

**SENATE***Friday, October 14, 2005*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MR VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**APPROPRIATION BILL  
(BUDGET)**

[Fourth Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 11, 2005]:*

That the Bill be now read a second time.

*Question again proposed.*

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, those who already spoke in the debate are as follows: Tuesday, October 11, 2005: Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill, mover of the Motion; Sen. Wade Mark; Sen. Mary King; Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano; Sen. Roy Augustus; Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin; Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning; Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie; and Sen. The Hon. Howard Chin Lee.

On Wednesday, October 12, 2005: Sen. The Hon Rennie Dumas; Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan; Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran; Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph; Sen. Sadiq Baksh; Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie; Sen. Dana Seetahal and Sen. Althea Rocke.

On Thursday, October 13, 2005: Sen. Althea Rocke completed her contribution; Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo; Sen. Robin Montano; Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand; Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift; Sen. Basharat Ali; Sen. The Hon. Satish Ramroop and Sen. The Hon. Christine Kangaloo.

**The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams):** Mr. Vice-President, thank you. I want to thank you for this opportunity to join in this debate as we attempt to respond to the 2005/2006 budget.

Mr. Vice-President, clearly, this budget in layman's term was a good budget. A budget which found favour with the majority of the citizens, and I wish to say with a number of Senators in this Senate. However, while some of my fellow

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Senators used the time to make constructive criticisms, some came here to moan and groan.

Mr. Vice-President, I could not believe that some of our colleagues on the opposite benches spent the entire period allotted to them—and if I would use the words of the Minister of Finance, he described their contributions as “off budget”. They were hopeless and they displayed a sense of disbelief.

Mr. Vice-President, a sociologist, Fred Pollock, showed in a study of 1,500 years of European history in a study entitled: “The image of the future” said that if a whole culture holds a very pessimistic image of the future that image would be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The actual predictions about decline do not have to be right or to come through, the pathological behaviours released may be quite sufficient to bring about that decline, and that is a disease of disbelief.

The contrary is also true as Paul Ray in his book, *The Rise of the Integral Culture* said that when a culture holds positive images of the future, they may not be right but investment in new opportunities and willingness to build a good society are sufficient to make a decent way of life, if not, the best of all worlds.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to deal a little with what I call: “The disease of disbelief”. If we as a people do not believe that we can compete in this world; if we do not believe in our abilities to solve our problems; if we do not believe that we have the entrepreneurial ability to sell our goods and services to the world; if we do not believe in our ability to solve crime; and, Sen. Montano, if we do not believe that Scotland Yard will come—

**Sen. R. Montano:** I believe they will come.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:**—and if we do not believe that we can live with our rich diversity in unity as a society as one people—

**Sen. R. Montano:** Would they get the cooperation? That is the question.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:**—then, as a people, we will not be able to contribute to the development that we are hoping to achieve.

**Sen. R. Montano:** I absolutely agree.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** Our task, on this side, is to bring about a cure; a cure of belief in self.

Mr. Vice-President, this disease of disbelief has affected my colleagues on the other side. What is worse, they are trying to see if they can affect the rest of the communities that we are trying to empower. [*Crosstalk*] We must have belief in

our own Carnival, it is the greatest festival. Believe in something—believe in your calypsonians; and believe in pan. You do not believe in anything and that is why you are moaning and groaning all the time. [*Interruption*] Believe in your tassa and believe in business. Somebody believed and that is why we have that Arthur Lok Jack Institute. Although he reached secondary school he believed that he could do it and he succeeded because he believed. Believe in our acumen; and believe in your chutney. [*Desk thumping*] Twenty-five thousand persons had that belief that the Soca Warriors could win and they went down there with that belief and they empowered them to win. [*Desk thumping*] That is what I am talking about. Believe in the education thrust; believe in our crime fighting abilities. [*Desk thumping*] You must have belief in your families; belief in your communities; and belief in the politicians. You are encouraging a sense of disbelief in this community. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Vice-President, I sat on this side and we have been sitting here for sometime now, and one of my colleagues opposite there—every member of her family had a problem at sometime, moaning and groaning. When it was not her ex-husband it was the child; it was the nieces; it was the nephew; and it was the neighbour's child. Somebody had disbelief. They could not walk to the corner; they could not go anywhere. Let me tell you that when you live with that sense of disbelief it colours all that you do all the time, so for your entire life you would always have a problem moaning and groaning and you cannot see the future. [*Laughter*]

When we sat here we heard Sen. Dana Seetahal ask how the education system, or whatever system is going to contribute to national development. To do that we must have an empowered people; people who believe in themselves and, as leaders, we have to give the people what Sen. Sadiq Baksh called “hope”. [*Desk thumping*] That was necessary and he knew it. Some of us are not giving the people that hope that they need.

I want to warn some of you of what I call: “Short term village politics”, in which you attack everything and anything in an attempt to control your own fear and to reap for power at all costs. You would always hear them saying: “If only we could sit on the other side.” In an attempt to do it, they put that sense of disbelief in the people.

They have a tendency to make everyone and everything an enemy. They put the blame on the Government and the Government becomes the enemy; they put the blame on young black males and they become the enemy; they put the blame on some community leaders and they become the enemy; they put the blame on

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some ethnic groups and they would become the enemy; they put the blame sometimes on the people of Laventille and they become the enemy; and they put the blame on CEPEP workers and they become the enemy.

Let me pause for a while. Mr. Vice-President, with your permission, Sir, this is Mr. Nileung Hypolite, I brought him here today; and the first time he is in the Senate with us.

**Sen. Mark:** Let us welcome him. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** He is a CEPEP contractor; a successful one. [*Desk thumping*] I am not saying that the programme is correct, but we had some belief that they would move on, and they would move into other areas. If you talk to Mr. Hypolite, you would hear that added to his CEPEP contract, he has now opened a construction company. [*Desk thumping*] We had the belief in him. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Mark:** Very good. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** That is when you have faith and you believe. We had the belief that it could happen and here is a living example that it could happen.

**1.45 p.m.**

I want to tell you that once you have dehumanized someone, there is little ground for seeing anything good in them, and for seeing them as a fellow of yours, and the long term view would be—I want to warn you—what you sow is what you will indeed reap. Take a page from Sen. Baksh's book, what the country needs is hope, and this budget gave us hope. There was no need to moan and groan for days. Young people, parents, early childhood centres; we are starting from there, right up to free tertiary education; that is hope. The academy for the performing arts coming for our cultural people; that is hope. Tax cuts and tax breaks, you are saving; that is hope. Crime initiatives; I want to tell you—cheaper food prices; there is a lot in the budget that would give hope.

You did not see it because you do not want to see it. You live with that disease of disbelief and I am saying as politicians, as leaders, cure yourself of it and that is why we are here. You have to cure that disbelief, and that is the only way we could make it. As Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, a Member of this Government, we have a responsibility to ensure that you do not let that disease afflict as many people in the communities. And that is

what we are about, trying to ensure that they have that sense of hope; a sense of self-esteem. [Interruption]

You are still looking at disbelief girl, move forward. Our vision of the Ministry is playing a leading role in the empowering of communities and the enrichment of life. If we have to do that, we have to give them that sense of belief. Our mission is to partner with our communities; to identify and satisfy their needs through the provision of gender sensitive quality programmes and services, thereby achieving improvement in their standard of living. I want to tell you—and I am saying provision of gender sensitive programmes—that this year we are partnered with 1,116 groups in the communities—[Desk thumping] non-government organizations; community-based organizations and faith-based organizations in the provision of those services to the community.

By so doing, we were empowering these groups in those communities. I want to let you know that that is the method by which we intend to go. As a Government, we also recognize that legislative actions; laws, increased and improved technology and equipment, which you are always asking about, and more robust policing action is just one part of the equation; that is not all. That alone cannot deal with the challenges with which we are currently faced. Our citizens have to have a deepened sense of self; a sense of worth born from a high level of self-esteem that enables them to return to self-belief. Let me tell you that, a call for civil disobedience is not going to do it. That is not what it is. That will never give them that sense of self.

Mr. Vice-President, in this globalized environment, we had better move away from this scapegoating and damaging of the other, and casting ourselves or party as the saviours. I am tired of hearing that they are trying to rescue Trinidad and Tobago; that is what your mission is. If we are going to sustain this country of Trinidad and Tobago as a moral society, equally celebrating its differences and its similarities, our programmes must help all Trinbagonians to reflect, to learn and to know who they are, and the role they must play in this world.

We must also help our people to embrace new paradigms, not only in their self-belief, but also in their confidence to compete in the region and the world, in terms of selling their goods and services, including their cultural expressions. Globalization is a double-edged sword. Modern information and communication technology can destroy our culture through being crowded out by the various programmes on cable television, but it would also help us to conquer the world.

I want to tell you that Bob Marley's *Exodus* was the biggest selling album of the 20th Century. Trinidad's pan was the only modern musical invention

discovered in this century. Why can we not then reflect them in our culture and protect them more a global basis? We must do so with all our products. We must bring back the balm of belief; belief in self; belief in community; belief in culture and belief in nation, if Trinidad is to be one of the leaders in our hemisphere.

**Sen. Dumas:** Good expression.

**Sen. Mark:** Good expression.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** So, Mr. Vice-President, I want to urge the Senators to strive to strengthen our people's self-belief by strengthening their communities and their culture.

Sen. Baksh had sent a question which was not answered at the last sitting. He asked what happened to the people on the People's Mall. When that fire destroyed the People's Mall, 200-plus business persons were displaced. We had to give them that sense of self and we had to believe that they could make it, even though some of them lost everything without insurance.

The Government came forward; I was there. We took them to the Small Business Association (SBA); each one was evaluated as to what you needed; what you had; where you would like to go. Each one was counselled and a business plan was given to each one of them. What money was needed to start up; what equipment was needed for them to start. Then they were taken to the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO) where they were supplied with a loan for five years, interest free and a moratorium for one year. You have not heard them out on the streets making any noise, and probably you wondered why. They believed in themselves; they took that strength and now today they are going to sign the lease very shortly for those premises there. [*Desk thumping*] And they are going to put up a multi-storey building on the People's Mall organization. That is what a Government would do to people, make them believe that they can do it; no groaning after the fire; look how they are treating you; look how they are not giving you water; they "ain't" giving you a buck; they "ain't" doing this for you; they "ain't" doing that for you. They are not helpless. They walked from each office to office empowered to do what they had to do and that is a belief in self. That is the kind of thing we are talking about as we move on, and I wanted to use that example to show you.

In our budget there was a call for a greater sense of national and personal pride; community ownership; environmental sensitivity; discipline; tolerance; responsibility and culture of excellence. Those of you who would remember, I

think Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie would remember, the community long ago was that mediating force. Long ago communities used to dispense social services; people revolved around the community. The community was a catalyst for social change.

We have to—and Sen. Mark said it—take back the communities. We have to take back the communities. That is where we are at the moment, attempting to take back our communities. And to do so we have to go in there and train and help people with their leadership skills and probably afterwards, at some point in time, I have to recruit Sen. Prof. Deosaran to help us with the programme, because the true leaders are not there, or they have not emerged. We have to get some new leaders emerging. The police could be in there doing what they have to do. But it is not a police state, the people in the community must own that community, and therefore, we have to encourage them; we have to empower them to take back their communities. That is our vision, and whatever we do, we would keep that as our focus.

So that we have these regional committees coming out of Vision 2020, which the Community Development Division was a part of, which is also part of the whole business of taking back the communities. When Sen. Dumas spoke, he spoke about decentralization, that is one of the other systems of our attention to give communities back to the people, and the Community Development Division was an integral part of working with the Local Government to do that.

We need to empower the people so that we can have sustainable communities. At the same time we needed to do something to give— We know that if we have to achieve that, and if we have to get community sustainability, we have to have it in an environment which is safe. Therefore we are saying safety and security must be assured if the communities are to satisfy the needs of their members. We have started some community safety and enhancement groups all over Trinidad. We have 60 of those groups so far. Groups which we have started in terms with the police—I have said this before in this Parliament—for safety and enhancement; crime prevention as you want to say. But they have gone beyond that. Now we are training those people. For some of the groups that we have started, the leaders of those groups did not have the skill, and therefore we are using our skills to train them. We have our stipend volunteers who sit at the safety desk; and when the Minister of National Security spoke to you, he spoke about a telephone system which would be instituted so that those volunteers who sit at the safety desk in the community would be in contact with the stations who know who they are, so they can report any incidents, and they can also give and get information. That is going on. Those same groups we are now training to work with the Office of Disaster

Preparedness, in case of any disaster, the persons within the region would be able to respond.

We are also having a relationship with the private sector, in the delivery and assistance with these groups. I think Sen. Prof. Deosaran might have alluded to it somewhere, that the private sector is now assisting us in articulating the measures of success for the training programmes, and they are also helping us with the selection and performance managing processes for those NGOs that are supervising the delivery. They are also helping with simple score cards and student cards to assess the success of the training, and provide important feedback to those NGOs. That is the partnership we are also developing.

We need to move on from those safety and enhancement groups in each of the communities, and I wish to let you know that we felt that bringing those communities together had been a great success. Just last weekend I was at the Sugar and Energy Festival and I noted that there were thousands of people there and the discipline was extremely good; there were no reports of crime and everybody enjoyed the culture that was going on.

We noted that at Carnival and Emancipation there was a decrease in the criminal activities, and therefore, as I told them at the Sugar and Energy Festival, there is something we need to learn why this is happening at this particular time. We are continuing our annual concerts that we had, and these groups are now going to pull all those within the communities, bring the communities together to celebrate themselves. Because there is a link between what we are doing, the culture there and some of that deviant behaviour.

You would want to ask why are we speaking so much about the communities, and the family is the focus of this budget. But I would just like to remind you that stable families are more likely to be found in stable communities, with community-minded people than in communities riddled by crisis. And we go back to that old African saying: "It takes a community to raise a child." Therefore, we have a number of community programmes which we are hoping will help with dysfunctional families, I would not go through all of them. You would know some of them already that we have had before, but I would just tell you the purpose of some of those community programmes. Because we feel that if we work within those communities, we will affect the families.

**2.00 p.m.**

We are also saying that the programmes we have are not just for the elderly and for the middle aged; we have a number of programmes that will affect young



people, our RAP programme, our GAP programme, as they say, we have so many persons being displaced with dysfunctional families. We are looking at things in a more holistic way.

Mr. Vice-President, this Government recognizes that progress and development can only take place if we continue to scan the environment. Therefore what we need at this time is to do things differently which will call for a cultural shift. In a multi-ethnic society like ours, a cultural policy is an important tool and we are working with our stakeholders in developing that cultural policy, and we hope to expedite it in the new fiscal year.

We are also working with our colleagues in the Caribbean and we have been in discussion with the Caribbean Foundation of Arts and Culture; the Forum of Ministers in Culture; UNESCO and the OAS and because of our active participation in the region and international forum we are going to be having three major activities next year: the Regional Council Meeting, the Fifteenth Forum of Ministers of the Caribbean and Officials with Responsibility for Cultural Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, and we are having Carifesta IX next year. I am looking forward for Carifesta IX because that is a programme, the way it is structured, we are going to be having community festivals and each community will have a festival structured almost like the National Carifesta.

We had done it before and I want to say that some time long after I had gone to Debe/Penal to do an exercise and the group which produced that activity that evening was the Carifesta group from years gone by and therefore we know that with Carifesta here next year there is that activity to bring the community together. Also, each community is going to be hosting one of the visiting contingents and that alone is going to create that kind of mobilization that we wanted to have and that will continue through next year. So we are looking forward to that.

Sen. Seetahal asked a lot about what it will do for national development, and I am going to show you very closely something of the importance of this, the cultural industries which I think Sen. Prof. Ramchand was alluding to. We talked about the UNESCO initiatives; we talked about our best village programmes and our junior best village and of all the cultural heritage that we have here. I want to assure Sen. Prof. Ramchand, I know he is very much interested in these areas, that in terms of our intangible heritage we are now putting up again the Carnival and Carnival Arts to UNESCO for that. Some of the other things that we had done for the last years in terms of our museum exhibits: we have two new museums that we have started, the Police Museum and the Money Museum which we

collaborated with those agencies. We had some temporary exhibitions over the last year at the national museum—and I do not think I would want to go through all of these. One thing we noted is that there was a higher increase in the number of visitors to the museum; last year the total number was 26,819 which shows that there was an increased appreciation for material and intangible cultural heritage.

**Sen. Prof. Ramchand:** Mr. Vice-President, I wonder if the hon. Minister, as she is in this vein, would comment on an item that appeared in the *Express* on Wednesday, October 12, 2005: “Sugar Factory for sale Experts predict US \$25m income as scrap metal”. It is the first sugar factory in the country.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** I had not seen the article, probably I had not looked at it, but I am quite sure that you know that the Ministry has been given the opportunity or the task of setting up the Sugar Museum. Therefore I am quite sure that is not part of what it is. [*Interruption*] Because we had had the Sevilla House and we have had a number of items all over central that form part of the museum now—could be you are well aware of it. I do not know if that is a part of it. If that is a part of it, well then it would not be up for sale? But I have not read it.

**Sen. Prof. Ramchand:** You should read it.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** You are saying that it is the first sugar factory. I have not looked at it, so I do not know what it is. I know [*Interruption*] that we were given the responsibility to set that up.

So we are moving on in terms of the cultural heritage and we are looking at how we could make use of it. We are talking about developing the cultural industries in Trinidad and Tobago. This is a country that is rich in culture. Every other country in the world has been able to use culture to develop its economy and we are doing the same within our Ministry here. The development, however, will not be approached in a narrow way, but it will take into consideration the broader context of the cultural role in community development and how it feeds into the national economic development.

Trinidad and Tobago's culture and the arts stand in a unique position for being the driving force behind our nation's socio cultural development, as well as our continued economic growth. It is known, for instance, that all spheres of the performing arts including carnival arts are generally instrumental in educating the young and reinforcing to the old the many fundamental positive values and morals that are currently being eroded from our society. Therefore we want to use culture to provide the support for the transmission of positive values.

Mr. Vice-President, I would want to look at some of the things that we are doing to improve our cultural heritage, and some of the facilities that we now intend to put in. First of all, let me just tell you what we had done in terms of the training in the areas of cultural development. Last year we assisted 37 persons locally—and I am quite sure Sen. Prof. Ramchand would love to hear—we had a certificate in Caribbean Culture and Society, we did one. We had a number of persons in the Associate Degree in the Performing Arts and Music, the B.A. Theatre Arts, B.A. Musical Arts, B.A. Visual Arts, Certificate in Dance and a Dance Education, Certificate in Music and B.A. Music.

We also assisted those who went abroad with the B A in Theatre Arts, B.A. in Fine Arts, Certificate in Performing Arts and Music, the B.A. Arts and Sciences and the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance. In all we have facilitated 77 persons.

Again, for our training we looked at our steel pan which we considered—and we wanted to market that as you see in the Prime Minister's budget speech—we wanted to also market the steel pan and we had here for our young people, we held 12 camps in which we trained 305 young people from the ages of seven to 14. They had no knowledge of the pan before, and they were not literate in music. We started with music literacy and I am quite sure those of you who were fortunate to be at the Jean Pierre Complex to see those 305 young people for the first time—I thought it was the biggest orchestra we had where they all came together and they rendered three songs.

Then we had a pan construction course where 77 of our pannists were trained in the making of pan, because of that industry we are trying to develop. Out of those we were using the tutors and we are hoping that they would be accepted at the University of Trinidad and Tobago in that tutors' programme, but we have 77 of them who would be graduating very shortly. So I want to tell you that we are looking at it in this way, as far as our cultural products are concerned.

In terms of the infrastructure, you may well have heard, that we are now working with the Naparima Bowl. We were just going to renovate the Bowl, as it stands and we were trying to get a centre for the performing arts and an academy for the performing arts in San Fernando at another venue. The new thought is that we will take all that space around there and set up a performing arts centre and an academy for the performing arts. It means that the Government will have to acquire a number of the buildings that surround the Naparima Bowl. We are also looking at the academy for performing arts—and just when I left two days ago—we have the brief here for this academy for the performing arts and some of those persons who I say went on scholarships will no longer have to go abroad as that

academy for the performing arts will now be established. We got word that it will start early next year and eventually the academy will form part of the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

I would not want to go through all of this, because of time but you can also look at this to see the design of the academy with three theatres, a 1,500-seat theatre, a theatre for 300, a theatre seating 200 plus and all the other facilities for training. It is going to be on the Princes Building Ground which has a close nexus with culture, starting off first with education and then you had a number of calypso tents and whatnot going on there. That will be in close range with this other building here, the National Carnival Entertainment Centre which is the one that is going to take over at the Savannah. So that by next year, [*Interruption*] after Carnival we will see the Grand Stand being demolished for this new building to take place. This is going to house, in addition to the areas for Carnival celebrations—we have spaces in here for our carnival museum as well in the Savannah. And I am quite sure if you have the time I will allow you to look at this.

One of the designer schools said that they are hoping that this is done in such a way that this centre would do to Port of Spain what the opera house had done to Sydney in Australia. The designs are fantastic, it is here for all times, part of our vision of 2020 and I would really like you to look at it. We are hoping to go on a 24/07 kind of schedule to work with this all the time. It may mean that we may have to miss a Carnival from the Savannah, but as the people we are, we do not moan and groan, we take the Carnival to the streets as the case may be or we take it to some other place, and we have the shows at some other place.

Why I am showing you this is because there is a lot of disbelief when people say things, other people do not believe that they will happen. I just want to show you that this is real; this is happening. So just after Carnival all of this will start next year.

**Sen. Mark:** I hope we live to see that, because the rate of crime here—

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** Again, as I am trying to tell you, disbelief is what is keeping back the whole thing, if you could only allow yourself the opportunity to enjoy what is happening then you will feel a lot stronger. [*Interruption*] We can pass that around to those of you who would like to have a look at it.

Mr. Vice-President, for the last few days I am quite sure that you might have seen, you might have heard or you might be the recipient of—sorry, before I go to

that, there is one other area that I think you would want to look at and you would want to hear about, and that is the National Steel Symphony. Some people ask themselves, how does this fit into Government's plan, and some people do not believe that there is a social side to this. The budget states:

“As a people we must re-examine our values and attitudes. We must develop a greater sense of national and personal pride, community ownership, environmental sensitivity, respect, discipline, tolerance, responsibility and a cultural performance of excellence.”

Therefore it is with that in mind the National Steel Symphony must be seen as an ideal medium to engender national pride.

### **2.15 p.m.**

I do not want you to look at these things as poles apart, as just things you add; they have social implications. The National Steel Symphony will signal a reexamination of our values and attitudes. It will represent to our thousands of pannists that we value their cultural products.

I want to take you back to Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory, which has revolutionized traditional concepts of intelligence. He said that musical intelligence enjoys a unique understanding of our society and the world. The understanding of our societal problems can be greatly informed by the steel band community that has fostered safe havens, provided recreation, the fostering of community spirit and the channelling of otherwise underutilized energies or social crises that may stem from the instability of family life. Even the safe pan yard is under threat from the scourge of criminal activities; we do not want to remember that incident at the Simple Sound Pan Theatre. Steel bands have been able to nurture young minds and provide safe housing for the youth.

We know that the "bad John" steel band has been transformed into the potential of the steel band to provide an avenue for social reformation. In fact, the arts provide unique opportunities to sensitize our society in crisis. For those of you who knew about the Second International Caribbean Art Education Symposium at the Centre for Creative Arts, this whole steel pan education was proposed as an example of best practice.

I want to tell you quite briefly what this is all about. By 2007, this National Steel Symphony should be a reality. It means that by mid-November you will see applications out for persons who want to become members. It will be a strong screening process going in; it will be both in music literacy as well as in

performance. So by the end of January, we should have the participants for this steel symphony and they will practice throughout the year to be ready for 2007.

The vision for the steel symphony should embrace the notion of the collective musical expressions of the varied cultural heritage: Indian music, African, Chinese, calypso, parang, chutney, soca, European, classical music and jazz, to name a few. This flagship of musical ambassadorship should have as its core, a tenet of inclusiveness that welcomes guest artistes, guest conductors, guest arrangers and composers to find an avenue and a voice to be heard on the national platform.

Of course, it will have a very extensive repertoire and should reflect the hybrid nature of our people and culture, with performances by the sitar, harmonium, tabla, tassa, parang and other instruments. I would not go into the details of it, but I want to tell you that this is real and you better believe that it is going to be. This is part, again, of the whole business of community development and we are using culture through it and giving hope to those young people, young pannists so they too could become part of a steel symphony. This begins in January. The core of this would be those who came from the National Steel Orchestra.

Mr. Vice-President, I now turn to another area within the Ministry, the Gender Affairs Division. Let me just go back a little and remind you that the vision of the 2005/2006 budget estimates was designed to strengthen family values and community-based empowerment and that is in tandem with the overall goal to promote gender equity, equality, social justice and sustainable human development in Trinidad and Tobago.

Research has shown that gender inequality is inefficient. It is not only costly to women, but also to children and men. There are clear gains to the nation if the macroeconomic policies are designed in ways to reduce or eliminate gender inequality. Let me tell you some of the gains, before I go into the meat of what I want to say: an increased output in goods and services; increased conservation of the environment; enhanced well-being of all members of the family; improved human resource capabilities and exercise; increased access to satisfying lives, including increased participation in the vision-making. Several World Bank reports allude to the fact that the quality of life in a society rich in physical resources, can continue to be poor, if male/female relations do not improve and if all men and women do not have equal opportunities to develop their full potential.

Then we had a study called Pathways to Gender Equality by Sidore Bhagin.  
[*Interruption*]

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I was talking about the study by Sidore Bhagin. It highlights the linkages between gender inequality, poverty, illiteracy, maternal and child mortality, HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation. It clearly concludes that the millennium goals cannot be achieved without adequate focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Trinidad and Tobago has always played a leading role in the region and in the Commonwealth in matters that relate to gender equality. The Government has shown its commitment to addressing some of the fundamental structural imbalances that strengthen gender equality by the work of its Division of Gender Affairs, especially as it relates to policy formulation. We are all well aware of the need to educate and increase awareness among policy planners, implementers and the general public. Therefore, in September 2002, the Government agreed to the development of a National Gender Policy and an action plan to advance the principles of gender equality and equity and to identify strategies to mainstream gender issues to the work of the Government in civil society. That is the culmination of three decades of planning.

In recognizing the role of the international partners, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs, partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) to work on the development of the National Gender Policy.

Following a very transparent process, the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, was selected as the consultant for the project. The organization was led and supported by academia in the field of gender and development. A concept paper which provided a summarized situational analysis and themes to be examined was prepared and presented to the country at a national consultation which was attended by over 500 persons. That exercise was followed by the conduct of eight regional and community consultations and an island wide consultation for Tobago, paralleled

by 10 interest group consultations in Trinidad and six in Tobago, as well as meetings with Government technocrats, including a presentation to permanent secretaries.

The process also involved in-depth research in selected sectors and this entire process was supported by an extensive public education and sensitization campaign. The entire exercise was conducted over a period of 12 months. In December 2004, the consultants, the Centre for Gender Studies and Development at UWI, presented its report to the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, in a document entitled *A draft Gender Policy for Trinidad and Tobago*. [*Minister Yuille-Williams holds book aloft*] This is the one that was presented by the consultants.

I want you to follow closely. Copies of the document were also shared with key stakeholders, including the Human Rights Unit of the Ministry of the Attorney General and other interested persons, for feedback and comments. The situation as presented in the document, was supported with national data, where necessary, and points to a number of gender gaps in the system. Many of the emerging recommendations were quite relevant, however, some were deemed to be contentious.

When this document was presented, it was not for public consumption; this came from the consultants. The unfortunate thing is that it came in this form and then, somewhere along the line, this cover was removed. There was a cover on it which showed a Coat of Arms. I think that is where the danger came in, but this was the document which was now moving on to the Ministry. It was not accepted by the Government. You know the process that a document would go through before it becomes government policy.

When this got into the hands of some persons: religious groups and otherwise, some of the contentious areas in it became topics for discussion. Immediately, I got in contact with two of the religious groups that had problems with it and I told them what had happened. I thought that was sufficient, but it was not. I then published in the newspapers for two days, May 05 and September 13, 2005, that this was not accepted as Government policy; that it had come from the consultant.

Since this document came—we call it a "working document"—we have moved to several others. You see this large document, it is in four parts. [*Minister Williams holds document aloft*] The policy itself is just about 50 pages, but it contains a lot of very useful information, done by a lot of professionals; it quotes the National Environment, the International Context, a Situational Analysis of Trinidad and Tobago for Gender Perspective and then in chapter 6, the Trinidad



and Tobago Policy on Gender Equity and Equality. All of this is useful material which we are going to put together singly. For all of that, this is the policy that has undergone transformation over time. We have one and we are on the second. That, therefore, is where we are at the moment and this is what we will hand out, not to public consultations as was done before, but to selected stakeholders.

I compliment those who aired their concerns, because feedback is always good and we recognized what had happened. When the Prime Minister read the budget, he said that the National Gender Policy was withdrawn, that is the document he was talking about; the one that got into circulation, which carried the cover of the Coat of Arms. That is not where we are at the moment. I want to get that quite clear; this is the one that came from the consultants; very distinguished people; a good bit of work, yet there were contentious areas. It has been a long time since we got this; we have moved on it so fast, that we have gone to the policy areas alone, which we are still circulating.

I give the assurance to Sen. Dr. Kernahan and the others who were concerned, that we are not going to back down on continuing the work of having a national gender policy for Trinidad and Tobago. We have given this commitment; it is important to all of us. In fact, when the Caribbean heard about it and even the Associated Press and the United Nations, they started calling. So that is what, in short, that actually happened. I hope that your interest then would continue in the National Gender Policy. I hope it was not only at that point, when it made the news. I hope your interest would continue, because we need a national gender policy for Trinidad and Tobago. As I always say, I am running programmes in the Ministry which are supposed to make good the areas of discrimination that happened before.

With the National Gender Policy, the legislation that is necessary should be put in place and this is where the politicians are really important in helping us. The structures will be put in place, and our economic institutions will all fall in line with the National Gender Policy

**2.30 p.m.**

Therefore, Mr. Vice-President, I am hoping that with that simple explanation, you can understand what had happened and I am saying it again, that what was withdrawn was the document that came from the university which carried the Coat of Arms.

In fact, I had to ask myself exactly what had happened. They sent theirs in this form and we are producing more at the ministry, because they had changed this

cover. This is the one that contains some areas which were said to be contentious. You know what I am talking about.

**Sen. Mark:** Mr. Vice-President, may I ask the hon. Minister whether that document is now in public circulation, or whether it is still within the confines of the ministry?

**Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams:** This one was never for public consumption; this is what they gave us. This one is what is going out and I really want to thank—I think it is Gregory Sloane-Seale from the YMCA who came forward and I like what he said. He was concerned about the policy. He had gone to several of the consultations that he had worked quite hard with and was so disappointed that it had been withdrawn. And, therefore, I think we need to get that explanation about it. This one was not for public consultation.

I hope that will satisfy those interested persons opposite and I thank all of you for your interest in what had happened with the policy. At the end of the day this policy will allow both male and female to contribute equally to national development and that is where we are trying to get it, and that is important.

The discrimination which now exists should not be there. A lot of legislation is expected to take place, and remember we are not the only country in the world, but one of those that—in fact, I compliment the work of the Centre for Gender Studies. I want to tell you that after this, they are now somewhere in the Caribbean, and other countries have now asked them to assist them in doing their policy using the same process that we used.

I do not want anybody to think for a moment that the work was not exceptional. It was good work they had done. There were some contentious places, they were free to express themselves, and what they put together here is what came from the consultation. Some of the areas that are in front would be documented into smaller documents that people can read. A lot of research had gone into it and I really want to compliment them.

With that in mind, having looked at ministries, they continue to be committed to national development and we will do all that we can and, as I said before, all that we need from the politicians and parliamentarians is their support. Give the members of the public and the communities that hope and sense of belief which is very important.

I am hoping, as I said before, to recruit some of the services of the persons here. I know Sen. Prof. Ramchand—I am going to deal with him as far as I go on with the training for steelband tutors, that is his work at the University of Trinidad

and Tobago (UTT) and I know that even in the design of the Centre of the Academy for Performing Arts, we are going to be liaising with them.

Let me also pay tribute for the work that has been done so far by Prof. Satnarine Sharma of the university. Those of you who know his interest in the steel pan, he had helped tremendously in looking at the concept paper for the setting up of this National Steel Orchestra and I really want to thank him very much, also Liam Teague and, to some extent, Ellie Mannette, with whom we were able to have some dialogue in the early era, but the main part of it will be done by Prof. Sat Sharma.

Let me thank you all again for the opportunity to represent the ministry, and I do hope that we would have the continual support and goodwill not only of the parliamentarians, but the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you.

**Sen. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan:** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, for the opportunity to contribute to this year's budget debate.

Mr. Vice-President, Trinidad and Tobago is a natural resource based economy with dwindling hydrocarbon resources and the need to develop and expand the knowledge-based and services industry to generate sustainable jobs, and cushion against the future economic downturns and depressions owing to falling commodity prices. This is according to the President of Trinidad and Tobago when he spoke at the opening of this Parliament just a few weeks ago.

Mr. Vice-President, I am not sure what has happened to our vision of becoming a knowledge-based and technology-driven society, but I intend to illustrate throughout my contribution how the Government, after four years and \$90 billion, has lost its way in achieving serious economic transformation to broaden the base of our economic dependence by investing our oil wealth second bonanza to finance the revenue-income generating mechanisms to take this country forward.

Instead, the oil wealth of the second bonanza is being used to fund criminal activity. I want to ask Minister Yuille-Williams, the previous speaker, who said we want to take back our community: Minister, why did we in the first place give away our community? [*Desk thumping*] How and when did that happen, and why did it happen, Mr. Vice-President?

The 1970s was a period and era characterized by the phrase “money is no problem”. Today in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, money is the problem and probably too much money is the problem.

Let me take a quick look at the current economic environment. According to the *Review of the Economy* on page 51—and I used the nominal GDP figures because later I want to deal with the non-oil deficit—the GDP of this country grew by 17.6 per cent, the petroleum sector grew by 35.9 per cent, agriculture declined by 9.7 per cent, manufacturing grew by just a mere 8.4 per cent, and services, by a mere 6.9 per cent.

Mr. Vice-President, do you know which other sector parallels the growth rate of the petroleum sector? It is the criminal sector. The murder rate was 265 last year, to date it is 302 and it is projected to go to 350 and possibly more. Assuming that we reach 350, do you know the growth rate in murders would be 32.1 per cent? So this is the only other sector that we can say is growing at the same rate of our petroleum sector. All this is against the backdrop of the lowest detection rate and, to date, a murder conviction rate of zero for 2005.

Yet the Minister of Finance continues to speak about strong macro economic fundamentals. In fact, these fundamentals are being weakened day by day using the same oil wealth of the second bonanza. It is being used to weaken the fundamentals. But why does the Government feel that the macroeconomic fundamentals are strong? It is because year after year it continues to inappropriately use financial indicators to mask the poor economic management and the inappropriate response by way of planning.

Mr. Vice-President, it uses the financial indicators of the Revenue Stabilization Fund which is at \$4 billion, a strong reserve position of nine months import cover; cash flows; strong inflows of foreign exchange; and the recent upgrade in the country’s credit rating by Standard and Poor’s.

These financial indicators are the financial outturns which are the result of external factors. They are not fundamentals. They are the result of the monetization of a depletable natural resource at a time when oil prices are at the highest ever, complemented by high commodity prices for ammonia and methanol, et cetera.

Fundamentals are the internal factors geared towards long-term sustainability of the economy. God forbid, should energy prices topple tomorrow morning, the financial indicators which the Minister of Finance hangs on to for dear life will

fall so fast that a fall from a precipice will seem like a joke. Our reserve position will weaken and cash flows will become negative.

Let me give an example of a most inappropriate financial indicator used. We keep using this credit rating, and this is a measure of sovereign risk. It is based on an analysis of the strength of cash inflows, foreign exchange and reserve position as an indicator to the probability of the Government not being able to meet its debt obligations.

The higher the credit rating, the lower the probability and, hence, the lower the probability that a Government will default on its obligations. It increases the country's access to international capital markets, and the liquidity of Trinidad and Tobago's securities and it causes such securities to be less costly to place. The end result of a higher credit rating reduces our international borrowing cost because the risk to the international investor of the Trinidad and Tobago Government defaulting on debt instruments will be low.

Mr. Vice-President, that is only because Standard and Poor's was able to evaluate the foreign exchange inflows, the revenue streams which this Government has no control over. It is because of the high prices of oil and the high commodity prices. We currently enjoy a favourable credit rating because of the high energy and commodity prices resulting in the strong foreign exchange inflows.

I want to ask a question and I will give you an example, let us take the BMI which is talking about the Dominican Republic where Standard and Poor's actually downgraded this country.

Do you know that there was a positive outlook for the economy of the Dominican Republic and they had to downgrade the ratings because of the inability of the Government to service that debt, and that was because they went ahead to refinance and extend the bond maturity and so forth?

Mr. Vice-President, credit rating is not an indicator of our fundamentals and that is the point I am trying to make. For example, you can talk about a healthy cash flow but it may not be profitable and if we are not profitable, it means that we do not have the wealth that can be reinvested in the existing infrastructure and the economy to generate future revenue streams.

So when we talk about the fundamentals and the strengthening of those future revenue streams and the ability to generate them, we cannot use financial indicators. In a business environment what do you do? The growth of the company depends on its rate of return, its profitability at this point in time, but

how much of that are you retaining for reinvestment for future growth of the company? That is what is important here.

Mr. Vice-President, this is why I wonder—I heard it before, but the President in his speech at the opening of Parliament used a very interesting term. He kept saying this depletable resource, but it is wasting resource. Why are we deeming this natural resource as a wasting resource now? Is it because we are wasting it and not using it to regenerate and diversify the economy? All of a sudden I keep hearing so many people talking about this wasting resource.

**2.45 p.m.**

I do not know if the other side understands. Fundamentals are internal factors geared towards long-term sustainability of the economy hence the huge returns from the energy sector should be used to strengthen the fundamentals to generate future sustainable income streams.

What are these fundamentals that we are talking about? We are talking about inflation; the shortage of skilled labour; the decline in the competitive indices; the growing transfers and subsidies which were seen in the budget this year; the crowding out of the private sector—are we increasing a role of the private sector in the delivery of public goods?—the declining levels of investment and savings in the economy so badly needed to generate those future revenue streams that are sustainable; the widening non-oil deficit and even moreso, the widening non-energy deficit.

Let us look at the budget details, inflation, for example. It has been said in all quarters that the increase in the disposable income will be eroded by inflation, high food prices. The poor man will suffer because he is not working for \$60,000 a month and I do not think the Smart Card could capture every one of these families. What have you done in this particular budget? You have eliminated part of the middle income because you have taken away many of the benefits in kind, for example the leased cars, and so on, so they now have higher taxes to pay.

Sen. King was saying that she is not sure if we are in a bubble economy. We are of the view that we are in a bubble economy, because we continue to speculate and speculation produces more speculation. This is why we have no incentive right now. The savings and investment are on the decline. This budget will move the middle income to the low income and further pauperize the poor and part of the middle income. We talk about rising food prices; I will call it spiralling food prices. The initiative taken by the Government to reduce customs duties, and so on, on some of the products listed in the appendix, many have said—not just me,

Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan—that these items that we are talking about are not of any meaningful nutritional value.

The last Central Bank monetary policy report indicated that there was a 70 per cent increase in the price of vegetables, with fruits not far behind. Every child's lunch kit must have fruit for snacks. This is the way we build a healthy nation and a productive workforce, by having healthy children. The Texas state recently removed many of the soft drinks from school cafeterias. It was outlawed, because they wanted it to be replaced with fruit juices, and they are following suit with all the snacks because they want to prevent obesity, diabetes, and all these new diseases in children. They want to promote healthy eating. How are we promoting healthy eating for our children of the nation? What is the Government doing about agriculture? This two-acre parcel of land for Caroni (1975) Limited workers, we have advocated over and over, is not economically viable.

I wanted to raise an issue here, because Sen. Ramroop spoke last night about policy by “vaps”. I have here a Land Distribution Policy; a New Administration and Distribution of Land Policy, developed in 1992 by this very same PNM government. I am going to read from pages 10 and 11 for you, where it deals with fragmentation. One of the issues it is raising here is:

“When you continue to fragment agricultural land, agriculture itself becomes non-economical.”

In fact, what this document did was to set a policy about fragmentation. I am reading from page 10:

“Fragmentation leads to the alienation from agriculture, in that infrastructure may be installed which attracts agricultural activities. Residential and commercial buildings may be constructed.”

I know that in the law, in this particular case with the Caroni Vesting Bill, this has been outlawed.

“The market value of the product rises and the parcel becomes non-viable for agricultural purposes.”

It is saying that regulatory agencies must be brought under pressure to ensure that we do not have further fragmentation. Do you know what is recommended in here in terms of the size? Let me read:

“In terms of the field and vegetable production, no less than two hectares; tree and food crops, no less than five hectares; dairy farming and livestock, no less than eight hectares.”

*Appropriation Bill (Budget)*  
[SEN. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, October 14, 2005*

One hectare is about 2.5 acres. So what we are saying is that for field and vegetable production we should have no less than five acres of land, and in terms of food crops, no less than 12.3 acres. So I have a bit of a problem. This is why we maintain that we must have a proper policy to ensure economic viability for the agricultural sector. Are we setting these farmers up for failure?

**Sen. Sahadeo:** Not at all.

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** You can say that because it is politically good for you to say that.

Let us move on to the shortage of skilled labour. When did we recognize that we needed to start training URP and CEPEP workers? How come all of a sudden we have a shortage of skilled labour and we are now about to bring in skilled labour for the construction boom? So these foreigners will benefit and get high-paid wages. They will benefit from the construction boom. Do you know what is important here? This PNM administration prefers to keep people in CEPEP and URP and not train them to take up these same jobs so that they will end up not reaping the benefits of the boom. That is the problem that I have with this Government. All the time when we were telling them about getting these people into programmes and getting them skilled so when this deficit arises, they would be able to service this deficit; all the time we sat on this side and said it. I will always go back to Arnim Smith when he talked about the ETP and the importance of that programme. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Vice-President, do you know why I am hearing so many complaints from that side? Because every time you talk about URP and CEPEP involved in criminal activity, they carry on and say: "No, no, no." But statistics do not lie, you know. Why is it every time you open the newspapers, you will find one out of every three killings—somebody who shot somebody; somebody who gunned down somebody in Morvant and Laventille—is a CEPEP worker or a URP worker? That is one common thread that continues to run through this. You had a magistrate who had to come out and ask, and plead, for the reform of this Unemployment Relief Programme because of what it was doing and the kind of criminal activity; the killings that were going on. [*Crosstalk*]

Do you know what is their solution to it? They put an advertisement on the television talking about URP being useful and reliable. That is how they solve these problems.

**Sen. Dr. Kernahan:** Propaganda.



**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Propaganda. That is how they solve these problems. That is why they could carry on like that. We know for quite a while now that CEPEP has been wrecking the labour market in the country. The Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association has been complaining; the business community. They cannot afford to pay the rates that you pay a CEPEP worker. They are losing all their workers to CEPEP. I want to make this point once more, because one of the things that they keep saying is that “we are reducing unemployment”.

**Sen. Dumas:** On a point of order, Mr. Vice-President.

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** You do not have any point of order.

**Sen. Dumas:** How could you tell me I do not have a point of order?

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** What is the point of order?

**Sen. Dumas:** Well, sit down and hear! [*Crosstalk*]

On a point of order, Mr. Vice-President. There is a published statement—

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** What is the point of order, Mr. Vice-President?

**Sen. Dumas:** She is misleading the Senate.

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** That is not a point of order.

**Sen. Dumas:** “What you mean?” She is misleading the Senate. Could I explain my point of order, Mr. Vice-President?

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** What is your point of order?

**Mr. Vice-President:** I am interested in the point of order.

**Sen. Dumas:** There is a published statement by the TTMA which says that they have no problem with the URP; that it does not inflate the cost of labour in this country and, therefore, when the Senator stands and says that it is the position of the TTMA, she is misleading the Senate; she is giving wrong information. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Senator, could you please desist from making such a broad statement?

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Well, Mr. Vice-President, as Members of the Opposition, we have had to meet with the various business communities, including the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, and these are the complaints that came forward. I would bring back the *Business Express* article

where the business community came forward and complained about CEPEP. I brought it and laid it here already in this Senate. Anyhow, I hope now that we understand that when they talk about misleading, we could stand up on a point of order.

Before I go on, if it is so important to continue with these makeshift programmes and the unemployment is already low; we are reaching the full potential of our economy, any economist would tell you that you do not need to continue with this kind of expenditure; deficit kind of spending, if you are approaching the potential of the economy, because what happens is that all you are doing is spiralling inflation and overheating the economy. So the Government wants to say on the one hand, “Yes, we are dealing with the unemployment”, but what it is doing is also spending. Most of the unemployment it is dealing with is putting them into makeshift programmes that are not sustainable.

Transfers and subsidies are weakening the structure of the economy, limiting the Government's flexibility to respond to negative shocks by way of a high fixed cost. They are nothing more than rising permanent entitlements. If you have a business and you have a high fixed cost, your degree of financial leverage is high; your risk will be high, because the possibility that your future revenue stream, should it decline, you will not be able to service this fixed cost.

We have continued to carry up this fixed cost to the Government. All the utilities are in the red. Yesterday Sen. Sahadeo spoke about this amount of money—\$3.2 billion—that was generated by the state enterprise sector, and she spoke about the profit after tax and Sen. Ali had to ask her—all the companies that she talked about that she was able to collect dividends from—\$800 million out of this \$3.2 billion—were companies in the energy sector. [*Interruption*] I know that, and I am going to include that. There is First Citizens Bank here, and she did say that—\$125 million. But let us take the others. Apart from FCB, there is the NGC, \$475 million. How is that? Because during the UNC administration we were able to reduce the price of gas sold by the producer to the NGC when we were negotiating Trains 2 and 3. So all of that profit—almost \$500 million was saved by the NGC when those price negotiations took place, and that was the estimate or an average on an annual basis.

So the profits that the NGC is recognizing today is because of those price reductions. If they are so interested in profitability, I want to know what they did with LNG Train 4 with respect to achieving price reductions by the producer to NGC. We have heard nothing like that. The National Enterprises Limited (NEL), the \$190 million that they talk about, again, all energy companies except TSTT.

What I want to ask the Minister is why have we not continued with this concept of NEL? Since the UNC started the NEL and divested those companies: TSTT, Tringen and NGC into that, what have we done since then? We have not done a thing with NEL.

The Senator spoke about NPMC. I think the dividend was \$11.9 million. But whatever it was, I want to remind this Senate that that is nothing to gloat over. Do you know why? Because NP was at a point in time at \$60 million on a profit line, not down to this \$20 million and \$21 million.

### **3.00 p.m.**

Yes, there was also a decline but when that took place it was because we used internally generated funds for the capital expansion programme at NP for those service stations and they have done none. As a result of that, we tried to expend most of that capital expenditure over a shorter period of time causing the profitability of the company to fall. They have not built a service station and no capital expansion programme. Why is the company so low in profitability? I am not impressed with this state enterprise sector. I hope that it is not the justification for putting on these special purpose vehicles to bring on more state enterprises. Apart from these enterprises all the others are running at a loss. This is why the transfer on subsidies is so high.

With respect to competitive indices, a report that was released one week ago by the World Economic Forum shows that this country has declined for the fourth consecutive year. In 2002, this country ranked 37<sup>th</sup>; in 2003, 49<sup>th</sup>; 2004, 51<sup>st</sup> and today, we now stand at 60<sup>th</sup>. On the business competitive index we have also been declining. In 2000, this country ranked 44<sup>th</sup>; in 2003, 53<sup>rd</sup>; in 2004, 59<sup>th</sup>; and today we stand at 65<sup>th</sup> out of a total of 117 countries. The public institutions index also looks grim. In 2002, this country ranked 33<sup>rd</sup>; in 2003, 56<sup>th</sup>; in 2004, 64<sup>th</sup> and in 2005, 83<sup>rd</sup>. Many developing countries in the world like Botswana, Mexico and Colombia have exceeded Trinidad and Tobago over the last four years. When we talk about economic fundamentals we must deal with these issues.

In the private sector involvement there is clearly a swing back in the direction of owning and moving towards the commanding heights of the economy. Although we started the divestment programme in the late '80s, the PNM administration continued it during 1991—1995. They have now changed that policy. I hope that Sen. Ramroop understands policy by “vaps”. Suddenly, we are not interested in divestment. Not a divestment has taken place under this Government. We want to take back the commanding heights of the economy with more state enterprises to come on. It is not surprising. This is why we are not

shifting towards the private delivery of public goods which has taken place all over the world.

I would give you an example of the School Textbook Unit. This is taking over the job of book sellers when they should be maintaining minimum standards. In this case, by trying to control books and put up your textbook unit you are now saying that you need one textbook for here and there and the creativity, innovation, broadening are being lost. You should be encouraging more people to write textbooks because that is a way we can export. If they do not meet the minimum standards and pass your quality control systems, they would have an opportunity to improve and meet the standards next year. That is how we broaden an industry like that. We narrow it and now want to play the role of textbooks— We need to get back to the core activity.

**Sen. Manning:** Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order, that is not the policy. I think that the hon. Senator does not know what is happening in the ministry. We do have a new committee established doing exactly what she just said. She does not know the ministry's business so she should not be saying it.

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Mr. Vice-President, I have a daughter and for two years—last year she never got her textbooks until the end of September. She got homework and was unable to do it because she had no textbooks.

**Sen. Manning:** That is totally different from what she just said.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Both of you do not stand at the same time. Are you further clarifying this, Minister?

**Sen. Manning:** She is misleading the Senate.

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** I am sure that the Minister would have an opportunity later on to deal with the issue.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Sen. Seepersad-Bachan, I am on my feet. Sen. Manning resumed her seat, but you continue to speak to me while I am on my feet which is out of order

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** My apologies, Mr. Vice-President.

**Mr. Vice-President:** You may resume.

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Instead of getting back to the core activity, the same sum of money being used for that textbook unit, you could have allocated it through the system you had before with the \$1,000; properly managed and controlled to buy an approved set of textbooks.

**Sen. Manning:** Mr. Vice-President, the cost of the books is more than \$1,000. Again she is misleading the Senate. If she needs this information I will give it to her so that she can then prepare. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** This is getting out of hand. You have taken your seat.

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** I took my seat because you stood, Mr. Vice-President.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Are you giving way?

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** No, because I am running out of time. It is only because of the time.

I know that she wants to talk about the discount rates, but that is the job of book sellers who would determine the wholesale price and source at the best price. That is not the job of a ministry. Anybody who alludes to special purpose vehicles in these state enterprises as a form of private delivery is fooling and hoodwinking this nation.

I go on to investments and savings. We measure GDP by saying how much we consume; we see how much we invest in the economy; how much the government spends and net exports. A high percentage of the GDP is in the consumerism aspect of it. Very little investment is taking place. What is the purpose of the investment? The investment would enhance our ability to provide consumer benefits in the future in business plans; equipment and building and the capital market. There has been no incentive for this. At the same time you dropped the tax rate and provided increase in disposable income, no incentive was provided by the Government to ensure investment activity within the economy. Were any vehicles provided for investment?

If the National Enterprises Limited (NEL) and other companies like that were put onto the market people would have the opportunity to use this extra disposable income as part of the investment. The Minister said that it is up to people how they invest their money and that is not good enough. If you want investment in your economy you have to provide the incentives. You are supposed to use the energy wealth that is being generated to ensure and provide incentives for investment in the economy. That is how we invest in the future.

The stock market has been on the decline for some time now. There are many reasons. Some are saying it is because of high inflation so people prefer to hold their money; some are saying because the market was overvalued so a self-correcting mechanism was taking place; and some are saying it is capital flight.

People are taking out their investments from the stock market because they are moving away. A true concern throughout this national community is whether the market is being manipulated because it is so thinly traded.

Since this Government came in, the Stock Exchange Board had an article in the *Business Guardian* saying that the Government should look at incentives and how to get private companies to become publicly listed. The Governor of the Central Bank spoke about getting the energy companies to trade on the stock market to spread the risk and allow the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to benefit from the energy wealth of this country. That is where we need to give the incentives. We are not doing that.

We increased the disposable income but provided no incentives for investment in the economy. You will end up with more consumerism and inflation. You removed all the saving aspects such as the credit union shares; repairs and maintenance and claims for mortgage interests which people used. It was an incentive for them to own assets. They would no longer have that incentive to own assets. This will continue to carry up inflation and increase food prices.

An important fundamental for this economy is the widening non-oil deficit. Year after year we have been ringing the alarm bells with respect to this indicator. This has been on the rise for some time. I recall Dr. Ronald Ramkissoon from Republic Bank and the Governor of the Central Bank talked about it being 10 to 12 per cent of the GDP. We are now talking about a non-oil deficit of \$18 billion. Do you know what it is in terms of percentage of the GDP? It is now about 20 per cent of the \$90 billion GDP. In there is a higher non-energy deficit. We are looking at the petroleum revenues. If we look at what is happening in the energy sector, we have not pulled out all the revenues associated with the petrochemical companies. If we pull out those the non-energy deficit would be higher. That is telling us about the risk in this economy. Should those energy prices topple how will we sustain this economy? Calls have been coming from all quarters. They were trying to indicate to the Government that it must be alarmed by this.

If the Government has to finance this non-oil deficit it would have to go to the Central Bank. They may use the Revenue Stabilization Fund (RSF) which might be \$7 billion next year, but do you know that \$7 billion is only 38 per cent of this non-oil deficit? The Revenue Stabilization Fund is not enough to carry that. We have expressed concerns about that fund. For this reason we asked about the investment strategy. They said that the legislation is coming. When is it coming? When we reach low oil prices? When are we going to ensure that we have a proper investment strategy to ensure capital growth of the money stored in that

RSF? If you want intergenerational equity, there must be capital growth. No steps are being taken and it is not good to say that the Central Bank will use its conservative investment strategy or policy. That is not good enough. You are not telling the people that this is how you are saving for the future.

I want to go back to what Sen. The Hon. Sahadeo said yesterday about the Dutch Disease. She said that she does not see us having the Dutch Disease. I want to return her to the IMF Fourth Consultation Report of 2003, that painstakingly warned this Government of the repeat of the 1970s. In that report they clearly outlined the symptoms of the Dutch Disease.

**3.15 p.m.**

Mr. Vice-President, when there is a productivity decline—and already we have seen within this economy that there is spending without production—the link between spending and production is disconnected. There is crowding-out of the private sector and we are creating the combustible elements for the overheating of the economy.

If you go back to the IMF report, you will see that the IMF took the time out to tell this Government what it should do to avoid the mistakes of the 1970s with respect to the Dutch Disease. They outlined the very same characteristics we are seeing here today: the widening non-oil deficit; the crowding-out of the private sector; the continued holding on to the commanding heights of the economy; and the makeshift programmes.

I was a little shocked to hear what was diversification of the economy, as confirmed by Sen. Sahadeo yesterday. The difference between the 1980s and today, she indicated, as the diversified economy, is because we have diversified in the petrochemical sector. Mr. Vice-President, that is diversification for this country! Well, I hope the citizens of this country understand what they deem to be diversification.

**Sen. Sahadeo:** Mr. Vice-President—

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Mr. Vice-President, they will have an opportunity to respond. I want to finish what I am saying. [*Interruption*] Fine, that is okay, I am glad for the education, Senator, that is not a problem.

Mr. Vice-President, everybody knows that there is a strong correlation between oil prices, energy prices and commodity prices. When the oil price is low all the commodity prices are low. I want to remind this Senate that when the oil price was \$12 a barrel, the ammonia and methanol prices were the lowest

ever. In fact, the investors at Point Lisas almost shut down then, because they had to pay what was called, a floor price to NGC. Although the price of the gas was high to the commodity, once the price of the commodity falls below a particular threshold they had to continue to maintain a particular price to NGC, and that was not cost viable. They were prepared to shut down their plants, and many would remember that. We were not deriving profits from the petrochemical sector at all. They were paying no corporate profits because they were in the red! Mr. Vice-President, once oil prices are down, the petrochemical prices would come down at the same rate. So when you talk about diversification, you cannot tell me about diversification to the petrochemical sector.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to correct Sen. Montano when, I think, Sen. Sahadeo made a point yesterday on page 34. He said if the manufacturing and private sectors were not doing well, we would not be seeing these huge profits. But, Mr. Vice-President, what Sen. Montano was quoting from in this particular document, he said on page 34 that the taxes on income and profits comprise 74.7 per cent of tax revenue and he projected an increase by 50 per cent due to a substantial increase in tax receipts from companies; receipts from oil companies improved by almost \$4 billion and \$9 billion while the non-oil companies increased by a mere \$502 million. Do you know what is included by the non-oil companies in that \$502 million? Mr. Vice-President, the profit is included in the petrochemical companies! So when Sen. Seetahal asked the question, she was right, because this is not an indicator that the manufacturing sector or the private sector is expanding. All the petrochemical profits are included in here; all the energy state companies, that she referred to yesterday, are also in here. The state enterprises of NGC and so on, their profits are captured in this figure.

I wanted to make that point very clear, Mr. Vice-President. When we speak about a diversified economy—let me remind this Senate that it was the Central Bank Governor in one of his speeches, in fact, who said—the Senator said, “You know the manufacturing sector is doing well, it is maintaining its own.”—the Latin American markets and the regional markets have expanded. But the Trinidad and Tobago manufacturers are not getting their share of that market. Everybody else is increasing their share of their market; we are not. Do you know why, Mr. Vice-President? It is because the competitiveness of this economy is killing us.

When we talk about diversification, we speak to the issue of the knowledge-based economy; the technology-driven economy, the manufacturing economy,



and that is where we have not seen, to date, what are the tangible incentives for the knowledge-based industries.

This Government has not done anything, you know! What they have done is put up eTecK with high-paying salaries. According to Sen. King, that is another rent-grabbing institution. It is nothing else. We have not seen a tenant as yet. We need proper incentives to get an anchor tenant here. How else are you going to get this knowledge-based industry off the ground? How are you going to get the export services off the ground? The Medical Transcription Training they are doing right now would prove futile if we do not get a tenant in the country to absorb those graduates from that programme. But that is the typical modus operandi of PNM political culture: to spend, spend, spend, and spend.

We heard it from Sen. Ramroop last night, how much they spent to rebuild John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, San Fernando Technical Institute and Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry (ECIAF), and how many new air-conditioned units they bought, et cetera. I want to ask Sen. Ramroop, what is the price of oil today?

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. We did all that we had to do with \$12 a barrel. Look at the kind of revenues they have coming in; in addition to that they have revenues from Train 1, Train 2, Train 3 and Train 4, which we did not have. We did not even have Train 1 at that point in time, and they are talking.

You must remember the UNC started off with an expenditure budget of \$6 billion and \$7 billion. Today what are you? You are \$34 billion! One has to ask: What are you really doing with this money? That is why there is this question in the public domain about what you are doing with this money.

Minister Ramroop talked about the University of the West Indies going from \$100 million to \$500 million. Mr. Vice-President, I want to ask Sen. Ramroop if he was given a budget for agriculture, let us say, of \$100,000, if he would buy a school bus and air-conditioned units, if he had a choice, or if he would spend that money providing incentives or seed money for agro-processing and marketing of

agricultural products which his students, the same students from that institution, would prefer. Would they prefer posh surroundings and so on, or would they prefer when they graduate that they have the opportunity to enter into a Small Medium Enterprise (SME)? Or, would they prefer to become just another public servant in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources? That is the point, Mr. Vice-President. What are your priorities when it comes to spending?

When we put our focus on Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology (TTIT) and National Energy Skills Centre (NESC), it was because we were trying to copy the Seven Jewels of India, which had all these institutes of technology. What they were doing was using those to fuel the service export industry and the knowledge-based industries. That is why they are so big in the export of services and knowledge.

We went into NESC because we were trying to deal with the closure of the foreign permits that were being allowed into this country, and to allow Trinidad and Tobago nationals to access jobs for sustainable earnings. That is why we put our focus on NESC; that was where we placed the priority. Mr. Vice-President, do you know what is the real test of economic management? It is whether the result is that you have improved the quality of life for your citizens. The UNDP studies of the Quality of Life Index shows that—and it is interesting to compare the UNDP ranking of Quality of Life Index for countries that have not even been endowed with the natural resources that we have, like our Caribbean neighbours. Although there is this phenomenal growth in public revenues and huge investments in the energy sector, we continue to fall in the Quality of Life Index so our resources are doing nothing for us.

In fact, as we continue to allocate, even allocating to the Revenue Stabilization Fund (RSF)—Mr. Vice-President, I want to make the point that when we were talking about the Revenue Stabilization Fund, I want this Government to understand, they keep talking about the excess oil revenues; they based expenditure on \$35 and revenue on \$45 and they said 100 per cent of that difference will go to the Revenue Stabilization Fund, but do you know not one cent of the gas revenue goes into the Revenue Stabilization Fund? They continue to maintain the same value for revenue and expenditure for last year and this year. They have made no attempt to trap the excess revenues—the windfall—from the gas sector to put into the Revenue Stabilization Fund. Do you know why? They prefer to spend it. That is an important point.

Mr. Vice-President, how do we know where to allocate resources to maximize returns to the citizens? How do you know when you are delivering the

maximum output? Another critical error on the part of the Government is that it continues to measure its performance by its input and not by its output. It is the output that you must measure, not how much money you have spent on ECIAF. What is the output of ECIAF? That is the only way you can determine where to put the money. You measure your economic policy by its results.

The many projects, programmes, great plans and announcements within all those ministries, I have not seen the evidence of any internal systems designed to determine the effectiveness of these programmes. There are no systems designed to collect the data to allow one to measure the inputs, Mr. Vice-President. How do you know if the programmes are designed to deliver? I want to take an example. The Minister of Education, again, during her contribution, when Sen. Seetahal asked about the School Intervention Strategy, she was really asking how do we know what is the impact of the School Intervention Strategy. The Minister continued to tell her what she was doing in the School Intervention Strategy.

**Sen. Manning:** Could I, again, Mr. Vice-President? I did say that we had a 50 per cent decrease in indiscipline in schools.

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Mr. Vice-President, they will respond in time. The Senator was really asking the question about the performance of programmes. The Ministry of Health, for example, weakness in the health sector, the reform project, they could never generate the desired effect. You want to shift cases from the hospitals to the health centres. How do you know how many cases will be diverted? What are the numbers of cases that need to be diverted? What systems are you using to determine if the desired level of service in your health clinic is being delivered? We do not know that! We have no idea! I heard Sen. King say not to go there, but we know that. Mr. Vice-President, that is because we are not defining our goals. We do not know the end-state in mind. We do not know what the milestones are! We do not know what the measurables are! We do not know what the benchmarks are! We do not know if we are on the road! We do not know! We only keep hearing about Vision 2020, but we do not know if we are accomplishing the milestone; if we are on the right road or the wrong road. It is tantamount to just throwing money at the problem. Our performance is based on how busy we are kept.

Mr. Vice-President, this is how you know when a Government is really spending and this is where the Ministry of Planning and Development must come in. They must be able to determine the effectiveness of the money spent in order to determine—when they are planning—where the priorities should be in terms of spending for the next year.

I was amazed and disappointed with Minister Camille Robinson-Regis in her response—that was only a coward act. She attacked Mr. Winston Dookeran, personally, when he raised these same issues of the competitive indices of this country. She said Mr. Dookeran only strung together all the World Bank and IMF quotes. She is the Minister of Planning and Development! She has to interact with the World Bank and the IMF as well! She should be devising programmes, Mr. Vice-President, to respond to the analyses by the World Bank and the IMF! Yes, year on year, all those indices have been on the decline! What has been the response by the Ministry of Planning and Development? She has the responsibility to respond to Mr. Dookeran on the initiatives taken by her ministry, but what does she do? She goes off after a personal attack. That is only because she is a coward! She could not answer! She had no answers! *[Interruption]*

**Hon. Senator:** Who is she?

**Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** The Minister of Planning and Development had no answers so the only thing to do was to go off on a personal attack. That is cowardice, Mr. Vice-President. Instead of dealing with the issues she attacked—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Vice-President, probably this is what they call common sense and a level head. This is the same Minister last year who categorically stated during the budget debate when persons raised issues about the widening non-oil deficit, that she was no economist. I have no problem if a lawyer sits in the role of an economist, but your job is to get your hands around the problem! Do not stand there and tell me that you are not an economist!

Mr. Vice-President, when Minister Chin Lee made his contribution the other day, you could have seen that this was a Minister who has got his hand around the problem. He is micromanaging but that is how he would generate results. He is enthusiastic about what he is doing. One would say this is either incompetence or it is a lack of due care and diligence in the execution of the responsibility by a minister who took an oath to deliver to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

**3.30 p.m.**

What is interesting is that while the hon. Member was in the Parliament attacking Mr. Dookeran, it was when the CEPEP worker was being gunned down outside Republic Bank on Charlotte Street and when he used a grandmother as a shield. Was she responding as a Minister of Planning and Development? I wonder if that incident could have been prevented, and that is the problem we

have in this country. Instead of the Member going on personal attacks, she should be spending more time in her Ministry studying the problems and devising response programmes. However, we seem to however have a problem with—and I want to go back to the Ministry of Education—ceiling tiles always falling off. They have some problem with that; I do not know if it is so easy to remove them. *[Interruption]* You have the money, fix the problem. Are you coming now to tell me about substandard work? There were contractors and there were retention fees. Call on the contractors to come and fix the problem. Do not come and talk about the substandard work.

Mr. Vice-President, the problem is they are paying a Mr. Burgesse \$90,000 a month and every day they are redesigning and the Early Childhood Centres are not being built. I wonder over the last four years as you have been making promises for these Early Childhood Centres, how many children between three and five years have been denied an education. That is why we were hasty to start building because we recognized that the children were being deprived. That is the problem here. The Minister probably feels that all those children who turned three years old four years ago might stay three years old. Remember this schooling is only for two years. I do not think the PNM expects these children to stay three years old waiting for an Early Childhood Centre to be built. This is why sometimes you have to move on; but for the past four years this is all we have been hearing, do not open the Biche school. I know probably the Biche School might not be the best thing out but it is still a solution instead of having children being deprived of a secondary education and having to go to Rio Claro and for parents who probably cannot even afford the travelling fees. Open it!

The same thing is happening in the Ministry of Health. There is this Oncology Centre that they are building and this Canadian firm, CCI, the same firm that is involved with Landate—\$30 million contract. Ads just came out for the building of this Oncology Centre. October was supposed to be groundbreaking; there was no groundbreaking; it has gone back for architectural design again.

They purchased two linear accelerators and those two accelerators were parked up there while they were waiting to build. How many patients right now—cancer patients in this country continue to suffer while you are doing big design. Do you know the multiplication rate of cancer cells? What happens to these patients when they continue to suffer while you are trying to decide what etching you put on the glass for the building? Those grandiose plans for building big buildings. Why could there not have been an interim solution? Do you know that all the modern oncology centres abroad, did not start off with a grandiose

building. They started off with equipment and people and as they go along servicing their patients, they generate proceeds then they build big buildings. While we are taking four and five years and we have all this money to design, people are dying. They are using cobalt radiation that is damaging all their organs.

Let me just say this Government has not had in any way—this budget does not, and I did not get a chance to get to the energy sector with all the interruptions. One of the things I want to mention—I would get another opportunity to do it. I want to ask this Government when they talk about rum shops and grocery stores, what is it they are telling this nation? They are telling this nation that people in this country do not deserve anything better. Right next door in Barbados and Guyana they could have modern quick shops and modern stations, but the citizens of this country do not deserve any better. They deserve the dilapidated, leaking, underground storage tanks in this country because for them to say we went on a frolic of building—thank God for the UNC government. We built some modern service stations people were happy with. They were happy to see the landscape changed; that is the point I am trying to make.

If I could end on that note, I hope they understood the signal that they sent. Because when President Jagdeo of Guyana came and he spoke to us as Members of Parliament and we talked about going to Guyana, he said to us, no way, look at the conditions of your service stations; look at ours, look at the marked difference. That should have been an embarrassment for anybody but they do not take that and that is why they have not built a service station. What are they doing? And they have an executive chairman, and more too, they have demotivated all those people who have worked on this particular project and took pride in doing that. You talk about giving hope. They are destroying the pride and aspirations of the people of this country.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you.

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith):** Mr. Vice-President, I rise to take part in this debate and I do so with a bit of happiness that we have gone through three days and we are now in our fourth day, and coming to the end of what I consider to be a very good debate. There have been high points and low points but in some way it is good; a bit of sadness, and I hope I am proven wrong because I would really like to continue to hear Sen. Augustus and Sen. Seepersad-Bachan. [*Crosstalk*] But I live in hope and belief, as Sen. Yuille-Williams said.

In my contribution I wish to focus on some of the aspects of my own Ministry, the Ministry of Public Administration and Information in the sense that

it does provide, in my view, a few key elements in moving this country forward: public service, human resource development in the country; IT, as we see as important. Because to move the country forward we need to have people and we need to have them well trained, we have to give them proper systems, tools to work with, and proper training.

But before I get into that, let me just respond to, perhaps, three things that were raised. The first was Sen. R. Montano when he talked about BWIA. As you know, a task force was set up to look at the options available to the Government on BWIA. The task force reported and a particular option was selected by the Government. That option basically the Prime Minister enunciated in his budget speech which was to create a new entity based on a restructured basis of BWIA and have a seamless transition with this new entity.

The Cabinet has agreed to that and basically said that it would go with the option of creating a new entity utilizing BWIA as the platform. In doing so, there are certain key elements that must occur in the transition. Firstly, there must be a recapitalization of the company so that all its obligations to creditors, to people to whom they have leased planes, to its employees and its travelling public are satisfied and to do that Cabinet agreed to provide US \$250 million capitalization. Cabinet also noted that fuel price is a significant element and we continue to monitor the fuel price because this US \$250 million is based on an oil price of US \$50 per barrel. And if it continues to be above that there is an element that we have to look at with what we do with fuel. The new entity should be 100 per cent government-owned in the first instance. At the moment BWIA is now 98 per cent government-owned but with a mandate for subsequent divestment to the private sector, that the new board of directors should be appointed to:

- Formulate immediately a business plan, a recapitalization plan and medium term operational plan for the company;
- That there should be a review of the charter policy of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that BWIA or its successor is not put at a disadvantage in respect of its operation;
- That the new entity should restore its maintenance capability; and,
- That it should do so in a way that it complies fully with the Civil Aviation Regulations;
- That there should be a complete change in the work rule and culture of the organization and that in doing so the idea is to create a new entity with a new way of looking at how they do business.

Mr. Vice-President, Cabinet yesterday appointed the first board. It initially would comprise Mr. Arthur Lok Jack, businessman and Chairman of Associated Brands; Dr. Terrance Farrell, an economist and Chief Executive Officer of Guardian General Limited, member; Mr. Robert Riley, attorney-at-law and Chairman of Bp Trinidad and Tobago, member; Mr. Gervais Warner an engineer and executive chairman of Neal & Massy Limited, a member, and Mr. William Lucie-Smith an accountant and retired senior partner of PriceWaterhouseCoopers Limited as a member. This board has the responsibility of ensuring that seamless transition takes place between what is there now and this new entity and to produce the plans we asked for.

I have a little note from Sen. Prof. Ramchand—

“Could you answer John Spence’s question in yesterday’s *Express*?

‘Have the reasons for the low performance of the Public Service been investigated?’”

I would not use underperformance as much as I would say its inability to keep up with the demands on it. The answer is yes, and as I make my contribution, I would give an idea of what we are doing in that respect. The other is: “Can you explain what has changed in NAR using the public service—36 primary schools and \$72 million and they worked through the Central Tenders Board?” I think it was a period of stringency. That is part of the answer. The demands being placed on the public service system to produce in that area were not as much as it is now and unfortunately, the public service systems have not developed to the point where they can cope with increased demands for producing in that field.

### **3.45 p.m.**

The other aspect, of course, is that, with increasing demand for the kind of skills required to drive the country forward, the public service, given how its salaries are set, is less and less able to attract and keep people. So, at the same time that you are putting a greater demand on the system, you are also finding it difficult to keep the people in the system who will do it, because they can move to the private sector, because the private sector is also demanding.

That is part of the reason and that leads me to Sen. Baksh who said in his contribution how proud he was that his government was able to achieve all that it did by using the systems of the public sector without having to do what we are trying to do with special purpose companies. Now I know that Sen. Baksh does not believe that, but for the record, so that you will also know, I will list some of the projects done by his government when they performed.



*Appropriation Bill (Budget)**Friday, October 14, 2005*

Head Office of the Attorney General, NIPDEC	\$70 million
Arima Magistrates' Court, PIDCOTT	\$45 million
Sangre Grande Magistrates' Court, NIPDEC	\$25 million
Restoration of the Red House, NIPDEC	\$14.6 million
South Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, PIDCOTT	\$28 million
Additional security for the new wing of the Port of Spain Magistrates' Court, NIPDEC	\$5 million
Construction of community centres, NIPDEC	\$25 million
Outfitting 10 schools under SEMP, Phase 1, MTS	\$30 million
Construction and outfitting of 12 schools, Under SEMP, Phase 2, MTS	\$462 million
Rincon Development, Las Cuevas, UDeCott	\$28 million
Oropune Gardens, Piarco, UDeCott	\$188 million
Refurbishment of the Huggins Building, MTS	\$20 million
Reconstruction of the old police headquarters, NIPDEC	\$45 million

You will love this one:

Construction of four stadia: November

*Appropriation Bill (Budget)*  
[SEN. THE HON. DR. L. SAITH]

*Friday, October 14, 2005*

1977 NIPDEC was given the responsibility;	
December 1998, it went to FINCOR;	
August 1999, it went to FIFA;	
December 1999, it ended up in	
CONCACAF, not a state enterprise, but	
a “Jack Warner”	\$385 million
Mayaro Multi-purpose Facility, NIPDEC	\$26 million
Wallerfield Science and Technology	
Report, TIDCO	\$17.6 million
Construction of a new Airport at	
Piarco, NIPDEC	Cost unknown
Whitehall Refurbishment, MTS	\$30 million
Churchill Roosevelt/Uriah Butler	
Interchange, UDeCott:	
Original budget	\$150 million;
Revised budget	\$225 million
NREP road paving, TIDCO	\$1.1 billion

I asked my staff to stop at that point because I want to continue my contribution to the debate.

I am not criticizing; I am merely saying that the statement that the hon. Senator made suggests that the public service was able to perform under them, therefore there was no need to look for ways—

**Sen. Prof. Ramchand:** I would like to go back to my question on the performance of the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) government. Is the hon. Minister saying that something has happened now; that the public service cannot deliver in the same way? Have they thought about doing things to make the public service deliver in the same way?

While I am on my feet, I would ask a question about BWIA. In view of all the excitement about the CSME, and remembering Dr. Eric Williams' attempt around the Federal period, to get a truly West Indian BWIA, did the Government consider

asking CARICOM states to invest in an airline we can call BWIA and mean it; an airline owned by the members of the CSME?

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith:** Mr. Vice-President, I would really love to answer the question in some detail. All I can say is that the concept “government-owned” includes divestment, if it becomes necessary, to willing partners. You cannot force people and you have to be sure you have something. When I go through my contribution, I hope you will understand what we are trying to do to make the public service able to deal with what is demanded of it.

Public service reform is the key to the question that Sen. Prof. Ramchand and others have raised about what to do to improve the public service. We have a large public service. We spend a lot of money on it. How can we use that resource? Let me just say that reform is not a single effect. Something is not dramatically reformed. It is a complex process; it is evolutionary. It takes place over time and the benefits will not come all at the same time. It will come incrementally.

We have continued over the last year of our programme because we need to sustain what we are doing. We aim to provide, in a timely and equitable manner, those goods and services that would raise the standard of living of our people and improve ultimately the competitiveness of Trinidad and Tobago. Unless we do that, the prophets of doom and gloom are correct. We will not survive. We understand that. What we have done is try to approach this in a structured manner.

The first thing would be to develop the strategy. How can we develop a strategy which, when applied in a proper predetermined sequence will take us forward, that is, develop the road map of how we are going? Our walk over the last year involved the following:

- We have invited bids for the identification of the issues and policy options for transformation.

What are the issues? Why is there underperformance?

- The development and implementation of the first phase of a national dialogue strategy because to improve the public service, we have to get all the stakeholders, including the public who are consumers of the public service involved in dialogue.
- Look at governance and institutional assessment.

How do we assess?

- The development of this consensus building strategy where you develop a consensus among the people who have the responsibility as government; the stakeholders who are the people in the service, and the public.

There must be consensus because if there is not, you can come with all the plans you want, it will not be implemented.

- To develop and implement a long-term communication strategy.

Communication within the public service and communication with the people outside.

We have taken two pilot projects at the same time—the CSO, as a pilot project to test all of this because the CSO is important to the country. All our decisions have to be based on information that we can rely on; that we believe and that has been collected in time.

We have to develop a compensation policy. What is our policy for compensation? At the moment, the way we pay public servants, by categories and grades, an Engineer I, whether he is an Engineer I in the Ministry of Works and Transport or in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, there is no differentiation in the skills required and the effort made.

We have hired consultants to gather information on public employment and institutional performance. We have also had a consultant working with him. What is the structure of the Ministry itself for implementing any change that takes place? If we have the responsibility for change, you have to organize yourself in such a way that change can, in fact, take place.

In that regard, one of the things that the Ministry has done is to begin to hire change agents and put them out into the various ministries to be able to focus in the ministries in the change that we hope to achieve. We have put together a panel of experts mainly from retired senior public servants, in March 2005, to provide us with some technical advice in respect of how we develop and implement this strategy. They are from outside, academia, retired public servants, kind of an old man think tank like me out there, thinking and telling us what to do and we will continue the effort in 2006. That is how we are developing the strategy.

In the short term—and to prepare for this environment of change, we have placed new system facilitators to act as internal change agents in the ministries. We have begun to train personnel in various techniques and practices to facilitate the management of change. So we are training these people and training the key

people in ministries to be able to improve their capacity for managing continuous change. We have developed a customer service response system because, at the end of the day, you have to feel the effect of how the general public is seeing the change.

We have created a policy networking forum for deeper collaboration among ministries on policy formulation, implementation and knowledge retention. One of the problems that we face in seeking to have the change done and continuous is the retention of knowledge within the Ministry. Somebody is trained, they work there; next thing you know they are somewhere else and the continuity of that knowledge is lost.

We have set up the Opinion Leaders Panel. I know that Sen. Mark thinks it is for election, but we think that we have to have an independent measure of gauging public opinion on the process and effectiveness of the reform process. You should take the time to read those reports and go to the website. You keep asking questions about the performance of Government and services that the Government is providing. See whether there is any change taking place and measure the change to see whether what we are doing makes sense or not.

Last year, we did a public service employee survey to find from people working in the public service how they feel about things; what are their views. That has been very successful and we have been doing one in the Ministry of National Security. Find out from them their own views. How do they see themselves? What do they like about working in the public service and what they do not like? We have also established a human resource development network to determine the skills gaps in our agencies and to build the capacity for training needs. We have to identify where there are gaps in the skills in the ministries and then target our training to fill those gaps.

#### **4.00 p.m.**

We are trying to develop robust systems, which will provide evidence for policy review and development. Those of you from university would understand that you need to have information to review your policy and to develop your policy. We can do it by “vaps”, or we can do it properly. What we are hoping to achieve is a public service that uses objective data to continuously improve its service delivery. That is what we have been doing over the last year and this is part of the continuous process of public service reform.

We have, over the last year, started to develop a performance management system. We have done a pilot in three ministries and we are hoping to fully

implement it, a performance management system, Sen. Seepersad-Bachan, where we can begin to measure the performance of ministries.

We have started the Prime Minister's Innovation for Service Excellence Awards Scheme, which seeks to encourage, heighten awareness, motivate and reward public officers for continuous improvement of service delivery.

We have done an umbrella policy and framework for the development of a results-based, monitoring and evaluation system in the public service—Sen. Seepersad-Bachan, results-based, monitoring and evaluating system. We would begin to set targets and then do a system of evaluating and monitoring how those targets would be met.

**Sen. Seepersad-Bachan:** The Ministry?

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith:** The public service.

Finally, capacity building in the Government for advanced evaluation techniques, for officers from across the public service, who may already have had exposure to training, but we want to take them to a higher level in evaluation techniques. If we are successful, perhaps, I should take Sen. Yuille-Williams comment—when we are successful, we can then identify where there are gaps in the competence of our people and also, at the same time, identify the high-level achievers, so that we could move to a system of rewarding high-level achievers in the public service.

The second is human resource management; how we manage what we have. We started this during the period 1992—1995 and we continue to place emphasis on it. We are implementing modern human resource management policies and practices in the public service and we are making substantial investments in human resource development. I keep saying that it is important that the system have people in it who are trained, motivated and who are given the tools to do the work.

We have to place some emphasis on management. We have undertaken a review of the human resource officer series in the public service in an effort to optimize performance of the human resource divisions, by moving to a competency-based approach.

The human resource divisions in ministries are key. We are looking at it. We have frozen appointments to it. How do we optimize their performance and how do we get the right people into that?

There was emphasis on training during the last year. We have done a number of Train the Trainer courses in areas where it is important for efficient performance of the public service and in an effort to help human resource divisions become more effective. Having trained the trainers, we are now rolling it down to individual ministries, for transmittal.

Project management, the bugbear of implementation. We are focusing on extensive training in project management, because the implementation of all the programmes that we have, whether Sen. Yuille-Williams' Carnival City will come or not come into effect; it depends on having people who can manage these projects in time.

During last year, we increased the portfolio and the number of scholarships offered, including some medical scholarships at St. George's University. We are continuing to deal with commonwealth scholarships. Our own Government scholarships, we have increased and we are targeting some of these scholarships in specific areas of training such as poverty eradication, educational administration, criminology, forensic sciences, estate management and property evaluation.

In 2005, we invested approximately \$14 million into the scholarship programme. For this coming fiscal year, we are reintroducing the system of development scholarships, one of which I got when I came back here in 1958/1959, which fulfils specific training needs in the public service. These training activities will include critical thinking, financial risk management, decision sciences, forensic auditing, evidence gathering and disaster preparedness, in other words, to take our public servants and give them scholarships, called development scholarships, training them in these areas. That is the process that we will continue in the coming year.

I made the point about how we pay people and how we classify people. We have started to implement a new job evaluation and classification exercise to attract and retain the skills required in the public service. The present job evaluation exercise is outdated. We have job classification which speaks about persons who are typists with so much words per minute, or a stenographer. We need to move the job classification. As we move to new job classification—we are doing this in conjunction with the union—that will be the first basis for looking at proper evaluation and that will lead to a new compensation package because if you are able to define what people have to do properly, then you are able to develop a compensation package that suits it.

It requires radically new thinking about how you compensate in the public service, but we are in radically new times, and, therefore, we cannot continue—come back to underperformance—If you have people with the wrong skills, you do not have the ability to bring people with the right skills, because if we want to hire a whiz at computers or Microsoft, we have no jobs. Could we bring a Clerk I, Stenographer II or a Typist I? You have to have the job classification that will enable you to bring the new skills. Having brought the new skills in, you must have a way of compensating, because these are the people in great demand in the private sector. We will continue to use the job evaluation process as a tool to revolutionize the jobs in the public service and pay them appropriately. Unless we could do that, we will continue to have a public service that is incapable of responding to the demands that are being placed on it. I keep saying that, because I do not want people to feel that I am knocking the public service. I understand the dynamics and, to some extent, the dilemma that the existing service is in.

Industrial relations, I do not have to say it; that is an important role in the management of everything. We have worked with unions in a harmonious fashion. I was accused by one—I cannot say trade union, because they are recognized—group which said that I was having a cozy relationship with the President of the PSA, but we will continue to work on that. We have brought most of our collective agreements up to date. We are now in the period 2005—2007. We are working assiduously to try and get all these agreements complete. When I came in and spoke to the union I said that my hope is that by the time I leave—not the PNM, because they would be there for some time—we will be negotiating agreements in advance of the period, rather than after the period. [*Desk thumping*] We have worked with the—[*Interruption*] I admit, I have been following his thinking, except when it comes to politics. We have worked with the National Union of Government and Federated Workers and set up what I think is a very unique thing, a training fund for training workers. That is a joint effort of the union and the Government. We took a portion of what their salary increase would have been and put it into a fund, which is managed jointly by the Government and the union.

If you have the best human resources and you do not give them good working conditions, you demotivate them. Therefore, again, we are seeking to change the traditional image of what a public service office looks like—a set of cubicles, brown paint, large wooden desks and files strewn all over the place. We have changed that to modern offices.



As you know, we are building a government office campus at Richmond Street to house Customs and Excise Division, Board of Inland Revenue and the Ministry of Legal Affairs. We are now looking at tenders for the Ministry of Education building at the end of October. That campus is part of the move. We are building these administrative complexes in the outside areas. Siparia was completed in July and equipment is being brought in. We are refurbishing 610 Building. We have hired an architect and we hope to start work early next year. As you know, the building on St. Clair Avenue, for the Ministry, is under construction and we hope, by the end of this year, to complete it and have it fully furnished by April of 2006.

We hope to award, by the end of November, for a building north of Trinidad House, a new building to house the Ministry of Social Development. We have in the design and tender stage, a new Government building on St. Vincent Street, where the Archives is, as the permanent offices of the Ministry of Public Administration and Information: “Doh feel yuh going in dey, eh.”

**Sen. Mark:** I would go to Foreign Affairs.

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith:** Information and communication: The other side of the thing is the bringing of information and communication technology to the service. As you know, we have Fast-forward, our national plan for ICT, which objective is to have national connectivity; everybody connected to each other.

**4.15 p.m.**

Mr. Vice-President, we have already seen an exponential rise in the use of ICT. Approximately 45 per cent of our citizens now have access to Internet either at their homes, their place of work, or through community access centres that we are developing all over the country. We have seen the number of homes with Internet access rise from 8 per cent to 17 per cent over the last two years. Our goal is to ram that up. All our libraries now provide free access to the Internet. [*Desk thumping*]

Fast-forward sees e-government as one element. Mr. Vice-President, e-government has to be an essential element of how we reform the public service. In that respect, we have completed phase I of the communications backbone project which is a project to link ministries electronically. I think Sen. The Hon. Christine Kangaloo indicated some of the immediate benefits of doing that—cutting down the time to get a birth certificate and enabling people in Tobago to also get these certificates. This gives you the ability to overcome distance and to provide service.

As far as “the backbone” is concerned, we have now laid fibre for 20 ministries and we have 230 locations connected. That will give us the ability for Internet, email, messaging and scheduling at these locations. At the moment, with that pilot phase 5,000 public servants now have the capacity to utilize this.

In 2006, we are going to focus on expanding and bringing in more ministries and more locations. In addition to email and the Internet to put our human resources IRIS programme, payroll and electronic document management on the system so that persons in a ministry can now find out how many persons they have working; what are their skills; where they are and so forth.

Another thing that we are doing is the e-government portal; that is the ability of the Government to interface with users. It is a most important step. We completed phase I in September 2005 which is a design of what the portal should look like, and some of the things that you put in it to make it available. We are now on phase II. On phase II we are focusing on the content and putting in the infrastructure.

What this does is to invite the public into electronic relationship with the Government. It will provide a common face for the public service; hopefully an attractive and trustworthy point of access; and an entry point to which one could efficiently find any service available from the Government. If you go into a portal you would then have the ability to go to individual ministries. It would allow feedback from consumers.

The model that we are designing allows people to interact and it allows the Government to contact you as you contact the Government. It has to be simple; it has to be clear. If we do it right, it would begin to provide, in my view, a gateway to a very nimble and available public service. You no longer would have to go and line up to wait to talk to a clerk. Once you go to the portal you could download a form and fill it out and send it back. You can begin to interface as you had to when you line up, with a system that almost gives you instant access.

In phase II, we are looking to have all government information available through the portal by the end of 2006, and by 2008 all government services, not only in information, but the services.

We are working on e-commerce. Again, if we are to remain competitive, we need to begin to use e-commerce to encourage and develop our small, large, and medium businesses into e-commerce. We are placing significant emphasis especially on small businesses—

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith:** I am so accustomed doing it I almost did it for myself. Again, we are focusing a lot on e-commerce, to enable people to begin to deal with themselves—business to business—and to deal with the Government for trade.

We have established an ICT Indicator Database, so we know what we have and we have sent that to the United Nations Agency for inclusion in their global report of these indicators,

Community access: As I indicated, where people do not have it in their homes, and where they cannot get it at their place of work, we are setting up what is called: Community Access Centres. We are going to make computers and staff available to assist. So that an old person in Cedros, who perhaps cannot use a computer, can go there and say: "I want to get a driving permit," and the person there is going to get it for him or her. So they do need to have the technology as they are being trained. This is going to be done. We are going to locate them in schools, in libraries and in community centres, as part of the resources that are available.

We are setting up what is called a "Wireless Base Kiosk" in the rural areas. We are calling them e-parlours where you can also go in and do it. We have set up approximately 34 so far; 29 of them are fully funded by the Government and the idea is to speed them up. So as you develop the capacity of the Government to work electronically, you develop the capacity of the people outside to access it.

In doing that, we need to improve the broadband capacity in the country, because as you get more users you must have the resources to do it. We have hired a consultant to develop a policy for us on broadband which will include what we should be providing but, more than that, how we provide it. Is it all Government? Is it all private sector? Is it the Government in collaboration with the private sector? We need to discuss that and that is the exercise that we are going through. One thing is sure and that is if the demand grows—and it should grow—the capacity that we now have is not enough and we have to put it in.

We need to review legislation as we go into e-trading; we need to review legislation on privacy; data protection and so forth. We have done some work on that. We have two policies on electronic transaction and data protection and we hope to convert them—the Attorney General willing—into the Electronic Transaction Bill of 2006 and the Data Protection Bill of 2006, which I hope to bring to this Parliament to give us the legal framework in which to do what we are doing.

The Telecommunication Authority, as you know, this has been set up.

**Sen. Mark:** Did you fire Ralph Henry?

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith:** What do you think? The authority is now getting into stride and it has its staff. They have put out a request for proposals for mobile services, international telecommunication services and television. They have submitted their draft policies and regulations in respect of some of the things that they have to do. We are working with them. With respect to those regulations, the Attorney General willing, it will be before Parliament shortly for ratification.

I have on my desk recommendations from the authority for the award of mobile telephones, cable TV and international telecommunication services. The technical team at the ministry is working on this and we are looking within the next two or three weeks to make final recommendations to the Cabinet on the matter.

**Sen. Mark:** What about the broadcasting code?

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith:** With respect to the broadcasting code, I think the Chairman has indicated that it has returned. They are starting the process all over, including discussions with stakeholders and the public.

Mr. Vice-President, NALIS comes under the Ministry and let me quickly tell you what is happening in NALIS. There was an increase in registration and Internet usage by the public at all branches of the libraries. As I indicated, there is a growth in the libraries and we now have all the libraries connected. They have trained approximately 5,000 users in the library system on the use of the Internet; they are developing a website for delivering information about Trinidad and Tobago. This would be completed in November. They are upgrading the Model Library at the Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre.

I think that NALIS is at the forefront in dealing with the physically challenged. This building next door is totally geared to the physically challenged. They have

placed orders for equipment for services to the visually-impaired at the libraries at Maloney, San Juan, Princes Town, San Fernando and Point Fortin. They have built ramps at Point Fortin, Tunapuna and St. Helena. They have started—because they feel that they must have an all-inclusive policy—a programme to support reading habits of members of the community who are institutionalized and they have a pilot project now going on at the Youth Training Camp.

To preserve our cultural heritage, the Heritage Library made 831 acquisitions in the last year of written documents; all recordings; artefacts; electronic productions about nationals. One major acquisition was the Wayne Berkley collection. When the Carnival Institute is completed it would be transferred to the Carnival Institute.

We are expanding the library service. We have developed a comprehensive implementation plan and development plan up to the year 2020 of how the library service should be improved. We put book-drop services to pre-schools at Waterloo, Monroe Road, Las Lomas, Little Coora and Freeport Community Centre. We have introduced new book mobile services at upper Guaico Government Primary School, Rousillac, New Grant, Barrackpore, Oropouche, Forres Reserve—Sen. Montano, did you hear that?—Rousillac, New Grant, Barrackpore, Oropouche and Forres Reserve.

I want to take the opportunity to publicly congratulate NALIS. Mr. Vice-President, they won the Prime Minister's Innovating for Service Excellence Award in December 2004 for their facilities for the visually impaired at NALIS. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, I am sure that Members would agree that the transformation of the Public Service and the modernization of the information sector are well under way. We are trying to engineer a more dynamic administrative and facilitative structure in the public service. We are trying to remove the bureaucratic inertia and to make the service more client-focused; we are trying to move away from archaic systems and procedures; and create the environment for the development of the country's full potential.

In fiscal year 2005/2006, this Ministry, like all other ministries of Government, is hoping to utilize its allocated resources with efficiency and effectiveness for the benefit of the people.

In closing, I urge all Senators, in the end, to support what I consider a forward-looking budget, in moving us to the goal of 2020. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, we shall take the tea break at this time and we will resume at 5.00 p.m. The Senate is now suspended for tea.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.00 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Mr. Vice-President:** We do not have a quorum.

**Hon. Senator:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Okay, we would just wait a minute.

**Sen. Walton Francis James:** Mr. Vice-President, thank you for the opportunity to make my contribution to the 2005/2006 budget debate. This budget is historic in the context of the \$34.1 billion expenditure projected. Taking our population of 1.3 million people, it amounts to some \$26,250 per head. It is wide ranging and their challenge would be to implement the proposals efficiently and effectively. Coming at this stage, I will try not to go over areas which have already been presented. I will touch on such issues which are of concern to me, and I dare say, to many in the population at large.

I will touch first on the revenue stabilization fund. Government must be commended for establishing and building up of the Revenue Stabilization Fund, as the windfall we enjoy through current high oil prices allows us to do so. It demonstrates that they have learnt from their experience of not providing for the future drop in oil prices during the first oil boom. This fund can grow substantially if the high oil prices persist, and it is therefore necessary to establish conditions and procedures with regard to how the fund should be accessed. Indeed, it should grow to the level of some \$4,455 million by the end of fiscal year 2005/2006. I would certainly not like to see it drawn down as fast as it has grown. Prudence suggests that it be treated as an endowment type fund; the accumulated capital be invested, and part of the dividends be drawn down when justified and necessary to meet revenue shortfall. Indeed, it should continue to be added to, not only from retaining part of the interest or dividends generated, but by a deliberate effort to increase it to a level where its returns can cover a significant shortfall. Its utilization in this manner would mean that it is not one of those safety nets which come and go, but one on which we can rely to be there for our children and our grandchildren.

During this debate, each speaker, I am sure, has touched on the area of crime, security and safety. The major concern in our country today is crime, security and safety. We are witnessing an escalating number of crimes being committed,

particularly murders, kidnappings and trafficking in narcotics. Our security agencies have, to date, not been able to stem the increase nor indeed, to reverse the trend and lower their occurrence to a far less alarming level.

The budget informs us of the intention to acquire certain equipment and services to assist the security services in the effort to reduce the crime level and eliminate the passage of drugs through our country, and their use here. The list of equipment is formidable and should be adequate to do the job. The only omission from the list I noted is the automatic cameras placed in strategic locations. These have been helpful to Scotland Yard in the London bombings. I trust that this is an inadvertent omission. These measures will certainly impact on improving the performance of the security services.

Mr. Vice-President, I would like to emphasize however, that the degree of success of any project or undertaking depends almost entirely on the quality of people involved in its execution. It is my view that we need to upgrade the people in our security system. In the short term we need to launch a major effort in the area of training to deal with the more sophisticated criminal element in our society today.

For the longer term, I believe we need to establish a Security Officers Training Academy, to turn out officers who are trained to the level of a first degree from university in this field. The intake would be young men or women who are CXC or Cambridge graduates at O'levels and A'levels. This programme would be a minimum of three years. I am looking in fact, at the type of institution similar to Sandhurst in the United Kingdom and similar other institutions in the United States. Some would question whether we would have enough candidates for such an academy. My answer is that this can be a Caricom organization. There could also be an intake from other developing countries, which I am sure experience a lot of the problems we are experiencing today. There will be a growing need for high level security personnel throughout the world as crime becomes more sophisticated.

Dealing with physical infrastructure and transportation, I am sure that you would all agree that the increase in the prosperity of the nation, and the coming into being of the roll-on/roll-off business, have led to an explosion in the number of motor vehicles on the roads of Trinidad and Tobago. We have serious traffic jams and delays in several parts of Trinidad and Tobago, which seriously impact on efficient output and performance. We know that projects are listed in the budget for doing certain works on roads including the dualling of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway up to Wallerfield, or the flyover at the junction of the

Churchill-Roosevelt Highway and Uriah Butler Highway. The latter, in my view, would give relief to traffic which is going south on the Solomon Hochoy Highway, but not to traffic going east and west along the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, this would just shift the traffic jam to the next traffic lights; so it will only be of some help. Also, the question is: When will it be available?

With a number of these larger projects, one of the problems is the lengthy time element in terms of their being fully implemented and put into use. It brings to mind the old saying: "While the grass is growing, the horse is starving." But there are a number of smaller areas where I think problems can be alleviated, which are not listed in the Budget, but which I think need to be looked at and I would suggest a few. For instance, there is an extension to the highway in Diego Martin, but on an evening going into Diego Martin itself from Port of Spain, which I did a few days ago, at about six in the evening, there was a traffic jam that extended all the way up into Tragarete Road. Having spent about half an hour chugging along very slowly, when I got to the place called Four Roads, there was a traffic light there, and once you got past the traffic light, it was clear. So there is just a need to do something about that traffic light or that junction to avoid having the traffic light stopping the traffic so often; one of the things that can easily be done.

We in Maraval have a serious problem with getting through Boissiere at certain times of the day, and the problem just gets worse, as more and more houses are built further up in Maraval. We have a system in the morning which, in order to get to Maraval, since they introduced a one way in Boissiere, you have to go via St. James and Long Circular Road, a very lengthy route. Now tackling the problem of Boissiere is not one of the items in this budget. Even when you get out into the country, there are traffic jams encountered, for instance, in Valencia and Sangre Grande, which need to be attended to. One of the major works going on now, as I said, is the dualling of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway from Arima up to Wallerfield.

### **5.15 p.m.**

This needs to be done but I am certain that it is not as critical as getting around that traffic jam in Valencia. If the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway were extended through to the Sangre Grande long stretch, that problem would be eliminated because the traffic going further east would not have to go through Valencia. So, there are a number of smaller measures which can be undertaken and given priority over some of these major highways which they have proposed here, which I would suggest they should be looking at as well.



I touch briefly on agriculture, which in a way I am involved in, to a small extent. It is essential that this country becomes capable of feeding itself, should the need arise. This statement has been made over and over for a number of years. We spend millions of dollars to import food from different sources, and some of them even outside of Caricom which is not necessary since we can grow these things here. I am told that tamarinds are now imported from Thailand and bananas are coming to us from Central America.

Every year we get plans to do certain things in the area of agriculture, but most of them, apparently, do not come to fruition. I think it is an area where a lot of attention needs to be given and I have had certain experiences, myself. A few years ago, private farmers, like myself, were being encouraged to plant timber trees and plants were made available at the forestry department at subsidized prices. I went ahead and planted trees and decided that I would have a programme, every year I would plant so many hundred trees. Last year, all of a sudden, they stopped selling seedlings. I was told that the Government had decided that they were going to do some programme using certain labour that was available to do some tree planting so they had stopped selling to the general public.

One of the problems today at the St. Augustine nursery is the quality of plants that they have there; for some reason the quality has fallen considerably. I was there just a few days ago and they did not have what I wanted and they said nothing more will be available until next year, but what I had seen there before was certainly not up to scratch. I think we need to buck up as far as agriculture is concerned, if we really hope to get to self-sufficiency with regard to feeding ourselves.

A few words with regard to education: Education has been allocated a substantial amount of funds, Mr. Vice-President, and so it should, as improving performance in the area of education has to be a top priority in moving our country forward to achieve the Vision 2020. The construction of school buildings to de-shift schools is proceeding, and my only comment on this area is if it could be speeded up the benefits would be obtained that much earlier. And I would certainly like to see a greater effort in that area.

There is, however, an area which does not seem to be getting adequate attention and that is, to my mind, what I call the underperformance of a substantial proportion of our secondary school students. The underperforming section of the secondary school population is made up mainly of young men. This becomes visible and is noticed at graduating ceremonies; we see the numbers of females increasing, while the numbers of males are decreasing. We must ask ourselves why it is that both are not increasing apace as they should. What are we

doing about it or plan to do about it? I believe that much of the deviant behaviour of our young men that we are experiencing today arises from their failure to benefit from the educational opportunities with which they are presented.

After leaving school many drift into crime, the drug trade and violence. Since they do not have the necessary educational qualification, they are unable to find employment and enter these areas to gain some income and they form a ready source of recruits to those seeking to lure youngsters into these activities.

Mr. Vice-President, my own analysis is that the coeducational school system is an unwitting contributor to this problem. It can be seen by the results obtained that non-coed schools form the major part among the high performing schools in the country. I will list some of them. Among the girls we have: St. Joseph's Convent, Port of Spain and San Fernando; Bishop Anstey Girls' School; St. Francois Girls' School; St. Augustine Girls' School; Lakshmi Girls' and Naparima Girls'. And among the performing boys schools we have: Queen's Royal College; Presentation College, San Fernando; Presentation College, Chaguanas; Hillview College; St. Mary's College; Naparima College; Fatima College and Trinity College.

Mr. Vice-President, during the secondary school years of youngsters in the 12 to 18 age group, boys are more distracted by girls than girls are distracted by boys. These are the years, when as they say the hormones become more active as nature takes its course. Girls mature at an earlier age than boys, while boys believe they should be macho to gain the attention of the girls. Application of disciplinary measures in these circumstances would also prove difficult as what is an effective measure for a girl may be scoffed at by a boy.

The Government is in the process of constructing a number of new schools and I will suggest that serious consideration be given to classifying a number of these as boys' schools and an equal number as girls' schools. Along with this measure parents may be invited to choose whether their child should attend a coed school, a girls' school or a boys' school. This measure would add no additional cost to construction of the schools or addition to the number of teachers needed, and also allocation of male teachers to the boys' schools as far as possible, may also result in providing role models for the boys. I believe that there are only two fully government secondary schools which are not coed in Trinidad and Tobago at present, which are Queen's Royal College and St. Francois Girls' School and there is a high demand for places in these schools.

Mr. Vice-President, I believe we need to tackle this problem at its root which, I submit, is at the secondary school level to ensure that the grounding obtained at

the primary school level is not eroded. If my suggestion is acted on, it will be instructive to analyze after an adequate period of time the relative performances of the boys' schools, girls' schools and coed schools under the umbrella of Government.

These are my brief comments. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill):** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I wish to place on record our thanks to all those Senators who participated in this debate on yet another budget for the period 2005/2006. As I listened to the contributions, we basically heard issues—questions about Tobago, about education, about crime, the economy, legal systems, energy, social systems, future directions, agriculture, implementation and by and large some policy issues.

Mr. Vice-President, there has been a view expressed that the budget in its present form does absolutely nothing for anybody and I guess that view is really based on a lack of understanding of what the issues are, that the population requires to be addressed. Throughout the contributions there was the issue of crime and that is an issue that we recognize to be a difficult one and we are putting in place what is required to do that.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to put in perspective something that must be said, because, I do not know who else would say it and I do not know if I would get an opportunity to deal with it. And it is this whole question about how this system works and who is effectively in control.

On occasions I have said that the Government and the Ministers are responsible for policy and implementation is really the work of the public service.

### **5.30 p.m.**

I have heard that interpreted to mean that I am launching some attack on the public service. Mr. Vice-President, the Ministry of Finance appoints accounting officers, as a requirement of law. In making that appointment, I want to place on record, what those instructions are to the accounting officer. It is a document signed by the Minister of Finance. It goes as follows:

“Sir,

1. I have the honour to inform you that you are appointed to be the Accounting Officer for all Votes and Accounts to be the accounted for under Head...”

Let us say Head X:

“2. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer are important and varied and would be best appreciated by reference to the Financial Regulations. It will be seen that the Regulations stress the personal responsibility of the Accounting Officer for the proper conduct of Financial business.

3. Your most obvious duty is to ensure that the Public Funds entrusted to your care are properly safe-guarded. In these as in other matters of a technical nature, you will naturally have the advice of appropriate expert officers...

4. It is equally part of your duty as the Accounting Officer to ensure that the funds entrusted to you are applied only to the purposes intended by Parliament.”

When we sit here, go through the debate and pass an Appropriation Bill, what, in fact, we are passing is expenditure by Heads. Once we do that, then this officer is an important part of the system.

I want to read a particular piece that says:

"6. As the Accounting Officer, you will be answerable to the Public Accounts Committee for the formal regularity and propriety, in all the senses described above, of all the expenditure out of the Votes for which you are responsible. Similarly, you are expected to ensure that adequate machinery exists for the due collection and bringing to account, whether as Appropriation-in-Aid or as Exchequer Receipts of all receipts of any kind connected with the Votes under your control."

This is the accounting officer. It continues:

“12. Finance is thus regarded as an essential element in the consideration of all policy questions from the onset; and the Permanent Secretary as the *Administrative Head of the Ministry/Department not under Ministerial Control must make sure* as a pre-requisite of efficient and economical administration, that financial considerations are taken into account at all stages by his Ministry/Department in framing and reaching decisions of policy, and in their execution. It is for this reason that it is the general rule that the Permanent Head of the Ministry/Department is the Accounting Officer; the Accounting Officer must be prepared to answer for the efficient and economical conduct of the Ministry/Department as a

whole, and the only officer who is in a position to do that is its Permanent Head.

14. From this description of the duties of an Accounting Officer, it will be clear that the Permanent Head of a Ministry/Department has ultimate responsibility over a wide field; and that his overall responsibility clearly cannot be carried out unless he is supported by a sound organisation which permits a proper delegation of duties. For this reason it is one of his chief duties to make sure that the Ministry/Department is organised and staffed on sound lines. In particular, he should pay special attention to the organisation and staffing of both the financial and establishment branches of the Ministry/Department and should encourage the closest liaison between them, for these branches have a particular responsibility on his behalf for seeing that there is a proper use of the public funds with which the Ministry is entrusted.”

I make this statement because Government runs on the basis of law and this is contained in the Exchequer and Audit Act Financial Regulations. It sets out, in some detail, who is responsible and how they are responsible. So let us not get caught up in the rhetoric of who has and who has not; the thing is prescribed very, very properly within the law and, insofar as that is concerned, this is how we have to be judged.

In looking at the report of the Public Service Commission, which is the body responsible for hiring, it is important that we talk about this, because one can get the impression, from some commentators on that side, that you have this significant amount of control and you can do whatever you want, but it is really a question of performance. It is really a question of understanding that the system under which we work has outlived its usefulness, insofar as the objectives we have set are concerned.

What are these objectives? They are as follows: Today, you have a situation in which a population is asking that you deliver on time consistently, predictably. The system that drives that, the system that drives that, the system that drives that, is not present. We have a system which, basically, says that we have to protect those responsible for delivery from bad guys like us, because we do not really have the ability to deal with our own issues.

The Public Service Commission is the organization appointed under the Constitution. The report says that Constitution grants the commission:

“...power to appoint persons to hold or act in offices in the Civil Service, Prisons Service and Fire Service, including the power to make appointments on promotion and transfer and to confirm appointments and to remove and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding or acting in such offices.”

When we talked about the Police Reform Bills, I think it was Sen. R. Montano who made the point, "Well, you have powers of delegation." Mr. Vice-President, according to the last report:

"Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments were delegated the authority to make acting appointments in offices in Range 41 and under in non-vacant offices and in vacant offices for a period not exceeding three (3) months...

The Public Service Commission retains the authority to make acting appointments in vacant offices for determinate periods of one year or more."

So on the one hand, the impression is given that you have all this delegated authority, but in actual fact, you really have it only for individuals in Range 41 and under and for a specific period of time. Therefore, the question that arises for those of us who run institutions that have to deliver is: What kind of system is that, as it relates to people?

The report continues:

"The Commission has had to remind Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department that it has the sole responsibility for the termination of acting appointment and not Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments."

This is the last point I would make on this particular matter. There has been a lot of criticism about what the Government is doing about performance and delivery and there have been all kinds of issues about setting up special purpose organizations and why we cannot fix the problem and so on. The reason we cannot fix the problem is that the problem is required to be fixed by a two-thirds majority, which we do not now have and which we really should have because we need to fix some of this.

One of the things that the report also says is:

"The Commission had delegated Permanent Secretaries...the authority to transfer within the Ministries/Departments, officers who hold

substantive appointments in Range 41 and under. In High Court Action #41 of 2001 it was determined that a Permanent Secretary had acted incorrectly when the Permanent Secretary had further delegated his authority to transfer another officer."

So there is also an element here of activity, within the legal system, in which one is not sure whether one has the authority or not, because if one does it, it can be the subject of review. Therefore, you have a situation where everybody is talking delivery, delivery, but the system does not allow us to do so; therefore, we will work around the system. I just wanted to reflect that, so that whenever we hear the discussion about, "You responsible, you responsible," yes, you are responsible, but you are responsible within the framework set up.

Let me talk a little about some of the comments made about the economy. The macroeconomics and finance sub-sector of the Vision 2020 Report, which the Government has been looking at, has identified, in its submissions, a couple of things: one has to do with the challenge of growth and development; establishing the target rate of growth on gross national product (GNP) per capita, something that Sen. Seepersad-Bachan and Sen. King spoke about; the structure and operation of the Trinidad and Tobago economy; approach to meeting the development challenge; programming model for projections and preliminary results; diversification and Dutch Disease; macroeconomic policy roles for sustainable growth, that is rules for fiscal policy; rules for monetary policy and rules for income policies; the role of the State; achieving the target growth rate with some recommendations. Additionally, there is also a part of the document that talks about framework for action in which there are objectives, measures, initiatives and timeframes.

A lot of commentators have been asking for that kind of information and it is available for all sections of the Government. It is available for the 25 or 26 sub-sectors and each of them have that kind of information. [*Interruption*]

**Sen. Seepersad-Bachan:** Is it going to be laid in Parliament?

**Sen. The Hon. C. Enill:** Yes; it is going to be laid in Parliament very shortly. It will provide you with the position that the Government is, obviously, committed to on the basis of where it has reached through this process. I guess we would be able to debate policy at that time, but for the time being, the policy we are following is the one that we have, in fact, put or enunciated in the Social and Economic Policy Framework. In terms of the deficiencies that currently exist in the planning framework, objectives, measures and deliverables, that have been dealt with.

The other question that came to the table was the whole question of poverty and what percentage of this population was really poor. In a document entitled “Poverty Reduction and Social Development”, presented at the Inter-American Development Bank Region Three, Long-term Development Challenges and Opportunities Programme, a submission made by Kairi Consultants Limited indicated that the percentage of the population that was poor was 24 per cent.

The percentage of the poor female population was marginally above the poor male population. However, female heads of households were much more likely to be poorer than male heads of households, and it develops a lot of details on households, population, indigent households and so on.

**5.45 p.m.**

**Hon. Senator:** When was that?

**Sen. The Hon. C. Enill:** This was from a report dated July 13, 2004, and it was presented to the IADB.

Mr. Vice-President, when this Government came into office it decided that the focus had to be on dealing with the poor and what we sought to do was instead of focusing the agenda on economic and social policy which was what we met, we changed it and basically started to focus on social and economic policy.

In fact, coming out of that decision, we also have and we have produced the Social Sector Investment Programme 2006 which we have been doing for a couple of years now. This is where, within this particular submission, you will find all those things that we are doing specifically for targeting the poor. Within this particular programme, there are issues of development and issues that deal with remedial, preventative and a host of programmes designed by social services to deal with all the identified problems we have in our society as they relate to poverty and issues relative to social issues and all one has to do is to take the information, comment on it and say whether or not one believes what the Government is doing is right or wrong. But instead what we hear from time to time is that the Government is doing absolutely nothing, and that is not true.

The other piece of the discussion that needs for us to put in some kind of context is the question of Government policy and the one-year budget statement. I have heard some people say they have heard the same thing last year and year before. Well, a Social Economic Policy Framework is a three- to-five-year policy document and coming out of that you do your one-year, so I find it difficult to understand why you would have something different each year if what you are really doing is over a period of time trying to achieve a particular objective. I



really do not understand that and I would leave that for those who can deal with that to treat with it.

Mr. Vice-President, suffice it to say that the Social and Economic Policy Framework, the Social Sector Investment Programme are two critical documents that one must refer to if one has to comment on the budget document or statement because in fact, it simply takes out of those documents what the particular focus will be for the particular year.

There are just a couple other issues that I want to refer to because we have been here for four days now and I do not want to extend this longer than I have to. Let me talk about the tax benefits. I find it absolutely amazing that this Government will take the decision to give to middle income earners—because if you look at the personal allowance you will see it is really for middle and lower—something to the tune of \$1.2 billion and people would say that that does not improve people's condition. I really do not understand that.

I heard discussions about savings. For the year 2003, the incentive that we gave to credit unions for shares purchased resulted in \$55,585,000 million; in 2004, \$23,000,926. Do you know what that tells me, Mr. Vice-President? It tells me that people do not have the cash to save, because in order to get some of these benefits you have to put out the cash and then claim it at the end of the year.

What the Government did was simple, give the cash so you can do a couple of things: reduce the debt that you currently have because you have debt, credit cards operating—if you look at bank profits and analyze it you will see from where the profits are coming, it is interest from consumer loans. So in a real sense we had this notion of the working poor and the very poor because in many instances—

**Sen. Prof. Ramchand:** Mr. Vice-President, while the Minister is on this subject I want to get the record clear. Of the \$1.2 billion revenue foregone, how much of that comes from the income tax concession, and how much from the corporation tax reduction?

**Sen. The Hon. C. Enill:** All are from the personal income tax; the corporation tax I think is another \$250 million. Remember we are increasing the personal savings and also reducing the rate.

I am one of those who believe that the people of Trinidad and Tobago will do the right thing. They are the same people who put us in office, that was the right thing, so I have no doubt at all that at the end of the day they will invest properly. But clearly, here is an opportunity for those institutions like the credit unions, Unit Trust and other kinds of institutions to develop programmes for their

membership that would allow those amounts to go where they need to go and the Government, I believe, would also be looking at focusing some attention on getting individuals to understand the value of investment rather than simply savings, which I think is where we need to go.

In the analysis done by Moody's they said a lot of good things and they said some other things, but the one thing they have said which I want to share with you is on the macroeconomic performance and outlook. It basically said a number of things but the piece I want to put on the record is this: The authorities are keen on promoting economic diversification both within and outside the energy sector in order to ensure local participation, a strategy that has proven to be somewhat successful.

The non-energy sector has been faring quite well growing at an average of 4 per cent over the past few years suggesting that the Dutch Disease has been fairly contained thus far. Manufacturing, construction and financial services have been leading non-energy growth in part due to increased government consumption.

I just want to put on the record that while there are concerns and issues, independent individuals who we contract over time to look at these matters provide us with that kind of advice.

Let me now turn to some specifics. We share Sen. Dr. Kernahan's view; yes we dream of a better way of life. I do not think we ever said it was a perfect budget; we said we were addressing basic needs and that is basically what we had intended to do. Yes, there is an issue with crime, yes, we are putting in place requirements and yes, we will deal with that.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran asked some interesting questions for which I do not have the answers now: How is poverty measured? How is unemployment measured? Those are things we can deal with because we do have the institutions that deal with them like the Central Statistical Office which is basically the one we talked about.

We agree with Sen. Baksh that safety and security are primary issues. We do not agree that this budget does not have hope, we think that there is. Sen. Seetahal talked about the quality of life in Barbados versus Trinidad; she said get cracking, it is taking too long. We accept that.

Sen. Rocke talked about family and family values and I want to point her to some details which I did not get into. Those which were in fact done by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, whose discussion in which he intended focusing on the family as the basic unit of the society was in fact, the focus of the

Government. Most of the things she had spoken about in some way are being addressed by policy at the various levels within Government ministries. Implementation, somewhat of a challenge, but at the level of policy and how we do it, it is happening.

One of the dilemmas we face is that international agencies believe if you spend money on social issues and on supporting poverty you are in fact wasting resources. That is a view that we do not share. We believe that poor people, like the rich, need to be taken care of and we would take care of them and we do not make any apologies for that.

Sen. R. Montano talked about getting fired if you do not perform. Unfortunately, the system we currently operate on runs counter to that, you do not get fired if you do not deliver, in fact, you get promoted in many instances and that is a challenge for any Government, it does not really matter which government is in place. We have seen individuals who got promoted simply because they did absolutely nothing and when you look at the file it had nothing in it and I keep making the point. My comptroller goes today, and up to now I do not know who the new comptroller is.

**Sen. Mark:** I hear Fitzroy is your man.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Enill:** I have not heard. So I think that that is really a challenge that any Government has to deal with. I just hope that at some point in time we would ask this question.

There are some 80,000 people on the Government's payroll and if you put that amount into a system like this, the question that needs to be answered is: Are we getting any kind of value? And I do not accept that if you change the measurement system you would get a different result. What needs to change is the system by which you operate, not the way in which you measure success or failure as Sen. Seepersad-Bachan has said, because we do have a programme for measuring it in the way that she has described.

#### **6.00 p.m.**

The same service that is involved in doing what they do now is not yet ready to change and, therefore, they have a way of basically not being very enthusiastic about the programme. They are there permanently; you are here temporarily, so you find ways around the system in the meantime.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand talked a lot about why the Government cannot do the work that the NAR did. One of the interesting things we have seen, for example, is

that the system works if people take responsibility and wherever you see success in the public service it is based on the individual; it is not based on the system. That is a distinction I want to make. In the private sector you have a system—it does not matter who was into the system—which operates a particular way and it provides a particular result. In the public service, for the system to work, people must make a decision about a choice.

Unfortunately, we have seen in some instances where the choice that people make is not to support the Government in power but to simply do whatever they can to frustrate the efforts of the Government. That is a choice that people make. We see it. For example, every time budget comes around we have outages; we have shutdowns and absenteeism. I could tell you when the next one is coming. We have seen it on a year-to-year basis; we have looked at it and we have found it a bit quite curious. When we attempted to deal with it or look at it, some of the individuals that are involved, whenever an election is called, they basically take leave and you see them on platforms. That is a reality. We are not complaining, but you need to understand that as you talk holier-than-thou about this, that and the other, there are some imperatives that are taking place that we have to deal with and we need to know what they are.

In terms of Sen. Basharat Ali, the only thing I can promise you, Sir, is that I am not going to take another year before you and the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries come together. I would try and do that a lot faster. Sen. Seepersad-Bachan spoke about after \$90 billion we had so much to deal with. I am not going to do it on this occasion, but what I will do on the next occasion is to deal with this particular issue, this notion that you had only this and that was what the cost of running government was, because that is not true. What is true is that the revenues that you got you spent this way, but the contingent liability, the off-budget expenditure, was what made the difference between what is seen here as central government expenditure and debt.

Let me tell you something. One of the reasons our expenditure has ramped up so much is because we took the decision that we are going to put everything on the books. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, last year I had a problem with WASA. Today, for WASA to survive, it is basically surviving on borrowed money.

**Sen. Seepersad-Bachan:** Everybody has a problem with WASA.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Enill:** Yes, I know. Therefore, one of the things that we have seen is that as you start to expand the network and the system gets older, it is costing you more to irrigate Trinidad and Tobago. That is an issue. I think we estimated that to fix WASA, it is going to cost something like \$12 billion and that

is a challenge for all of us. And if you get into government tomorrow morning it would not change the fact. You still have to go and change the pipes and you still have to deal with all the issues that we are talking about.

So in a real sense, the point I am making is, while the Government expenditure has appeared to be high, it is because we took a decision sometime ago to put everything on the table. You see, if we put everything on the table, then we would know what our true cost of running the State is, and we believe that we know that now and it is what you are seeing there.

I listened to Sen. Seepersad-Bachan talk about excess revenue and I wondered how she could work out what she is asking us to do. First of all, revenue is based on taxes received from oil companies. So you have a petrochemical company; you have an oil company that does oil and gas and it basically gives you a result and it pays tax on that. The way we do it is as follows: We take a position and we say, okay, this is what our budgeted revenue is going to be and everything in excess of that goes into the Revenue Stabilization Fund. Therefore, if there is additional gas and oil, once it is extra, it flows. So I do not understand the statement that says you only put oil into the Revenue Stabilization Fund and you do not put gas. It is not possible. You do it on the basis of the proceeds of the revenue from—

**Sen. Seepersad-Bachan:** May I just ask a question then?

**Sen. The Hon. C. Enill:** No.

**Sen. Joseph:** Same treatment. Well done.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Enill:** You cannot treat my colleagues that way and then expect me give way. I am sorry.

So that statement does not make sense and I do not agree with it.

**Sen. King:** Mr. Vice-President, if I could just ask a question, before the Minister concludes. You were quoting from a document which stated that we had less oil and gas production and we had more diversification. Could you just give us the name of the document please, and the author? Thank you.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Enill:** This is which one?

**Sen. King:** You were quoting from a document which stated that we were recovering from the Dutch Disease; we had diversified somewhat, so I would like the name and the author.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Enill:** The name of the document is *Global Credit Research, Moody's Investor Service*. The date is September 2005, Trinidad and Tobago. Contact: A-L-E-S-S-A-N-D-R-A A-L-E-C-C-I-A.

**Sen. King:** Thanks a lot.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Enill:** Mr. Vice-President, I want to conclude as we did on the last occasion. This Government is giving top priority to the security of the State, which is the Government's first responsibility to our people. As we said then, we must be able to walk the streets in safety and enjoy our homes in comfort. Despite the obstacles with the cooperation of all, it will be an objective we shall achieve.

We will work to strengthen families as this is the surest way of strengthening our communities. We will pursue with a passion our efforts to assuage the concerns and fears of the citizens. We must regain the respect and trust of each other and as the challenges arise, which they will, we must put on our tall boots, go into the communities and work with our people. We will make Trinidad and Tobago the paradise that it can be. This is not only a task for the Government; it should be a determined resolve for all our citizens.

But to achieve this requires a change in attitude, a commitment and determination by each one of us to be our brother's keeper. [*Desk thumping*] I cannot over-emphasize the importance of this. It requires that each day we must be better than the last day; it requires a return of the basics of wholesome family life; driving carefully on the roads; going to worship; respecting and caring for our elders; teachers comporting themselves in an exemplary manner to earn respect; students obeying laws; helpful police officers; respect for authority; offering of prayers and supplication and going that extra mile.

No budget and sums of money can replace these challenges. There must be a return to soul, to conscience. This requires unity and not division. I close by reminding this honourable Senate that this is our country; this is our Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

*Appropriation Bill (Budget)*

*Friday, October 14, 200*

*Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith):** Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, October 18, 2005 at 1.30 p.m., at which time we will deal with item “Motions” under “Government Business”.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Senate adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 6.14 p.m.*