

Leave of Absence

Friday, January 27, 2006

SENATE

Friday, January 27, 2006

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Dana Seetahal from today's sitting of the Senate.

PAPER LAID

Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended December 31, 2000. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. C. Enill)*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Special Purpose State Companies
(Scrutiny of Contracts)**

- 26. Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance:
- (i) Could the Minister of Finance tell this Senate whether these special purpose state companies will be generally subject in their contracts to private law or public law?
 - (ii) If it is public law, could the Minister of Finance state who would exercise this scrutiny to ensure that strict procedures are adhered to?
 - (iii) Could the Minister also state exactly what procedures, for example, procurement and accounting standards as well as reporting and monitoring arrangements these entities would be subjected to?

The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, in fact, I only got this when I walked in here, so we were not aware of the questions that would come up today. I have the answer to mine but it is not here. Could I just ask that these questions be put on next Tuesday's Order Paper?

Sen. Mark: Madam President, with your guidance, are we going to be taking six questions? Because remember three questions come up every Tuesday.

Madam President: I think we can do that, yes.

Sen. Mark: I would suggest, to save Dr. Lenny Saith any—he can answer the third question, because he has the answer.

Madam President: Do you have the answer to Question No. 34?

Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith: I do not have it here.

Question, by leave, deferred.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Wade Mark:

**Special Purpose State Companies
(Scrutiny of Accounts by Parliament)**

- 27.** Could the hon. Minister of Finance state:
- (a) Whether these special purpose state entities would be subject to financial scrutiny by the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee as well as any other Joint Parliamentary Committee?
 - (b) What procedures would be adopted to ensure that these companies' Annual Financial Audited Reports are tabled in Parliament and consequently referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee as well as any other Joint Parliamentary Committee?

**Information Channel 4/NCC
(Details of Expenditure)**

- 34.** Could the hon. Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries provide the Senate with the following:
- (a) The total expenditure realized by the Government to keep the Information Channel 4/National Carnival Commission (NCC) Channel 4 on the air from January 15, 2005 to the present day?
 - (b) The total revenue generated or earned by the Information Channel 4/NCC Channel 4 from January 15, 2005 to the present time?

Questions, by leave, deferred.

Written Answer to Question

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WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

The following question was asked by Sen. Wade Mark:

**Advertising Agencies
(Details of)**

- 31.** (a) Could the hon. Minister of Health provide the Senate with a list of names of the various advertising agencies employed by the Ministry or any Statutory Authorities, government agencies and departments under his control for the period January 01, 2002 to October 30, 2005?
- (b) Could the Minister provide the Senate with a breakdown of the expenditure per agency in respect of (a) above?
- (c) Could the Minister also state the amount of monies utilized in both the print media and electronic media in a detailed way over the same period as well as the various events hosted, promoted and advertised?

Vide end of sitting for written reply.

FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (2005) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill):
Madam President, I beg to move,

That a Bill to vary the appropriation of the sum of the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2005, be now read a second time.

The Bill provides for the variation of the 2005 appropriation in the sum \$79,600,000. The variation affects the following heads of expenditure: Increases in Head 39, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, \$52 million; Head 40, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, \$27,600,000. Decreases in Head 26, the Ministry of Education \$21,600,000 and Head 36, the Ministry of Housing, \$58 million.

The purpose of this variation of the 2005 appropriation is to bring to account by way of retiring warrants issued for advances from Treasury deposits to meet expenditure for which funds were not allocated within the 2005 budget. These

advances were made to the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. The increase of \$52 million to the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment was to provide funding for the Government's street lighting programme. Government agreed to implement a national street lighting programme over the period 2005—2007 at an estimated cost of \$626,927,400. The programme includes the installations of approximately 82,000 new street lights, the upgrade of approximately 36,000 lamps, from 70 watt to 150 watt luminaries; illumination of 80 kilometres of highway and addressing the street lighting needs of newer housing developments.

In fiscal 2005, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission commissioned \$72 million for the supply of labour and material of this programme. Of this amount, \$20 million was provided in the first supplementary general warrant, vide Act No. 12 of June 23, 2005, leaving an unfunded balance of \$52 million. In order to bridge the financing gap between commitments and the fund appropriated, a warrant for an advance for \$52 million from the Treasury Deposit Account was authorized by the hon. Minister of Finance.

In the case of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, in March 2005 the Government agreed to provide the sum of \$15 million to the National Energy Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (NEC) for the development of new industrial sites at the following locations:

Cap de Ville Extension	530 hectares
Oropouche Bank	1,400 hectares
Point Lisas, South and East	1,400 hectares.

In the following months Government also agreed, among other things:

- (1) To approve a proposal by SURAL for the development of an aluminium smelter and downstream manufacturing facilities, estimated at US \$590 million.
- (2) The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries identify and make available to the National Energy Corporation funds in the sum of US \$2 million or TT \$12.6 million which represented the NEC's portion of both direct and shared, that is, NEC/SURAL expenditure required to move the project forward.

The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries was unable to identify funds in its 2005 budget allocation for these initiatives and proposed that it be drawn from Treasury deposits. In the context of Government's policy decision to participate in

both investments, the hon. Minister of Finance authorized the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to access resources totalling \$27,600,000 from the Treasury deposits. The required allocation is being sourced from savings under the heads of expenditures of the Ministries of Education and Housing.

In the case of the Ministry of Education, an amount of \$12 million was available from the provision of book grants to secondary schools, since the processing of the \$1,000 book grants for lower 6 Form students for the academic year 2005/2006 was not completed by the end of September 2005. This situation eliminated the possibility of meeting these commitments from the 2005 budgetary provision. I should report, though, that in the month of October that was, in fact, dealt with. Further, a sum of \$9.6 million was sourced from the Student Support Services Programme. The allocation for procurement of furniture and equipment for seven district offices was not fully utilized because the Ministry was able to establish only three of the district offices during the 2005 fiscal year.

With respect to the Ministry of Housing, although works were completed for certain projects under the Ministry's 2005 accelerated housing programme, the bills were not tendered within the time frame to allow for settlement. As a result, \$58 million was unspent. Funds were released in fiscal 2006 to settle these outstanding bills.

I now refer to transfer of funds between subheads of the same heads of expenditure. With effect from August 01, 1988, Cabinet delegated its authority to approve transfers between subheads to the Minister of Finance when it agreed as follows:

“Requests for transfer of funds between separate subheads under the same head of expenditure should no longer be submitted for the Cabinet but can be decided by the Minister of Finance on the advice of the Budget Division.”

Consequently, in fiscal 2005 the hon. Minister of Finance approved the transfer of funds in the sum of \$681,039,712 between subheads under the same head of expenditure. It should be noted that the transfers were approved by the Minister of Finance based on submissions or notes from the respective Ministers requesting this transfer.

It should also be noted that these transfers are requested to reflect changed circumstances in ministries and departments and a consequential reordering of priorities. They do not increase the total appropriation in any way. A statement showing the transfers approved by the Minister of Finance and explanations for some of the more significant transfers were attached as appendices 1 and 2 of the documents provided to the hon. Members of this Senate.

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Hon. Senators are asked to note that at the time of presentation of the 2006 budget in September 2005, revised revenue projections of \$28,200.9 million was presented. Correspondently, expenditure was forecasted at \$27,901.2 million resulting at that time in an anticipated surplus of \$299.7 million. This position was communicated to the Parliament. Based on the Ministry of Finance's data on the actual fiscal outturn for 2005, that is to say, after taking into account after the end of the year all the transactions that were, in fact, made and finalizing those transactions, we are pleased to advise that overall spending was \$27,274.7 million and total revenue was \$29,286.2 million yielding an overall fiscal surplus of \$2,011.5 million. This surplus is \$1,711.8 million, greater than that projected at the time of the presentation of the 2006 budget. Revenue exceeded the revised provision by \$1,085.3 million while actual expenditure was \$733.4 million lower than the revised allocation.

Permit me to bring for the attention of this Senate the exceptional performance of the capital account. You would recall that for fiscal 2005 an original sum of \$2,125 million was budgeted for the Government's capital programme. For the first Supplementary Appropriation Act in June 2005, the capital programme was increased to \$3,033,504,000. Based on the Ministry of Finance's data, actual expenditure on the capital programme for fiscal 2005 was \$3,004,200,000. This means that in value terms in fiscal 2005 the Government implemented a capital programme that was 41 per cent higher than the original budgetary allocation or 4 per cent higher than the revised estimates.

This clearly demonstrates that during fiscal 2005 the Government prudently managed the nation's resources. We deposited \$500 million in the Infrastructure Development Fund; we deposited approximately \$2.5 billion in the Revenue Stabilization Fund, or the savings funds as some would call it, and we registered an overall surplus on the fiscal account of \$2 billion. What we are doing this afternoon is simply bringing to the attention of the Parliament these issues because there was a timing difference between the last time when they were reported and the close of the books as at the end of December of last year.

With those few comments, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Sen. Wade Mark: Madam President, once again we, in this honourable Senate, have been called upon to engage in an exercise of sheer futility. As you are aware, the current arrangements allow the Government to spend, transfer, vary its allocations without any reference whatsoever to this honourable Parliament in

justification of such actions or decisions. So today we engage in an exercise of intellectual masturbation in which, what is taking place is that we in the Senate have been virtually handcuffed in our ability to change any items, any provisions that are currently before this honourable Chamber.

This is why we, in the United National Congress, have been articulating and agitating for some time now for meaningful Constitution reform in our Republic, because it is only meaningful reform that can make the Executive more accountable to the Legislature. Right now the Executive is effectively in charge of the Legislature. This is why today the Minister has presented a Bill to vary sums of moneys that were already allocated in the 2004/2005 budget. These activities have been already undertaken by the regime. To even compound the madness, we have transfers which, as you are aware, take place at the level of the Ministry as they seek to spend moneys from one subhead, or remove moneys I should say, from one subhead of expenditure to another subhead of expenditure within the ministry.

Would you believe that we are talking, according to the figures we have been provided with, we are referring to a figure in excess of \$681 million. Now the Minister may well argue it is minuscule; it is relatively small as a percentage of the overall budget for 2004/2005. That is not the issue. What this particular Bill demonstrates to us clearly, particularly the transfers, is a lack of proper planning. A budget is supposed to achieve a particular target. The Parliament, based on estimates that were projected by the Government for the period in question, was supposed to achieve those ends, but we realize this is all smoke and mirror. They come and fool the population that they would do a number of things and when we look at the reality a year later, we realize that it was just “ol’ talk”.

The incompetence, the lack of human resources, the lack of planning are all manifested in the document that we have before us today. But in spite of this particular exercise in which all we can do on these Benches as part of our public duty and responsibility, is to scrutinize after the fact, to highlight after the fact, to expose after the fact, the inadequacies of the present regime in terms of meeting its commitments and obligations to the citizenry of this Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. But we have a duty and we shall carry it out without fear or favour. What this Bill demonstrates again is a clear lack of accountability, transparency and scrutiny on the part of the Government's conduct when it comes to huge expenditure involving public funds in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

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Today I would like to briefly look at both the variation part of this Bill and, most importantly, the transfers which are alarming, to say the least. If we look at the transfers, we are told, according to the Bill, that the Government has increased expenditure in an effort to close its books and bring to an end its financial accounts for the year 2005. They have had to transfer moneys from one ministry to another. So we have seen in the schedule, Part 1, where the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment has had an increase in its allocation, by some \$52 million, similarly, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, \$27.6 million, giving a total allocation of \$79.6 million. Where did that money come from? It came from the Ministry of Education, some \$21.6 million.

The other Ministry that was able to release moneys was the Ministry of Housing, \$58 million. When we look, we cannot, in the case of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, where, as you know, the Government has promised a lot of street lights to solve crime—they believe the more street lights and lamps, the more safe the population would be. That is the PNM thinking, I would imagine. They say plenty street lights and crime will dissolve. This is the thinking of this regime, always like buildings in the sky.

So what has happened, as you would have noted in the Explanatory Note that we have before us, we are told the Cabinet approved a national street lighting programme that would amount to \$626 million, and we are given a breakdown of where these lights are going to be installed, or the numbers. I do not want to detain you and give you all that we have before us. We are told that the Electricity Commission committed some \$72 million of the \$115 million to light up the country to eliminate crime in that particular fiscal year. That was supposed to be a sum to address labour and material and they needed to get some funds back and the Government obliged. In order to bridge the gap between commitments and funds, a warrant of an advance of \$52 million was authorized by the Minister of Finance.

2.00 p.m.

I would like the hon. Minister of Finance to tell the Senate, this sum of \$72 million that was spent by the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) of which we allocated \$52 million to deal with street lighting, lamps and luminaries to illuminate the highways and byways, and all the housing development projects, who did all that? Was it T&TEC or did T&TEC award contracts and to whom? We want a detailed listing of all the contracts that were issued by T&TEC in this particular financial period 2004 and 2005. We would like to know the tendering procedures because we understand there is rampant

corruption in this exercise. We think that the Minister of Finance owes this Parliament and the country a detailed explanation on all those contractors who have gotten these contracts to supply labour and material to deal with these areas that they have mentioned.

T&TEC will not be able to do this given its current workforce. They have to look for additional labour. We want to know where the labour came from. Who are the contractors? What are the tendering procedures in this exercise? We are talking about their wanting to increase the rates from March 01, 2006 to poor people.

Let us go to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. My good friend who has now assumed responsibility for the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith—this is a family affair. This is Saith versus Saith. We need some explanations on these matters. They requested \$27 million from the Cabinet. To do what? The National Energy Corporation. Who is this? What is this? Who heads this? Prakash Saith, the brother of Dr. Lenny Saith. Family affair! Am I wrong?

Sen. Dr. Saith: Madam President, the Senator is taking the opportunity to make statements about people who are not here. Just for the record, he headed it under the NAR; he headed it under the PNM from 1991—1995; he headed it under the UNC from 1996—2001 and he continues to head it now. I ask the good Senator if he is going there to give the facts. In any case I do not see the relevance. The Senator is totally irrelevant.

Madam President: Sen. Mark, I want you to be very careful about calling people's names, unless you can be justified in so doing. As the Minister has pointed out, there is really no relevance in calling the person's name here.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, who is the head of the National Energy Corporation that you, the taxpayers of this country and I finance?

Sen. Sahadeo: He did not “just come” .

Sen. W. Mark: I did not say “he just came”. You just came. He has been here for a little while. You just came and you “leaving fast”. Do not interrupt me. I am speaking to the President. She is interrupting me. I was cool yesterday. Do not push me.

I ask the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to give an explanation to the Senate. He has just assumed responsibility, but he must be aware that the National Gas Company's (NGC) business portfolio was removed from the NGC and placed in the hands and company of the National Energy Corporation (NEC). I

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ask the Minister to explain to the national population why this was done. What was the rationale after all these years?

Hear what they wanted \$15 million to do. They wanted it to continue a smokestack industrialization strategy. The regime continues to bulldoze prime lands owned by the citizenry of this country without any explanation and accountability whatsoever. Here we have a company called NEC wanting money to clear our land to bring industries that America rejected. They know that they have “dotish” people in the Third World who will hug these companies that they do not want. The aluminium smelters that the American, Chinese and other governments do not want and have stopped building, a small country like Trinidad and Tobago is embracing them.

We are told that in April Cabinet approved a proposal for the development of an aluminium smelter and downstream manufacturing facilities estimated at US \$590 million. ALCOA wants to build an aluminium smelter. Firstly, we understand that it was Union Estate and they massacred the people, their properties, the environment and the rain forest. The serenity of these communities has been rudely interrupted by this regime. They have the tendency and propensity to engage in wild development. They have gone to Cap de Ville and they are looking for 530 acres or hectares. They have gone to the Oropouche bank, 1,400 hectares and Point Lisas south and east, another 1,400 hectares of land. The Minister does not come to Parliament to explain the rationale.

Do we need aluminium smelter plants in this country? All the evidence is showing that these plants are no longer being accommodated in the rich advanced developed countries. We want to reach developed status by 2020, but we are bringing into our country plants that the rich countries have rejected. ALCOA has not built a plant outside America in the last 20 years, but they are coming to Trinidad and Tobago because we understand that the Government has promised ALCOA free natural gas. They signed a memorandum of agreement and up to now the citizens of this country do not know the contents, or the terms and conditions of this MOU. We do not know what they have decided to give away in principle. We do not have a clue.

I have the *Newsday* dated Tuesday May 25, 2005 with an article entitled, “Government signs for \$1 billion aluminium plant”. It states:

The Trinidad and Tobago Government yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding with ALCOA, the largest aluminium plant in the world for the construction of a state of the art US \$1 billion aluminium smelter. The smelter which is to be located at Union Estate, La Brea will have an expected capacity

of approximately 25,000 metric tons per year. The smelter will receive its power supply from T&T's natural gas fields converting it into low cost electricity which will then serve the growth and demand of residential, commercial and industrial customers.

This was said by the then Minister, Eric Williams. The Government is signing MOUs as if they are going out of style with all these companies and giants to set up aluminium smelters. At one time we were told that ALCOA was going to Union Estate. They completely licked up Union Estate. Hundreds and hundreds of acres of land were bulldozed. The fauna, flora and tranquility of the community were rudely disturbed. Now we hear that they are no longer going to Union Estate but they are going to Cap de Ville and Chatham. We have some people who should not be in power because they are selling our country to multinational corporations. For what? These things always have deals. The PNM can run but they cannot hide. The searchlight of the rising sun will focus on you at the appropriate time. The Prime Minister has told us that "jail eh nice". I want the PNM to know that jail is not nice. We understand that many of them will be "making some jail".

We want to get answers. We will like the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to tell us what is taking place. Is it a fact that the Government intends to give free gas to ALCOA? We do not know.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Senator, please, because by the time I get to reply, the media would have left. The answer is no. The Government is not giving free gas to ALCOA. The answer in respect of smelters, I wish to remind you that when you were in government you also signed an MOU for aluminium smelter.

Sen. W. Mark: Today, we would like you to table in the Senate the terms and conditions that you have entered into with ALCOA so the country will know what you have done. It does not work so.

I will read the editorial of the *Newsday* dated Thursday, 24 June, 2005 headlined, "Silence on the smelter":

Two weeks ago we drew to the attention of the Government and the public of T&T the health and environmental problems associated with the operation of aluminium smelters in different parts of the world. We expected that by now some statement with respect to these concerns would have been forthcoming either from the Ministry of Energy...

Now that we have an energetic minister in charge of the ministry we expect you to answer.

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None came from the Ministry of Energy; none came from the National Energy Corporation which is ALCOA's partner in this \$1 billion project.

However, our editorial has been met with a stony silence which we find somewhat disturbing since we believe the Government should be anxious to allay any fears and apprehension that the smelter to be established at Union Estate at La Brea would be quite safe, presenting none of the serious health and environmental hazards experienced with aluminium smelters in such countries like Australia, Canada, Russia and Iceland.

This paints a disturbing picture. Apart from the damage to the area surrounding these plants, the effect of smelter emission on the water supply and the health of plant workers and neighbouring residents are well documented and frightening. For these reasons we must wonder at the haste with which the Government is proceeding to establish the \$1 billion smelter plant at Union Estate. It is worrying to think that Prime Minister Manning has gone ahead and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with ALCOA to construct this plant without seeing the necessity to bring such a controversial project to the nation's Parliament.

He signs and up to now the Parliament knows nothing about it, not even to debate it. It goes on to say:

To openly discuss the well known dangers to workers and the surrounding public associated with such smelters and to determine what measures or conditions this Government has imposed on ALCOA to ensure that the recorded affliction do not occur at La Brea.

The National Energy Corporation, the partner to ALCOA in this project, the smelter would be located on 800 acres of industrial estate or site which will also accommodate the establishment of heavy industrial plants.

These are files with only pieces from the *Newsday*, *Daily Express* and *The Trinidad Guardian* on this aluminium smelter. People are asking questions. The Government is silent and refuses to tell the country the dangers or benefits to be derived from such an enterprise. All we are hearing from the Prime Minister at his PNM convention is that he has \$7.4 billion of new investment to bring to Trinidad and Tobago involving two more smelter plants. We have ALCOA and we are told that we will have two more smelter plants.

Where are you going to put these things? In the sky? Where will the Government get land given the limitations of land space in this country? In the absence of a proper land use policy, how can you be destroying our rain forests,

agriculture, the serenity and tranquility of communities like Chatham, Cedros, Icacos and Fullerton? People from Union Estate, you will just destroy their lives. For what? We will find out soon. I believe that these projects are riddled with corruption and kickbacks. We know of the history of these projects and the amount of bribe and corruption that take place. In the absence of transparency and openness we are forced to conclude that there is more in the mortar than the pestle. Our searchlights will eventually discover what is what and who is who in this particular area. We will come to that at the appropriate time.

I raise this matter in terms of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries because the population wants answers on the aluminium smelters. They want the Government to justify the cost benefit analysis in Parliament. We want to know why the Government is pursuing these plants when other countries are rejecting them. Is it in the best interest of this country? If the masses of the people in Cedros say that they do not want that plant, let us discuss the matter. The least you can do is to sit and chat with these people. If the Government continues as the Prime Minister is saying, the silent majority wants ALCOA, let him call a referendum to find out if the silent majority wants an aluminium plant. Do not tell the country the silent majority wants the plant.

Where is the evidence to that? If you continue to push people they will revolt. Tear gas and bullets will not stop people. You see what happened in Point Fortin, today? People have to protest in order to get this Government to act. In Point Fortin there are bad roads, no employment and water. They blocked the roads and burnt tyres. The Minister of Works and Transport is now saying that he will fix the roads next week. People must know that when they want things in Trinidad and Tobago, protest and block the roads.

Let us deal with the transfer of \$684 million. With the Ministry of National Security, I do not know, I can only assume that there is much incompetence. The Minister came to Parliament and defended all the programmes that he suggested should be implemented in 2005/2006. Hear the programmes he told the country that he will implement. To help whom? The young people who are dying every day on our streets; 387 of our young men and women perished in 2005. From the way things are going, the prediction is that under this regime it will climb to over 500 young people in 2006. By the time we reach the general election in 2007, we might have more than 800 persons being murdered in this country. That is the legacy of the PNM.

They told everybody what they were going to do for the young people. They were going to establish a Civilian Conservation Corps. They will increase the

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allocation in that instance to \$3.6 million. Next was the Military-Led Academic Training (MILAT), \$10.5 million. That is what the Minister of National Security, the silent Minister told us, the National Youth Service, \$13.8 million; the Military-Led Programme of Apprenticeship and Reorientation Training (MIPART), \$13.9 million. Do you know how many young people could have been taken off the streets in terms of discipline under the military? The Government promised the people that. They have deceived the youths. They took \$65.2 million and it moved from MILAT, MYPART, NYS and “all kinda my something to my belly”. “The military eating food fuh so! \$10 million gone to buy food.” The Government could not have anticipated that the army is getting more and more hungry and they need food? Why do they have to set up programmes and then take the money from the programmes to feed the army? The Government took \$65 million from programmes that were supposed to help the young people and the bulk of the money went to food and maintenance of vehicles.

I want the Minister of National Security to tell this country whether there is conflict in the military today. What is the conflict between the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT) and the Defence Force? We want to know. People are talking. Information has reached us that the Government is putting pressure on the Brigadier of the Defence Force. They have made three offers to him to demit office. The last offer was an attachment at the United Nations.

Sen. Joseph: On a point of order. The Senator is misleading the Senate. He is doing things that could have security implications. The Government is not pressuring any brigadier. It is also irrelevant to the debate that is taking place.

Madam President: Sen. Mark, on the point of national security, you need to be careful and I think you are imputing improper motive on the Minister. Please desist.

Sen. W. Mark: I am concerned about national security because my national security is in trouble too. I cannot trust this Government. I do not trust the Minister of National Security. The only way I will deal with national security is to expose the Minister. I am not having any secrecy with you.

Madam President: Senator, speak directly to me.

Sen. W. Mark: Nobody in this country is safe with the PNM. They are setting up people all over the country; have criminals in high places and they will not move them.

We want to know what is happening. You have a legal unit called SAUTT that has not been given any legal framework to operate and we are allocating money

every year to an illegal outfit. They allocate money for blimp, helicopter gunship and all kinds of attack helicopters. To whom? To SAUTT. You are telling me I must not ask questions. Do you think it is a lodge or a secret society? This is the place we have to ask questions. I cannot ask you that question behind closed doors because you will mamaguy me. *[Interruption]* Not at question time. You do not answer properly. You hide and manipulate answers. I get many real answers from the ministries already and when you come here you give me a bogus answer. I do not trust this Government and the population does not trust them. I am glad that he has admitted that there is no conflict and there is no attempt to remove the brigadier. I am happy about that. I wanted him to say that. That is why I asked here. I am not going behind any closed doors to ask you about that. Tell the country that there is no plan to remove the man. *[Interruption]* You do not worry about the UNC. UNC is okay. If all is well in the military, what about the police? Are there problems with the police? We understand that Mr. Bob Lindquist was in this country conducting enquiries into a particular senior officer's activities.

Sen. Joseph: Madam President, on a point of order. The point of order is relevance of the Senator's contribution, especially where he is bringing up issues that can have the security of the country at risk.

Madam President: Senator, please get back to the Bill before us.

Sen. W. Mark: I asked a question. It is either the Minister admits or denies. If I ask, did you bring Bob Lindquist into the country in the last three weeks in an effort to investigate a particular senior officer, tell me.

2.30 p.m.

Sen. D. Montano: It is either you sit down and hush up or get out.

Sen. W. Mark: I have told you already do not harass me.

Sen. D. Montano: You need to sit down or get out.

Sen. W. Mark: You believe that you are a slave master. This is an independent country, you know. You still have this attitude that you are a slave master! *[Interruption]* I take orders from her, not from you, Montano. You have no right to be talking to me like that. *[Interruption]* Madam President, he has no right to be talking to me like that.

Madam President: All Senators, please, I want absolute silence!

Sen. W. Mark: He has no right to talk to me like that!

Madam President: Sen. Mark, I want silence in this Senate now!

Sen. W. Mark: He has no right to talk to me like that. I am a senior officer.

Madam President: Sen. Mark, I am asking you again to desist and to get back to the Bill before us.

Sen. W. Mark: Tell this man here to desist; this man here. *[Interruption]* Madam President, can he tell me that?

Madam President: No.

Sen. W. Mark: You must rule and tell this gentleman not to harass me when I am making my contribution!

Madam President: Sen. Mark, please sit for a moment. *[Interruption]* Senators, please, you cannot tell another Senator to sit down and hush up or to get out. I would prefer if you did not do that. Thank you.

Sen. W. Mark: Thank you very much, Madam President. May I go on?

Sen. D. Montano: Provided you are relevant.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, you see he is harassing me again; I seek your protection.

Madam President: You all have a love affair going on? *[Laughter]*

Sen. W. Mark: Me? Me? Me? Madam President, Please! Please! I understand that in another country they want to amend the law, you know, not here. *[Laughter]* No, I am straight like a pin. *[Laughter]* I have no relationship with Montano. He might be eyeing me—*[Laughter]*—but I am not interested in Montano! *[Laughter]*

Madam President: Sen. Mark, please continue with the Bill.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, let us deal with the Ministry of Public Administration and Information. We understand that the Caribbean News Media Group has commenced operations and 610 radio is back on the air.

Hon. Senator: No.

Sen. W. Mark: This is what I understand. In fact, I have been listening to that radio station 100 FM, which is a family of the former NBN. We saw where \$5.5 million was taken from the Ministry of Public Administration and Information that was allocated to this agency and was placed in other entities; I would imagine telecommunication got some of it.

Madam President, when I come to Community Development, I would like to know what is the relationship between NCC TV4 and this Caribbean News Media Group. I would like the hon. Minister to tell us. I understand the PNM has been using NCC TV4 to promote its own propaganda at no expense to them. We would like to know who gave the PNM the authority to use NCC TV4 to carry its broadcast of its 50-year anniversary celebration. I was told that. I did not see it but somebody told me that it was carried live on NCC TV4! There was no tagline saying: "This has been paid for." We would like to know how could the PNM, which is a political party, use the resources of the State to promote its own private political agenda. That is corruption! We call for an investigation into the misuse and the abuse of the resources of the State by this evil and wicked regime.

Madam President: Senator—

Sen. W. Mark: Sorry, Madam President.

Madam President: We all heard you. Continue now.

Sen. W. Mark: All right, Madam President, but I am concerned, I do not like to see people stealing from the public purse! It is a crime to steal from the public purse!

Madam President: Senator!

Sen. W. Mark: It is a crime! It is a crime! [*Interruption*]

Madam President: Sen. Mark, just be careful of the words that you are using and make sure you are not imputing improper motives to anybody in this Senate. Thank you very much.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I call on the Minister of Public Administration and Information to launch an enquiry. I do not trust him, so I will call on the DPP, and I would have some problems with the DPP too, so I do not know who to call on, Madam President. Madam President, you cannot trust this regime. I cannot call on Dr. Lenny Saith to launch it because I would get a cover-up report. I had better call the FBI and the CIA to conduct these enquiries because we cannot trust this regime any longer. I would like Sen. Dr. Saith, when he is making his contribution to let us know what is the relationship between Caribbean News Media Group and the National Carnival Commission.

I know that the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs is being used as a conduit to channel moneys to this particular TV station. They should call that station the Joan Yuille-Williams station because she pays for that. [*Interruption*] Sen. the hon., I beg your pardon.

Madam President: Minister.

Sen. W. Mark: Minister. Madam President, let us go again to Public Utilities and the Environment. Imagine they took moneys from wages and COLA both in forestry and horticulture; they took money from the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation Pension Plan, which they were supposed to establish four years ago; from the Institute of Marine Affairs—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I would like the Minister of Finance to let us know what explains this heavy transfer to the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP). Did the Government not budget properly for the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP)? Madam President, \$17 million and they used Grenada for it. What about the National Reforestation Programme? Did they not plan for these things? I am sure when the Minister of Finance is approving these estimates, he assumes that these people in these ministries headed by the Ministers are doing their proper homework. They are not doing that, Madam President, from what we are seeing.

Why has the Government not established the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation Pension Plan to date? Why? We need to know because they are taking money from the Postal Service Pension Plan in order to do all kinds of things.

Madam President, I would like to bring to your attention—Sen. Dr. Saith, I would like you, because there are three people running this country right now, you are one; the Prime Minister is the next one and the czar of the energy industry—[*Interruption*] You are the second czar, the real czar from whom you take advice. He is the real man in charge. Do you know who I am talking about? I am talking about the goodly professor.

Hon. Senator: Oh, I thought was Clinton?

Sen. W. Mark: No, I am talking about Ken Julien. Madam President, I would like the hon. Minister to indicate to us—If you look at Appendix 1 on page 13, the

Government reduced from one Head \$1.6 million and placed it under another subhead “The Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago”. I have been hearing all kinds of stories about this sport company. A “fella” called Butcher who was in the PNM; he dropped out of the PNM and joined the NAR; he went to the ONR, he dropped out of the ONR; he was part of UNC, “he leave we and he gone back to the PNM”. Oh God, that is a “fella”, every party that is in power he is jumping into! He is a PIP “Party in Power”! Madam President, this man is the CEO of this company, and the former Mayor of the San Fernando City Corporation, Mr. Ferreira, is the Chairman.

Madam President, I understand that there is large-scale corruption in the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago. They are setting up ghost leagues, Dr. Saith, ghost leagues! They are saying that they are playing football but it is ghosts playing football! They are having ghosts football matches and, Madam President, they are thieving the money! *[Interruption]*

Madam President: Senator, Senator!

Sen. W. Mark: All right, I withdraw.

Madam President: You withdraw—

Sen. W. Mark: They are pilfering. *[Interruption]*

[Madam President is on her feet]

[Sen. Mark is on his feet]

Hon. Senators: Madam President is on her feet!

Sen. W. Mark: Well, let me take my seat. I am sorry, Madam President.

Sen. D. Montano: He does not know when to sit down and—*[Interruption]*

Sen. W. Mark: Look, do not harass me! Madam President!

Madam President: I will have to put both of you to sit next to each other the next time. *[Laughter]* *[Interruption]* Yes, outside of the Parliament. *[Laughter]*

Senator, please be careful with your language.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I have an unsigned document here dated August 31, 2005.

Hon. Senator: It is unsigned?

Sen. W. Mark: It is unsigned, Madam President. I would not read it but I want to circulate this to every Member of this honourable Parliament, including

your good self. I think it warrants an enquiry. Where there is smoke there is fire! If somebody could take their time and write this particular piece, two pages, outlining a litany of corrupt activities by this sport company, it warrants an investigation. I am calling on the Fraud Squad to investigate this Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago because they are involved in activities that are not in the public interest! I will not burden you with the details of this document but I will make a copy available to you and to every Member of the Senate so that Senators could understand what people are saying about this company. Sometimes you have whistle blowers, Madam President, who do not want to put their names but the facts are there! Let the Government dispute those facts.

Madam President, I must tell you that I am investigating the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs.

Hon. Senator: Wade Lindquist Mark.

Sen. W. Mark: Yes, Lindquist Mark. I am investigating. I got some disturbing news about activities in that ministry. At the appropriate time I shall make my findings public. I am investigating at this time. Madam President, I want to make sure that when I make my findings they are factual. I do not want anyone to write in any paper telling me to cease and desist.

Madam President: I appreciate that very much, Sen. Mark.

Sen. W. Mark: Yes, and you know I am a factual person.

Madam President, I would like the hon. Minister of Finance, my good friend; do you know him, Madam President? Sen. Conrad Enill, he is a very decent gentlemen but he is very dangerous too. I would like you to look at page 8 of the document *Statement of Transfers* and I would like the hon. Minister to tell this Parliament why he has to put \$15.5 million into a company called the Estate Management and Business Development Company. If any company needs the intervention of the Fraud Squad and the so-called—I do not hear about the anti-corruption bureau at all again since Mr. Piggott was promoted. They have gone silent! They have done their job! They were established to deal with the UNC! Having dealt with the UNC, they are now dealing with police officers.

Hon. Senator: But he is not finished with you yet!

Sen. W. Mark: I know he is not finished with us. Why do you think the thing was in the papers last week that you all tried to set up Sadiq Baksh and four senior PNM people are involved? I do not know who they are.

Madam President: Thank God.

Sen. W. Mark: But I am hearing about “Institution man” and big B; I do not know!

Madam President: All right, all right!

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I would like the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance—I feel sorry for the Minister in the ministry because she was doing an excellent job. I must tell you, Madam President, we could say what we want about Sen. Christine Sahadeo, she does not stand for nonsense. Where she sees corruption she tries to expose it; where people try to take advantage of the people, she tries to get at them and for some reason there are people in the PNM who do not like that approach. Madam President, you know she was dealing with this company called the Estate Management and Business Development Company, and do you know what they did to that lady, they took that particular assignment from her. Where did they put it? In the hands of Conrad Enill.

Sen. Enill: Your point is?

Sen. W. Mark: My point is that you, apparently, have a good relationship with this man called Uthara Rao. The Minister wanted to get rid of Uthara Rao for all his activities, Madam President, and she was stopped.

Sen. Enill: Relevance?

Sen. W. Mark: I know you must say relevance because it is the truth! Madam President, would you believe that this company authorized—and I want the Minister of Finance to tell us; there was a case involving an individual—I would not go into the details—it went to the Industrial Court and they settled this matter at \$300,000. The board of directors said they were not paying this money because it was a personal thing involving the Executive Chairman and the particular individual. They signed an agreement with a confidentiality clause saying that the sum must never be disclosed to the country. Here is a person who was involved in an activity and they went to the court; the court ruled that \$300,000 must be paid to the women in question and the board of directors of this company said they were not paying a cent. The Minister in the Ministry of Finance and, maybe the Minister of Finance, gave authorization to pay the money, that is what we were told! Let the hon. Conrad Enill rise and tell this country if that is so. Who paid the \$300,000? Who authorized the payment of the \$300,000? Madam President, we want to know.

Madam President: Okay, the Minister will answer when he is replying.

Sen. W. Mark: Why did they incorporate a confidentiality clause into that agreement so that nobody else could see how much money was paid? That is corruption! These are matters we would like to know.

We understand, again, this gentleman in question who is an alien; he is a stranger to our land but he has a lot of power like the next one from Canada—imagine you gave this man \$15 million in the face of all these allegations.

Sen. Enill: Madam President, the Senator asked a question and I think it is misleading the Parliament. The Cabinet Note says “Development of lands at Caroni and Orange Grove”, how does that translate into giving the CEO of the company \$15 million? It is there and it is part of Government’s plan that is articulated and therefore—

Sen. W. Mark: That is irrelevant, Madam President. I thought he was going to answer my question.

Madam President: All right, I am standing, Sen. Mark.

Sen. W. Mark: I thought he was going to answer my question. He did not answer my question. Madam President, may I continue, I have only a few more minutes.

Madam President: You have about two minutes more but I agree with the Minister, in that there is nothing there that says it went to the CEO of any company.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, we are dealing with a Finance Bill. This chap, again, got a gratuity of \$150,000 when this same man paid himself as an executive chairman a fee, which he was not entitled to, a fee which only directors of the board were entitled to and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the Ministry of Finance—I do not know if it was the Minister in the Ministry of Finance or the Minister who authorized the payment of the \$150,000 ex gratia to this gentleman. Why are you breaking the law? Why are you encouraging people to break the law? I call on the fraud squad to investigate—I cannot call on the PNM—

Hon. Senator: The squad.

Sen. W. Mark: Not the anti-corruption squad.

Madam President: Sen. Mark, you have a minute again.

Sen. W. Mark: —to investigate this matter of the executive chairman.

What we are witnessing here is a trail of corruption on the part of PNM. They are allowing persons to run “free sheet” in this country—their friends. They are

using this Parliament to cover their tracks. Madam President, we cannot support this Bill in its present form. We need answers to a number of our questions from the Minister of Finance. We will not be a rubber stamp to cover up corruption, nepotism and favouritism.

I thank you very much, Madam President. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Thank you, Madam President, Sen. Mark and Sen. Dr. Saith for the opportunity to comment on the variation of appropriation for fiscal year 2005. [*Interruption*] He takes “fatigue” very well, Madam President.

I have a particular focus but I want to begin with a few general observations. There are questions in my mind, Madam President, which I would not pursue, as to why education and housing did not spend the moneys allocated to them for worthwhile purposes. I have serious misgivings as to where the unspent money is being deployed.

Madam President, you do not have to read books and you do not have to conduct interviews to know that there are very urgent problems in this country; there are areas in the society that need urgent remediation. I do not have to work on the conscience of this honourable Chamber, I only have to list them: poverty, the condition of police stations, the condition of the prisons, the shortage of hospitals, equipment, drugs, the condition of roads and bridges, the shortage of nurses and, of course, the floods.

You want to tell me, Madam President, that you have unspent money and the best thing you can do is give that money to the NEC to take part in the creation of an aluminium smelter? Madam President, I hope you will allow me to say one or two sentences about policy related to this. The connection is tenuous, but it is a connection. Is an aluminium smelter urgent? Is it a priority for our social and economic development? Does the Government understand that there is no link between those mega projects it is embarking upon and the lives and needs of ordinary people, and the desire of ordinary people to be involved in national projects that would make them participate in things that would make our country a better place in which to live?

Does the Government understand that its mega construction projects necessitating further importations of building material and labour puts a strain on housing, roads, and the food supply? Does the Government understand that the very building projects for which they are going to import materials are going to take longer and cost twice as much because we are trying to develop everything at

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the same time, beyond our needs and capacities and, through a misinterpretation of what our needs are; this illusionary notion of being like the big countries, to have a dock site that looks like Toronto?

Madam President, we are destroying our landscape. We are destroying our people, for what and for whom? Technically, is an aluminium smelter part of the diversification of the economy? That is what I have heard, that you have to diversify the economy. I have heard that you have to diversify the economy away from oil and natural gas. Everybody, except the Government it seems, understands that you cannot diversify away from gas and oil if the diversification depends upon the gas and oil. What kind of diversification is that? You want to get away from the reliance on gas and oil so you want to build up some other industries, but the other industries are based upon the gas and oil.

They are coming here to put up an aluminium smelter because they are going to get cheap energy.

Madam President, I have some misgivings about where the money is going to be spent, and I have serious misgivings about our development plans.

Madam President, I want to focus now, very particularly, on Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. I am focusing on that because that is the section of the appropriation that deals with moneys being invested in aluminium and downstream industries. One of the things we read under Head 40 is that:

“Cabinet, in April 2005, agreed inter alia to approve a proposal by SURAL for the development of aluminium smelter and downstream manufacturing facilities estimated at US \$519 million.”

Two paragraphs later:

“In the context of Government's policy decision to make equity participation in the investment...”

So the information I have here—for the first time because this has never come to Parliament, and I take it that it is official information, I have read bits and pieces of it in the newspaper. Madam President, the first intimation of this thing is that:

“Cabinet in April 2005 approved a proposal by SURAL...Government has a policy decision to make equity participation in the investment.”

I think that means we are taking a share?

Madam President, I do not know who is SURAL so I checked it out. SURAL is one of the world's leading manufacturers of pure aluminium and alloy rod by the continuous casting process. It is a major manufacturer of products based on aluminium: alloy rod, aluminium cable, wire for the electric application, et cetera. It owns three major manufacturing plants located in Venezuela, Italy, and Quebec in Canada. Sometimes I hear it is a Venezuelan company; sometimes I hear it is a Venezuela-based company. I still do not know what it is, but it is the very big manufacturer of pure aluminium, which has major manufacturing plants in three countries.

3.00 p.m.

I cannot work out from Head 40 where this smelter is going to be established. I do not know where. Where in Trinidad and Tobago? You would only get an idea if you follow the newspapers, which is all we can do these days because nobody tells Parliament anything. After Cabinet meetings there is a post-Cabinet conference that tells the papers and then the papers misinterpret it or interpret it for us. That is how we get the news. That is how Parliament knows what is going on in this country.

What I read in the *Daily Express* of December 13, 2005 is something different from what I see here under Head 40. In April 2005, you approved a proposal by SURAL for the development of an aluminium smelter and downstream manufacturing facilities estimated at US \$590 million, and now in the *Express* there is a photograph of the Prime Minister and so on and it says:

“An agreement for the project development of 125,000 annual tonnes smelter complex was signed between Alutrint and the China National Machinery and Equipment Import Company at the Hilton.”

There is no mention of this Chinese company in the April release. But now we hear about a Chinese contracting company and Alutrint for the first time.

In the next paragraph we read that Alutrint is a joint venture company owned 60 per cent by the National Energy Corporation (NEC) with SURAL, a Venezuela-based company which owns 40 per cent; and the Prime Minister is quoted as saying that the project is not just an aluminium smelter, it also includes two plants at the Union Industrial Estate, one producing wire and the other creating rods; and two other plants at the Tamana Intech Park in Wallerfield which would be producing wheels and other automotive components. So all those young fellows must be glad they are getting rims. We are going to spend money to produce rims. We do not have enough roads, we are producing rims. I think you should buy

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helicopters for everybody. If you cannot fix the roads, supply us with helicopters. We do not want rims!

Madam President, I am in confusion. I do not—I lost my way, I just lost my notes and I found back my notes but I am still in confusion. *[Interruption]* You wish I get my contribution confused! I know exactly what I want to say so I could throw this away and still say it.

Madam President, I want some information. SURAL, Alutrint? What? And of course, why is this not a matter for information? Why is it not a matter of discussion and policy? I am confused about what is going on because—and I must repeat it, these arrangements have never been brought to the Parliament for debate and for national discussion. I am sure everybody in this Parliament has opinions, has advice, suggestions, and even if you are not going to listen to it, let us vent, let us say it, let the newspapers print it, let the people in the country know that when something like this is going to happen there were some people who stood up and said ‘No’. Let it be known that we said ‘No’!

As I said, to get information one has to go to the newspapers. Since 1959 something has been going on. Since the beginning of Cabinet rule, something has been going on in this country which has now, I hope, reached a climax. The something is that the dignity and authority of the Parliament have been eroded.

Let me remind you of what the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago says at section 75(1):

“There shall be a Cabinet for Trinidad and Tobago which Cabinet shall have the general direction and control of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and shall be collectively responsible therefor to Parliament.”

Madam President, one does not have to be a lawyer to understand what this means. It means that if Cabinet has a policy, if Cabinet wants to do something, it brings it to the Parliament for discussion and debate. Notwithstanding they have a majority and they will get through, but the Constitution says you are responsible to Parliament and the decisions have to be made in Parliament. And then the Executive may carry it out.

Madam President, since 1959 successive prime ministers and governments have been flouting the Constitution. They have been acting as if they are above the law and above the Constitution.

I think I should give a little explanation here because it seems that people in public life and people who write articles and editorials in the newspapers do not understand what “above the law”. They think it means the same as being

exempted from a law.

Being above the law means that you are a lawless person, you are above all law. They recognize no law but their own will and wish and I think Cabinet is getting above the law. Cabinet seems to think it is above the law because they are flouting the Constitution. More and more, the will of Cabinet is being imposed on the country and being imposed on the Parliament.

The Constitution allows for instances where you can be exempted from a law. The Constitution allows instances where there can be exceptions to a law, or exemptions from a law. 'Exception to' or 'exemption from' does not mean 'above the law', and whenever the Constitution allows people not to follow the law, the Constitution is very elaborate as to how you do this because the Constitution wants to make it clear you cannot be above the law. 'Above the law' is a dreadful thing and we cannot contemplate it. I warn the Government and warn the others retroactively that they have been lawless and when they see lawlessness in the country it is because it starts at the top. If you have no respect for the Constitution and the law in this honourable place, what do you expect the man in the street to do? As they say, "If the priest could play who is we?"

Madam President, I am going to town on this because there is a particular instance in the case of the aluminium smelter, of how harmful it is to have proceeded in the way the Government has proceeded by not informing the national community and by not bringing this matter to the Parliament for discussion. It is bad because, in the first place, we have done another bad thing. We do not have a blueprint for the planning and development of land. We tried it in the last Parliament and I know I take every opportunity to remind the Government that there is a Planning and Development of Land Bill which is a blueprint for development and which says certain areas are reserved for agriculture, certain areas need environmental protection, certain areas can be used for this and that. It is a map, it is a plan; it is a detailed blueprint and when you have that then you can proceed. You would not be able to go in a vaille-que-vaille and an ad hoc manner.

Madam President, in the absence of a Planning and Development of Land Bill, any project that is going to impact upon land use, any project that is going to impact upon the lives of communities, any such project must be embarked upon only after a national debate. So that if the argument in Parliament is clear and it is something we do not want, and the Government does not want to be influenced, then we can go out on the street and tell an informed population, "Your representatives are playing the fool, let us march". If the population knows the

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debates and understands—that is why they are afraid to televise Parliament live. If Parliament is televised live, one would see how all of them would sit, listen and behave; and they would not crosstalk and they would be taking notes and they would not leave when one is talking and all of us would speak properly and argue coherently and the population would know. And then when a Government takes advantage of its majority, one would be able to alert the population: Look, something is happening here which we do not want and if they cannot listen to us in the Parliament, let them listen to us as a people because in the end they are the people's Parliament and they are not doing what the people want. If the people agree, then we would see.

Madam President, I would have thought that we would get more information about these projects and we would have a chance to say whether we agree or not. I would have taken the opportunity in a debate like that to point out that if you want to use the technical University of Trinidad and Tobago as part of your development process, you have a wonderful opportunity to raise a question which was raised at an important seminar at the Hilton yesterday: What is the place of solar energy in the energy menu? After gas and oil, what?

I have been saying for years during gas and oil, how about solar energy. During gas and oil, why not solar energy? Madam President, I would have set research scholars at the UTT to come out with ways in which our refrigeration, in which our cooling systems, in which our agricultural production could benefit from solar energy and we would be contributing to a more healthy environment and all these mega projects, we might even have passed a law that you cannot put up any new government buildings without solar energy built in.

So if one is thinking about development and how to spend money and one wants to use one's technical university, there you have solar energy. And if you have a planning and development of land blueprint and if you are reading the papers and have sense and you know that a country must be able, at least, in part, to feed itself and you cannot have the galloping import bill that we have, you would know. And if you understood Trinidad, how fertile this place is, if you only turn your back here bush grow, you would know. You would know what to do.

This country was the headquarters for an institution called the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture where people from all over the world came for training and experience. If you want to spend money and you have a technical university called the University of Trinidad and Tobago, then get the University of Trinidad and Tobago to create in our time and in our terms a college of tropical agriculture that would be both agriculture and food processing. That is science.

That is not just going and letting bachac bite you and razor grass cut you. That is science and these are the directions in which we should go if we want to diversify the economy.

Madam President, I realize that the nature of today's debate is not to go into matters like this, and I thank you for your forbearance. The main point I want to make is, I am sorry that the ministries did not spend the moneys that they got. I have misgivings about the way the money is now being allocated and most of all, I am very disturbed at a further indication presented by this Bill that the Parliament means nothing, that the Cabinet regards itself as above the law. The major effect—if I had to choose one effect of this contribution to hope for, it is that it has focused on an anomaly in the Constitution which allows the Executive to be selected out of the Legislature. The consequence of this is that when the Executive makes a decision it is a foregone conclusion that the Legislature will rubber stamp it. That is the root of many of the problems in our society today: the Legislature does not have an input in the development and in the good running of this country.

And so, Madam President, I end with a wish that the Government would take very seriously a resolution it agreed to when I brought my Motion about constitutional reform, that it would set about the question of Constitution reform as a matter of urgency. Without that we will sink even faster. I thank you.

Sen. Vasant Bharath: Madam President, thank you for the opportunity to address this honourable Senate, this august body, this afternoon. It is truly an honour and a privilege. I also wish to thank those Senators who warmly greeted me yesterday and offered me their best wishes.

Madam President, I would like to take the Senate back, if I may, to yesterday's presentation by the Hon. Sen. Conrad Enill, and I would like to quote briefly what he said:

“The success of the Government's policy is reflected in the economic prosperity of the nation. In 2005, the economic performance as measured by the real GDP recorded an unprecedented 12th consecutive year of positive growth, increasing by 7 per cent.”

He went on to say:

“The Government is aggressively pursuing policies and programmes geared towards diversification of the economy through expansion in the non-energy sector, especially the financial services sector and is also putting measures in place to deal with poverty and the level of crime.

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The key medium term objective for the period 2006—2008 includes, pursuing the human development agenda where policies are presented to ensure that economic growth becomes more inclusive and socially responsive and that all citizens are afforded opportunities for personal growth. Diversification and growth of the economy which primarily revolves round the expansion of the non-energy sector is the new engine of economic growth.”

In winding up his debate, the hon. Senator concluded that, “education is the key because knowledge-based economies require knowledge-based individuals.”

Madam President, after decades of being one of the richest countries in the western hemisphere, Trinidad and Tobago is today in a state of crisis. Some have even referred to us as a “failing state”. At every level there is evidence that our society is collapsing around us. Decay and instability are rapidly becoming our natural state.

Madam President, I say this in the context of the hon. Senator’s statement because, if we are to look at some of the transfer of funds made between subheads, it is readily obvious that much of the above statement made by the hon. Senator is not only wishful thinking but purely Government’s spin.

First of all, the transfer of funds in the sum of \$681,039,712 is quite incredulous. How is it possible I ask, Madam President, to over or underestimate funds required by such a large amount? I might add that almost half of this amount was attributable to the Ministry of Education.

Madam President, take as an example the transfer from Head 13, the Office of the Prime Minister: amounts of \$4 million and \$1.5 million for the SHARE programme and disability grant respectively were transferred to the official entertainment, other contracted services and hosting. This is in view of the fact that this Government has spent over \$330 million in the last three years on entertainment, overseas travel, hosting and advertising. Of the \$30.7 million spent on entertainment alone for the three-year period, the Prime Minister’s office usurped \$19.3 million and has a further \$5.7 million allocated for this fiscal year. The Ministry of Education raked up \$2.4 million with one million allocated this year. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs blew \$3.7 million with an allocation of \$1.5 million for this fiscal year.

To put this in context, the corresponding figure for the UNC in its last year of government, for the Prime Minister’s Office—\$1.2 million, education, \$330,000 and foreign affairs, \$250,000.

If it were this Government's intention to pursue a human development agenda, alleviate poverty and improve the quality of its people's lives, then I fear that we are going about it in the wrong way. As you would have heard yesterday, despite the current boom, 50 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago's citizens are living on US \$2.00 or less according to a 2005 United Nations Report.

Dr. Ebong-Harstrup, the UNDP resident representative in Trinidad and Tobago made this revelation during the United Nations Millennium Project launch in the report, "Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals in January 2005". Newspaper reports quote Dr. Ebong-Harstrup as saying:

"For Trinidad and Tobago, while per capita income approximates US \$9,000, approximately 12.4 per cent live on US \$1 per day, and a further 39 per cent of the population lives on less than US \$2 per day."

Madam President, all of this poverty at a time when we are experiencing massive increases in revenue. Owing to the soaring levels of expenditure in recent budgets, \$27.9 billion last year, \$34 billion projected for this year, and due to the wealth of resources surely, we are financially capable of lowering the level of poverty. But is Trinidad and Tobago focusing on sustainable development or is Trinidad and Tobago satisfied with allocating millions of dollars to welfare programmes such as the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) and the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP)?

As mentioned by the hon. Senator yesterday, Trinidad and Tobago is now enjoying its 12th year of consecutive growth and the economic indicators appear to be positive. Yet, over 300,000 people live in poverty. It begs the question: Does Trinidad and Tobago have mechanisms in place to ascertain that the moneys allocated to a certain development purpose will be spent for the purposes for which it has been allocated?

The UNDP regional report goes on to state that it is surprising indeed, that there has been no significant change in the area of poverty in Trinidad and Tobago over the last few years, particularly given the strong growth in that country's economy during that decade. More shocking is that according to available data, Haiti was the only country that scored lower than Trinidad and Tobago in this study. Suriname, Jamaica and Guyana were all said to be on track to achieving their targets. Indeed, the UNDP Human Development Index indicates that Trinidad and Tobago has slipped from 49 to 57 in the area of human development over the last four years.

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Madam President, I want to tie in what I am saying with a real life example from the *Sunday Express*, 22. 01. 2006. The headline:

“Sexual abuse, first child at 15 and a baby almost every year since. The slide into homelessness and poverty

For all her life, Sharon Narine has only wanted one thing—her own house.

Narine has never known what it feels like to have a place to call home. ‘I was born in the Moruga forest and lived with some relatives there, then I moved with my mother to Princes Town where we lived for a while...’

She thought that she was on the way to realizing that dream when she built a one-room shack in the heart of San Fernando for herself and her 12 children. But that dream was shattered last week when a giant tree crashed onto the house.

Over the next 24 hours she and her children started rebuilding. She also spent a seven-hour vigil, starting at 2 a.m., hoping to see Prime Minister Patrick Manning. It was a futile wait.”

The story goes on. It is a very sad story but unfortunately, this sad and moving story is not an isolated incident in our oil rich country today and emphasizes that in order to reduce poverty and develop our nation the poor must be provided with access to educational services and opportunity for sustainable employment with proper health care to raise them above the poverty line.

In her report Dr. Ebong-Harstrup has linked poverty, illiteracy and crime and posed the question: “Is Trinidad and Tobago inadvertently sowing the seeds of terrorism in parts...by allowing poverty to be perpetuated?”

Madam President, this brings me to my second question, crime. There is no doubt that lack of security in Trinidad and Tobago is the single most issue of concern to our citizens. After almost a decade of steady decline in the rate of serious crimes, kidnappings, wounding and shootings have increased by over 100 per cent since 2001; murder rates by over 100 per cent and rape by 10 per cent. To date, there have already been 38 murders—I believe, I am not sure it has gone up again; 1,085 murders, deaths since the PNM came into power three years ago, almost as many, an equivalent to the death toll in the Iraq war.

Fourteen-month old Zakia Mitchell is a graphic example of crime continuing to spin out of control. This tiny tot was riddled with bullets, with the police, again, clueless as to the perpetrators. In fact, the San Juan cemetery had to be closed this week because it is now overflowing with murdered victims of crimes. Domestic violence is an additional concern.

Evidence shows unequivocally that violence slows economic growth and impedes social development. The most obvious cost to violence is the value of resources used to treat its consequences. These are related to increased expenditures in health services as a result of violence. Less obvious, but perhaps, more important is the impact on economic growth that is generated by the effect of violence on incomes and on investment and productivity. Incomes are affected by violence as employees decide to work fewer hours or are less willing to work late hours or in dangerous neighborhoods. This, of course, has led to a flight of both human and financial capital. We are now in a situation where it is either escape or endure.

I make this point in light of the significant transfers made from the Ministry of National Security and alluded to by Sen. Mark earlier on, where allocation set aside for the National Youth Service, the Military-led Youth Programme of Apprenticeship and Reorientation Training, the Civilian Conservation Corps and Strategic Services Agency and the police service salaries amounting to over \$65 million have been re-allocated. Surely, in a country besieged with crime and rampant delinquency, taking young people off the streets, and putting them into meaningful training programmes would auger well for national development.

It would appear, therefore, that every time we see light at the end of the tunnel the Government orders more tunnels.

3.30 p.m.

As far as diversification of the economy is concerned, Madam President, any student of economics will tell us that Trinidad and Tobago needs to move away from its dependence on oil and gas and to seek to develop other sectors with the potential to contribute positively to national development.

Today, approximately 53 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago's income is derived from the energy sector, which employs maybe 3 or 4 per cent of the labour force. Trinidad and Tobago needs to focus on developing alternative sectors. The most critical industries carded for development are:

- the value-added manufacturing industry;
- tourism;
- the knowledge-based industry; and
- agriculture.

Yet, when one looks at Head 25—the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources—we note that an amount of \$974,000, originally set aside as an

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agricultural incentive programme, has been transferred and expensed for office and storage space.

The architects of the *Global Competitiveness Index*, Professors Sachs Mc Arthur and Porter, believe that the development of a country rests on three pillars:

- The quality of the macroeconomy;
- The state of public institutions; and
- The level of technological readiness.

An examination of the reports from the World Economic Forum's *Global Competitiveness Index* indicates that Trinidad and Tobago has been consistently falling in the rankings since the first report was published in 2001. In the year 2001, this country was ranked 38th on the *Global Competitiveness Index*. In 2002, our ranking fell to 42nd and in 2003 and 2004, it was 49th and 51st respectively. In 2005, Trinidad and Tobago fell to 60th on the *Global Competitiveness Index*. This situation just compounds the need for the development of several globally-competitive industries.

Although I have chosen to highlight the above issues, this is by no means a comprehensive list of our ills. We can and we must learn valuable lessons from others and from our own past. If we do not, we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes we made previously.

I wish to highlight the conclusion of a few studies conducted over the last 20 years that relates directly to our position in Trinidad and Tobago. Political institutions in resource rich countries have frequently been described using the concept of the "rentier state". According to Michael Ross:

"Theories of the rentier state contend that when governments gain most of their revenues from external sources, such as resource rents or foreign assistance, they are freed from the need to levy domestic taxes and become less accountable to the societies which they govern."

You may remember that in the last budget Government reduced both income tax and corporation tax.

As Terry Lynn Karl, in 1998, observed:

"The pernicious access to easy money weakens traditional work ethics...lowering financial discipline within bureaucracies, leading to reckless budgetary practices."

The end result is that government officials:

“...have no incentives to be frugal, efficient, and cautious in their policy making.”

Does this ring a bell, Madam President?

Political processes in the rentier state are mainly concerned with the distribution of resource rents in order to stay in power. The allocation of resource rents may thus be guided by purely political motives. In most cases, resource rents will be transferred through subsidies, trade restrictions, or public sector employment. The State gets deeply involved in economic activities, which leads to major economic distortions and additional welfare costs. Thus, in such an economy, a large part of the population is involved in distributing and consuming rents, whereas only a few are engaged in productive activities.

It appears, from the literature, that leaders in resource-rich countries systematically make poor choices about important growth-related policies, whether through excessive borrowing, irrational optimism, bad investment choices such as prestige projects or other failures. Thus, resource booms may lead to excessive public sector spending, in particular increased public employment in attractive short-term policy instruments to reduce unemployment. Higher public investment goes into projects with lower than market returns or construction. Government may be tempted to promote import substitution.

Madam President, large natural resource endowments often create distortions in the economy that result in low levels of human capital. This is because the country devotes all its efforts and resources to the exploitation of its natural resources. Additionally, primary production appears attractive because it requires lower levels of initial investment. Primary production and natural-resource based industries do not require high levels of human capital as compared to the manufacturing sector. Thus only a limited sector of the economy is developed—one that does not promote the development of human capital.

If a country centres its economy on a natural resource like we have, the literature indicates that the country will not develop an extensive educational system. This is because the core of the economy, the natural resource sector, does not require high levels of education. Indeed, over a period of time, a country may find itself having to import specialist skills that would have been lost to the country. This is the theory, but we are seeing it in action today in Trinidad and Tobago.

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Government is not pressured into providing higher levels of education since the resource-based economy cannot accommodate these new skills and therefore additional education does not increase income. In such an environment, it is almost impossible to diversify into other economic sectors of the economy such as manufacturing.

The above conclusions represent the work of some of the world's leading authorities in this area and are frighteningly too close to home for us to ignore.

Madam President, crime, unsustainable employment, corruption and a gross mismanagement of our country's affairs as evidenced by the significant transfers being made between and amongst ministries are crippling our beloved country. There is simply too much at stake.

Whether we are white or black, Hindu, Muslim or Christian, PNM or UNC, I think, as a country, we deserve more. I ask, therefore, that, as a nation, we put our differences aside; we learn our lessons from the past—our own past as well as those of others—we look beyond colour and race; we unite and we take back our country from those who are hell-bent on destroying it. Because if we do nothing, as Martin Luther King said:

“History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transformation was not the strident clamour of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”

I thank you.

Madam President: Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you on our maiden speech.

Sen. Brother Noble S. A. Khan: Madam President, thank you for allowing me this short intervention. I must say that, on what is before us, I would like to preface my comments on this Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (2005) Bill with a tribute to my erstwhile colleagues from the Ministry of Finance. I have had a look at it and, as few as the pages are, I can rest assured that quite a bit of work went into what is before us; also, to our Minister in the Ministry of Finance, for his scholarly and professional output.

One of our colleagues made reference to the structure resting on three main characters within the framework of the rulership of our country. I would like to add that with each of these there are adjuncts that go up. I would like to pay tribute to many of our Ministers, if not all, who formed part of these adjuncts to

what is before us, particularly in the area of education and culture. These two come to mind quickly.

My chief criticism of what is before us is systemic and this is possibly because of what has been laid before us in the past, starting with our Constitution, our finance laws and so forth. Yesterday we had some of that.

Because of a structure that may have been long past its usefulness in forming the structure of our decisions that will lead our country and this thrust we want to make—this urgent thrust which even as fast as we in this Parliament and in the Government would like to push forward to, it is even not as fast as I suspect the country would like to see.

That urgency finds expression in some of the negatives that overflow, starting with our youth. I will not touch on that because I think that it has been before us for quite some time and the hurt and ache is sufficient just to be reminded of it.

The question of the Constitution, our colleague Sen. Prof. Ramchand touched on it. What is before us, this structure, allows for the sustenance and even the allowance for the perpetration of this high level of negativity, which finds expression today in the law before us. It is a cry for a speedy solution as far as reform is concerned and the decision-making processes, as I have mentioned before, in our Constitution and financial laws.

I have stressed this point because, in anything that we do, and very often I tell the young people with whom I come into contact, that whenever you start to work, if you are making five cents, make sure and put aside something. Before you were making the five cents, there was nothing. Now that something has come, you can still reduce what you have because you had nothing.

This rationale might appear to be grassroots, but it still has validity. Money is what we are all about to get things done; its availability and wise use, even if the decisions are worthy. This, again, I would like to mention and use as a prop for speeding the decision-making processes by changes in our Constitution or the need for that.

To allow for the masses to take part in it has always been one of the things I felt strongly about. Again, I would say that no matter what elitist group is created by the Constitution, which finds expression in a Cabinet that seems to feel—very often when you hear Cabinet meets and decides, but everyone who has been involved in decision-making processes knows that somewhere behind any organization there is somebody who owns something. He may not own it outright, but he is responsible for what comes about and the umbrella of the whole thing is

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below these very nebulous constructs like Cabinet and the committee and what have you. Again, the question of allowing for the mass participation is one that I think we should always pay respect to.

3.45 p.m.

These are some of the major points. I think our colleague, Sen. Prof. Ramchand, touched on many of the points with respect to development. I support them strongly. They are worthy of consideration, particularly in the area of the planning process.

I would also like to pay tribute to the speaker before me. Indeed, he was a refreshing breeze to what we are accustomed. I enjoyed it and wish him success. Some of us would remember the senior Mr. Bharath, a worthy gentleman. I personally have high respect for him. I can see that there is a linkage between that and what I am seeing here today.

Again, I wish you well and success in your future undertakings, as far as Parliament is concerned and even in your own personal life. May God bless you and give you the guidance that, obviously, all of us need.

I would like to pay tribute to the public service as I mentioned before. Very often we get plenty knocks. Some of us who have passed through that route know. Again, there is precious little, because all that is before us has gone before. We are just, more or less, putting veneer or making it legalistic. There is precious little that we can do after the horse has gone out of the stable. I think that there are attempts being made to make our country a better one. I would give my support towards the passing of this Bill and hope and wish that some of the thoughts I have expressed here will find themselves into the system, so that we can possibly move away from this form.

Maybe, before it comes before Parliament, we would have a more detailed review of what is being presented, instead of Cabinet saying and then it is brought here to be rubber-stamped, as has been said.

From my own personal experience, which is many years of experience, I cannot recall any change being made here or even downstairs over the years. Again, allow me to express my thanks to you, Madam President.

Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan: Thank you, Madam President. The Minister of Finance, in his opening remarks to this Senate this afternoon, told us at the end of his presentation of the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill that he merely wished to “draw our attention” to the issues that he raised. The Minister of

Finance said this—apparently with no sense of the grave disrespect that this implies to Parliament, that important development projects and issues are raised here—with no reference to Parliament, as other colleagues expressed earlier on. The Minister said it with a lot of nonchalance, very casually, that he merely wished to draw these points to our attention this afternoon.

We have started a new year, 2006. I think it is a pity that we, as a people have not found a new formula to advance the interest and welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Clearly, this old formula is not working. The streets, as we speak this afternoon are ablaze with violence, guns, crimes, murder and legitimate protest by the citizens of this country.

From all reports, the southwest peninsula this morning was at a standstill. While we come to this Parliament, the Government comes here to engage in semantics, laugh and joke, and while the Opposition tries to do its duty to raise serious issues on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, we have absolutely no input in the policy formulation, influencing policy decisions or influencing the vast amount of expenditure that is being executed by this Government. This old formula, this parliamentary debate, this make-believe debate and interchange has no relevance to the giant leap forward that we as a people need to make at this point in time while we have the resources to do it. It needs to be radically altered because, at the end of the debate, the Government goes ahead and does exactly what it wants to do, with no input from a vast array of intellectual resources, the NGOs and CBOs. All these organizations have no input in whatever the Executive decides to do. It makes me wonder about this so-called democracy that we embrace. We preclude the advice and expertise of the representative of half the population of this country. What kind of democracy is that?

I think the question is when we look at the issues that are raised here this afternoon—in the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill it provides for the expenditure, the taxpayers' dollars and the fundamentals of the economy of this society—are we prepared to recognize this inherently self-destructive and counter-productive, dangerous nature of the type of democracy that we embrace in Trinidad and Tobago?

More importantly, are we prepared to do anything about it? When will we reach that stage of political development, when the serious issues that are being raised in Cedros, Chatham, Union Estate and Point Fortin by the people, are bound to be taken into consideration by the Government or it will not do so at its political peril?

Right now, our democratic framework within which we operate makes it so that the Government does not have to listen to anybody. The Executive does not have to listen to the people and there are no political repercussions. This is a serious failing in our so-called democratic system that we operate under, at this point in time. That is why the Minister of Finance can bring huge development projects to the table in this Parliament and tell us that he is just drawing it to our attention and that he would like us to take note.

This moribund democratic formula that we embrace gives the Executive, right now, the power to embark on serious persecution of the Opposition under the guise of all kinds of spurious charges such as voter padding, which have never been proven in the court. Outright criminal activity is perpetrated against Opposition Members.

There is the outright use of guns, muscle and force. This is a democratic country. We are not talking about Haiti, Zimbabwe or any country that is known to violate human rights and democratic institutions. We are talking about this country that is supposed to be democratic. We have a deadly formula of democratic governance that allows the Executive to attack independent institutions at will, to undermine independent institutions, as we will see in the whole question of the Environmental Management Authority. That comes into play when we examine the issue of SURAL and the smelter plants.

One of the first issues that I would like to look at, as we look at the Bill before us, is the issue of agreement by Cabinet to approve a proposal by SURAL for the development of an aluminium smelter and downstream manufacturing facilities estimated at \$590 million. The Bill goes on to say that the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries identify and make available to the National Energy Corporation, funds in the sum of \$2 million which represents the NEC's portion of both direct and shared expenditure required to move the project forward.

It also states:

“In the context of Government's policy decision (to make an equity participation in the investment) the hon. Minister of Finance authorized the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to access resources totalling \$27,600,000 from Treasury Deposits.”

These are huge sums of taxpayer's money. These are projects that have not been thrown out to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and have not been brought to Parliament. When you investigate and look at what are the possible implications

of these projects for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, for our environment, it is extremely alarming.

Like Sen. Prof. Ramchand, when I saw the issue of SURAL, on investigating, I came upon an article in the *Express* of Tuesday, December 27, 2005 which states:

“ALUTRINT is a new company that is building a...aluminium ... (complex in Union Estate) in La Brea. It is owned 60 per cent by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and 40 per cent by Sural of Venezuela.

Julien, whose company sponsored this year's league, emphasized that at the end of the construction, ALUTRINT will provide about 800 direct job opportunities at its world class, cutting edge facilities in La Brea.”

Apparently this project is touted to provide 800 jobs at the end. The question I ask my fellow Senators today is: At what cost? What is the cost of a project like this to the people of Trinidad and Tobago? People who are directly affected by this project are seriously disaffected. They have serious problems with the project because they had not been consulted. If we are talking about a democratic formula, we are talking about democracy and democratic institutions. One of the first obligations of any government is to consult with the people who are directly affected by projects of this magnitude, which would affect their lives. This will affect all our lives because this is a very small country.

I want to bring to your attention some of the issues that people have with this particular project. I quote from the *Express* of Sunday, November 06, 2005:

"There is some resentment among the residents of the community surrounding Union Estate regarding the establishment of a gas-based heavy industrial complex in their neighbourhood. The same came about because of the manner in which a rural community was transformed into an industrial site and the lack of proper consultation at the start and throughout the transformation exercises. It acknowledged the sudden widespread destruction of hundreds of acres of forest, abundant wild life and a way of life for generations. People are also skeptical of any benefits to be derived from the industrialization of their community."

Where is the redress for the people who have these serious concerns about this project in their communities and the implications for the future of their communities and their children? These people have serious concerns as do the people of Chatham and , and with good reason. There is a lot of literature and there have been many investigations carried out with respect to the health risks that we in this country run when we entertain this level of industrialization. We

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are talking about three aluminium smelters in this small country. People are concerned, and rightly so.

I went on the Internet to look at some of the health risks that we run as a result of having this type of industrialization in our country. The information I got from the nosmeltertnt.com website I would like to share with you this afternoon. Some of the issues that were raised from this particular website I find extremely alarming. The emissions from these proposed aluminium smelter plants include sulphur dioxide, which causes respiratory problems; corrosion to plants and buildings and acid rain. It has a pungent odour. Other emissions are chlorofluorocarbon gases, which contribute to global warming and higher temperature; oxides of nitrogen, which contribute to air pollution; benzene, which is highly toxic and explosive; class three indicators, which are extremely hazardous, carcinogenic, tetragenic, mutagenic and highly toxic.

Since in the early 1970s, scientists have correlated elevated bladder cancer rate to smelter pot room workers. A local doctor, Dr. Steve Smith, President of the Trinidad and Tobago Medical Board, in a published newspaper article said:

“With regard to the occupational risk, ALCOA suggests...”

This is not SURAL, this is ALCOA, a similar operation.

“that communities’ health concerns are based on antiquated data. To me, this is an overt attempt at misleading the public.”

The health risks and environmental risks are very real, very dangerous and very strong. People are concerned. There is no recourse. We have a so-called democracy. We have a democratic system of government and a Constitution and yet there is no recourse when people have these serious concerns and their wills and wishes are passed over. Parliament is required to meet and rubber-stamp decisions that the Executive made previously. We read about these decisions and mega projects in the newspapers and we are asked to meet here to rubber-stamp these projects.

There are also other concerns, with respect to the role of the EMA in approving these projects. This information was also obtained from the website I mentioned. We will appreciate the true nature of the impact that the smelter could have on the environment, when we look at the questions that the Environmental Management Authority asked these organizations to provide answers to. There were certain crucial questions. They were asked to provide information on community health, safety and socioeconomic impacts, flora and fauna, terrestrial and aquatic, hydrology, drainage, sediment loads, the marine environment and potential of

contamination from spills, and changes to topography such as levelling, undulating countryside, side changes in noise and vibration levels from the site and associated transportation networks, changes in soil contamination levels.

Madam President: Senator, I have been listening for the last 10 minutes and I have been trying to see where you are going with this, and how relevant it is to the Bill before us. I really think you need to come back to the discussion before us, on the Bill.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Thank you, Madam President. We live in a democratic society, apparently with democratic institutions and we are not allowed to have a say in any input in the policy decisions of this Government; policy decisions that affect our lives and our future. I am amazed at the casual nature of the presentation of the Minister of Finance, when he comes to Parliament and asks us to take note of projects that have major implications for our country.

The whole question of the National Physical Development Plan was already raised by Sen. Prof. Ramchand, because this involves thousands of hectares of land. There is no national physical development plan before this Parliament, that will legitimize any change of land use and the use of lands at , 530 hectares; Oropouche Bank, 1,400 hectares and Point Lisas south and east, 1,400 hectares. There is nothing before this Parliament that would legitimize the use of these huge acres of land for the development of projects that are dubious, to say the least.

I looked at the transfers that were effected under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. The transfers effected here consisted of \$974,000 from the Agricultural Incentive Programme. This money went to the Lands and Surveys Division, for the rent or lease of offices, accommodation and storage. I found this particular transfer extremely interesting because this transfer betrays the total disinterest that this Government has in the development of the agricultural sector and the development of the question of food security in this country.

At this point in time, we are seeing some of the most devastating floods and losses suffered by farmers in the country, running into hundreds of thousands of dollars. When farmers are reeling under tremendous losses, what do you have? We have the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources in an article of Friday, January 27, 2006 in the *Newsday*, saying that his major problem or cause for concern is to go out there and ensure that some odd farmer does not defraud the Government of moneys, by claiming for losses that he did not experience. We

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have a situation where, in the Toco/Manzanilla area, it is reported that another Member of Parliament admitted that he was particularly concerned about the tremendous losses incurred by farmers, some of whom export their produce. I quote:

"They have run into hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of damage, he said, adding that Vega de Oropouche is known as the vegetable capital of the east.

Boynes said: given the perennial problem of flooding in the community, a new policy had to be implemented."

This is the Member of Parliament for Toco/Manzanilla speaking and admitting that farmers have run into hundreds of thousands of dollars of losses.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is not concerned about these issues. He is concerned about verifying claims and ensuring that farmers would not outsmart the system and that the officers must be very vigilant against this type of activity. I would have thought that the major implications of these losses would have been foremost in the mind of the Minister. These types of losses set us back 30—40 years in agriculture because farmers already have very little infrastructural support systems. The little that they are able to pull together to ensure that this country has food is being consistently flooded out in these areas. There were approximately five floods in the last year.

There is the question of food security and increasing food prices which is directly linked to the continuous losses that farmers have been experiencing. When we look at the Bill before us and we see that moneys are transferred from the Agriculture Incentive Programme to offices and accommodation, it seems strange to me. At this point, I would have thought that any transfers of money would be to alleviate the flooding and put in the infrastructure to alleviate, in the short term, the losses that the farmers of this country are suffering. This would affect their family life and the goods that they are able to take to the market. It affects everybody. It affects the health and nutritional status of the people of the country.

In the first place, incentives that are offered to farmers are primarily for the larger farmers. The incentive programmes that we talk about here are incentives that involve rebates for tractors and irrigation and that has to do with large farmers. The small farmers are mainly the farmers that suffer perennially from the heavy flooding incidents. They are primarily the smaller farmers.

In the last budget speech, the Prime Minister said that 30,000 units of family farms over the last few years, have been reduced to 20,000 units of family farms. These family farms are the ones that are the major producers of food for the country. When there is a direct hit on the farmers who actually produce food to feed the people of the country, it is a serious issue. I would have thought that an emergency response system would have been put in place and that moneys would have been immediately made available to farmers for compensation to recoup and recover their investments.

The Minister admitted that the sum of \$15 million, allocated to the flood relief programmes, has not been touched for the year. What are they waiting on to compensate, alleviate and give relief to these farmers who are reeling under tremendous losses?

In the first place, this money for relief does not go to livestock farmers. Livestock farmers are the ones who produce the ducks, goats and pigs for our consumption. They are not in the category for flood relief. When they lose their livestock, that is it. They have no compensation to get. These are the issues that the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources should be concerned about, rather than the lone farmer who might try to claim for a crop that he did not lose.

We have to talk about responding to the needs of the people of this country with a lot more vibrancy. We have to talk about putting in emergency response units in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to deal with what is happening with our farmers. We have to talk about transferring more moneys in the flood relief programme and widening the scope of the programme to include livestock farmers, because they are the basis of the protein production in this country. These are the issues that we have to deal with, to take money out of the incentive programme and put it into accommodation and housing at this time. I find it absolutely incredible, especially at this time. At another time, it would have been bad, but at this time it is even worse and it shows that the Government has absolutely no interest in the development and maintenance of the sector despite all the lovely words to the contrary, in terms of agri-business development and development of strategic subsectors, which appear in the budget every single year.

I am asking the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to immediately effect the flood relief allocations to farmers. Farmers are reeling under the losses of hundreds of thousands of dollars. We cannot look at the petty elements of whether or not one or two farmers are going to rip off the system. We have to look at the big picture and what it will take to bring food production back

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on track in this country. That should be the Government's major concern. We are calling very strongly on the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to immediately start dispensing relief to farmers who have lost thousands of dollars in crops and livestock.

I was also amazed, as was my colleague, Sen. Mark, at the transfer of resources in the Ministry of National Security away from the youth programmes. The Minister proudly presented this in the national budget. I was amazed at this time, when there is so much need to concentrate and look at the issues of young men and women, especially in the East-West Corridor and the urban environment, who are under the negative influence of the drug pushers, drug runners, drug barons and the gun culture that has taken over the country.

I am amazed that we can have the luxury of transferring resources out of these projects and into other projects. It shows that the Government is not taking the issue of the problems of young people seriously in the country. The young people know that. They are quite aware that they are marginalized, discriminated against and that they do not have a place in the society. That is why they have lost hope and that is why they are determined to live fast and die young. They do not see a place 10, 15 or 20 years down the road in the society for them. They understand that the cost of housing and land is beyond the reach of the ordinary citizen. Therefore, when you go to the people and you say that these are projects you believe will help to eradicate and bring the most vulnerable members of the society, young men, out of the atmosphere of crime, drugs and lawlessness and with not so much as a "by your leave", you pull the rug from under their feet and remove the programmes, I think this is an absolute scandal and the Government has betrayed its total lack of commitment to the development of young people in the society.

I believe that something is wrong with the way we operate. I believe that our system of democracy needs revamping. Sen. Mark spoke about constitution reform. I believe that there are things that we can do that will enable our citizens to feel more a part of the society. They would feel that they can have an input and that they can influence Government's policy. We must set up the institutions, such as the nosmelternt.com website, that will allow people to feel that they can air their views and concerns and that they will be listened to, because they are citizens of this country. They are part of this country. We believe that there must be institutional arrangements for the NGOs and Opposition to influence policy. Unless we do that, we are going around in circles, creating problems for the future and a society in which there will also be rebellion, violence and crime, because

there is too much bias and power in the hands of a few people in the society: people who organize the society in the interest of the rich and powerful. The interest of the poor is marginalized and ignored.

This Bill before us this afternoon is an example of what is happening in terms of agriculture, national security and the developmental projects that the Government has indicated, without any regard to legislation and the laws that are on the books of Trinidad and Tobago; laws that require the Government to bring these types of projects before Parliament, in the form of a national physical development plan.

If we have a government that is lawless, disregarding the very laws that are on the books of Trinidad and Tobago and reneges on the commitment to deal with the serious problems that young people face in the society, there is very little hope for this country. The only solution is the return of the UNC to the administration of this country and we can take this country back on the road of national development. I thank you.

Madam President: Anybody? Nobody?

Sen. Walton James: Thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to make my contribution on the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill before us. I would first like to compliment the people who have put it all together. I think they have done a very good job, in terms of presentation of all the facts and figures that we need to have a look at. What comes out to me, from this exercise, is that there is a lack of efficiency in implementation of most of the projects and things which are approved in the budget.

We see these situations where lack of implementation results in funds becoming available, for example in the area of education, where the biggest contribution to offsetting comes from the failure to appoint deans and heads of departments amounting to \$229,694,000. Vacant posts, salary and COLA have not been paid because these posts are vacant, amounting to \$22,582,000. Outstanding payment of arrears to officers amounts to \$30 million; primary school computerization, \$34 million; delay in accessing equipment for assisted primary schools, \$7 million. If we go on to the national security budget, there are two other major items which total \$65 million. There is a delay in the recruitment of two batches of police officers, \$13,000,832. We have a problem with security and two batches of police officers have not been recruited. We have two youth training programmes, MILAT and the other related programme, which did not come off, due to no accommodation, \$38,200,000. They did not have the facilities to carry out the programme. I think, if nothing else, this highlights that the

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Government needs to pay a lot more attention to becoming efficient in implementing the things they say they are going to do.

I would now like to go on to an area which has raised my concern, which is the large capital investment in office buildings, et cetera, which are also included in the programme. I learned, certainly for the first time, that besides the waterfront development and the campus, we now have an office building to be constructed on St. Vincent Street, Queen and Edward Streets. There are a number of office buildings being constructed. Of course, these are not investments that will bring any revenue to us later down the road; neither do I think it will create any employment in the future.

I think we need to engage in investment in areas which will help to produce or create employment. Investments in the manufacturing plants that are being put in place will give employment to many workers during the construction stage. However, after the construction, when they go into operation, they are so highly automated, the permanent jobs will be, by comparison, quite small indeed. Employment is an area which we need to look at very seriously. We know that this is a current problem. Many of our youngsters coming out of schools today are not employed because they are not adequately trained at the secondary school level. This is being corrected but will we have the jobs for them when we get more of them coming out properly trained? If we do not take steps in that direction we will continue to have problems of youngsters who are sitting on the corners and the blocks, as they call it.

Worldwide, it is acknowledged that the service industry is where the jobs are being created today. We have gone into the tourism industry to some extent but, from what I have seen, in other places we do not invest enough in that area to make a significant impact. I am not saying that the Government should get into building numerous hotels and things of that nature, but they certainly need to invest in infrastructure which will attract the investors to put hotels and other such facilities in place.

One of the areas that I thought we should be looking at very seriously in this connection is the northeastern part of Trinidad, the Toco/Balandra area, which is an attractive coastal area. There is a need for a proper road to get to and from Toco other than the torturous one we have at present. An investment of funds in a proper road will open up that Toco area. In fact, I would also suggest that at Toco, we should construct a ferry port and make a direct ferry connection from there to Tobago. A trip to Tobago from there, by ferry, I am sure would take less than one hour. We are now still at the stage where, if you want to go to Tobago, not by air,

you are told that you would get a boat leaving at 10.00 a.m. and possibly another one leaving at 6.00 p.m. and you would have to arrange all your affairs to suit those times. If you go to Scandinavia or one of those countries, you do not have to be concerned over when the ferry is leaving because one is going every half of an hour. You just have to drive up there and get off at the other end and go about your business. I would suggest since Trinidad and Tobago is one country, we should have easier access between Trinidad and Tobago than what we have at present.

Madam President: Senator, I am sorry to have to disturb you, please. Unfortunately we are at 4.30 p.m. and we have to take the tea break. You have spoken for eight minutes. When you come back you will get your rest of 37 minutes, if you so desire.

Hon. Senators, we will now suspend for the tea break. Can I ask Members to try to get back in here at 5.00 p.m.? Thank you.

4.30 p.m: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. W. James: Madam President, I believe I was talking about tourism at the time when we got to the tea break. Besides the employment aspects that tourism would impact on, we also have the impact of tourism on agriculture. When you have a vibrant tourist industry, you have to provide food for the tourists. That provides an outlet for people who are involved in agricultural production.

We also have the area of employment of persons in handicraft. People can produce household handicraft with certain local materials, which tourists are interested in purchasing. The area of employment extends over quite a wide area of activities.

Another area which I think we have been neglecting is roadways—although I saw recently, the Minister of Works and Transport raised the question of a new highway from the old Kirpalani Roundabout, as I still call it, up to Piarco. That is one of the roads which I think is sorely needed, because the Churchill Roosevelt Highway is overcrowded now. It is no longer a highway as there are too many traffic lights on it.

There is another aspect of road transport which I think we, so far, seem to have avoided, that is the use of tunnels. We have, for instance in the Maraval area, a serious traffic problem getting through the Boissiere area. There is no reason

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why we cannot put a tunnel from the upper reaches of Maraval, close to the church, straight through to the savannah. It is so located that you can make it a toll tunnel, if you want to call it that. That will significantly reduce the volume of traffic having to go through Boissiere Village. There are other areas. We should also be looking at tunnelling through many areas of the northern range, which is divided into many valleys which need interconnecting. Years gone by everything went over the tops of the hills. You can easily tunnel straight across between Diego Martin and Maraval or between Diego Martin and the western peninsula, to get down to Chaguaramas.

I was a little surprised when I saw a map of Grenada a few days ago, and saw that they have a tunnel in St. Georges. I was not aware of that. I had to look for it very carefully in order to find it, but there is one.

Those are the thoughts that I had with regard to expenditure on capital works, emphasizing the need to invest in infrastructure which would bear fruit further down the road, rather than putting too much at this stage into office buildings. It is not that we do not need them, but I think it is a question of timing, what should come first and how can it be spread out.

With those words, I would close. If the Government would lead the way, in investing in infrastructure, with respect to tourism and such, I am sure that the private sector will follow and will build on it to make such investments viable. Thank you.

Sen. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan: Thank you, Madam President. It is my intention to be short this afternoon. I note that only the Minister of Finance is here, so she will answer any questions.

Yesterday the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries indicated that everybody said that I speak with so much passion. I want everyone here to understand that I speak because I believe that we must all act in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago. We have to think about the generations that will come after us and what we are leaving for them. At the end of the day they will not just look at one side or the next; two generations down the road they would say that all of you were part of this. If you do not flag and highlight the ills that can affect them later on, everybody will be culpable.

Madam President, when the Minister said yesterday that I was consistently wrong, I want to tell him that I was consistently right, because I am consistent. I will always continue to maintain, with passion, that our reserve position is

dangerously low. It falls right back here when we look at the projects that we are talking about.

Two days ago we had a meeting with the technocrats from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and we asked an important question such as what was the reserve to production ratio and what was the reserve position. As I said yesterday, they said it was 18 tcf. When you ask what was the reserve to production ratio, it has been said, that is just an indicator and that it is not important. Let me explain to this Senate what the meaning of reserve to production ratio is. Reserve to production ratio is, you take your total reserve and divide it by the current production, that is how much you are using every day. A reserve to production ratio will tell you how many years of that inventory you have left, based on your current production rate and utilization rate. Everybody said that they did not know what it is. Nobody knows! You would imagine that these are technocrats in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

If I am running a parlour store and I am selling coca cola and I know every day I have to sell 10 bottles, I am sure I am going to look in the back and make sure I have 10 bottles.

Sen. Dr. Saith: I do not think the Senator is right in beginning her attack on public servants who came before a committee. They came and they presented. My understanding and report was that the meeting went very well, and that they were respectful. I do not think we should do that. We should not rehash the debate of yesterday; I will have to get up and say the same thing over again. Please, relevance.

Madam President: Yes, I think we should leave the public servants out of this and remember, please no repetition of yesterday. Try not to repeat the arguments of yesterday.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, permit me. I was not referring to the public servants, what I was referring to is that all over this country the experts, the so-called Government, continue to say that it is not important. I will have you note today that it was brought to my attention that just one week ago there was a presentation to the Prime Minister of this country and that it was revealed to the Prime Minister, based on the current production and on the reserve position of 18 tcf, that we have nine to 10 years left. That is my concern. I will never agree with people saying that we will find more gas. It cannot be that you are telling me that we will go forward and use and use and then tell me that you will be hopeful when you find gas. That cannot be!

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It brings me right here. In this Bill, what we see before us is that we are moving moneys from the Ministries of Education and Housing. I do not want to repeat what everyone said. In the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, we are looking at \$27,600,000. Some of it, \$15 million, goes towards the expansion of the , Oropouche and Point Lisas Estates. Let me remind this Senate that not too long ago, during the early 1990s, we went into a similar project and \$300 million of taxpayers' money went into Labidco. To this day we have never been able to recover a cent of that money. It was a totally failed project. It is a failure, because today we cannot site a petrochemical plant on the Labidco site. You tell me that we are going into , Oropouche and Point Lisas south. The Government has just spent \$30 million on clearing the Union Estate. It is full, but do you know what the amazing thing is? It does not have a pillar on it. I have not seen construction of anything. The Government is clearing and clearing. What is the Government clearing to do? There is no said agreement, for any of the projects that the Government is talking about because there is no gas to give to these projects. Do you have a gas agreement, Sen. Dr. Saith? You can tell me. You have no gas agreements for any of these projects. Why are we continuing to clear these sites?

Sen. Dr. Saith: I do not want to answer the Senator. I do not intend to continue this irrelevant discussion that is taking place.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Okay. That is the Minister's position that he does not want to answer, but we are going to be spending another \$27 million.

We will be talking about SURAL and the NEC. First we heard about ALCOA coming into the country. Now we are hearing about SURAL. SURAL is a combination of—*[Interruption]*

Madam President: You should not be repeating the arguments of other people who spoke today, such as your colleague. Sen. Dr. Kernahan and Sen. Mark spoke about ALCOA and Cap-de-Ville. Try not to repeat their arguments.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: I have not repeated anything yet. I want to take a different approach. ALUTRINT is the company that has been formed to represent SURAL and the NEC. Part of this money would be for the equity start up for the NEC, which will hold 60 per cent. SURAL will hold 40 per cent of ALUTRINT.

Again, we are taking taxpayers' money which we are moving out of the Ministries of Education and Housing, which I will come to just now. Before we put equity in this, did we get an economic model to determine what is the feasibility of this project? If we have a feasibility, do we know what is the gas

price we are using to sell gas to this new company, ALUTRINT? *[Interruption]* Let me finish. The Minister is free to answer. It is my understanding that we are negotiating a price of \$0.60 for gas. You can refute it or not. I want to understand. I know that you will tell me that we have to give a cheap gas price to be able to encourage this particular project between NEC and SURAL—if you use the economic models for the feasibility study, you took into consideration a gas price of \$0.60. You cannot do that. Is this Government investing taxpayers' money into another losing entity? We had a situation not too long ago with Nucor.

My argument this afternoon, I cannot recall exactly what Sen. Mark and Sen. Dr. Kernahan spoke about, but they would have spoken more on environmental issues.

5.15 p.m.

My concern here is that we are going to be putting this amount of taxpayers' money into equity in a company. I wonder if five years down the road, I would be hearing that this is another failure like Labidco, and we would have lost this money totally? What is the purpose of this? No one knows if this venture is going to go forward. No one has any idea. Furthermore, this is a second aluminium smelter plant that you are talking about. The first one is ALCOA. ALCOA is still on the drawing cards. Am I correct? It is still a project. It is one that you are still negotiating; one that you are also giving 60 cents to as well. We are hearing that the output of ALCOA is going to be exported. What is the purpose of that?

We are going into aluminum smelters. The reason you would have gone into this particular project is because of the possibility of the generation of jobs and the downstream activities from aluminium smelters. If we allow ALCOA to export all its end product out of this country, what then is the benefit to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, by allowing a cheap gas price and almost giving away the gas to that aluminium smelter? That is what I want to know. We are putting more money here in this Bill to support this nonsense. This is what I want to know. The House does not know.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand made the point that we need to understand this and there must be more transparency. Well, now is the time for us to get transparent and for us to know.

Madam President, earlier on, Sen. Mark talked about Prakash Saith and Dr. Saith and so forth, but I am not interested in that, because they are people. I am interested in the issues involved in this company called NEC. *[Desk thumping]* I want to make it clear that very same company NEC was a small operation. I do not

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understand how this company is growing and growing. It is almost as if it has taken over. It is now the parent company. Only in Trinidad and Tobago we hear about the subsidiary company running all the business of the company and carrying all the investments, when that is the job of the parent company. So we now have the little subsidiary company operating like the parent company. This is what I do not understand. My concern is that NEC is growing and it is a subsidiary company.

I want to suggest to the Government to get NEC out from under the National Gas Company (NGC). You cannot have NEC this big and the parent company this small. Move NEC out of NGC and let us see what it is doing. Do not cloud it under NGC, because you know what you are doing. By making NEC a subsidiary of NGC, they are not accountable here. We cannot ask enough questions about that matter.

Sen. Sahadeo: Madam President, the Senator is misleading the House. In NGC's published accounts for the last year, one would have seen close to \$1.6 billion in profits which is synonymous with the business activity of NGC. There is no rule of law or rule of thumb which states the size of a subsidiary versus the parent company. I just thought that I should clarify that for this honourable Senate. Certainly, I think, it is a misleading statement.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, I do not understand what the Senator meant by \$1.6 billion in profits and that I am misleading the Senate. That \$1.6 billion profit in NGC was as a result of the gas sales that NGC made to its clients. I am talking about when a parent company is responsible for making decisions about future investments. That is the job of a parent company. That is what I am dealing with. How could that be the job of NEC? That is the job of the NGC board and not the NEC board. I beg to disagree. If you want, you can go and put that in one of your corporate governance seminars and tell them that you would give the subsidiary the opportunity to be the parent company, and the parent company would make all the decisions about the company going forward like the whole strategic planning and so forth. You tell them that, if that is the case. [*Desk thumping*] I am not disputing that NGC did not declare a profit of \$1.6 billion. [*Interruption*] In fact, I have said over and over that NGC's profitability of \$1.6 billion was as a result of gas sales.

Sen. D. Montano: Do not be "duncy". You are too smart.

Madam President: That is what Sen. Enill was talking about yesterday.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: Why is the Senator calling people "duncy"?

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Everybody is always “duncy” for him. Madam President, let me go back to the \$1.6 billion. I do not understand what the \$1.6 billion in profits has to do with future projects. That profit of \$1.6 billion was based on current operations, and it was based on the gas sales; gas they bought from their producers, which they sold at a profit to their customers downstream.

Madam President, through you, let me remind the goodly Senator that the \$1.6 billion was as a result of the gas price reduction we were able to negotiate under Trains 2 and 3 between NGC and suppliers. [*Desk thumping*] That is why you had cheap gas available and NGC could have made that \$1.6 billion in profits. You go back and check the records and you would see that they were not making any profit before that.

Hon. Senators: Oh goooh!

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Go back and check the records. [*Interruption*]

Madam President: Senator, you do not speak across the floor to another Senator in that threatening manner. Talk to me, please.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, I apologize. I did not intend to threaten anyone in any way. I did not realize that I could threaten anyone. Madam President, through you, the point I am making is let us not confuse—you talk about misleading—and try to obfuscate the situation. Let us be very explicit. Do not come and tell me that because of the \$1.6 billion in profits, NGC is the parent company. That \$1.6 billion was as a result of gas sales and current operations of NGC. This should not mislead the Senate.

The point I am making here is that we need to understand that this Government—this is why Sen. Prof. Ramchand is correct. We come to this Parliament and this was already done. Do you know what has happened here? Nobody knows if this is a feasible project or not. My concern is, as I said before, five years down the road, we are going to hear that ALUTRINT has closed its doors because there was no project; there was no gas; and they could not come to an agreement for gas pricing.

It is my understanding that British Gas is not selling any gas at 60 cents and they want Henry Hub. All their producers are demanding market base pricing for their gas. So, without NGC getting involved and NEC, the goodly Minister should know that what I am talking about here has been quoted by the chairman of NGC. The chairman has come out and said, over and over, that he has no gas available to give to these projects. They do not have any cheap gas available. So do not carry on as if I am misleading the House, because these are statements by your

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chairman, not me. I am just quoting. [*Desk thumping*] They have gone on the *Energy Magazine* and clearly stated that. They have all the investors sitting and waiting to see if they would find gas. I do not know if that is what they intend to do. While they are waiting on all of that the taxpayers of this country continue to put money into projects like that. That is my concern.

I think the Government needs to tell us its project feasibility for ALUTRINT and this equity investment that they are making, and whether the feasibility study was based on a gas price of 60 cents. If it was based on a Henry Hub price, what is the gas requirement and whether or not this free tranche of gas that they talked about yesterday is going to be used by the company called ALUTRINT or ALCOA? It is time now that we find out that. They should be very explicit.

One minute you are hearing about an increase in royalty; then you are hearing about a free tranche of gas; and now we are hearing about going into an aluminium smelter. In fact, I do not think that we have gained anything since this Government started negotiations with Train 4. I am of the firm conviction now that this Government did not achieve anything. They did not get an increase in royalty. They got a free tranche of gas that may very well go to an aluminium smelter; not for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

It was quite a revelation yesterday when the Minister said: “You know, royalty is not important because it is a pass through.” That is what we have been saying all the time. It is an emotive issue.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Madam President, she is misquoting me. I never said that royalty was not important. I said that the way they signed an agreement which allowed Bp to pass on any additional royalty to NGC, in this case, it made it irrelevant about royalty payments, because you are not going to get it out of Bp. You know because you were there. You know what you all have signed.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: Do not threaten her. [*Laughter*]

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, the bottom line is that he said that royalty is irrelevant and it really did not make any sense trying to negotiate an increase in royalty. I want to tell him that was always the case. It was not because of Train 1, Train 2 or Train 3, but royalty was always a pass through for NGC.

Madam President, the other issue has to do with this new company that is being formed called ALUTRINT.

Sen. D. Montano: Where did you get your degree?

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: You do not have to worry about where I got my degree. You have to answer to the citizens of this country. Is it my understanding

that this company is being headed by one Phillip Julien who is the son of Ken Julien and Chairman of the National Gas Task Force?

Sen. Sahadeo: For the record, this entity is not spearheaded by any Julien whatsoever. Again, let me clarify that.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Stop bringing people's children into this.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: I thank you for that clarification. Madam President, if that is so, I am glad that they have cleared up the issue. That is what has been said outside. *[Interruption]*

Sen. Joseph: Outside?

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: That was in the press. They should have come out and denied it.

Madam President: Members, please. It has been corrected. Let us accept the correction and move on.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Exactly.

Madam President: Do not be calling people's children name.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, as Opposition Members, we have to go by what is said in the press. If the Government did not deny what was said in the press, that is the Government's fault, not my fault. If I did not see the Government coming out and denying it, I have to assume that it is true.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: We read about SURAL in the press.

Sen. D. Montano: Where did you get your degree? Is it from the newspaper? It must be true.

Madam President: Sen. D Montano, you are disturbing the Senator.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Not only is he disturbing, but I do not understand what the relevance of his point is. Everyone knows that there was a company called Pandevco that had to do a feasibility study. The other issue here is one of transparency. We continue to hear that Trintoplan has been given the engineering services contract for the and Oropouche estates. What selection process was used? It is my understanding that there were merit awards for many of these contracts. If that is not true, I would be quite willing to let them clear the issue on that matter. It is my understanding that several merit awards were made for these engineering services. I am asking the question: What selection process was used or why a selection process was not used? I am going to sit if you want to answer

the question.

Sen. Dr. Saith: I do not see why I should answer that question. What that has to do with me? Whether the consultant is Lee Young, Trintoplan or Baldeosingh and Company, why do you want an answer from me?

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: All I am saying is that it is my understanding that there was no selection process; there was no open bidding process; no transparent process; and there was no open competitive bidding process.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: No transparency.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Most of these contracts were awarded on merit.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: PNM style.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, the issue here is what has happened in terms of this pricing committee. I do not want to misquote the Government. Is the pricing committee operational? Three Senators have also asked that question and we did not receive any answer. Is it operational or is it not operational?

Sen. Dr. Saith: The Minister would respond.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Minister?

Sen. Dr. Saith: Not now. [*Laughter*]

Madam President: Are you going to reply now?

Sen. Dr. Saith: No.

Madam President: Please, we are wasting time.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, it has been said that there is no pricing committee that is operational. I am asking the question—

Madam President: He is going to answer when he is winding up.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: We did not get any answer yesterday.

Madam President: You are going to get one today.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: We need to know if the pricing committee is operational. I think it is very important. That is a question being asked all over the country. The same way the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries is giving approvals all over the entire country, investors know that they must go to the National Gas Task Force to Professor Ken Julien to get approval for their projects.

Only the PNM and its supporters know that, but everybody else in the country knows otherwise. That is the problem that I have here.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Madam President, on a point of order. The Senator is being totally irrelevant and rehashing the contribution she made yesterday. If she has nothing new to add then, I am sorry, but she has to find something new.

Madam President: You are repeating your arguments from yesterday.

Sen. Dr. Saith: All of it.

Sen. D. Montano: Are you stupid?

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: You are disrespectful to other people—

Madam President: Sen. D. Montano, do not be disrespectful to the lady.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: You know, Madam President, do you know what I have noticed? Whenever you stand here and talk about facts they behave that way. Whenever you start hearing people accusing other people and calling them names is because they have no answers. Get up and get answers. That is what this country wants right now. [*Desk thumping*] They are fed up! Do you know why? The Government treats the energy sector as though it belongs to the PNM. The gas and the oil reserves belong to the PNM and not the country. It belongs to the PNM. That is what I am passionate about. [*Crosstalk*]

It always amazes me that every year since I have been in this Senate, a big allocation would be made to the Ministry of Education and somewhere along the line there would be a transfer out into another programme. When I am doing these Bills, I try to determine what value was there, and when it is moved to point B, what value would it become, because this is taxpayers' money.

Madam President, according to the budget, every dollar that has been allocated to a project, a particular argument and justification was given. At that point in time, we heard all that was required for the Ministry of Education. It was interesting to know that yesterday evening the Minister of Education got up and said that everything was so because of the mismanagement at the schools and so forth. Nothing is wrong with the Ministry of Education. They are perfect. Everything they did was perfect. It is not bad that they continue to hire more staff and they make untimely payments, and three months later people cannot get their salaries. These are the same janitorial staff and we find that there is nothing wrong with that. That is very disappointing when it comes from this Government. You would see schools collapsing all over this country. When I talked yesterday it was because I did that survey. I called all the boards and only Monday night we

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saw the Anglican Board complaining.

Sen. Dr. L. Saith: Madam President, again, she is debating the Motion on the Adjournment. Madam President, please get her to be relevant.

Madam President: Senator, you said that yesterday.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, I want to find out something. Why could this money not go toward that same allocation to improve primary schools, whether they are denominational or government-assisted schools? [*Desk thumping*] Why did it have to go to a company called SURAL or whatever? We do not have any idea whether this company would make a profit in five years or even stay open, but we are moving money from the Ministry of Education to go into this company. Yes, only yesterday I debated a Motion, but do you know what the objective of that was? At the end of the day, the objective is, this is what we subject our children to. We want our children to realize Vision 2020 and this is what we do.

We come here every year and move moneys out from the Ministry of Education, and we are seeing the collapsing of infrastructure throughout the country; whether they are denominational schools or government schools.

Sen. Enill: Madam President, may I make a small intervention, please? The movement of the moneys from education was, in fact, an issue of time—one week into the New Year: both in terms of education and housing. The expenditure that did not make its way to 2005 made its way into 2006. It is artificial; it does not make sense. It is simply a point in time when a transaction should take place. So to have a discussion for 30 or 35 minutes about something that did not take place on the 6th, but took place on the 7th, I do not understand it. [*Desk thumping*] I just do not understand it. [*Desk thumping*] The question of moving money is a function of a date. As at the 31st of a date you close off. This is what this is about. This is not any high science. It is about taking up the books and saying: “Okay, we did not do this here, but we are doing it here.” That is what it is and nothing else.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, that is the problem. Let us say that you were going to spend \$100 million on “A” and you did not spend it on “A”, but you spent it on point “B”—

Sen. Enill: Madam President, I just want to make the point that it is like your bank account. You have decided that you are going to buy a car this month, but customs did not clear it, so you have to do it next month, and instead of buying the car, you went on holidays. That is what it is. It is a date issue. As at the

particular date, the event did not occur, but it occurred in the next period. So, if we were doing a review for January to December now, you would see that it was done. That is all.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, that cannot be so. If I put aside \$100 million to buy the car and I bought it the next month, what I did with the current funds was to spend it on a holiday. If it was not there, I would not have spent it on the holiday. If I had bought the car, then I would not have spent it on the holiday. That is my point. You see, at the end of the day, all the figures are going to add up. What you are saying is this is where we spent the money, and you put the money into a company called ALUTRINT. That is what we are questioning.

You see, what is happening here with that side is that it sees this much money and all of it which could be spent. On this side, we look at how it is being spent and what it is being spent on. [*Desk thumping*] From a business perspective, if you did not have the use for the money, then you would put it back into something for future savings or some other project that would realize the value. That is the point. That is why we look at it in this way from where we sit. You look at it in a different way. You are looking at how you are going to spend it; once it is spent. Of course, we cannot take your approach. We must look at how the money is spent; we must understand the value generated for every taxpayer dollar.

Madam President, this is why after 50 years of PNM's rule we are in the position we are in today.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: Exactly.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Because of that attitude and because of that approach—

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: They do not care.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan:—after 50 years of PNM's rule—after one boom going into a second boom—that is what we have outside there; collapsing infrastructure. That is the PNM's approach.

Madam President: The conversation is across the floor, so what am I doing here? [*Laughter*]

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, what I am saying is that we on this side would look at how every taxpayer dollar is being spent and how the value is generated. [*Desk thumping*] Your approach is, I have the money to spend

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and where I spend it and how I spend it does not matter, once it is spent. That is your job. I always say that the PNM feels that if it spends \$100 million they would get \$100 million worth of performance. On this side, we do not look at it in that way.

Madam President, I am going to close because I recognize the other side is not prepared to listen. They are not prepared to listen; they are not prepared to understand. This is why the criticism of this particular regime is the way they spend money. They would continue to get criticism for that. This is not just coming from the Opposition Bench, but it is coming from all quarters of the society. You heard it from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). That is because of the kind of explanation we just heard. It cannot be. That is why after 50 years—first boom and the second boom—we have collapsing schools; collapsing infrastructure; and we have no agriculture. That is why. Every time we try to understand how they are spending the money, they make the same mistakes over and over. They are not prepared to listen.

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

Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie: Madam President, thank you very much. I just want to make a few comments after perusing the document. Firstly, I understand that there are two kinds of transfers: one is where we did not spend the money and that is under two headings. So you have allocated savings from these two ministries to other projects, which I hope would have been considered worthy and a good substitute for the moneys we would have saved.

The second element I looked at is what I called a virement—from one vote within a ministry to another vote within that same ministry. My observation is that there was no need for an increase in that allocation. In other words, we have not increased the budgetary allocation.

I hope, in the future, we could minimize some of the non-performance in certain sections of these ministries, not necessarily the Ministry of Finance. I looked at three or four examples. When I looked at the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC), they anticipated that they would have done this lighting project over a two-year period, 2005 to 2007, then this should have been on a phased basis.

Let us say, for example, in January to June, they were going to do so much and, therefore, they would need an allocation of so and so. That would give the Ministry of Finance the opportunity to know how much money to be allocated for the street lights from January to June, and that would make you realize whether

you have enough money, according to the forecast, and T&TEC would have received that amount of money. In future, I hope that when we have this type of extended time to do a project that it would be broken down and the money would be allocated accordingly.

The next important point I think we need to look at is the dependence of certain ministries on the work of other agencies. Much of the savings was as a result of no appointments; no promotions; no filling of posts; no okay from the Director of Personnel Administration; nobody upgraded the posts for the deans, sports officers and travelling officers and so forth. This has nothing to do with the Ministry. This has to do with the Service Commission Department or whoever.

When a ministry is dependent on other agencies to do its work, so that you can do your work and spend your money, you know, as we say in Tobago—this is a Creole proverb—“Yuh cah boil cattle head if you have to borrow water.” Do you understand? When you are dependent on somebody else, it keeps you in a closed jacket and, therefore, you cannot function. I am saying that you must do something; whether you coax, cajole, beg or whatever, and let these agencies know that because they are not filling these vacancies or upgrading these posts or setting the conditions of service and so forth, they are keeping back the ministry and the funds are tied up and it could be used otherwise.

I also looked at the late submission of bills. In my time, as a public servant, we had a commitment in the vote book in red. So if we issued an invoice order for 50 tables and we received the quotations for these 50 tables, in my vote book in my Ministry, I would commit that expense in red. The actual bills that would be coming in would be in black or blue and, therefore, when I am looking at my expenses, I know that I would have spent \$5 million and I have \$3 million in outstanding bills to pay. I think that if we do this we would be able to forecast and say that these persons have submitted their bills, but my vote book would tell me that. I would then be able to make a phone call and say: “Listen, you are holding up my finances and if you do not submit my bills by so and so date, I would have to use the money otherwise.” They may be able to say why they could not submit the bills on time, and this would make you do what you have to do in a timely fashion.

I want to commend the Government for trying to cut out corruption. I looked at what the Government said about tightening up the SHARE programme and persons who have videos, stereos and five cellphones in their homes want a food basket. I am glad that the Government has looked at tightening up and turning the screws where it sees signs of corruption taking place.

Finally, we would also have variation of appropriation as long as we are in this world. I looked at the last point which is unforeseen circumstances like the hurricane in Tobago. You do not know when Ivan is going to come until a day or two days, and you have to respond. Look at how long Ivan has taken place! You would realize that I did not talk about flooding because I think that we have become accustomed to it. We should make provisions for flooding.

I talked about when Ivan hit Tobago and only last week there was a freak storm and galvanized sheets were blown off some houses. In Grenada—we have to be nice to our neighbours and friends. “Fire catch yuh brother’s beard so you have to wet yours.” I am saying that there will be occasions when unforeseen circumstances would cause us to do the things that we are doing today. If we could minimize them I would be happy.

Madam President, I would like to tell the Minister of Finance that when he is considering budgetary allocation, I know that you would call in the different ministries and top public servants then you should see if they are in a state of readiness to implement what they have asked for within the time frame. Giving them a time frame and letting them know that if they are not sure to implement this project within the time frame—whether it is three months, six months or nine months or whatever—do not put it in the budget. All this does is embarrass you. Having a non-performance of so great a percentage makes it seem as if you did not know what you were doing when you gave them the money.

Madam President, thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Sadiq Baksh: Madam President, we had a lot of discussion on the matter before us this evening. We heard a lot of different angles of the same thing. Madam President, part of the Minister of Finance responsibility is to close the books for 2005, and we are here to do that. It is only at this time he would know whether he has achieved what he was supposed to achieve during that period. It is the only occasion that you come to this House, after the event. When the Budget was presented, it was the projection; it was what was anticipated; and it was a target and you had the funding to do it: both under the PSIP and the Recurrent Expenditure.

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

Mr. Vice-President, coming to the end of the year, people would have realized savings, and that is really because of the inefficiencies within the ministries. They were not able to utilize the funding for which it was provided. So it is not a question about savings alone. This is not really applicable. Be that as it may, the

different ministries would now need to justify to the Minister of Finance, internal virements and he now has that authority without going to Cabinet. So it could be in a more timely basis. So, on the last day of the financial year, you would be able to make that change. That is additional flexibility. We do not have any problem with that.

For this year, according to the schedule provided, we saw where \$79.6 million is supposed to be removed from two heads of expenditure and the equivalent of \$79,600,000 to two other heads of expenditure. This is presented in the schedule and it is quite straightforward. We understand that.

Mr. Vice-President, the proposal to fund the retirement of the Treasury Warrants by the transferring of \$79 million, again, that is straightforward. With respect to the Ministry of Education; \$21.6 million and the Ministry of Housing; \$58 million, my main comment is that the sum of \$52 million was transferred to the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and that was intended to meet the commitment of \$72 million in fiscal year 2005, as part of the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission National Street Lighting Programme.

Madam President, it is true that in March 2005 Cabinet did approve the National Street Lighting Programme which was estimated to cost \$630 million over a period of time, up to the year 2007. We are faced with the question of poor financial management and poor programme implementation. Mr. Vice-President, the existing method of financing the National Street Lighting Programme is not working and it is cumbersome. It was clearly not designed to be transparent. That is for sure.

This administration continues to demonstrate the lack of ability to manage and implement any programme, for instance, there is no indication from the information available, especially for the last period, as to how many street lights were installed, not only for 2005, but especially during the period when the money was shifted, and three months later we have to know whether we have met those objectives. That is an important point. Today, we could have been told that when this money went it was able to accomplish X, Y or Z. That is something we could not have done when the budget was presented.

Mr. Vice-President, Why is T&TEC responsible for implementing the National Street Lighting Programme? This must interfere with their core responsibilities of maintaining the distribution network. We are talking about the installation of street lights, and you have the electricity on the poles. This is a project that could go to the private sector, but you put it under the electricity commission so that you could facilitate the lack of transparency.

At present, my understanding is that the current demand for electricity is in the vicinity of 1,000 megawatts. This comes close to the national generating capacity. The national generating capacity is in the vicinity of 1,400 megawatts. With the current National Street Lighting Programme and the current housing development requirements alone, if you do not take into consideration the new peak demand requirements, we would immediately begin to have blackouts again.

I know that the Government would say that it has plans in place and they are going to facilitate additional electricity generation, but we have heard that in the past; we have experienced that in the past, especially during the boom days of 1971 to 1983. They said that same thing. It cannot get better than that. We were supposed to get a cable with electricity from Venezuela to Trinidad. That was the recommendation in those days. I am warning this administration that if it continues like this, the current peak demand would not be sufficient for the supply of electricity.

The sum of \$27,600,000 to be transferred to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries: We had a lot of discussion on the use of that fund. My comment from the available data is that there is no indication as to how the \$15 million is to be allocated and what progress was made when they got that funding for that period. That is a very important matter.

There were three locations: , the Oropouche Bank and Point Lisas south and east. Surely, \$15 million was not sufficient for any of them. Maybe you allocated that \$15 million to those locations to top up what you had before. My point is: What was achieved? Where was the money spent?

It is possible that the information that is available to NEC, we do not have it here. The point I am making is that good financial and project management require that the information must be available to the Government. I am certain that the Government had that information and they just did not think it was necessary to share it with us.

Mr. Vice-President, a lot has been said about SURAL and I would not go into that. I do not really want to get into duplicating what took place there. When I looked at the movements, in terms of the statement of transfers for 2005, it is there I found my greatest concerns. That is exactly what the Minister of Finance said. We reached a point where the funding was available to the ministry for a set of activities that would have been part of its strategic plan and to really get it implemented for the year 2005, but it did not work. I am not interested in if it did not work and for whatever reason.

What I am concerned about is that in a short period you had \$600 million plus to go on the market and you went into the market. You went into the market and purchased goods and services that were available on the shelves. None of the items purchased was really a specialized piece of equipment to achieve a specific set of objectives. If you take a simple look at any one of these items, you would see that minor equipment purchases would have outstripped everything else; food would be running a close second; third would be entertainment; and fourth would be publicity.

Mr. Vice-President, what you have here is a spending spree that would not increase your asset base, but really frivolous spending in a lot of cases. In other words, instead of getting the results that you have planned for—and you had the vision to do it. You created the plan; you set in place the project management capability; and you put in place everything else and it did not happen. In a mad rush to say you have funding available, you spent it and bought things for twice the price. You bought things that you did not get on the day, and they cut the invoice so you would pay at a future date for a product that would be substandard. So by the time it reaches the ministry, it is of no use. That is my concern.

I know the Minister of Finance is well aware of that. I know he does not condone that, but that is the harsh reality of what took place during the last virement; what took place the year before that, but the time has come to streamline these things. Now that the Minister of Finance has the authority to really approve virements, those virements should really get vired with his authority before he makes a commitment to the ministry for the purchases of those items.

In many cases, we have complained about rubber stamps. Many times the Minister of Finance finds himself in that same position, where there is a commitment to purchase things and he then goes to the Minister for a virement. I had a serious problem with it in the past and I have a serious problem with it now. I am certain that the Minister is going to take into consideration the haste in spending the money and he would end up with sub quality items; frivolous items.

If you do not get the required quotations from the number of different persons for a vehicle in the ministry, you would end up going to specific buyers and there are suppliers who are only waiting for that time of the year to jack up their prices, so you do not get value for money; you get substandard goods and, really, the ministry does not benefit from that.

In many cases, the person for whom the items were bought did not supply the specification, especially in the case of computers. Mr. Vice-President, the only

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market for suppliers and noncompliant Y2K computers is in the government service. That is the only place. They have them waiting on standby for sale to the government service during the period September to October, in any given year. They really have a surplus house waiting to supply the government service. That cannot really keep us going.

I return now to another matter that I talked about earlier and that is the National Street Lighting Programme. The National Street Lighting Programme is a very good programme. That is a programme that is needed and I would not really complain about people getting lights on the roads that I have to drive on in this country, but I have a serious problem when you put the street lights where nobody is living. I am going to give you a classic case. I know of a number of them but I am going to just give you one example. I do not think that anybody is going to live there—and this is on the Fyzabad Branch Road off the Guapo Road in Fyzabad. I checked them. There are 364 street lights in all directions leading away from the Lake View Nature Park.

So, you have a Lake View Nature Park which was intended to really be a nature park and not even a maniocou could survive there. Around that park is so bright that if a maniocou had to go there it would change its mind. There is nobody living there. There are three houses on the higher stretch of the Guapo Road to the Southern Erin Road. There are only three houses there, but there are 364 street lights. Mr. Vice-President, if you drive there and go back to anywhere in Tobago, you would want to know why you cannot have some street lights in Tobago. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Vice-President, it was done during 2005. I really do not know who put it and I do not know why they put it there. All I know is that taxpayers' dollars went down there. A few cars would pass there and I have no problem with that. If you have to prioritize, I want to suggest that you do the highly populated areas first. I do not have any problem with street lights on every lamp pole. I do not have a problem with that, but I have a serious problem when you do not prioritize it.

There are two other areas where I saw that similar thing, but I think one example is going to suffice. I am sure that the Minister knows that when I tell him that he could go and check the 364 street lights, and he would be assured that I did it. I know the Minister does not really condone that and the Government does not condone it either, but that is what takes place all the time.

Mr. Vice-President, the purpose of rejoining the debate this evening is to ask the Minister of Finance to request appropriate accountability from the ministries, especially now that he has the authority and responsibility.

I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Vice-President, some of those who made the most noises are not here, at this point in time, and I would have liked to be able to engage them, but I guess the interpretation of dealing with the people's business is to make statements and then leave.

Mr. Vice-President, the exercise that we are engaged in this evening is a simple exercise. It is one in which sometime ago we brought before this House something called the Estimates of Expenditure. "Estimate" is a word, by definition, which means an appropriate judgment; especially cost, value, size, et cetera. "Approximate" means near to the actual, fairly correct and "judgment" means an opinion, good sense. So, if by definition what you bring here is an estimate of expenditure, and it has all of these judgmental issues then, how is it possible that when you actually do the exercise and actually carry out the activity, it is going to be equal to what the estimate was? That is the sum total of most of the discussion that we have spent time here for the last six hours.

The theory, by those on the other side, is that if you do estimates of expenditure which is to look 12 months down the road and estimate what it is going to cost, 15 months after, when you have actually done the work, if you do not get it exactly right, then something is wrong with your policy; you are mismanaging and this and that. Mr. Vice-President, that is not so. Therefore, for all the arguments, as good as they may sound, the fact of the matter is that the exercise in which we are engaged today, is an exercise to close the books so that the Ministry of Finance can meet its constitutional mandate to prepare a set of accounts representing the work that we have done. Part of our responsibility is to give it to the Auditor General who would then provide us with an opinion and then report back to the Parliament on what we have done. That is simple.

Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Prof. Ramchand talked about constitutional reform and he basically quoted some elements of the Constitution. I thought that I should not deal with it, but I am going to deal with it today. The way in which Parliament controls the Executive is through the Appropriation Bill. The Appropriation Bill is debated and it sets out for the year the limits by which the Executive can, in fact, use public funds. That is an important duty. In fact, in some instances when we come here and report we do more than what is required under the law. Quite frankly, the law says in passing a budget, all I need to do is to talk about

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expenditure. I am under no legal obligation to tell you where it is coming from, but we do. In the fullness of transparency and bringing the population along with what we are doing, we do a lot more and, in doing a lot more, there is no consensus as to what we should report and what we should not report. Again, it is a judgment issue.

When we provide the information, it is not good to create the impression as though we are in a war; we are right and so forth. It is not about that. At the end of the day, it is a question of priorities; it is a question of what you told the population you were going to do; and it is a question of keeping faith with those who have put you here to do a particular thing.

Cabinet is not above the law. If Cabinet was above the law, then we in Cabinet could decide that we are not coming here. Quite frankly, in many instances, coming here is painful. It is painful because we should be looking at legislation to help the people of Trinidad and Tobago. You see, in a real sense, part of the problem is us, because it is collective us. We get up here and talk about the system, but the system is based on us. We are the ones who must decide how to change the system.

We have an issue now where crime is the most important issue in this country and, yet Members on that side have decided that the way to solve crime is to sit and blame the Government. Everybody knows that more money into a system that is bad is not going to produce any different result. We know that; we have tried it. We have put new things in place. We need to change the method by which it is being done.

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: You cannot even leave your house.

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: Mr. Vice-President, I am getting a response. I am sorry that my colleague Sen. Bharath is not here, because I was going to tell him that I totally disagreed with him. His analysis was flawed. It does not take into account the real situation that we have in this country where it does not work in the private sector. If the Government works like the private sector there would be no issue. The Government works within a framework. It was set up that way and it works that way. That is the system we have to operate in. What we do, as we move through the system, is to try and make the best use of the system and deal with the issues. Sen. Baksh was correct when he talked about those issues. In many instances, you have to work within the system.

Mr. Vice-President, let me tell you something about the system. Some of my colleagues talk about civil disobedience and within the system, there are persons who believe that it is their job to slow down, shut down, obfuscate and frustrate

the work of the Government. That is their job. They have been told to do it and they take their job seriously. We know it; we see it. What happens is when you take action, you get judicial review and when you get judicial review, or what that side likes to do, they try to clog up the work of the ministry by asking 152 irrelevant questions, and then spend a lot of time badgering everybody and they know fully well that in a lot of instances what they are doing does not make sense.

Mr. Vice-President, we on this side recognize that there are some things that do not work; we recognize that there are some things that we must do. In instances where we can do it, we would do it, and in instances where we cannot do it, we would put it on the table.

One of the things that we are committed to, insofar as reform is concerned, is the question of financial management reform. We have talked about it for about three years now. The real difficulty is when we talked about financial management reform and we looked at what is required, in order to do that there is a lot of work that is needed to be done in individual ministries.

Financial management reform is a reform that would allow us to deal with value for money issues, that is to say; if you are going to plan for this particular output—sorry, let me put it a different way. What would this output do in terms of the value of money that you have spent compared to alternatives? Now, unfortunately, the system that we operate with now cannot within the current structure support that. The system that we operate in now is basically, as we have seen it, a shopping list system; nice to have.

One of the issues in the system is this: You are saying not to put money for it, but guess what? If you do not put money for it when you go to the CTB to even ask for a consultant, they would say to give them a confirmation of funds. If it is not there you do not get it. You do have to put it even if you know that it cannot be done, because if you do not put it, it would not be considered. That is some of the realities of the system that we operate in. What we are seeing here today is a reflection of that system. That is the result of the system.

Mr. Vice-President, they put a policy in place that says that everybody can bring in roll-on roll-off cars, so every single day people are bringing in 300 cars. Today, we have a problem with transportation, because of your bad policy which was not sorted out properly, and then they say the Government of the day must solve the traffic problems, because we created it. We did not create it. The fact of the matter is your policy which seemed to be good at the time had the unintended consequence which we have to deal with and we are dealing with it.

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Mr. Vice-President, this is a simple exercise to close the accounts; an exercise to do what is required. It is a Friday afternoon and we have been here for two days.

6.15 p.m.

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: There is a pricing committee?

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: The pricing committee by law is in place.

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: So is it operating?

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: You have to invoke it and usually you invoke it when there is an issue to be dealt with at the level of price with the Board of Inland Revenue.

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: You have members on a pricing committee, right now?

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: Yes. By law it is defined within the Act. It is the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and some other people. What we said we are going to do is put some additional technical support in it to deal with the issues. So there would be an advisory group that would basically work for the pricing committee. Then it would go for discussion.

With those few words, Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad 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, That the Bill be read a third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration and Information and the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Mr. Vice President, I beg to move that the Senate be now adjourned to Tuesday, January 31, 2006 at 1.30 p.m., at which time we would debate the Occupational Safety and Health (Amdt.) Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjournment

Friday, January 27, 2006

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.19 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

The following question was asked by Sen. Wade Mark:

**Advertising Agencies
(Details of)**

- 31.** (a) Could the Minister of Health provide the Senate with a list of names of the various advertising agencies employed by the Ministry or any Statutory Authorities, government agencies and departments under his control for the period January 01, 2002 to October 30, 2005?
- (b) Could the Minister provide the Senate with a breakdown of the expenditure per agency in respect of (a) above?
- (c) Could the Minister also state the amount of monies utilized in both the print media in a detailed way over the same period as well as the various events hosted, promoted and advertised?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the Senate:

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): With respect to (a-b) the undermentioned table reflects a list of agencies employed for the period January 01, 2002—October 30, 2005.

TABLE

Agencies	Period			
	2002	2003	2004	2005
Media Planners and Consultants			4,100.40	35,064.16
Trico Industries	2,609.00	1,096.00		13,512.00
Kaisocer Productions	3,791.00			
Londsdale Saatchi & Saatchi	111,041.79	171,989.33		
Advantage Advertising Services Limited.				31,771.62

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(c) As at Appendix I and II attached.

Events, Media Houses and Cost for Period 2002—2005`
Ministry of Health Head Office

Events Hosted, Promoted & Advertised	TRINIDAD GUARDIAN	EXPRESS	NEWSDAY	TTT	TV 6
2002					
Dengue Awareness	42,856.26	5,117.51	-	103,309.36	62,100.00
No Tobacco Campaign	8,951.03	61,978.74	-	59,899.79	254,984.79
Health Promotion	5,841.20	40,140.83	-	34,209.00	-
Uncashed Cheques	34,173.46	-	-	-	-
Registration of Pesticides	2,220.08	-	-	-	-
World Aids Day	-	12,319.40	-	22,367.50	23,345.00
Registration of Pesticides	-	-	1,963.28	-	-
Wanted Property	-	-	1,656.51	-	-
Buy Fresh Fish	-	-	-	-	61,174.93
Women On The Go Fun Run	-	-	-	5,575.00	-

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Events Hosted, Promoted & Advertised	TRINIDAD GUARDIAN	EXPRESS	NEWSDAY	TTT	TV 6
2003					
World Aids Day	23,287.50	21,818.98	-	42,367.50	51,117.50
Protect your skin	3,229.20	6,443.45	-	-	-
Protect yourself	15,688.88	13,887.90	-	-	-
Carnival Safety (Aids)	8,445.60	11,515.08	-	61,899.64	92,875.00
Mental Health Month	61,187.86	63,395.71	-	-	50,000.00
Media Awareness Campaign Dengue	34,408.00	8,006.88	-	141,159.21	59,000.00
Symptoms Dengue	-	17,436.91	-	8,050.00	-
Vacancies (Oncology)	-	7,877.52	-	-	-
World No Tobacco Day	-	-	-	21,612.48	15,000.00
Women 5K & Youth Healthy Living	-	-	-	23,000.00	-

Written Answer to Question

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Events Hosted, Promoted & Advertised	TRINIDAD GUARDIAN	EXPRESS	NEWSDAY	TTT	TV 6
2004					
Arrears of Increment	-	6,322.48	-	-	-
Dengue Fever (Awareness)	-	4,117.58	-	25,000.00	57,995.20
Advertising Scholarships	-	9,547.12	-	-	-
Vacancies	-	56,948.13	97,284.84	-	-
Diabetes Campaign	-	32,154.20		19,550.00	44,999.50
Minister's Speech	-	9,989.71	30,298.37	-	-
Ad. No Drinking & Driving	-	32,640.68	40,643.21	30,000.00	60,000.00
Cataract Surgery	-	8,293.13	6,440.00	-	-
Rapport Vacancies	-	2,018.25	-	-	-
Rapport Camp	-	3,249.91	-	-	-
Abstinence Programme	-	8,423.76	-		-
Health Promotion Launch	28,799.46	74,714.73	97,926.35	56,499.65	79,837.50

Written Answer to Question

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Events Hosted, Promoted & Advertised	TRINIDAD GUARDIAN	EXPRESS	NEWSDAY	TTT	TV 6
World No Tobacco	-	6,559.60	-	-	59,999.55
Healthy Eating	-	4,544.80	11,248.24	-	-
ACI Surgeons	-	13,381.16	-	-	-
World Blood Donor Day	-	31,877.50	14,119.76	-	-
National Aids Programme	-	-	14,902.88	25,000.00	60,000.00
Tribute to Dr. Ashton Le Maitre	7,134.61	-	981.64	9,999.99	-

Events, Media Houses and Cost for Period 2002—2005
Ministry of Health Head Office

Events Hosted, Promoted & Advertised	TRINIDAD GUARDIAN	EXPRESS	NEWSDAY	TTT	TV 6
2005					
BS.c Nursing Program	2,673.75	4,904.75	2,277.00	-	-
Abstinence – Tobacco, Mental Health	20,736.81	12,558.00	5,520.00	-	58,236.00

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Events Hosted, Promoted & Advertised	TRINIDAD GUARDIAN	EXPRESS	NEWSDAY	TTT	TV 6
Health Promotion	26,785.23		49,052.10	-	-
Hernia & Cataract	14,000.34		3,703.00	-	-
Uncashed Cheque	5,860.40	3,453.45		-	-
16 Slice CT Scanner	5,188.80	10,584.60	9,770.44	-	-
Mammograph Machine	5,188.80	10,584.60	9,770.40	-	-
Surgery Waiting List	1,196.00	1,196.00		-	-
National Tissue Transplant	17,999.37	11,362.00		-	-
No Drinking & Driving	9,999.68	12,328.00	19,603.30	20,000.00	34,500.00
Health Talk Series	13,800.00		1,196.00	-	-
Vacancies	8,372.00	47,803.66	22,601.88	-	-
Dengue	-	-	-	7,500.00	35,000.00
Diabetes Camp	-	4,577.90	43,208.01	26,551.58	35,000.00
World Aids Day	-	15,183.45	15,525.00	12,000.00	30,000.00
Carnival Camps	-	13,413.60	6,375.60	17,000.00	40,000.00

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Events Hosted, Promoted & Advertised	TRINIDAD GUARDIAN	EXPRESS	NEWSDAY	TTT	TV 6
Abstinence (Sexual Behaviour)	-	2,392.00	17,756.00	-	23,000.00
HIV/AIDS awareness	-	-	-	-	40,000.00
New Equipment (Business Feature)	-	-	68,341.05	-	51,750.00
Immunization School Quiz	-	16,588.75	-	-	74,969.65
Jingles	-	61,946.48	41,034.30	-	180,681.24
Tobacco	-	-	47,467.40	-	94,999.99
Tribute to Dr. Rawle Edwards	-	1,495.04	6,213.45	-	-
Flood Advisory	-	11,974.35	21,387.70	-	-
Urology	-	18,293.64	6,831.00	-	-
CDAP	-	57,317.26	11,895.60	-	-
Landmark Accomplishment	-	81,862.06	15,528.50	-	-
Pesticides	-	2,466.75	1,104.00	-	-
NEMA Programme	-	26,636.88		-	-
International Nursing Day	-	-	3,864.06	-	-
West Nile Advisory	-	-	44,878.63	-	-

APPENDIX II

Events, Media Houses & Cost for period 2002 – 2005
Regional Health Authorities

2002

Events Hosted, Promoted & Advertised	Media House(s)	S.W.R.H.A. \$	E.R.H.A \$	N.C.R.H.A \$	T.R.H.A \$
Vacancy	Guardian	-	-	-	-
	Tobago News	-	11,501.00	-	-
	Express	-	13,312.75	-	11,330.00
	Daily News Limited.	-	-		6,728.00
Tenders	Guardian	-	1,872.00	-	-
	Express	-	1,081.00	-	-
Meetings	Daily News Limited	-	528.75	-	-
Freedom of Information	Express	-	2,702.70	-	-
	Guardian	-	2,702.70	-	-
		2003			
Vacancy	Guardian	-	16,428.50	-	-
	Tobago News				4,859.00
	Guardian	-	21,009.00	-	-
	Express	-	2,115.00	-	26,070.00
	Daily News Limited	-	-	-	8,626.00

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Events Hosted, Promoted & Advertised	Media House(s)	S.W.R.H.A. \$	E.R.H.A. \$	N.C.R.H.A \$	T.R.H.A \$
	Tobago News	-	-	-	4,859.00
	Tobago News	-	-	-	5,090.00
Tenders	Guardian	-	17,323.00	-	-
	Express	-	15,085.90	-	-
	Daily News Limited	-	2,800.00	-	-
	Intergraphix Limited	-	7,703.00	-	-
Meetings	Express	-	900.00		
Increments	Guardian	-	526.50	-	-
		2004			
Vacancy	Guardian	18,889.80	20,052.00	-	-
	Express	17,980.00	59,836.50	-	9,492.00
	Daily News Limited	-	17,720.24	-	2,628.00
	Newsday	19,756.80	1,974.40	-	-
Tenders	Guardian	11,981.65	24,849.00	-	-
	Express	9,095.00	59,996.00	-	-
	Daily News	-	45,499.88	-	-
	T& T News	-	6,896.00	-	-
Meetings	Newsday	7,835.90	4,482.00	-	-

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Events Hosted, Promoted & Advertised	Media House(s)	S.W.R.H.A. \$	E.R.H.A \$	N.C.R.H.A \$	T.R.H.A \$
	Express	-	3,331.80	-	-
	FM 102	-	540.00	-	-
	I 95	-	690.00	-	-
	FM 106	-	378.00	-	-
	AM 730	-	450.00	-	-
		2005			
Vacancies	Guardian	102,646.44	68,943.58	56,400.00	
	Express	116,776.70	61,183.02	169,400.00	
	Daily News Limited		24,662.87		
	Newsday	123,291.06	25,364.25		
	Tobago News				34,739.00
Tenders	Guardian		20,390.50		
	Express		27,398.83	16,000.00	
	Daily News Limited		12,919.00	1,520.00	
Health Information	Express		20,259.87		
	Channel 4		5,850.00		

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Events Hosted, Promoted & Advertised	NWRHA for period 1/1/02— 3/10/05	
Vacancies	Express	70,241.71
	Guardian	83,211.84
	Newsday	89,140.77
Health Promotion	Express	39,022.09
	Guardian	32,618.44
	Newsday	40,518.50
Tenders	Express	31,219.63
	Guardian	26,062.45
	Newsday	32,414.79