy sector. I do not agree that it will be of the same magnitude, but certainly not when one is on the increase the other is on the decline. It does not make sense.

Mr. Vice-President, I now turn to what I think may be part of the problem in this economy. I want to reiterate a view of the Member of Parliament for St. Augustine, Mr. Winston Dookeran, which was expressed in the other place during his contribution to the budget and this is supply and demand. Mr. Dookeran is of the view that this budget addresses the demand side and not the supply side. Developing an efficient supply side means developing a skilled, healthy workforce with the necessary resources for the sustainable expansion of the economy's output. In the economic sense, is this not why Government increased expenditure levels in order to increase the economy's output? Is that not how we get real GDP growth? We can talk about health care when we move toward primary health care and wellness in order to produce a productive workforce, which will contribute to growth. Road infrastructure is necessary to eliminate the time-wasting activities of traffic congestions and the high stress levels of the producers of this economy; the workers—including the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) workers. There

must be an efficient delivery of public goods through the private sector initiatives but facilitated by the Government in order to maximize the benefits of the increased expenditure levels, and that is the problem. We generate the demand through these high expenditure levels but we do not address the supply side. Where are the initiatives to address the supply side?

Mr. Vice-President, let me turn to the diversification of the economy. The cancellation of the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology and replacement with the University of Trinidad and Tobago would only serve to reduce the supply of a level of professional technologists, which the industry was lacking for some time. Increasing the output of university graduates could have been left to UWI. The Technology Park at Wallerfield, which I said was prematurely cancelled, was designed to facilitate innovation and creativity in order to provide the supply side of the equation. Setting up another industrial estate would only serve to increase demand, which would be supplied by foreign resources. If no incentives are provided to the business entrepreneur and local businesses to invest in innovation and creativity, there will be no diversification.

Mr. Vice-President, venture capital by itself will not encourage qualifying investing companies; a separate and distinct set of measures are required to provide encouragement for QICs.

Mr. Vice-President, in terms of expansion of tertiary education, which has been facilitated through the Government grants of GATE, et cetera, permit me to ask this Government: What has happened to the dollar-for-dollar fund? I note in the budget revenue for 2005 that there is a further reduction in the dollar-for-dollar programme from \$190 million to \$139 million, according to page 4. This Government has not come to this Senate and indicated how many times they have drawn down from this fund. This year was the first time we heard about this drawdown on the Road Improvement Fund.

Mr. Vice-President, with respect to the expansion of the tertiary education, if there are no incentives and encouragement for the local entrepreneur and business to invest in innovative and creative ways to absorb these individuals—all these individuals who are being educated by all these private tertiary educational institutes—then this is just another exercise in futility resulting in a brain drain. Under the UNC, the objective was to stimulate the tertiary education simultaneously with stimulating entrepreneurs and local businesses to participate in technology and service-based industries that would absorb the output from tertiary institutions. That is what is lacking in the form of fiscal measures from

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successive budgets to facilitate the diversification process and creating the competitive edge.

Mr. Vice-President, stating objectives for local content will not achieve local content. In addition, there is a need to move to a higher level with respect to local participation in this key sector via institutions of incentives to encourage entrepreneurs and businesses to participate. Negotiating with the multinationals for local content is again providing a demand side and not the supply side. In addition, local content should involve a higher level of intellectual skills, inclusive of information technology components. However, this requires some capital outlays for which the Government must be prepared to provide concession during the embryonic stages of development.

Mr. Vice-President, let me now say for agriculture, Government must be prepared to subsidize agriculture like most other developed countries in the interest of food security. What incentives have been provided for farmers and agro-processing industries? In terms of the labour market, members of the manufacturing sector will indicate that these makeshift programmes are wrecking the labour markets. Employers cannot compete with the terms and conditions of the makeshift programmes and hence they are losing all their employees to these makeshift programmes. For example, the Government increased the minimum wage to \$9, but have you retooled or re-skilled your workforce to increase productivity before increasing the minimum wage? If you had increased the productivity levels of our workforce commensurate with the increase in this minimum wage, our unit cost of labour would not have increased. Instead what we would see is an increase in the unit cost of labour reducing the profitability and reducing the competitiveness of our non-energy sector.

The Government talks about all these programmes: OJT, YAPA and many others. Mr. Vice-President, how many participants in those programmes continue to return to the programmes? The success of those programmes will tell you that these people, after they have passed through the programme, must be employed in sustainable employment. But are they being employed in sustainable employment or are they just returning to the same programmes for handouts?

The role of the private sector: the IADB report correctly observes that it is firms that compete and not nations; the Government as a facilitator and the private sector led with private sector-led initiatives. The Government provides the enabling environment; however, we are now back to the familiar pattern of over-responsibility on the part of the Government for the success and failure of this economy.

Mr. Vice-President, permit me to turn to the energy sector. For some time now there has been a call as to whether the country has a Minister of Energy and Energy Industries on paper only. Indeed, the *Sunday Guardian* of October 17, Lennox Grant's article is headlined: "Is there an Energy Minister in the House?" must have prompted the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to respond. On Monday, October 19, the Minister did respond in this budget contribution and I was enlightened to hear the Minister publicly state in the other place that to those members of the public and those who have been wondering whether or not there is a Minister of Energy and Energy Industries in the House the answer is, yes. He is an enthusiastic, loyal team player in the Manning administration for the service of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Vice-President, since this loyal and enthusiastic team player, who has turned a blind eye on the energy sector for the last three years, is now ready to reassert his ministerial authority, I would like to deal with some of the issues that need his immediate attention and the attention of his Government. Some of these have been elucidated upon by his leader and himself in this budget, and others, which have been made less clear.

Mr. Vice-President, it is now clear that significant quantities of revenue have been lost as a result of lack of due care and diligence on the part of this Government, to protect and preserve the revenues derived from a depletable natural resource which belongs to the citizens of this country. You would recall, Mr. Vice-President, that about four weeks ago the debate started in this place on the issue of whether Trinidad and Tobago was obtaining a fair price for oil produced and exported. You would also recall that the then Minister of Finance, Mr. Conrad Enill, reported to this Senate that although prices had crossed \$50 per barrel, Trinidad and Tobago's revenue stream over the last fiscal year was based on a weighted average price of \$32, and there was much debate that ensued.

Subsequently, I was startled when I heard the Minister of Finance categorically stating to this nation that bpTT reported that it was only able to obtain \$40 a barrel for three or four of its shipments. Then comes the announcement by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in his budget presentation that it is his intention to restart the crude oil pricing committee. Mr. Vice-President, the pricing committee is a function of the Ministry of Finance which is responsible for Trinidad and Tobago obtaining a market price for oil produced in this country. According to Sen. Basharat Ali, this is the law and it must be adhered to. How could bpTT tell the Government the price for oil and gas? It is the other way around! When did the pricing committee cease to exist and on whose instructions? Could it be a case that after three years in office that

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not one of the four Ministers in the Ministry of Finance recognized that it was part of their portfolio of responsibility to ensure that the pricing committee operates?

Mr. Vice-President, you will be aware that the majority of transnationals operating in this country sell to themselves, either through subsidiaries or affiliates with refining capacity. In addition, Petrotrin sell to themselves all of the oil produced by Trinmar and Petrotrin's ENP Division. It is used as their feedstock to their Pointe-a-Pierre refinery.

The role of the pricing committee is to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago obtains a fair price for crude oil shipped to international destinations. In the case of Petrotrin there is a fair transfer pricing mechanism. I make this point in the context of recent developments globally. Within recent times, Mr. Vice-President, you would have been aware that several multinational oil producing companies have had major fines, penalties and levies imposed on them in the US for under-reporting oil production, thus depriving oil-producing countries of oil revenues.

Mr. Vice-President, under the UNC administration there was one Minister of Finance and the pricing committee functioned. I am not sure, with four Ministers of Finance, if it is a case of too many cooks spoiling the broth.

It is alarming that this Government has stated that there is a shortfall of production of two million barrels for the fiscal year 2003/2004. What has happened to the monitoring function of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries? The technocrats are required to execute regular audits in these oil companies.

Mr. Vice-President, permit me to turn to an issue on LNG pricing. According to the *Trinidad Guardian* dated Tuesday 19, 2004, on page 3, the article entitled: "Closing the loophole" the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries stated in his budget contribution Monday, October 18, 2004 that:

"The offtakers of LNG contracted to the Spanish market have been diverting cargoes destined for Spain to the more lucrative US market."

As you are aware, Mr. Vice-President, LNG prices are at an all-time high in the US market, averaging about US \$5.66 per million cubic feet, and has declined in the Spanish market due to increased sources of supply of LNG and competition from alternative fuel sources. The Minister further stated that:

"...given the technology of the day, these cargoes are being [sent] to the more lucrative US markets and being supplanted by cheaper... sources, but that the revenue reported back to T&T is the revenue as if it had gone to Spain."

Mr. Vice-President, the Minister has accused LNG and its shareholders of massive fraud. [*Desk thumping*] At least, the Minister was magnanimous enough to recognize the UNC administration for having the foresight to ensure that provisions were included in the LNG marketing arrangement. I quote:

3.30 p.m.

“...for the sharing of any premium in excess of the contracted price, the parties are allowed to seek a contract price re-opener if the economic circumstances in Spain have substantially changed and the contract price does not reflect the value of natural gas in the end-user...”

If what the Minister is saying with respect to the diversion of LNG cargoes to the United States market is true, then it is clear that the Atlantic LNG shareholders have been acting ultra vires to the terms and conditions of their marketing agreement. But the minister proceeds to contradict himself by stating that those who framed those contracts on that day did not foresee the possibility of the diversion of the cargoes, therefore the returns to Trinidad and Tobago are based on a formula derived from a destination, Spain.

Mr. Minister, this is not a case of having or not having foresight but a case of massive fraud. Furthermore, as he has indicated several times in this place and in the other place, the formula used to determine the price at the well head is net-back pricing. This involves using the final price at the destination and subtracting the cost components along the value chain, whether it is regassification, shipping via LNG tankers, processing at the Atlantic LNG plant, transportation of gas from the well head to the plant, net-back pricing is net-back pricing. It is used for determining refined products, crude oil and petrochemicals at the supply point. The formula does not allow you to sell cargo to the United States and use a net-back pricing formula for the Spanish market otherwise there would be no need for net-back pricing.

What is clear, is there is no monitoring, policing and enforcing of contracts. Someone has been deliberately turning a blind eye. How come no one knew that cargoes were being diverted to the US market? Why this sudden revelation among the Minister of Energy, the technocrats at the Ministry of Energy, the cabal of technical advisers headed by Professor Ken Julien, called the Natural Gas Export Task Force, the Prime Minister who is the Minister of Finance and spends most of his time on the energy portfolio? No one knew that these cargoes were being diverted to the US market?

When the Prime Minister met with President Bush in Washington to discuss energy security, given that Trinidad and Tobago supplies 60 per cent of the LNG

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market in the US, did he not know that? It does not take a genius to perform a back-of-the-envelope calculation to determine that almost 100 per cent of the LNG produced in Trinidad and Tobago is equivalent to 60 per cent of the US LNG market, but who are the offtakers of the LNG contracted to the Spanish markets that have been diverting cargoes for Spain to more lucrative markets in the US? There are five shareholders of Atlantic LNG: bpTT, British Gas, NGC, Repsol and Tractebel. British Gas is the only shareholder, that I am aware of, that has marketing agreements for supply to the US market via Elba Island regassification terminal. NGC has no share. Repsol is the only shareholder that has the marketing right to sell bpTT share of LNG and its own share to the Spanish market.

Mr. Vice-President, I think the answer lies therein. I hope the Prime Minister understands why he should not have taken any plane ride aboard Repsol corporate jet. In future should he not heed this advice and instead be encouraged by his cabal of advisers such as Professor Ken Julien to board the Repsol—

Sen. Jeremie: The matter to which my senatorial colleague refers has been investigated *ad nauseam* by the Integrity Commission, set up by the United National Congress of which they boast, and a conclusion has been arrived at which might not have been acceptable to my friends on the other side, but which was arrived at as a consequence of due process of law.

Sen. R. Montano: It was not due process. It was the Integrity Commission in secret.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Vice-President, let me just say, should the Prime Minister not heed this advice, and instead be encouraged by his cabal of advisers such as Professor Ken Julien, to board a Repsol jet, he should ask the Repsol team next time to give him an aerial view of the route taken by the LNG tanker, destined for Spain. He must be careful that he does not end up on the eastern seaboard of the United States.

Mr. Vice-President, permit me now to turn to the production sharing contracts because I was a bit confused when I heard the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance indicating in his budget presentation that they would be reviewing PSCs with a view to renegotiating the terms and conditions. Against the background of high international prices for oil and gas, and Government's pronouncements as to the reasons for the shortfall in unexpected revenue from this sector inclusive of high capital allowances and high recurrent expenditure claimed by these companies, I first interpreted the intent of this statement by the Prime Minister in the context of the renegotiation of the terms and conditions for

cost recovery. I immediately visualized this daunting task of renegotiating with multinational companies to reduce the cost recovery in order to increase Government's stake. Little did I realize it was the other way around and the intent was to reduce the Government take.

For the benefit of Members of this Senate, a production sharing contract is different from the typical ENP licence. In the case of the ENP licence, the Government derives revenues from royalties and taxes based on the SPT, which is 50 per cent of profit and PPT. If costs are high then the profits are low and taxes are low, so that is the ENP licence. With the production sharing contracts in lieu of taxes the Government takes from a PSC, a share of the oil or gas produced. This share varies depending on the volume produced and prevailing international market prices. If either the volume or price increases or both, or the Government's share increases, this share can increase to approximately 70 per cent of the total volume produced.

Mr. Vice-President, permit me to state that is comparable with anywhere else in the world. The operator has the operating contract for production from the field and to market the Government share at a price subject to the approval of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. The cost of production of cost-recovery is applied against the Government's share of production and what I mean by this is, if 100,000 barrels of oil is produced a day and they estimate the cost of recovery to be equivalent to 20,000 barrels per day, that is deducted from the Government's share of production. It is clear that if the cost of production is high the Government will end up with less barrels of oil to sell or less gas to sell.

What concerns me is the clarity from the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries in his budget contribution. The Minister clearly stated that we have had cause to negotiate PSCs on the request of operating companies when the market did not allow their business to be profitable. There is, in fact, a production sharing contract. It has been in the press and the Minister has been prodded to try to fix it where there is no cost-recovery. On the one hand you are using the existing tax regime as an excuse. The Government complained about not obtaining a fair economic rent for the country's natural resource. They have deliberately dragged their feet on the reform of the existing fiscal regime and will continue to do so. Now they want to interfere with the production sharing contracts. The negotiations of the production sharing contracts were based on detailed, technical and commercial analyses with both parties, that is, the Government and the operator hammering out the terms and conditions of these contracts. If your operator agreed to no cost recovery then it must have been based on the projected

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profitability of the venture. What if other concessions were granted at that time of cost-recovery?

Mr. Vice-President, this Government cannot be pandering to the needs of the multinationals. It is unfair for the citizens of this country to further fritter away their fair economic rents. [*Desk thumping*] Before the UNC administration there was not one production sharing contract. It was the UNC who introduced PSCs in keeping with the merging mechanisms to ensure fair economic rents to the citizens of this country. I hope the business community of Trinidad and Tobago understands that this Government is only about big business and not about the small entrepreneur. They have refused to introduce the fiscal regime to allow for the survival of those small farm-out operators as part of the farm-out operation of Petrotrin. We have suggested several times in this Senate—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. 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. C. Seepersad-Bachan: I hope the business community of Trinidad and Tobago understands that this Government is only about big business and not the small entrepreneur. They have refused to introduce the fiscal regime to allow for the survival of the small lease operators, part of the farm-out operators by Petrotrin. We have suggested several times that in the interim one can place these operators under the Corporation Tax until finalization of the new regime. I hope the South Chamber takes note because this Government will wait for the demise of every private-sector-led initiative, whether it is the lease operator or the service operator and after that return all of that acreage to the multinational.

That is what would take place under this Government. Then they talk about local content. That is why the IADB report could speak to the lack of incentives and support for the private-sector-led initiatives and participating meaningfully in the energy sector and not at the lower end of the sector. Furthermore, how are you selecting production sharing contracts for renegotiations? On what basis? Where is the transparency in all of this?

Madam Minister Sahadeo, you signed on behalf of Trinidad and Tobago a commitment called the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives. So instead of standing in this honourable Senate and reading nice speeches, with buzz words of “good governance,” ‘transparency’ and “EITI”, put some action to transparency,

and tell us which operator of which PSC has been prodding the Minister of Energy. I would love to know.

What contract is he going to try to fix to include cost recovery? Be very careful, Mr. Minister, that this is not one of the production sharing contracts that currently supply the LNG Trains. Recall the price of LNG in the US market is \$5.66 per million cubic feet, and after net-back pricing the price at the well head should allow for a reasonable profit. I know you urgently wish to re-assert authority but please, be very careful of instructions being handed down to you on these issues and this time you tell the Prime Minister, you advise him, not to accept any plane rides from British Gas.

Mr. Vice-President, permit me now, just to point out to the Minister of Finance, that in the draft estimates at page 20 of this document indicates that the revenue from the production sharing contracts have all gone to zero whereas in 2004, they were at least \$50 million.

I do not know if this is an indication of things to come. Is it that we are going to renegotiate PSCs so that we are down to zero from production sharing contracts? Or, it may have been placed in a different place under a different Head of revenue taxes for oil and gas. So could the Minister please indicate which Head this is now being placed under?

However, I would like to recommend that this revenue stream be kept separate and distinct from the taxes from oil and gas or any other form of revenue streams. It allows for the proper monitoring of the different revenue streams, especially now, for us to see the performance of the production sharing contracts, as more and more production sharing contracts come on stream.

I would like now to turn to the Brighton/La Brea area. I would like to put this issue to bed once and for all. During the winding up of the debate in the other place, the hon. Prime Minister once again alluded to the loss of \$600 million and counting as a result of an alleged decision by the UNC administration with respect of the La Brea/Brighton Estate. Let me categorically state for the hundredth time that the UNC administration never removed any project, any investor or anyone from this estate. Only the PNM administration could conceive of siting heavy industry on shifting soil with abandoned wells.

3.45 p.m.

During the 1991 to 1995 period, the then PNM administration had a project arrangement for the construction of an ammonia plant at Brighton Estate, La Brea.

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The agreement included an extremely low gas price, much lower than the gas price offered to any other ammonia plant. A similar arrangement also existed for LNG Train 1.

A detailed technical analysis of the soil at the estate was undertaken, the findings of which clearly indicated that the soil was unstable and presented a high safety and investment risk for heavy industries such as an ammonia plant and an LNG plant. Both investors indicated their outright refusal to continue with any further consideration of this site and that alternative sites were required with soil conditions suitable for the construction of heavy industry.

The UNC administration had just taken office and immediately commenced consideration of alternative sites. In addition, it was assumed that this would have allowed for a contract cost price reopener, given that the site had changed, only to be advised by the investors that there was no ironclad agreement for the gas price that tied it to the location of the plant.

The Minister and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries were advised by the lawyers of NGC that there was no condition precedent set in the agreement that linked that very low gas price to the site at La Brea. In addition, given that the terms and conditions of the agreement committed the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to the project, the UNC administration had no alternative but to honour the terms and conditions of this agreement or face the legal consequences and the loss of confidence by international investors.

Mr. Vice-President, I remember when Sen. The Hon. D. Montano got up some time last year and commented on this issue, the story was totally different. Do you know where I got this information? We will be surprised how his Government continues to mislead this House. In researching an amendment to a bill that was before this Senate, I went back to the Act itself, which was debated when they were in opposition and the UNC in government, and at that time the *Hansard* had where the PNM Opposition had raised the question and this was the answer that was given. Knowing full well that this is the answer, this Government continues to mislead the public on this issue.

Why do they continue? Let us understand why. It was later discovered that the initial geotechnical study expressed the same concerns, but that these concerns were withheld by the key decision makers representing the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and LABIDCO. That is what prompted the UNC administration to conduct an investigation into La Brea, the findings of which were forwarded to the DPP, who, after review, requested a criminal investigation to be carried out. This directive is yet to be carried out by the police.

I challenge this Government, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, if they are so confident about the La Brea Industrial Estate, to site an aluminium smelter there. Put the LNG plant there; put LNG 5—all these big projects that they are talking about. Why have they not sited an industry there? Why have they moved across the road to the Union Estate to spend a further \$300 million of taxpayers' money to clear and develop what is called the Union Estate?

Mr. Vice-President, do you have any idea what is on the La Brea Industrial Estate? There is a land treatment facility, a Trinmar pipe yard, a NGC pipe yard, which will disappear very soon when they have finished their 56-inch cross island pipeline, a fabrication yard—tenants who store scrap material. So we spent \$300 million to \$400 million on the La Brea Industrial Estate to make it into a scrap yard. This is how this Government progresses. The mere fact that not a petrochemical plant or any form of heavy industry can be sited at this estate by this Government bears testimony to the fact that the site is geotechnically unsuitable and that there is a serious safety risk to the investors, employees and residents of the area.

The only reason the Prime Minister continues with these utterances is to cover up and to divert attention away from the direct instruction to the police to conduct criminal investigations into money spent and other matters related to the La Brea Industrial Estate. But, Mr. Vice-President, we are about to see history repeat itself.

Just across the road in the Union Estate, they have invested \$300 million and they have started clearing land, but do you know that the consultants on that project for the aluminium smelter have already raised issues and concerns about the suitability of the site because of the stability of the soil. Are you aware, Mr. Vice-President, that already the residents have observed and there are pictures of huge oil seeps on that property; that everywhere heavy machinery moves to grade and cut into the land, spools of oil appear? Three hundred million dollars have been spent and this is what is going on down there.

Once again, the accuracy and integrity of the geotechnical survey is in question. By the way, that survey was conducted by Trintoplan Consultants. It is my understanding as well that the consultants have requested that they start doing a pressure test instead of a bubble test on that site because they are uncomfortable with what is taking place. Petrotrin's data is outdated and every time you look for an abandoned well, where you think it may be it may not be and sometimes, by accident, a tractor may drive over when cutting into the land and it may hit a well

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head and then they find out that is where it is. That is how it is going on down there; it is a hit-and-miss operation. This is the way this budget is operating, too.

NEC, the board, was recently reconstituted to comprise the key players from 1991 to 1995. Mr. Ken Julien, Mr. Keith Awon, Mr. Malcolm Jones. Mr. Prakash Saith, et cetera, are the same players, so what else do we expect? It is only a PNM administration that expects to repeat the same thing and get different results. I do not know how they expect that.

Permit me to go to gas reserves and gas utilization. Last week Sen. Ali raised the point there was a 20.785 tcf. I went back to the *Hansard*. That is what was reported in this Senate last year as proven reserve. This year it is 18.81 tcf. It is not hard to understand why that is. Over the last year there has been no proving-up of reserve, so there has been a consumption of 1.94 tcf with the coming on of Train 2 and Train 3. If that has happened, obviously with a utilization of that level, you will deplete the reserves within 9 to 10 years. The reserve-to-production ratio is dangerously low. Yet this Government continues to make announcements. I want to see what will happen to that utilization rate and the reserve-to-production ratio when Train 4 comes on.

I warn this Government about its continued effort in announcing projects to this nation. Let us be careful that we do not continue committing to projects that we do not have gas reserves to support. I hope we understand. When we do not have gas reserves to support those projects, the next thing we might be doing is importing LNG to service some of those projects.

I want to take a quick look at the statement of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries on the mineral resources. Mr. Vice-President, do you know that the Minister has indicated that the Minerals Act, 2000 is unworkable. The Bill, Act 61 of 2000, was passed in this Senate unanimously, with all the comments from the then PNM Benches and the Independents incorporated; and do you know they were accepted unanimously by the other House as well?

It is my understanding that this Government wants to get rid of that piece of legislation because it requires specifically that all of those quarrying lands licences must be done by competitive bidding. Mr. Vice-President, do you know that not one of the licences that they have awarded have been done by competitive bidding and that they are in breach of the law? If they do award licences by competitive bidding, they are supposed to bring a report to this Senate. We have seen no such report.

They talk about illegal quarrying. What was the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries doing? Was he sleeping at that time? How is it that he did not know about illegal quarrying? How did he award these licences without going through a competitive bidding process in accordance with the law? Now I understand from the sources of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries that they want to get rid of the piece of legislation because they do not want the competitive bidding. I want to put on record that during 1995 to 2000 the UNC administration awarded licences based on a competitive bidding process.

I know that I have run out of time and I want to just say that we can continue to make all these great announcements, especially on gas utilization and gas reserves and then we will find out what will happen. We continue to have pipe dreams. In response to Sen. Ali, Sen. The Hon. Sahadeo talked about the Gas Master Plan, but that is another study that will be forever under review.

In this Senate, we have called several times for that plan and do you know why they will not release the findings of that plan? Because that plan will say they had no right to invest in another LNG Train 4. There is no effective diversification in the gas sector when they do that. There is no proper portfolio and, furthermore, they are not doing enough downstream. It will also tell them that piping gas up the islands is a pipe dream. All we will do is to turn back to being hewers of wood and drawers of water. That is what we are doing.

We cannot continue to decapitalize this country by converting our natural resources into currency for recurrent expenditure. Instead, the fiscal proceeds from the monetization of our natural resources must be used for capital formation to increase the revenue-earning capacity of a non-energy sector that is knowledge-based, technology-driven, thus creating the competitive advantage. This is the only way Trinidad and Tobago can go forward.

I listened to the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries when he talked about being a loyal team player of Mr. Manning's administration. I hope he understands that he took an oath into office that said he would protect and preserve the resources of this country. I thank you.

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph): Mr. Vice-President, I am pleased to participate in the debate on this Bill to provide for the services of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2005, and to join with my colleagues in complimenting the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister, and the Ministers in the Ministry of Finance, on what can only be described as an excellent budget; a budget designed to continue to

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transform Trinidad and Tobago into the developed society that we have visualized for ourselves.

Let me from the outskirts—because I will talk about it later on—talk about the belief that Vision 2020 is some pipe dream. Mr. Vice-President, I see vision 2020 as three five-year strategic plans—a plan for 2005—2009; 2010—2014 and 2015—2019. So, broken down into that context, and given the five-year strategic planning context in which we operate, the question of Vision 2020 can be realized and, with God's help, I look forward to living in a developed society some 17 years from now without having to move out of Trinidad and Tobago.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, I have a responsibility to respond to concerns raised in this debate by Senators on the other side. I was not here on Thursday when Sen. Augustus made his contribution. Clearly, on the basis of newspaper reports, Sen. Augustus raised an issue as to whether or not we have death squads operating in Trinidad and Tobago. Clearly, the issue was such that it formed part of a Sunday editorial in the *Newsday* of October 24, 2004 that says:

“Quo vadis police service?”

Without quoting the full details, I would pull out the first and fourth paragraphs.

“We wonder whether the Government is aware that members of the public are rapidly losing confidence in the integrity of the Police Service and its commitment not only to solving crime but generally to protecting and serving the people. The situation is clearly getting from bad to worse, but the authorities seem paralysed by the same old lethargy, somehow unable to take any effective measure to deal with the growing number of rogue cops and the menace they represent.

This horrifying incident has led to Opposition Senator Roy Augustus asking Minister of National Security Martin Joseph to respond to allegations that a police hit squad is in operation because, he observed, ‘there seems to be some evidence of it.’”

Mr. Vice-President and Senators, let me start off by indicating that there is no death squad existing in the police service and no such arrangement will ever be tolerated in the country.

Let me remind this honourable Senate, a couple of months ago, I was addressing a private sector breakfast meeting of the chamber in Westmoorings. I

was talking on behalf of Crime Stoppers and encouraging the private sector to contribute to Crime Stoppers. I made the point that I was at a function some time before and some prominent citizens—I was very taken aback—were expressing the view that we need to put things in place to take some people out. I told them that we cannot think about that. I told them that there is a country that is being scrutinized for being alleged to have been engaged in such actions and we cannot. I said that we will be dealing with crime and criminal activities in this country in a way in which, at the end of the day, we will be able to hold our heads high. I made a comment, for which I was taken to task, by talk show hosts, when I said that we have to respect the rights of everyone. The headline somewhere was “Joseph says Criminals have rights.” They wanted to know whether or not criminals have rights to terrorize the population. I feel it is necessary to remind us that, even as we pursue crime and criminal activities in the country, we will not do that without engaging in the four squares of the law.

I have also been called upon to respond to the incidents of police killings. We do not have, as I indicated—[*Interruption*] According to the information that I have received, there are 21 persons who were killed by police officers during the course of this year. I do not intend to go through each one of those persons, but clearly to indicate that these are the activities that are taking place. In some instances—I did not tally them—files have been submitted to the Clerk of the Peace, with a view to facilitating the holding of inquests. In some instances, it is a question of inquests that are supposed to be held as a result of investigations. [*Interruption*] How many have been held? That information has not been provided, Sir. In a couple of instances, it has been indicated that the investigation is incomplete. In some instances, the file was sent with respect to the holding of inquests. In two cases, investigators are awaiting the forensic report to complete investigation. That is where the investigation is at this particular point in time. In another case, the file was submitted to the Senior Superintendent of Port of Spain and is still awaiting information. The file was submitted to the Commissioner of Police for transmission to the Director of Public Prosecutions. In the one that has created the major concern so far, the shooting of Sherman Monsegue, the witness in the shooting is to be interviewed today, with a view to obtaining a written statement and senior police officers are meeting with the family and other interested parties to get additional information concerning the matter. In each of the cases, actions are being taken to treat with the whole question of police—

Sen. Mark: What about Galene Bonadie?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: In her case, this file was submitted to the Clerk of the Peace with a view to facilitating the holding of an inquest. [*Interruption*] I do not have that information.

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I think it is instructive to indicate that last year there were 12 fatal shootings, as a result of police. What is the response to issues of this nature? Members of the Senate, I join with the Prime Minister in the statement he made yesterday that there is no way that this Government or any right-thinking person can condone any extrajudicial police killings. We cannot conclude that those shootings were extrajudicial police shootings. As we indicated, we do not have a death squad existing. One has to take the circumstances on the basis of the necessary evidence and investigation, and whatever course of action needs to be taken will be taken.

What is the solution to the challenge that faces us, as it relates to this?

Sen. Seetahal: To make your figures balance, perhaps you can tell us how many police officers were shot in the course of their duty. Maybe that would assist.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Unfortunately, I did not walk with that information.

One of the concerns that we have and must resolve is the question of how do we ensure that police officers discharge their responsibilities in a way in which it does not bring the organization into disrepute. It is not a challenge that faces just the police service of Trinidad and Tobago, it faces police organizations the world over. The solution or entity that exists to deal with that, in our circumstances, is referred to as the Police Complaints Division. The Police Complaints Division is the entity that exists to deal with police behaviour to ensure that they do not bring the organization into disrepute. Police officers who do not discharge their responsibilities and duties, in keeping with their oath of office, are brought to justice. Unfortunately, our Police Complaints Division as it exists leaves a lot to be desired. One of the things we are doing is bringing the Police Complaints Division up to a certain level.

It was only August of this year that we received a report with respect to some of the challenges currently facing the Police Complaints Division. I am sure all Senators are aware of the performance of the Police Complaints Division. That was highlighted in the last Police Complaints Authority Report laid in the Parliament. It outlined clearly the fact that, I quote:

“The Police Complaints Division’s productivity in handling complaints is at a level that could be fairly described as placing the police service in crisis.”

This is an independent observer who came to look at the whole question of the police service and in particular the Police Complaints Division.

The most recent Police Complaints Authority Report of May—September 2002/2003 shows a dramatically increasing backlog of outstanding investigations that had not yet been submitted by the Police Complaints Division for resolution by the Police Complaints Authority. The figures are provided.

The conclusion states that approximately 40 per cent of the 3,462 pending cases are now more than two years old. The Police Complaints Division detectives now estimate that the average time to complete an investigation is three to four years. In addition to problems with completing investigations on a timely basis, there is a reason to be concerned about the quality of the investigations. The Police Complaints Authority report states:

“In many instances, the division failed to address all aspects of the complaint. Reports also fall short in that they do not show the conduct of interviews with the alleged defaulters or the witnesses.”

We have a problem with the Police Complaints Division.

Other problems noted by the Police Complaints Division investigators are numerous. First, it is understaffed. Currently, we have 22 investigators, but only 16 positions are filled. One of the first things that must be done is to improve and increase the staffing levels of the Police Complaints Division.

The second point is insufficient training. Police prosecutors do not receive legal training, which places them at a disadvantage, when they face accused police officers, represented by trained legal counsel at PCA hearing or in court.

Another problem is that highly-qualified and highly-motivated investigators are hard to attract to the Police Complaints Division assignment. It is hard to keep investigators in the unit. Investigating the wrongdoings of one's peers can easily make one an outcast, so many officers avoid the assignment whenever possible.

These are some of the problems that exist with the Police Complaints Division. One of the things that we are moving to do is to—notwithstanding efforts made to ensure that the Police Complaints Authority was provided with a certain kind of legislative clout, to make sure that we can address the problems of the Police Complaints Division—put things in place to deal with improving the Police Complaints Division.

There is a recommendation that we increase the staffing of the Police Complaints Division as follows—I am finding myself in an awkward position now, because this report came this morning, as a result of the investigations that are taking place, as they relate to the police service. We have asked the people to

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focus on two major areas that will give us as immediate results as possible. One is the Police Complaints Division, the other one is the improvement in the performance appraisal system. I have not discussed this tentative report with the commissioner nor any other persons involved in the Police Service Commission. I am hard-pressed to indicate what some of the recommendations are. One of the recommendations is to increase the staffing of the Police Complaints Division. The proposed time frame is to begin in January 2005.

Let me indicate the proposed staffing strength for the Police Complaints Division: one senior superintendent, one superintendent, two assistant superintendents, eight inspectors, 18 sergeants, 49 corporals, three constables and 10 civilian clerks. These figures will produce 66 sworn persons conducting investigations and 16 sworn persons in management or support positions. This staffing level would be able to clear approximately 4,000 cases during 2005, which will bring the Police Complaints Division's caseload to approximately 800 by January 2006, which will enable the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to begin to reduce the size of the Police Complaints Division during 2006, to a level that will keep the clearance of cases at a reasonable level.

The second recommendation is to increase mobility of the Police Complaints Division investigators. I told you presently, the Police Complaints Division has a staff of 16 persons. This is clearly insufficient to deal with a police force of 7,000.

The third recommendation is to reorganize the Police Complaints Division. The senior superintendent will have an executive officer of the rank of superintendent. This person will be responsible for visiting all offices, monitor work of investigative staff, coordinate and see that necessary support is given. This position will involve much travelling.

4.15 p.m.

The fourth recommendation is to develop and implement training for all Police Complaints Division investigators. The current Police Complaints Division leadership will develop an 18-week training plan. I will go into some of the details of the necessary training. There will be training for prosecutors in the Police Complaints Division.

There is a recommendation of reassigning responsibility for holding tribunals from the divisional commanders to tribunal officers, who will be specially trained to do this work and they will work at this full time.

There is also the recommendation to create a computerized management information system that will allow the Police Complaints Division managers and supervisors to monitor the progress of individual cases, and track the productivity of individual investigators at the police complaints units.

Over the long term, there is need to give the police commissioner more authority to determine the discipline that errant officers receive. The process is too cumbersome and it takes too long. The current system works to delay effective discipline; protects errant and innocent officers from receiving timely justice; and makes effective timely correction of poor policing practices almost impossible. This will require giving the police commissioner the power to assign more disciplined and corrective measures than he is currently allowed.

Interestingly enough, I am not trying to score political points, but we brought the Police Service Reform Bills to address some of the very issues which needed to be addressed and which were raised.

Mr. Vice-President, I give to Senators of this honourable Senate the assurance that the Government is bent on ensuring that we have a highly efficient police service; a police service that provides us with the level of security and safety that we need. In most instances, there is a small group of persons who are bringing the police service into disrepute. We need to put measures in place to deal with that matter.

Mr. Vice-President, do you know what was instructive? Sometime earlier in the year, the Police Complaints Division decided to take certain actions on the basis of some concerns that were raised concerning the operations of some police officers. I have to be careful of how I am saying this. The actions that were taken resulted in some transfers and reassignments. The police officers involved engaged certain lawyers and ran and got judicial review. As a result, these actions were stopped. You would recall that there was a big headline and they tried to make politics out of the matter. They were saying that police officers claimed that politicians were involved in certain kinds of action, et cetera.

I am saying this to highlight what are some of the challenges that are facing us, as they relate to changing some of the things for which we are getting certain kinds of results. That was in response to Sen. Roy Augustus' concerns.

Let me now respond to some of the concerns raised by my colleague, Sen. Prof. Deosaran. Sen. Prof. Deosaran talked about this budget as being "compassionate pragmatism"; he talked about Mother Theresa and the Houdini effect. He said that there was a high level of under-reporting of crime, so that

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even some of the crime statistics that we have before us are not necessarily accurate.

Notwithstanding that, I think we need to get a sense as to what has been happening as it relates to crime over the last three years. First of all, there was admission up front in the Lower House when the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said in his budget statement that there was a concern with respect to the incidence of crime that continues to plague our society. There is no question about that. The Prime Minister indicated that it is a dark cloud that hangs over our economy, and all of the prospects that still lie ahead of us. As a result, we have to treat with crime and criminal activity.

Later on in my discussions, I will discuss the matter. There seems to be a difference in philosophy as it relates to whether or not money is going to solve our crime problem, and the whole issue of the Government's role in terms of providing support for members of the society.

Mr. Vice-President, in 2002, the number of reported serious crimes stood at some 10,995, which is an increase of some 912 for the year 2001. In 2003, the number of serious crimes reported was 11,206; this is an increase of 201 from the previous year. These are figures for the period January to August. This is to keep the comparison correct. In 2004, the number of reported serious crimes stood at some 10,907, which is a decrease of 299 for the pervious period.

While the total figures remain fairly stable, the ministry has observed the following trend: There is a consistent increase in the number of murders, narcotic offences and larceny, including motor vehicle larceny. Presently, I think the latest figure was about 230. Of course, that is extremely alarming.

There was a consistent decrease in the incidence of crimes against the person such as rapes, incest, sexual offences and serious indecency. I am saying this reluctantly, because if my Professor friend indicated that the under-reporting in these areas is almost 90 per cent, then there is really no solace in the fact that there is a decrease. The chances are that may not be the case and we will have to go with the information that is before us.

While kidnappings increased by 18 per cent between 2002 and 2003, there was a noticeable decrease of some 34 per cent in the number of reported kidnappings between 2003 and 2004. That is not by chance. We have put measures in place to deal with kidnappings, but following the old people, I will still knock on wood. [*Interruption*]

We have always maintained that kidnapping is a crime that has become a crime of choice over the years because of the lucrative nature of it. The aim was to make kidnapping not the crime of choice, because the persons involved must recognize that kidnapping is not an easy offence that they could get away with it. Efforts have been put in place to deal with this matter of kidnapping. Again, we cannot stand here and say what are the efforts that we have put in place, but we have put efforts in place to deal with the kidnappings.

Mr. Vice-President, I must say something. I did not hear it myself so I have to go by what I was told. Two Thursdays ago, a colleague of mine told me—these days I have tried to minimize my listening to radio talk shows in the morning. I try now to make sure that the Ministry has a means of ensuring that they listen, and the issues raised would be identified and we would address them. I am sorry, but I have stopped listening to these talk shows. I try to get the news and when the news is finished, I turn to Radio 97 to listen to music.

Sen. Mark: Pressure. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: A colleague of mine was saying to me that there was a particular radio station—I am not going to call any names—said: “Eh, yuh realize kidnapping on the whole drop.” I understand what was said was that we must thank the criminals. [*Laughter*] So, we should thank the criminals for deciding that they are not going to engage in kidnappings.

There are some areas where we are seeing some holding, but nothing to boast about. The thing has to be sustained over a particularly sufficient period of time for us to realize that we are doing certain things.

Let me tell you what we have been able to discern. We have been able to discern that 18 police station districts are responsible for 65 per cent of the crime. I have already said this here. On the basis of a comment made by my hon. colleague about micromanaging, what we have attempted to do is to provide resources for those particular 18 police station districts, so that they would have the means of responding. For example, the 100 vehicles that we have acquired this year were provided specifically to the 18 police station districts, with the understanding that those vehicles are to be used specifically to respond to concerns in those areas.

When my Cabinet colleagues approved the allocation and agreed on ensuring that they were provided as quickly as possible, they challenged me. They said: “Make sure that those vehicles are used for that purpose.” Naïve me, did not understand why they were going to raise that matter. I could not understand why,

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but now the reality is starting to hit home. We are now finding ourselves in a situation where we have to insist that these vehicles are used for these purposes.

One of the first things that we did was to ensure that all those vehicles have the telephone numbers of the police station districts to which they are assigned written on them. We are trying to make sure that they are used for that particular purpose. We are being challenged. As a result, we are now trying to make sure that part of the remit of the police officer who is in charge of the police station is to managing the use of the vehicles.

I come from a school of thought that says that if you want something done, then put it in your performance management system; let it be part of your accountability, in terms of evaluating officers. [*Desk thumping*] Even as we do that, you can only do that on the basis of an understanding that they themselves recognize that we have to deal with the matter. But, suppose they decide not to deal with the matter, there are no corrective measures that one could take to make sure that you reward the performance that you want and to deal with the performance that you are not getting. That is a challenge.

Mr. Vice-President, the reason I am taking this pain to explain this matter is because we keep hearing about these ill-informed comments being made as they relate to treating with crime and criminal activity. It is always easy to blame the Government and the Minister. Yes, we are accountable and responsible for making sure that the resources are provided to our law enforcement agencies to do the job.

Recently, I asked someone: "What do you want me to do? Do you want me to put on a jacket marked police and actually go out there and do the work?" You cannot. The most that you can do is to say that these are the results that we want; these are the resources; and please make sure that you do the things that are needed to be done.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is now 4.30 p.m. and we are going to take the tea break now. I will have to ask the Minister to continue with his contribution afterwards. We will resume at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Mr. Vice-President, I was responding to some concerns raised by my hon. friend on the other side. He raised the question of micro analysis and micro management. Just before we took the tea break, I

indicated the extent to which we were doing some of what he suggested, in terms of the micro managing. Basically, we are attempting to make divisional commanders more accountable for the performance of their division. I know the Senator does not like the term “divisional commanders”.

There are nine divisions in Trinidad and Tobago. Eighteen police station districts are responsible for 65 per cent of the crime. We are putting things in place to ensure that those statistics drive the whole question of resource allocation, performance, et cetera. I am confident that as we start putting some of the modern police management, state-of-the-art technology systems and structures in place, we are going to start seeing the results.

My professor friend made a comment about putting back community policing. Community policing, in successful police organizations, is now part of policing; it is not just a department. Community policing is driving because, after all, it is to protect and serve members of the community. The breakdown in intelligence is as a result of the distrust that has developed between the community and the police; so you have to redevelop that trust. There was a time when it was the same thing in other places. We had a problem here with community policing being seen as soft policing and then you had hard policing; there was this dichotomy. There was not the understanding that, basically, what you are talking about—if I may be permitted to say so, because I am not an expert on it—is the use of force.

The extent to which you have to use a certain amount of force to deal with things is supposed to vary from circumstance to circumstance and that is where you have the challenge. You are going to have your specialized units, design your operations and so on, but in terms of the relationship between police and community, we cannot see community policing as some subset of policing. When we get to successful policing, you will see that there will be a change, in terms of the relationship between the police and their communities.

Professor raised the point that Government has to draw the line, sooner or later, as to how far it will get into family life and the social sector. Is there a philosophical difference between the Government’s position and the professor’s? This Government is committed to ensuring that the economic growth this country is currently experiencing must be shared by all. The professor spoke about getting “back to the compassionate pragmatism”; I like the term. If that is how he wants to characterize it, then we stand accused and we are not annoyed at all, because we recognize that we need to replace the so-called “supply side” economic theory of trickle down. Trickle down did not work and, as a result, we decided that we

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would intervene directly, in particular areas and segments, to do certain things, because left up to the market forces, it will not happen.

I am sorry Sen. R. Montano is not here. He said that he likes to refer to himself as a democrat. In terms of UNC versus PNM policy, rest assured that he would be a republican, if that example is still used, and we would be democrats, because we believe, just what the last successful democratic President did: He managed the affairs of the United States between 1992 and 2000; under his stewardship 22 million jobs were created. He did specific things as a result of direct intervention in the economy and improved the circumstances of minorities such as African Americans and Hispanics.

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan raised a concern as to the extent to which we are creating sustainable jobs. The Prime Minister was very clear that the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) and the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) are going to provide a transition toward a level of entrepreneurship. He also indicated that more money will be going into training and development so, at the end of the day, you are going to see developed persons who are able to occupy sustainable jobs. The concern about whether or not we are going knowledge base, third wave and those other things, we are convinced that once our policies are implemented, we are going to see the kinds of results that we expect to achieve, in terms of providing sustainable jobs for our citizens.

We will continue to debate the role of Government in the lives of our citizens. We believe that Government is neither the enemy nor the solution, but the instrument to give our people the tools and conditions to make the most of their own lives. We will continue to re-establish the family as the primary unit of society; one that Government can strengthen with the social policies outlined in the budget, especially as it relates to the minimum wage increase, reforms in health, and education, as the case may be. With your permission and your leave, Sen. Prof. Deosaran, let me now go to my other colleague, Sen. Seetahal, because the other areas you raised concerned my other colleague.

Sen. Seetahal was very clear in how she saw the role of the Senate, as it related to the question of holding the Government to account and the extent to which we have been able to achieve the things we had set out to achieve. I have no problem with that. The first area I will respond to is the question of prison and penal reform. Sen. Seetahal said that the only statement made in the budget by the Prime Minister, in the other place, was about making the Maximum Security Prison (MSP) operational. She wondered why we were still talking about making it

operational, so many years after, when the facility was built to accommodate some 2,400 and right now it is not accommodating that number. I think it is now up to about 800. Unfortunately, there were some problems associated with the Maximum Security Prison. One problem was the sewage system and the other was the electronic security associated with that.

Mr. Vice-President, I was amazed. My understanding is that the people who put the system down left; for whatever reason. They did not leave any institutional blueprint, so there were no persons here who could operate it. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Bro. Khan: Government to government.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Well, I do not know what it was, but we have been able to track the manufacturers. As a result, people came down and they have now been able to operationalize the electronic system. I do not understand and, again, I am not in a position to say why the sewage system problem is taking so long. I cannot, for the life of me, understand that. We have been given a commitment that says by November. They are putting some interim arrangement in place that will allow us to take some 500 additional prisoners by November.

I like to look at things in terms of the immediate, short-term and long-term. Right now we have a serious overcrowding problem in our prison system. The question is: What can we do immediately? What we can do immediately is to have the Maximum Security Prison (MSP) up and running, so it can hold more people; it has been built already. I want to hear that by November, whereas in a cell in Port of Spain you had 14 prisoners, "it now gone to seven". Even that is unacceptable, but we need to ease the overcrowding, because all kinds of other things are associated with that.

In terms of increasing the maximum security capacity we had to hire some additional prison officers. My understanding is that has been done; some 150 officers have so far been employed. When we reach up to maximum capacity, my understanding is that we will need some 700 officers. Let me tell you why I keep saying "my understanding". I am not trying to pass the buck. We have an arrangement in place where the Minister in the Ministry of National Security's direct remit is for prison; that is Minister Hinds. He took over from Minister Roberts. We have a mechanism in place so that the information is shared, but the prison is his direct remit.

Mr. Vice-President, I will tell you why we have to make sure and improve the MSP by November, and I do not want it to be misunderstood. We have now opened up the prison to both local attorneys, and Sen. Seetahal will correct me if I

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am wrong. We have also done something that was not done before; we have allowed Amnesty International to come into our prisons. People said that the Government was mad to do that, but we did not have anything to hide. They told us what we knew, in terms of how bad the place was. They are supposed to do their report by either October or November. They made a commitment that the Government will get a chance to see the report before that, so that it will be in a position to say, "Okay, while your findings were A, B, C, D or E, we have been able to do 1, 2, 3, et cetera, as it relates to the situation." This is the reason I have been pressing so hard to ensure that the Maximum Security Prison is able to take as many prisoners as possible, to ease the overcrowding, because that is the number one problem.

There was some concern raised with respect to lawyer/client ability to be provided with whatever facilities. My understanding is that it was being addressed in Port of Spain. I do not know whether or not facilities have been put in place to do that, but we do have a problem in the Port of Spain prison and something has to be done. I have not taken any proposals to the Government yet, as it relates to that, so I do not want to indicate what my thinking is, because it is just my individual thinking. Clearly, we need to do something with that facility on Frederick Street. It is beyond any kind of renovations; the most you can do is tinker with it.

5.15 p.m.

I do not want to make policy. I do not want to stand here and make pronouncements; I do not operate like that. I am a good team player, and a loyal Member and I make no apologies for that. I will discuss it with my Government before I make any pronouncements as to what we are going to do, but clearly, some decisions have to be made with respect to the Port of Spain prison. This is in response to the comment made that the only statements made by the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister were to ease the crowding.

The Senator raised some concerns about prison life, about drug use, prison abuse and those other things. I hope she will forgive me if I do not get into all the details—

Mr. Vice-President: The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. C. Enill*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I have to move fast. The other issues associated with those things with the address, I think mention was made about parole.

The Government has approved the establishment of a penal reform and translation unit with a mandate to spearhead the transformation of the penal system in Trinidad and Tobago. The unit is currently being staffed and I know interviews are taking place with specialists whose remit will be to provide dedicated and focused attention to the transformation thrust.

Additionally, the Parole Introduction Committee was established in August, 2004 and the terms of reference include the development of a parole introduction strategy, preparation of a parole—I hear you are saying three years—but I am now aware of these developments and I give the assurance that every effort will be made to treat with them. The Senator talked about the Terrorism Bill, and this is now on the Order Paper in the other place dated October 11, 2004.

With respect to Vision 2020, I see that as three five-year strategic plans and all our divisions and agencies are being called upon to develop them. So Vision 2020 is there, and then you have the three five-year strategic plans and I hope God gives me long life so I may live to be part of it.

Monies were placed for either MILAT or MYPART, but the three programmes, as the Senator indicated, are MILAT, MYPART and the National Service. The Civilian Conservation Corps is up and running and is doing a spectacular job.

We have been a little tardy with respect to those three programmes. I do not know if it would give this Senate any solace if I say the first ministerial “bouff”—if I can call it that—I received as a Minister was with respect to those three programmes. When asked why were they not up and running, the answer was one did not have money, and there was not sufficient money; and I was really pulled over the coals for that. I can give you the assurance that I am not going to be coming back here next year without being able to talk about those programmes and the fact that they are up and running.

The one that creates the biggest embarrassment is the question about the Forensic Centre and the DNA. I stood up with luster—on the basis of information provided to me—and indicated that the Director of the Forensic Centre advised that the centre should achieve readiness by the month of April, 2004. I also indicated that all the work that was supposed to have been done to have it running would have been put in place, only to realize that it is as it stands now.

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I guess that we did not realize that health had a part to play with respect to the necessary legislation of the DNA. We thought it involved the Office of the Attorney General and ourselves, only to realize that there were some other players who also had to sign the DNA Regulations and they have not yet done so. I am not passing the buck, but that was one of the things that was not on the radar screen.

As far as my office was concerned, the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill was on the radar screen and we needed to make sure that it was proclaimed and this one sort of fell through the cracks. I gave the Senate the assurance that it was going to be implemented by May of this year; unfortunately it was not, so we are here with our tails between our legs.

However, we can say that we also recognize that we lack sufficient skills at the Forensic Centre and we are having discussions. Again in keeping with the immediate, short-term, and long term approach in the firearms section we need to get two firearms and toolmark examiners, and I will tell you what steps we are going to take.

In the document section, we need to get two question document examiners, whoever those persons are; in the DNA section, we need to get two DNA experts. We are holding discussions with international agencies to see how we can acquire those skills in the short-term for either a six months to one year period, and at the same time start putting things in place to identify persons and provide them with scholarships so that they can start their training.

I agree with you that DNA is the cutting edge now to deal with crime and criminal activities et cetera. Incidentally, the IBIS machine is going to be commissioned on Friday. Of course, you know that that machine is the one that allows us the matching of ammunition with respect to the guns; these are all part of the implementation of the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill.

I am not saying that DNA is not more important than the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill, I have already confessed that this one fell off the radar screen and we have to put it back because it is an integrated thing, they are all important. So that treats with the Forensic Centre.

Sen. Seetahal: How soon will it be ready?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: I am hoping before the end of the year on the basis of what is left to be done as it relates to the consultations and signing of the other stakeholders.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran: Mr. Vice-President, with your permission, I know the Minister is winding up but I want to get some clarification on two points. Before I do so I want to express on behalf of the Senate and myself our commendation for the way he has been responding to the issues raised. It is a very good sign of a healthy parliamentary debate. [*Desk thumping*] Of course, you know that we have made these points to help the Government in its own agenda, and the same remark pertains to my friend, the Minister of Social Development.

Mr. Minister, the issues you raised on the role of government in social welfare and so on are debatable all over the world; so we are not peculiar in this sense. However, the two issues I want to raise are: if you say that one of the major problems is that the police officers do not like to investigate, and particularly report on their colleagues, then adding a larger number of officers in that respect would not really help if the proper independence is not sought in the context of investigation.

Secondly, with respect to the crime statistics, which is also debatable all over the world, I was merely trying to indicate that what the public knows is really not what the police reports are saying and you will always find yourself as a policy maker responding to which: the shadows or the threat to reality?

I want to know from you, Sir, whether you are going to give that any attention in terms of improving your collection in reporting of crime statistics because, from what I know, that unit really needs a serious review if the Government has to have a more accurate basis for policy implementation.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: First of all, we will need to increase the strength in order for them to do the work; secondly, we are talking about training and we need a different breed of police investigators. I think, unfortunately, our Police Complaints Division over the years has not been provided with what it needs.

I was making the point during the break that in other jurisdictions, when internal affairs knock at your door, you quiver because they have a culture of making sure that the police officers—because it is in the best interest of the police organization itself. I do not think it is fair to the police organization to have a few people tainting the whole organization and I believe they also would not want to see some of the “rogue elements”—if I can borrow that term—tarnishing the image of the police.

So you are talking about a special type of training, a special incentive. I understand as it stands now, that when one is sent to the Police Complaints Division it is like if one is sent to Siberia—it is like being banished—so that has

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to be changed and that is also going to provide us with the means of ensuring that they do the work they need to do.

To answer the point about the crime statistics: Yes we are going to continue to ensure how best—and we are going to be opened to the experts like you and others—do we now take into consideration what is reported, bearing in mind that is an under-reporting. What I am also told is that if people start having confidence in the police, there will be an increase in the number of reported crimes.

Those are the things that are likely to happen, and with your kind of expertise and other international experts coming together to help us and since there is recognition that crime and criminal activities are global, they are no longer confined to any borders and shores, we have to collaborate the same way in which the perpetrators of crime and criminals do, who are also global.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank hon. Senators for giving me the opportunity to respond. This is a Government that listens. I do not know why people feel we do not listen. We move beyond rhetoric into action.

5.30 p.m.

Sen. Seetahal: I am sorry to interrupt. You said you were not going to get into drug use, but the drug rehab programme in prison has been something that I have been talking about for a long time.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Yes, and I am hoping that, as I indicated, as part of the whole prison transformation and reform, that some of those things are now going to come on board. The Prime Minister has also indicated, I think only over the weekend, that we need to find a means almost immediately to see how best we can separate some of the hardened criminals. He was responding to the unfortunate incident that occurred, where someone was taken to prison for maintenance and ended up dead. Something is seriously wrong, and as a result we need to put corrective measures in place to make sure those things do not recur.

Sen. Mark: May I just ask, through you, Mr. Vice-President, the hon. Minister of National Security: Having regard to all these complaints that have come to the fore about these alleged executions or murders, has the Minister of National Security been able to establish whether there is some coordinated mechanism operating in defiance of the law within the police service that can allow the population to come to the conclusion that there is an organized hit squad operating—it may not be officially sanctioned; he has denied it—and whether the Minister of the National Security has conducted any kind of investigation to

determine if there is a coordinated body of persons—rogue elements, call them what you will—operating within the police service and taking the law virtually into their own hands? I just wanted to find out if you had conducted, or are thinking of conducting, such an investigation.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: No, Sen. Mark. I have not conducted an investigation. Let me give you the assurance that, again, we have provided the information—clearly there must be a concern with respect to what is happening and whatever measures we need to put in place to make sure that those things are going to be looked at. Let me just, in closing, indicate to the Senator, because just when I was going to the break, he said I looked as if I am—I cannot remember the words—

Sen. Mark: You seemed frustrated.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: No, I am not a frustrated man at all. I am not going to do like a former Minister of National Security and throw my hands up at all. Let me give you and the Members of this House and, by extension, the national community, the assurance that all persons who are involved in any means of ensuring that we provide security and safety, that the aim is to make sure that they get on board. I tell people if I cannot sleep, it must not be me alone who cannot sleep, but a number of other people must not be able to sleep also, because it has to be a collaborative effort. I give you the assurance that we are going to lick this thing; we are going to win this war; we are going to win back our country and we are going to ensure that the quality of life and standard of living which this Government wants to see most of our citizens enjoy, that they will enjoy.

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

Sen. Magna Williams-Smith: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, for affording me the opportunity to make a contribution on the Appropriation Bill, 2005. I, like my colleagues on this side of the honourable Chamber, support the initiatives and fiscal imperatives of the budget statement 2004—2005, eloquently articulated by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the hon. Patrick Manning.

The theme, “Ensuring Our Future Survival”, represents a trademark of this PNM administration, of which I am proud to be a member and a Senator today. Our policy has always been one of inclusion. We govern for all; we are responsible for all; we are responsive to all. We are therefore proud to take initiatives that will ensure the survival of individuals, organizations, groups and sectors of the society. The budget initiatives and fiscal imperatives are ample

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testimony of this Government's commitment to delivering and improving quality of life for all citizens as we move closer towards realizing the goals of Vision 2020.

My focus today will be on the underprivileged in our society, with special emphasis on women. We, in the People's National Movement, unlike those on the other side, respect women, abhor discrimination against women in any form or fashion and promote gender equality as part of our overall goal, not only to create a just and moral society, but also one in which women are treated as equals with men folk in social, political and economic relationships within the body politic. We have recognized that women form the backbone of many communities. Over the years, we have seen the less-fortunate women in our society struggle to maintain their families, many of them unemployed, single parents. In this context, women are sometimes forced to play multi-dimensional roles and even sometimes assume the role of fathers.

As Sarah Graham in her seminal piece said, and I quote: "My mother who fathered me", demonstrated women are often the father figure of many households. This is a stark reality in many areas, along the East/West Corridor, in particular, and in South and Central Trinidad, in general. That is why this Government has outlined initiatives in the budget that are geared towards the development, empowerment and upliftment of women.

This budget contains many provisions that will assist in improving the quality of life of underprivileged women, in particular, and women in general. Statistics have shown that women are living longer than men. Since they live longer than men, the larger burden of family life rests with them. Provisions have been made in the budget to empower women in three main areas: Training and education, health and employment.

We have taken a decision to raise the minimum wage of \$8.00 per hour to \$9.00 per hour. This measure will ease the burden of women, many of whom work in the service of light manufacturing sectors where the lowest wages are often paid. This can also be seen as a poverty-eradication measure, because it will also enable them to grapple with the rising cost of living. This is why we also increased the personal allowance of individual PAYE (Pay-As-You-Earn) by \$5,000.

We are not at all sidetracked by some of the detractors and the naysayers who argue that this will lead to unemployment, because some employers, and in particular small businesses, would be unable to meet this payment. The irony is

that those who are the most vociferous in their opposition to this measure, represent big business whose companies declare millions of dollars in profit each year, but seem not to recognize the workers' contribution to such financial performances. In fact, some of them scoff at the poor while paying lip-service to the need for poverty-alleviation measures.

Women in Harmony is one of the key development programmes under the aegis of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs. This is a training facility in agriculture, landscaping, grow-box technology and elderly care, which targets women between ages 26—45. The programme is offered throughout Trinidad and Tobago and is designed to assist in increasing employment opportunities for low income women with limited or no skills, particularly single female heads of households.

Participants are also exposed to modules of self-development and life skills to enhance their capacity to cope with the challenges of their particular circumstances. The programme promoted the development of the nation's women during the fiscal year, benefiting 575 women at a number of centres throughout the country. This represents a 38 per cent increase, compared to the last fiscal year, 2002/2003, when only 413 women benefited.

The budget allocation for this programme during the 2004 fiscal year was \$2,535,951. This programme will be expanded in 2005 to include an increase in the number of projects to be extended and the number of communities to be targeted. We have also outlined initiatives that would empower women by providing them with the skills and appropriate training so that they can become employable or self-employed. For example, we have established the Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme in July 2004, to address training for employment in the construction industry for about 10,000 persons, especially those who are financially and academically challenged or vulnerable. This programme will be expanded to include the tourism, hospitality and process manufacturing areas where women are normally heavily represented.

Other complementary programmes that have a high component of women, have also been strengthened and reinforced, including the following: Youth Training Entrepreneurship Partnership Programme (YTEPP); Helping You Prepare for Employment (HYPE); National Skills Development Programme (NSDP); and the National Retraining Programme. Another training initiative which has been developed is the Non Traditional Skills Training for Women. Four hundred and forty-three women were trained during the 2004 fiscal year in areas that are not traditionally areas of skill for the female population. Women benefited from

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training in skills such as masonry, bricklaying, tile-laying, air conditioning and refrigeration, plumbing and upholstery. This programme was administered by the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs and targeted unemployed, low-income women with little or no formal education, between the ages of 18—50. The women are also trained in a range of technical fields, including construction, mechanics, wood-working and computer repairs. The budgeted allocation for this programme in the 2004 fiscal year was \$3.5 million; in 2005, the Government proposes to offer places to 1,200 women and establish centres in Carenage, Arima, Chaguanas, Sangre Grande and Princes Town.

We have also reintroduced the NEC programmes. This is another example of this Government caring for all and leaving no one behind, unlike those on the other side, who were part of the most unpatriotic and uncaring administration that Trinidad and Tobago experienced. These programmes unceremoniously came to a halt under the previous government and many women were distraught to find that their children had no access to those important craft and technical programmes. Many of these women are saying, thank God for the reintroduction of these programmes, which will prepare and develop the skills necessary for their children to take their rightful place in the world of work.

We have also introduced a Transition Studies Programme. This programme caters for providing remedial education to academically prepared school-leavers who deserve to re-enter tertiary education. Young persons who did not have this opportunity in the past were left to slip through the crack, as it were. This Government, unlike the previous administration, really cares about developing and promoting tertiary education. This was aptly done with the introduction of the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) Programme. Unlike the dollar-for-dollar programme under the previous administration, this programme targets those persons who are qualified to pursue tertiary education but do not have the financial resources.

5.45 p.m.

In other words, we have recognized that everyone does not have a dollar to further one's education. With the introduction of this programme, no one is left behind and women now have the opportunity to further their education in the field of their choice. I am pleased to see that the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education is treating with education for women and the underprivileged groups within society, as priority. They will receive full attention so that they will have equal chances to access social and employment programmes, including basic education which will improve the overall quality of life.

Mindful of the health of our women and the role they play in the reproductive cycle, we have to protect them from contracting and spreading HIV/AIDS. We have commenced the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS. Special attention is being paid to controlling the spread of the disease through voluntary counselling and testing; treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS and the provision of antiviral drugs.

Another important initiative is the prevention of mother to child transmission. The dread reality is that statistics have shown that more women in our society are reported to be contracting HIV/AIDS within recent times. Moreover, the rate of mother to child transmission has been growing at an alarming pace. We have developed a programme to curb or prevent mother to child transmission. This initiative will not only decrease infant mortality rate, but also ensure that healthy babies are born and place less strain on our primary health care system and also reduce postnatal irritants.

We also need women to be healthy. Primary health care is very important, as it affords women the opportunity to practise preventative health care, especially in the early detection of breast and cervical cancer. Access to primary health care in this area is very important and we have developed programmes so that the necessary testing can be accessed by our women. We have expanded the Nursing Education Programme. In this regard, about 315 candidates will be trained to become registered nurses.

There are other programmes in which women have been given ample attention, thus the Unemployment Relief Programme also has a women's programme component. The focus of the Women's Programme will be beautification; replanting our flower beds; vegetable gardens and limited landscaping; work at government institutions and property; maintenance; environmental sanitation; weeding and cutlassing school yards; cleaning and scrubbing yards and painting. The work programme will impact approximately 515 government institutions and shall be serviced with a ratio of maintaining 60 per cent to beautification; 40 per cent on work crews and will include partnership with companies and providing the environment for practical application of skills identified; maintenance; beautification and limited involvement in construction projects, related to government institutions and properties and design and implementation of training programmes, to create a cadre of self-reliant women and strengthening the administrative and operational system of the Women's Programme. There is also provision of training in the non traditional skills such as the construction industry; agricultural industry; tourism industry; entertainment industry and fashion industry.

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Many of these areas that I touched on in my contribution have been addressed by the social development policy and the associated programmes and projects, that have been informed by national and international policy objectives. These objectives together with our thrust towards Vision 2020, include our commitment to the millennium development goals and targeted improvements in the country's ratings in the human development index. It might be useful to restate the millennium development goals which comprise eight goals. They are:

- the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger;
- the achievement of universal primary education;
- the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- the reduction of child mortality;
- the improvement of maternal health;
- combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- ensuring environmental sustainability; and
- the development of global partnership for development.

The aim of sector policy is to provide the framework for achieving Government's social development objectives and to primarily ensure that an enabling environment is created for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to access opportunities and to attain an acceptable quality of life irrespective of race, creed, age, religion and gender.

The initiatives undertaken recognize that economic development alone cannot bring about the much needed improvement in the well-being of the citizens of the nation. As a result, Government has adopted a people-centred approach in its development thrust which places high value on principles of dignity, equity, equality, participation and empowerment. In this regard, the women of Trinidad and Tobago have a very significant and important role to play in the achievement of our development goals. In this regard, our women and by extension, the families of the nation need our special attention and support.

The Appropriation Bill, 2005 is testimony that this Government is committed to the social progress of the population by fostering an environment that promotes the continuous improvement of all citizens. The underprivileged women of this country will continue to take their rightful, productive, caring place, as equal partners in the ongoing development of our families, communities and country.

Thank you.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is my pleasure to compliment Sen. Magna Williams-Smith on her maiden contribution in the Senate.

Sen. Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie: Mr. Vice-President, I would like to start by commending our colleague, Sen. Enill, the staff of the Ministry of Finance; all those public servants and technocrats and those who met with the budget people in consultation to work on this document. I know that as Senators we have no control over the money. We do not even have a vote on this Bill. I would like to join with my colleagues who would have given some suggestions towards the implementation of the measures expressed in the budget.

I want to look at our theme, “Ensuring Our Future Survival”. I ask myself: What are the good things we have going for us as a people, not as a country alone? At times I think that we tend to forget the people in the mix and concentrate on the material infrastructure. I want to stress that we look at the people in this theme of future survival. Apart from what we may have going good for us, what are the threats to our survival? What are our strengths and weaknesses? For our strengths, we need to maintain and improve them. We have heard from the Minister of Finance; the Minister of Education about all the structures, buildings and the lovely things we have going for us. We heard it again from the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment.

At times we tend to wonder, after five or 10 years, where does the dilapidation come from. We have to put in place a system of maintenance where we can ensure that what we have, we do not send it to ruins. I am sure that when my colleague, Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh talks about the health sector, as I expect he would, this question of deterioration would be brought up. We need to ensure that we put plans in place to prevent deterioration of our physical plans.

What are our strengths? We have much going for us. I want to look at four special areas such as agriculture. I know that my colleague, Sen. Anmolsingh-Mahabir dealt a little with this and I will leave out what she dealt with. The other areas are education, employment and the environment. I will touch on health in a layman’s and folksy way that I know that Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh would not have looked at.

I have learnt so much from every Senator who has spoken on the budget so far. I have been taken on trips all over the place. I thank all those Senators who have spoken before. I want to tell them how much I have learnt from them and how grateful I am for their education.

Let us look at how we can suggest to the Government how we can spend the allocations that we have. I looked at agriculture. What do we have going for us in

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agriculture? We have government-owned good agricultural land, whether it is in Caroni, as we heard from Sen. The Hon. Sahadeo; or Orange Grove, as we heard from Sen. Anmolsingh-Mahabir. I suggest that we look at utilizing the good agricultural land owned by the State for agriculture, and not use these good agricultural land for housing and campuses and whatever have you. We also have a good knowledge of the soil. Look how many years we have been using Caroni, about 50 or 60 years. Therefore, we can manage the soil if we have the experience.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, we have to learn to do crops other than the sugar that we have displaced. We have a variety of fruits. We have to get facilities to process these different types of fruits. Just recently, one young man in Tobago said: “But Eastlyn, we have all these juices: mango juice coming from Jamaica and other types of juices coming from Barbados and we have so much mangoes dropping on the ground and rotting, what are we doing?”

Mr. Vice-President, we need to look at our manufacturing—as we have seen in the budget—and use our lands to diversify the types of crops that we grow. We need to have different types of processing plants that will make use of the fruits in the off-season. When guava is in season, let us make guava jam, guava jelly and guava cheese. When we have another fruit in season, let us use it, but make sure our plant is multi-dimensional so that it can process different fruits.

We have the technology, Mr. Vice-President. We have ECIAF, we have the University of the West Indies, we have all sorts of things. But why should we worry? We need to feed ourselves. We need to bring down our import bill on food. We can do this! We need to have people realize that they can live by agriculture!

I was very pleased, about a month ago, when I saw in the *Tobago News*, a group of Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) workers handing over to the Tobago Hospital, vegetables that they had grown. That really pleased me, Mr. Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*] They handed over cabbages, cucumbers, sweet peppers and tomatoes to the hospital, which they had grown in their CEPEP project. We could increase this and instead of just the sort of narrow scope that we have had so far, we can enlarge this and go into other areas.

I want to tell the Minister of National Security, I know that there are prisoners in Golden Grove and they have gardens. Our prisoners in Tobago actually have a

market on a Monday morning at the Community Development! They are planting their tomatoes and cabbages and they are selling their crops. Mr. Vice-President, I know you must have bought from them. [*Laughter*] On evenings you can see them going home with their sheep pulling behind them; they are rearing their animals and so on.

Mr. Vice-President, this question of prison rehabilitation must not start after the offenders leave the prison. If they start to learn while they are in there and when they come out they are given lands and given a start, they will rehabilitate themselves. I know we can do this.

We can use these measures to reduce crime and we will not have so many repeat offenders. Mr. Vice-President, as we heard from Sen. Seetahal earlier, the jails are turning out better criminals than when the offenders went in. They are coming out of the prison as experts. We have graduate criminals: if they went in with a B.Ed in criminal activity, they are coming with masters degrees! We have to stop the jails from breeding criminals and making criminals of persons who were just deviants! Mr. Vice-President, we can do this!

In agriculture, also, we have to remember to relate the crops to the size of the farms; otherwise we would make it uneconomical for some of these farmers. When I heard Sen. Sahadeo speaking about 5 acres of lands and so on, probably she was talking about vegetable farming in some instances. Mr. Vice-President, in some instances if you do not farm large acres it will not be economical. We have to make it economical! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, I know that we have cut down on tariffs for chicken and turkey parts coming into Trinidad and Tobago, but we must also cut down on some of these licenses, tariffs and duties on the expensive feed that is brought in for the animals. We have to be careful.

Mr. Vice-President, I note the assistance in the cocoa production area and when I spoke to one expert he advised that we should not go into cocoa rehabilitation because some of these cocoa trees are so old, it is better to plant new crops. Again, I hope that the message will be passed on to the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

I now touch on education and it is the rock on which we will build our future survival. I repeat: education and training is the rock on which we would build our future survival. What are our strengths? Today, especially in the primary schools, we have more teachers with degrees than we have ever had. Many of our primary schoolteachers have Bachelor of Education degrees; therefore, if we have more

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graduate teachers, I must say that for me, personally, I am not seeing the type of impact that has on the results we are getting. I am not at all carried away by 1 per cent, 2 per cent or 5 per cent of persons who get world-class ratings—1 per cent, 2 per cent or 5 per cent; 24 persons; first in geography in the world and so on.

I am concerned about the national test for Standards 1 and 3, where over 50—60 per cent of those children cannot get over 70 and 75 per cent in the test. I am concerned about the number of persons we are sending to do CXC in mathematics and English but we cannot boast as yet that over 70 per cent of our children are getting Grades 1, 2 or 3. I am concerned about that. Mr. Vice-President, if we have so many persons with degrees in the education system, I am not seeing the impact of that on the results we are having. I am not blaming the teachers. I am saying that we have to find out the reason for all of this. Why do we have such a high rate of failure, of non-achievers or of under-achievers, having had so much?

Mr. Vice-President, let me tell you what we have going for us. We have well-paid teachers now. We have more teachers accessing higher level education; good fringe benefits, universal primary and secondary education. We have smaller classes. We have all of that going for us in education! You heard the Minister speak this morning about the plans, pre-school, et cetera, and yet I do not think we can boast about our results. If, from the national test, we cannot boast about our results in Standards 1 and 3 in the primary schools, something has to be wrong and I agree with the Minister, that we have to look at the entire system of education and revamp it.

Mr. Vice-President, you know that at one time our teachers were multi-skilled. Teachers were not there only to teach a class. A teacher who stood in front of a primary school class could sing, dance and sew. Now we have teachers who cannot even teach the children hands up, hands down exercise. [*Laughter*] I am being very honest and serious! They cannot do anything but stand in front of the blackboard and write. Therefore, we have to go right back to our recruitment and see what is happening. We no longer have any poetry in the classes. From the time the children leave the infant class and go into Standard 1, they are weaned so early from the practical touch: storytelling, nursery rhymes, it is like what we say in Tobago “You are giving a baby dumpling.” It is like giving a baby dumpling and the child cannot digest it. I am saying to the hon. Minister of Education that we need to look at that. My Latin teacher at school was my sports teacher and my Spanish teacher was my drama teacher; that is where I learnt my drama. We have to look at our teachers who are so one-dimensional to see whether we are not robbing our children of something.

I am going to make some suggestions, again, Mr. Vice-President. I think some of our school plants are too big. We have 1,000 children in a school and the school is built where the principal's office is here and the classroom doors are facing the sea. I can tell you because that is how it is in Signal Hill. For the principal to stand in front of her office and take a little glance to see—she could only see the back of the school. We have to look at even our construction. We are making it unmanageable, not only because of the size of the school but also because of how the plant is constructed, so we have got to look at that—“Doh let dem give yuh any wrong-side building, Madam Minister.”

Mr. Vice-President, I say maintain them, as I said before. Why can we not give Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) contracts for school maintenance? We could take some of those CEPEP workers, train them to do plumbing and so on and let them maintain the schools. We should not wait until the schools have broken down and then to build new schools; use these same CEPEP contractors and after a time the workers will become little contractors.

Mr. Vice-President, I am on the school board in Tobago and the roof at the school in Charlotteville needed to be replaced. The board looked around: Is there anybody in Charlotteville who is a good construction man? They found one; he got some builders from Charlotteville and they got the contract. That is why I always say that Tobago is such an ideal place for pilot projects of this nature. We could try it out there; make all the mistakes on a miniscule scale and then come and do the big thing. Mr. Vice-President, the CEPEP contractors could be used for school maintenance and, therefore, you are earning and learning: plumbing, masonry, carpentry, painting, repairing the benches and so on. They are learning a skill so that when this set of contract workers move on, another set can take their places, they can stand on their own and the same contractors will use them. Mr. Vice-President, we must empower our citizens to stand on their own after the specific period of time otherwise we will make them helpless, weak, feeble and scheming. I want the poor, the illiterate and the unskilled to live, but while we help them they must earn and learn.

Mr. Vice-President, I commend the ministry on its Pre-school Programme. I also commend Sen. Mary King on her reference to this in her contribution. We have to feed the children while we prepare the parents to take care of them. We have to do a sort of crime stoppers from that level. The Crime Stoppers programme is for if someone has committed, or if you suspect someone has committed a crime, but they are already old. We want to stop crime from the

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infancy stage when we see the tendencies. There are mothers who do not know how to parent and, therefore, these children are left rudderless; they are like dry coconuts on the sea; waves tossing them hither, thither and yon; no direction, nothing. Mr. Vice-President, it is not because the parents do not care: it is because they cannot; they are just not able to; they do not have the parenting skills. I say, send the children to day care; pay for the day care personnel to take care of them; take them away from the parents who are leading them to destruction. We should then rehabilitate the parents; let them earn and learn and when they are capable then they can take care of the children, otherwise we are breeding criminals from the cradle! We are! Therefore, why are we only confining Crime Stoppers to adults? Let us see what we have.

Mr. Vice-President, we can look at crime against people as crime against the environment. What do we have going for us? Everything! We have plenty of the natural resources: land, sea, animals, and air—we have everything but what happens?

6.15 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, it is like home. You know nut grass. Nut grass, if you do not dig it out from the root you could cut off the top as much as you want, the grass will grow back in two twos. You have to dig it out from the root.

In our environment we have to take care of what we have. We cannot only control the floods by cleaning the drains. We have to stop it from where the source is coming. We have to stop the cutting down of our hills; we have to stop it from the disposal of our refuse; we have to do all of this but every day, we are hearing about something. It is pollution. We are polluting the atmosphere, and we are polluting the rivers, the sea.

Long ago we had a 'ting' in Tobago when you go into the sea; you would dip your hands full of seawater and drink it. You cannot do that now otherwise we would have to get to Dr. Gopeesingh. We killing your—

Mr. Vice-President, as I said before, I would leave health to Dr. Gopeesingh. I am sure that he would tackle many of the areas but, I want to say one thing. I am very happy to see not only this Government, but also the previous governments, recognizing the importance and the significance of the non-governmental organizations. No ministry has the resource to do what it wants done in the country. You have to have some confidence and put some money into the NGOs. They are the ones that will help you and so I say, enlist visiting health care personnel. We used to have them when we were in school. These NGOs have

public health people going into schools—I do not know if you remember. I mean, old people like me over 60 years old, remember as a student going to school, the people would come, the doctor would put you on a bench, they would “squeeze your belly, squeeze your belly,” who have worms, who have that; we do not have anybody doing preventive care. We wait till the children sick and we go and buy Zentil and all sorts of things and we would not detect these things.

The time has come for health prevention. Enlist visiting health care persons into schools. Train the people. New diseases, drug rehabilitation as you heard from Sen. Seetahal. We have in Trinidad especially, travel stress, noise stress, AIDS, cancer, care for the growing aged population as Sen. Williams-Smith spoke about a while ago; Alzheimer’s, facilities for the aged. We heard Sen. Abdul Hamid speak about it.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to make one plea to Sen. Abdul-Hamid. He waved his document and told us about all the social programmes. I say excellent, but I want to tell him many times the people for whom these documents are meant they do not read, they cannot read and they will not read. Use the radio; use the TV, use the posters, the jingles, actors, everybody, and get the message across and I am sure—use the young people in the schools and they will rap and the others will listen.

I want to go to one little point in education. Madam Minister, I ask you to consider the use of the NGOs in setting up little sort of co-curriculum groups in schools. Do not try to do it from the Ministry. Get the Scouts Association, give them a contract and say ensure that there is a scout group in every school or in one district or whatever. The same thing for girl guides, the same thing for cub scouts, for cadets. Do not try to do it from the ministry. Get the NGOs that are responsible: cubs, scouts, guides and brownies, red cross, cadets and let them do that in the schools. Where you do not have netball teachers, get the Netball Association, give them a little stipend or whatever and say, “I want you to make sure you have people engaged in sports: netball, football, cricket, basketball, lawn tennis, table tennis, whatever.” Do not try to do it from the ministry. You do not have the resources. You cannot monitor it and, therefore, I want to appeal to you to do this.

Some of the programmes that are enumerated. You talk about an age 17—45 but these programmes are now coming on stream—or 17—25 age group. If they are now coming on stream and I am already 25, I cannot access it and it is new. You have to know when to make that age flexible, that because I am 25 and there is a new thing going, I want to join but I am too old. But it was not there before. I

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want to say look at these things and ensure that you do not leave anybody behind because of an age barrier and because it did not have that facility going while those people were growing up. Some people may want to switch. Because that is probably what they always liked to do, but there was no facility to teach them. So look at this; be flexible.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to talk a bit about the crime stoppers from the early stages of life for these children. Our neighbours can be crime stoppers. In other words, they can ring you and say listen, “we have a home next door where there are five children but nobody is going to school.” The children are bare feet, hungry; they always sucking their fingers, they have eczemas. Nobody is reporting these people because they do not know who to report to. They report it to this place and then they say is not our responsibility; it is somebody else and I am saying—[*Interruption*]

PROCEDURAL MOTION

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

Question put and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL

(BUDGET)

Sen. Dr. E. McKenzie: Mr. Vice-President, we could use a sort of hotline to alert the agencies that there are children in trouble, that there are many people who have dropped out; and they are young. I think we should bring this back.

Another suggestion I want to make is to have truant officers as we used to have long time who would see children on the block or all about, and ask what are you doing out of school. Check on the school for dropouts, check on the children who have been absent for two months. Why is your child not at school? You have contact. In other words, let us not wait for crime stoppers to do this.

I look at the threat of crime that would probably blight our future survival. I will not deal with it as extensively as Sen. Seetahal has.

I looked at a little note I copied from Prof. Deosaran, which said “prisons to hell and back.” It says for the number of persons in jail, twice that number has been left who feel they should be supported. In other words, a man is in jail but he has left a family out there. The majority of them are poor. So the crime is a cycle. And that is why I was saying to the hon. Minister to take the children away from persons who are going to breed criminals of them because they do not know better. Put the children in a day care and help them. Put the child in a day care and

say to them, “I will pay the day care and I will pay for you to learn a skill”. It is another kind of CEPEP but at the same time you are training. By the time you come from the day care you put them in early pre-school. You train the mother. You would not get all, you would not get the 100 per cent, but if you save five, you save plenty and this is what we are saying—poor families and they go back in jail so it is to hell and back, and back again.

I want to hint on Tobago before I wind up. There is to be a conference on education. Very soon it should be taking place. It should have been on October 09 but I understand it has been postponed to October 29. Sen. The Hon. Chin Lee spoke about tourism and I commend him. It is the best I have ever heard him speak since he has been here and I have been here. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, I told him this. The Tobago House of Assembly is trying to upgrade—in fact, they have spent \$2 million upgrading the hotel institute to train people to take up jobs in the top level of the tourism industry. Not just waiters, and bellboys and so forth, but in the top administrative posts there.

I want to commend Minister Enill for giving the Tobago House of Assembly the authority to borrow. It gives them a sense of confidence [*Desk thumping*] and I will tell you the people of Tobago do not look at it as if you gave it to Mr. London. They look at it as if you gave it to the Tobagonians because they have a sort of confidence that they can borrow and use the money well, and they can dictate their own approaches.

I want to respond to Sen. Mark and others who asked about the boat. There is a committee presently in Europe looking at boats. They shortlisted three and they are doing a second inspection. In fact, they found one that was built this year and they are looking at it; so very soon we shall have that. The aeroplanes on wet lease are—one is to leave next month and the others are going to stay to take care of the Easter rush. In the meantime, they are looking at long term plans for the air bridge between Trinidad and Tobago, and I can tell you, we are not very happy with how British West Indian Airways is servicing Tobago.

I want to say to Sen. The Hon. Enill, and his ministerial colleague, Mr. Valley, when BWIA comes up for more money make sure that you talk about what they are doing to Tobago before you give them any more money because the Tobagonian voice must be heard. They service Barbados and all these places and not Tobago. So please look at that.

We are looking at sports and sports tourism and we are asking that consideration be given to the maintenance of the Dwight York Stadium. As you

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would know, we will have a problem with sea blast and, therefore, there is need to look at this from this standpoint.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to end by making an appeal. I want to suggest to our two Ministers in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. Enill and Sen. Sahadeo because I am hooked on implementation of the budget. I have always been from the time I have been here. I have seen a vast improvement in the implementation of matters that come before us. I want to ask that the Ministers make it a travelling job. Go from ministry to ministry over time. Find out from the public servants and the technocrats. This is what I have for your ministry, how are you going with it? What are your barriers? What are your problems? Let us see how we can solve it. Do not be afraid to take advice from the people down below. Find out their barriers; talk with your public servants. You will see, Mr. Vice-President, when they have questions they ask a question. Sen. Mark asks a question; Sen. Martin Joseph cannot answer the question because somebody has to supply him with the information and, therefore, it is to say to them that the public servants are the ones who will implement this budget and they must be given the importance and, therefore, I am saying, you have to make sure that you do not squander the goodwill of the people. This Government came into power on the goodwill of the citizens of this country. Do not squander it!

6.30 p.m.

Finally, I appeal to all of us, as Sen. Mary King did—that we put country first. Let us put country before party and party politics. There is a time for that. When elections come, talk party, party politics; do what you want. However, when we come to implement the budget for the future survival of our people, that future generations could inherit, let us not carry party politics too far. Put country first. Let us trust one another. Let us not sabotage one another. Let us put our heads together.

We, the people of this country, are our resource. We have the technical people and the resources to rule the world if we want to. Let us work as a team. If we do not come together as a people, whatever our creed, colour, race, skills, competence, we will not survive. We will destroy each other, if not physically, then mentally, socially or psychologically. Let us use our best brains from all areas; otherwise many of our people will withdraw from the services of the country.

Our problem is not money; our problem is money management and setting priorities. Give local government more authority and hold them accountable. Let local government give village councils and groups in the areas more authority. Why should there be potholes in the roads for weeks and someone has to wait until they get some order from Minister Khan to patch a pothole?

I am happy when I hear one minister or anybody from the Opposition say that was their project that someone else is doing. I hope they are not doing it as if to say the other person is copying. I hope they are doing it to say that it was good; they are a good resource; they put something good in place and they are happy to see the others running with it. It must not be like a curse: "All yuh thief it", and vice versa. I was pleased when I heard some minister say, it was the other side's project and they have been running with it. I am not sure if it was Sen. The Hon. Chin Lee.

Mr. Vice-President, let me say that I have hope. I am encouraged because we are very sensible and intelligent people. I am encouraged because we have the resources to implement this. Sen. Mark does "gih you he lil' thing, but here and there, in-between, he does gih you a nice point, tek the point". "Yeh". And you know when he making mischief because he does smile the broadest. He smiles the broadest when he is making a mischievous point and he looks at the public gallery. [*Laughter*] Whenever he is serious and he wants you to take it, he looks at the Vice-President and he looks at the speaker. Everybody has something to offer.

Let us, together, make this country what it could be because we would have put aside petty differences; we would have put our resources, our minds, hearts and souls together; we would have taken our criticisms in good light and we would have risen to the cause to ensure the future survival of this blessed country of ours.

Thank you very much.

Sen. Joan Hackshaw-Marslin: Mr. Vice-President, thank you for giving me this opportunity to make a brief contribution to this budget debate. My contribution today will be on a topic that is very close to my heart.

Before I do so, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, who presented what I term a user-friendly budget; and Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill, who brought the Bill to the Senate.

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Let me at the outset say that my Government is a very caring one, unprecedented in the history of this country. It is concerned about every segment of the population, whether young, old, informed, or school child wishing to pursue dreams of success, but coming from a poor family.

In my contribution to the budget debate last year, I centred on the youth. This year the budget addresses the needs of all, but I wish to speak about those citizens 60 years and over, who I say are very close to my heart and who are now in the winter of their lives. [*Desk thumping*]

We must not ever forget citizens from this group because they have toiled ceaselessly in the vineyards in order for Trinidad and Tobago to become a prosperous country. The fact that Trinidad and Tobago is achieving quantum leaps in respect of its economic and educational thrusts is due to the efforts of our senior citizens. Examples abound concerning the great sacrifices made by them. I am sure that some of us who are descendants of headmasters, police officers, wardens, doctors, nurses, et cetera would recall our parents and grandparents telling us about their meagre salaries and the supreme sacrifices made for us to become better citizens. What we are today, Mr. Vice-President, is as a result of their sacrifices.

A country can only prosper on the basis of the foundation blocks that have been laid. Our senior citizens are the economic and social foundation blocks of our country. Our Vision 2020 budget reads: "Ensuring Our Future Survival", and we would not have been as optimistic or as positive about our Vision 2020 if we did not have those dedicated citizens who moved us from the 1920s, the 1930s, the 1940s to this present time.

It is for this reason and also for the social dignity of our senior citizens, that my Government, over the years, has introduced tangible economic and financial relief and consideration. In this year's budget, the old age pension has been increased to \$1,150 or by 15 per cent. Ex gratia payments are to be made to public service officers who retired before 1984 to December 31, 1999. The widows of public service officers will also receive an ex gratia payment. Public assistant payments have been increased; increases in the disability assistance grant are also slated in the budget.

Presently our old age pensioners are exempted from airport departure tax. They are allowed to travel free of charge on the express commuter service buses and their transport costs are borne by the Treasury. They also receive subsidies in health care.

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The Minister of Social Development has outlined his Ministry's plans and policies for older persons and, having heard him, I am satisfied that our older citizens are in good hands. However, I await the day when our senior citizens get their own heading in the table of contents when the Government presents its *Social and Economic Policy Framework* document.

As a society we must respect and cherish our elders. This is not only a social imperative, but it is also a religious injunction whether one is Hindu, Muslim, Christian or otherwise. My Government will continue to improve the social environment in order for our senior citizens to enjoy a better standard of living.

The increases in the NIS benefits and old age pension are a contribution from the Government, however, how we treat our senior citizens on a daily basis, is a contribution that only we can make as citizens of this country. My job today, therefore, is not only to commend the Government on what it is doing, but to beseech every citizen of this country to treat our senior citizens with respect, love, admiration and honour.

I thank you, Mr. Vice-President, and may we continue to see our senior citizens as mirrors of ourselves.

Motion made and question proposed, That the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, October 26, 2004 at 1.30 p.m. [*Hon. J. Yuille-Williams*]

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.43 p.m.