

Leave of Absence

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

SENATE

Tuesday, April 25, 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. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith, Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie, Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift, Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill and Sen. Mary King, who are out of the country. Leave of absence has also been granted to Sen. Basharat Ali, who is ill.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

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

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MRS. JOAN HACKSHAW-MARSLIN

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

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, JOAN HACKSHAW-MARSLIN, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 25th April, 2006 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Knowlson Gift.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 20th day of April, 2006.”

Senators' Appointment
[MADAM PRESIDENT]

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MS. BONNIE-LOU DE SILVA

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

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, BONNIE-LOU DE SILVA, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 25th April, 2006 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Conrad Enill.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 20th day of April, 2006.”

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MS. ROSE JANNEIRE

WHEREAS Senator Dr. Lenny Saith is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the

Senators' Appointment

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, ROSE JANNIERE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 25th April, 2006 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Dr. Lenny Saith.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 24th day of April, 2006."

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MR NILEUNG R. HYPOLITE

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

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, NILEUNG R. HYPOLITE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 25th April, 2006 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator John Jeremie.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 20th day of April, 2006."

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

Senators' Appointment
[MADAM PRESIDENT]

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: PROFESSOR DAVID PICOU

WHEREAS Senator Mary K. King is incapable of performing her duties as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 40(2)(c) and section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, DAVID PICOU, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Mary K. King.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 24th day of April, 2006."

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The following Senators took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law:

Joan Hackshaw-Marslin, Bonnie-Lou De Silva, Rose Janneire, Nileung Hypolite, David Picou.

STUDENTS' REVOLVING LOAN FUND (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Students' Revolving Loan Fund Act to provide for the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry with responsibility for Tertiary Education to replace the Chief Personnel Officer as Chairman of the Board of Management of the Students' Revolving Loan Fund Enactment, brought from the House of Representatives [*The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education*]; read the first time.

PAPER LAID

Report of the Statutory Authorities Service Commission for the period October 2004 to September 2005. [*The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams)*]

**ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION
Trinbago Unified Calypso Organisation
(Auditor General Reports of)**

59. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs:

- (a) Would the Minister state the reasons that no Auditor General reports into the accounts of Trinbago Unified Calypso Organisation (TUCO) have been presented to the Parliament for the past four years?
- (b) Would the Minister further state when these reports would be submitted to the Parliament?
- (c) Would the Minister also state whether any funds/money appropriated by TUCO have been utilized for any purpose other than the promotion, support and propagation of the calypso art form?

Sen. Wade Mark: Madam President, the hon. Minister has indicated that she needs another week to complete.

Question, by leave, deferred.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Sen. Wade Mark: Madam President, again, I bring this matter to your attention, based on your own ruling that written answers ought to be submitted within a 20-day period. I know that you cannot force a Minister to answer a question, but at least you can invoke the rule you have established. I appeal to you once again to call on the Government to answer these questions that have been outstanding since October 2005.

Madam President: I would certainly try my best.

NATIONAL STREET LIGHTING PROGRAMME

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Hon. Penelope Beckles): Madam President, I am authorized by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago to make this statement.

On Tuesday, October 19, 2004, during the debate on the Appropriation Bill for fiscal year 2004/2005, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance informed this honourable House, and by extension the national community, that there would commence a programme of street lighting aimed at illuminating every community, highway and major roadway throughout Trinidad and Tobago. This policy initiative is in keeping with the Government's thrust to achieve developed nation status by the year 2020.

National Street Lighting Programme
[HON. P. BECKLES]

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

Madam President, I am pleased to advise that this comprehensive proposal entitled the National Street Lighting Programme 2005—2007, submitted by the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) was approved by Cabinet on March 03, 2005.

I would like, with your permission, to refer briefly to the status of street lighting. The total number of street lights installed by T&TEC in Trinidad and Tobago is estimated to be approximately 64,000 units installed along highways, roads, secondary schools and residential communities. This includes 10,300 street lights installed in residential communities and along roadways throughout Trinidad and Tobago between March 2002 and September 2004 under the National Social Development Programme. [*Desk thumping*]

Currently, street light accounts are billed to the respective city corporations, boroughs, regional corporations, the Ministry of Works and the Tobago House of Assembly. Further, there are also a number of street lights which are paid for by private individuals and companies. The outstanding debt to T&TEC for street lighting is approximately, \$7,688,988. This amount includes \$4,434,271 owed by government-related agencies and \$3,254,771 by private developers, who are in the process of having these accounts transferred to the relevant agencies. To alleviate this situation, Cabinet has agreed to have the Attorney General review the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, including the T&TEC Act, to make the necessary amendments to have one government agency make direct payments to T&TEC.

The National Street Lighting Programme is designed to:

- install approximately 82,000 new street lights;
- simultaneously it is intended to improve the quality or level of illumination to meet first world standards with the upgrade of an estimated 36,000 street lights from 70 watts to 150 watts.

It is designed as well:

- to illuminate approximately 80km of new primary and secondary roads and highways;
- to address the street lighting needs of all new housing developments; and
- to ensure that areas prone to criminal activity are adequately lit, thereby contributing to the reduction of crime by providing a possible deterrent to such activities and to a stronger sense of safety and community.

Madam President, of the 82,000 new street lights, 4,600 new street lights will be installed along the East-West Corridor and environs, 9,020 street lights will be installed in North Trinidad, 7,960 street lights will be installed in Central Trinidad, 47,500 street lights will be installed in South Trinidad and 12,920 street lights will be installed in Tobago.

Further, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and T&TEC will work closely with the Ministry of National Security to identify, in a timely manner, specific locations which require immediate attention. To ensure that the objectives of the programme are achieved and to ensure transparency and accountability, a Central Coordinating Unit will be established within T&TEC. The responsibilities of this unit will be:

- (1) the proper management and implementation of the National Street Lighting Programme, 2005—2007 as well as any other related lighting projects, including the management of in-house personnel, contracted labour, funding, materials and information;
- (2) the preparation and implementation of maintenance schedules and policies;
- (3) the maintenance of a database of accurate information for all installed equipment, including appliances and vehicles;
- (4) the creation, maintenance and ownership of all geographic information system mapped data for installed equipment;
- (5) the monitoring of street lighting equipment;
- (6) the preparation of reports and responses to queries on the programme; and
- (7) the performance of technical audits.

In order to achieve the targets outlined earlier, there will be the need to acquire the services of additional human resources to do the actual installation of the street lights. It is proposed that new small enterprises utilizing personnel with relevant skills and expertise be encouraged.

Further, T&TEC proposes to provide support in standard and tertiary training to provide adequate training to upgrade semi- and unskilled labour to levels which effectively support the National Street Lighting Programme and future long-term sustainability. Work is already in progress to re-establish facilities to conduct training for linesmen and electricians to satisfy the manpower needs of this

National Street Lighting Programme
[HON. P. BECKLES]

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

programme as well as that of the national community. All personnel, contractual or internal, will be fully apprised of the technical and safety requirements and issues in order to efficiently engage in this specialized work.

Madam President, it is estimated that the overall cost of the National Street Lighting Programme would be approximately \$626,927,400. Approximately \$115,878,400 will be spent in fiscal year 2005/2006, \$258,240,400 will be spent in 2006/2007 and \$252,808,600 will be spent in the last year. This is inclusive of all capital, maintenance, administration, research and development, as well as street lighting upgrade costs. Provisions have already been made to cover incremental increases, new main roads and highways, transmission and sub-transmission infrastructure and equipment costs. Increases in the number of new private residential developments and NHA housing schemes have been anticipated and these developments have been provided for in the programme.

Madam President, this initiative is aimed at illuminating every shared community area, highway and major roadway throughout the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. This should not only be endorsed but embraced by all who seek the interest and welfare of our twin-island state. This policy initiative, in keeping with Government's thrust to achieve developed nation status by the year 2020 should be encouraged and supported by all.

In the short-term alone, efforts to improve electrical plant and infrastructure will provide the impetus for social and economic benefit. It is envisaged that this innovative initiative would result in improved visibility on roadways, helping in the reduction of night time accidents of all kinds and, in addition, will:

- (1) aid in police protection;
- (2) facilitate traffic flow, particularly at night;
- (3) promote business activity and positive social interaction;
- (4) inspire community growth and an appreciation of environmental conservation;
- (5) stimulate employment; and
- (6) provide safety for pedestrians and other citizens.

Madam President, I thank you.

GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE IN HANDLING CRIME
[Third Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [November 22, 2005]:

Be it resolved that this Senate:

- (i) express its concern over Government's performance in handling crime;
- (ii) call on the Government to explain to the Senate why the actions of the relevant agencies have so far consistently failed to produce the desired results; and
- (iii) agree that the Government outline, with specific performance targets and mechanisms for accountability, what concrete measures it intends to take to deal effectively with the serious crime situation now facing the country so as to facilitate the pathway to national consensus and civic mobilization.

Question again proposed.

Madam President: The following Senators have already spoken on the Motion: Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran, who moved the motion, Sen. Roy Augustus, Sen. Mary King, Sen. Angela Cropper; on the last day's debate, Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph, Sen. Ato Boldon, Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie, Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas and, when we adjourned, Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan was speaking, with five minutes remaining of her 45 minutes. You may continue.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Madam President, when we adjourned last I was looking at the issue of the non-implementation of Act No. 64 of 2000, assented to on November 02, 2000. I was making the point that if this Government is serious about caring for families and recognizes that the family is the basis of this society and if we support and care for families we would eliminate many of the problems that society faces, I would have suggested—and I do suggest—that they deal with the immediate implementation of Act No. 64 of 2000, the Children Authority Act.

Madam President, we have been inundated over the last few weeks, following the tragic murder of that young baby Sean Luke, with all kinds of information concerning the abuse of children.

2.00 p.m.

We have been inundated with all sorts of information concerning the abuse of children. I was reading a newspaper article recently, in which a social worker alleged that the abuse of children is commonplace in this country, especially in the institutions into which they are placed for safe keeping and good care. She

outlined the horrific facts in which older children routinely, physically, sexually and psychologically abuse younger children in the institutions. These children who are abused in turn become abusers themselves when they grow older.

In yesterday's newspaper there was a couple with an 18-year-old young man who was charged for the rape and abuse on a consistent basis of a nine-year-old child of the couple in question. Crime against young children in the society is rampant and we would not eliminate crime from this society unless we deal with and protect our children.

Act No. 64 of 2000 actually sets the framework for the protection of children: the innocent, helpless and vulnerable among us, who depend on us because they cannot protect themselves. This Government has not lifted a single finger in the defence and protection of children.

I was about to point out the last time, a certain section in this Act that is so important and would go a long way towards eliminating heinous crimes that are perpetrated on children on a daily basis and, apparently in this country, on an ongoing basis. I am looking at section 13, which provides for the registration and licensing of all children's homes, rehabilitation centres, foster homes and nurseries. This section provides for the monitoring of all children's homes, rehabilitation centres, foster homes, nurseries and agencies addressing children's issues. It also provides for the establishment and maintenance of a register of children with problems as may be identified from time to time by the Authority and it provides for the establishment and maintenance of a register of all children placed in children's homes, rehabilitation and foster homes.

In section 14 of the Act there is the provision for receiving children into the care of the Authority and provision for liaising with support services and agencies for counselling, investigation and follow up. These are important issues. If you look at what is happening in our society, that 13-year-old boy who was charged in the horrific crime apparently had left school. He was out of school.

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. W. Mark*]

Question put and agreed to.

Madam President: Are we sleeping?

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: He was out of school and there was no authority, agency or anyone following that child. My grandmother always said: "The Devil finds work for idle hands to do." If you multiply that by 1,000 or 2,000 children, who sometimes might be attending school but in a situation of abandonment and abuse, we can see where the crime will impact more forcefully in the society if we do not take hold of that outrageous situation.

Section 22 of the Act provides for the Authority undertaking the care of such children if they are exposed to moral danger, if they are beyond the control of their parents or guardians, if they are ill-treated or neglected in a manner likely to cause them suffering or injury, if they are destitute or wandering around without a settled place of abode or without visible means of subsistence, if they are begging or receiving alms or if they are loitering for the purpose of begging or receiving alms. These are important issues and the legal framework, institutions and caregivers, to actually make this system work, need to be instituted immediately. I think this total neglect and abuse of children in the society starts at the head with this Government's refusal to implement the Children's Authority Act and to set up the institutions and to train the caregivers, sociologists, psychiatrists and psychologists who will deal, in an active proactive way, with children who are abandoned, abused, need help and counselling and who may have been isolated from abusive situations. I am laying a charge firmly at the feet of this Government that they have not provided and protected the children of this country who are committing crimes and against whom crimes are being committed.

One of the most important challenges that we face is our future of sustainable development, both of our physical resources and our human resources. The children are an important part of our human resources. I believe that if we look at the words of one eminent Rapso artiste, Ataklan, who captured the challenge we have to face in the society very brilliantly in two lines when he said: "I'd rather be a shadow in the dark than a fool in spotlight. I'd rather be a dog without a bark than a bark without a bite." He captures the issues of governance and the challenge of how do we emancipate our people out of the darkness of the shadows of neocolonialism, poverty and cultural emptiness and bring them into the spotlight of a new era of justice, social equity and human development. We see a lot of physical development going on in the country and we see nothing of human development bringing our people into the spotlight of human development. When Ataklan said that he would rather be a dog without a bark than a bark without a bite, he is unequivocally decrying the cowardice and weakness of those who have bludgeoned their way into leadership, but who do not have the temerity to deal

with the real problems that we face in our society, the real problems of the plunder of our natural resources, the problem of widespread poverty, the problem of the daily loss of human resources and the problem of crimes against our children. Instead, what we see in this society is facing the very real challenges of poverty, plunder, neglect and the loss of the very future of this country.

Instead, the major issues for this Government is the selective targeting, maligning and vilifying imprisonment of political leaders, especially our Opposition Leader who did more to defend women, children, pensioners and the vulnerable and dispossessed in the society in the six years that he was in office compared to what they had done in 40 years. This is the real scandal and tragedy that we face in this country today.

This Government is spending a lot of money saying that they are fighting crime. They are buying \$1 million blimps and paramilitary equipment. They are equipping the Special Anti-crime Unit. Lots of money is being spent and crime is escalating in the country. What is happening with the children; the future of this country: horrendous and heinous crimes are being committed every day as the sociologists, psychologists and social workers say, against the children, the future of this country and not one blind cent is being spent to protect those children and to guard the future of this country. That is the real scandal and tragedy of this society.

If we continue to close our eyes to this phenomenon, if we continue to condone the wild spending of our depleting natural resources and we do not seek and insist that this Government harness, protect and conserve the human resource of our country; the people who are going to develop our country into this century and the next, indeed we are going to eat the bread that the devil kneads.

This document I have before me is a denunciation of this Government. It speaks to the total callousness and cynicism of this Government with respect to what they like to tout as their aims and objectives, with respect to sustaining families. This is the *Report of the Multi-disciplinary Committee to Examine the Status of the Institution of the Family in Trinidad and Tobago*. It is addressed to Sen. The Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid, Minister of Social Development, dated August 30, 2004. It states that in July 2003 a Multi-disciplinary Committee was appointed to examine the status of the institution of the family in Trinidad and Tobago and to make recommendations to treat with the problems identified. The committee viewed this as an opportunity to serve the society and diligently embarked upon the necessary study and research to provide required insight into the situation of the nation's families. This committee submitted its

recommendations on August 30, 2004. We are in 2006 and the Government has not lifted one single finger to implement more than 40 recommendations made by this committee to sustain, resuscitate and protect families in this country. We have all agreed that if you protect, sustain and have family-life, especially among the most disadvantaged group in this country, then you are a long way on the road to reducing crime. I would like to quote the executive summary to let us know what this project was about.

- “1. Assess the current status of the family unit in Trinidad and Tobago through the examination of reports and studies previously undertaken.
2. To prepare a report in respect of the above, including recommendations.
3. To develop an action plan for the implementation of the recommendations.
4. To identify immediate, medium and long term actions which could be taken by Government to provide support to families to rehabilitate and reconstruct the institution of the family where necessary.”

This is from the Family Service Unit of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago of the Ministry of Social Development. You just commission the reports and pigeonhole them and put them in a back drawer and what happens? This is typical of the inanity that passes for governance in this country. You are forced to commission a report, because there are NGOs out there that are working. You have identified the issues and you commission a report. You have a committee working on this report, who gave a year of their lives— important people who are very committed—and you pigeonhole it for two years and have the temerity to defend that.

Madam President: You have three minutes.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: I quote:

“Several factors were constantly identified as major threats to the survival of the family. These included:

- a growing drug culture
- failure by the authorities to effectively enforce law and order
- peer pressure by individuals and communities
- reduced community support and positive sanctions

- the negative pull of an easily accessible and intrusive media, the internet and some types of music that churn out questionable values
- the inadequate support of the private sector and employers' failure generally, to provide a work environment that supports and reconciles family and work responsibilities
- the reduced role of the church and the education system as socializing agents and transmitters of critical social values
- the financial stresses that families face and which have the potential to undermine healthy family life.”

I have basically identified the problems. They have some general recommendations and specific recommendations. I would like to read the first general recommendation which showed the sort of optimism that this committee had, that its work was going to bear fruit in the society:

“The Office of the Prime Minister, Social Services Delivery in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development should develop a National Policy on the Family which will outline a Family Code and Mission and measures to promote a family friendly society and to mainstream family issues into sector policies by increasing sensitivity at all levels of government to the importance of supporting and strengthening families in all governmental actions.”

They also spoke about declaring December 2004 a month for strengthening of the family life. They were very optimistic. They thought that by December 2004, the Government would have responded to this report and would have been putting measures in place to implement these recommendations. This report has over 45 recommendations for the strengthening of the institution of the family. This report has never seen the light of day. Nothing has been done to implement this report. I say this without fear of contradiction. This is crass and gross neglect, cynicism and wilful display of total disregard for the health and well-being of the children and families of this country. This Government is only concerned about mega projects.

Madam President: Please wind up.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: A show of development and real development is left to happen whichever way it could. I accuse this Government of total neglect of families and children and I charge every drop of blood of the children that is spilled in this country; all the pain and suffering, I lay at the feet of this Government. Thank you.

Sen. Dana Seetahal, S.C: Thank you very much. Madam President, the final resolution in the Motion before us calls for the Government to outline, not only specific performance targets and mechanisms for accountability but what concrete measures it intends to take to deal effectively with the serious crime situation, so as to facilitate the pathway to national consensus and civic mobilization. In short, one of the things that resolution calls for is an identification, by the State, of how it will treat with the criminal situation. It is my view that in order to properly treat with the criminal situation, we must know the causes. This is so self-evident.

Many people have voiced causes such as family, drugs and a lot of other reasons. Measures have been put in place, in the form of social structures, to deal with poverty which is seen as one of the things that is responsible for crime.

Before I offer my three suggestions, I want to relate an incident that happened to me this morning. In my however many years in Trinidad and Tobago as a person with decades of living, I have only had four racist experiences. The first was when I was five years old, when I was the perpetrator of that racist thing. I was told then that 730 radio station was not an Indian radio station. I said that in primary school because I was told so. I do not know who told me. Subsequently, there was another time when I was 18 and someone who was of African descent, then called Negro, paid for my taxi fare and the taxi driver, who was Indian, was so incensed that I allowed a Negro person, nigger as he said, to pay for this. Although I tried to explain that we were friends, I do not know why I tried, I was 18 years old, and he did not accept it. He was very racist.

There was another incident. This morning I went to get gas at the Curepe Junction gas station. I was parked and a man was in front of me. He was tall and big and of African descent. He filled up his tank. Five minutes had passed and he left the car and went to the one-stop shop. I was talking to the car park attendant and asked what was going on. He came back and saw me pointing to the cars lined up behind me. He said: "What happen?" I said: "I was not speaking to you." Clearly I was not. It seemed too much for him. "You mother so, so, so." I cannot say what here. That would clearly be obscene language. There was a proliferation of obscenities and then he said: "That is why they send you all to jail." This was in no connection. I was shocked and flabbergasted. Then I said: "You must be mad!" He had to be mad in my view. He said the mother other word. There is mother A and mother C and he went on. Eventually he moved his car and went. I was stunned and the person behind me said something to the car park attendant and he came to me and said: "I did not know that man was so ignorant." He said that he was sorry.

Interestingly enough, the gas station attendant was of Indian descent. I do not know what race the person behind me was. I have never had that kind of experience. Imagine, in Trinidad and Tobago never to have had many racist experiences and to have had one this morning. Why I mentioned this, not that I am suggesting that anyone here is racist; I do not believe it. I do not think like that and I am sure 99 per cent of Trinidadians and Tobagonians do not attribute racism and crime, unless it is a factor in particular crimes, based on scientific study. The interesting thing that man said to me is: "That is why you all are in jail." It is so ironic because 73 per cent of the people in prison in Trinidad and Tobago are of his ethnic origin. I would not tell him that. We were not having a scientific discussion and it was not an exchange of insults, it was just a mad racist attack, in my view.

The point I am making is, that is the kind of person who listens to certain radio stations. He could be a person of East Indian descent in the reverse saying those same things. With the size, he thought I could not answer him back. Maybe he was vexed because I had a bigger, better and newer car than he had. I do not know what. It could happen either way and this is fed by some of the radio stations we have; at least four I can mention. I have raised this in this Parliament before and I was told that there was going to be an invocation of the broadcast code and nothing has happened. Some media people will say that it is a denial of freedom of the press, but we have rights too as citizens of the country. All of us have rights, including the media. The normal, responsible media would not propagate race.

I heard one commentator approximately two weeks ago talking about it. I was astonished at him because I actually called in to that show before to offer some suggestions about something and he was very polite to me. He said: "Those Hindus, they want to take over." I heard it with my own ears. Then, the other radio stations of the other sides have no problem with using the "N" word. Why are these things being allowed to happen? That kind of ignorance is infiltrating into the children and is feeding ignorance like this man who is a parent. He looked about 40. He probably has a number of children and they are going to have this kind of parenting. This is what is happening. They are going to be cursing everybody left, right and centre; having no respect for anybody or any authority. That is where we are breeding delinquency. That is one of the bases, sources and origins of crime in this country. What can the Government do about it? The Government, as a body, cannot go down there and do anything with this man and his children except, I think I heard at one point about people controlling the number of children you should have, which is another issue. The parents that we have, bring up and affect the kind of adults that these children become.

In criminological theory, it is said that delinquent behaviour is a reaction of middle-class values by persons who cannot legitimately achieve certain things. They cannot do it in the legitimate way, because they do not have the educational opportunities or the connections. I know the State can and has put in place those opportunities, but we still often find that they do not have the connections, also because of the background they come from.

I heard a young man with seven O levels, say he went for an interview; they heard he was from Laventille and they said: "Sorry boy." I think it was in a calypso. The name of the calypso is "No Vacancy"—Thank you very much—It is true, but these same criminologists say, one is Walter Wreckless, you can have good boys in delinquent neighbourhoods if they have a good self concept. How do you achieve that? You achieve it by the cohesiveness and solidarity of their family structure. They are saved from alienation from the society. There is that hope. On the other hand, there are parents like the individual I mentioned who will turn a child into a criminal. That is the kind of—somewhere there we have to step in.

We have had reports about parents leaving children to look after themselves with no money at home to starve. That is one avenue for intervention by the State, which is provided for in the Children Act. More importantly is when you have neighbours and you hear them abusing and screaming at their children and encourage them to respect no one. There should be some kind of state intervention there. Too often, many of us do not want to get involved. That is the major point I wish to make with respect to that. That whole racism thing is an indication of the individual.

I also want to make the point that racism and all the negatives that go with it are fed by some media that we have now and we are not dealing with that. It is creating disaffection in the society and unhappiness to many people, their being allowed to ride roughshod over people's feelings because they have a mouth.

I said I have three issues. The second issue results from what this incident brings me. I could have called the police and made a report. That was prolonged obscene language and annoying language. It is something of that nature that would fall under a summary offence, but I did not do it. Why? Because it would never be heard in this lifetime in these courts. In Trinidad and Tobago, in the Magistrates' Courts, unless it is a high profile matter or it is a preliminary enquiry—meaning that it deals with a serious offence, and it has to go up to the High Court—you do not get a summary matter heard, in general, within three years, and that is being hopeful.

I had a matter and I was pressing it to go on, where somebody stole stuff from my car around the Savannah in 1993. I reported it and they arrested somebody. I identified my stuff and got back my bag. My clothes and money are still in the police station somewhere. By 1999 it had not been heard. The person had been given bail and did not show up. The case came up and I eventually said to forget it. Why am I wasting my time? This is prevalent in all courts in this country. We hear every year that the Chief Justice is talking about how he is doing all of this work in the Magistrates' Courts. It is nonsense! I am not making any personal attacks. But it is nonsense! To say that you would build a court in Arima and a new one here, when there are no proper facilities for recording evidence that is being given, is really not getting to the root of the problem.

I can talk from personal experience. I am dealing with a matter in the Arima Court. Every day I go to the court there are hundreds of matters listed in one court; for those of you who do not know, the magistrate has to go through that list and she has to call up everyone. The first thing she has to do is call the people who were arrested the night before. If you are dealing with the Easter weekend that is four days. You go through and fix bail. After you fix bail you call the adjourned matters. "Yuh, ready? Yes. How many witnesses are there? There are two witnesses. I cannot do your matter because I have my matter because I am senior and I get my matter heard and it is adjourned. The people would say: "Ma'am, this is the fifth time and the police are not ready, can I have bail?" "No bail." If it is the 10th time within six months and you have not had a report yet from the forensic—what I heard in this Parliament is that we are getting reports quickly. I do not know who told who that, because in the courts that I have been to, reports are not coming in six months. By the sixth month, they would say: "Okay, I will give you bail." People would ask why persons with criminal records are given bail. It is because the matter cannot get started. If someone cannot have a matter started and six months have passed—I am telling you that this is a fact, and this is not one court, it is all over—the person is then given bail. Even in our new kidnapping legislation, it says in 60 days if you do not get a hearing, you are entitled to bail. I said it then and I say it now, that in 60 days you will never get a hearing, unless it is a major, most important person in the country.

I am doing a matter in which the incident occurred in July 2005 and we just started the hearing, with all the best intentions in the world, in March. The magistrate spends two hours going through that list. Then you know what? It is approximately 11.30 a.m. and she would start to take one witness. You have to record it by hand in 99 per cent of the Magistrates' Courts. There are 30 and maybe there are two Magistrates' Courts—maybe 95 per cent would have this recording. I was told

about all the recording that would come into effect. There is one Magistrates' Court in Port of Spain where you have that. In the Arima Court it is set up. There are all the little things with smaller ones. The other day I was going to press on mine and was told that that never worked. It has been there for two years. Everything goes on by hand. You know how long it takes to record a witness' evidence by hand? There was the cross examination of one witness which we started and it is still going on. There are nine accused in this matter. One took two hours. Generally, if you are lucky and it is not a preliminary enquiry, you could get five witnesses per day. If there are 100 cases, the average case has approximately five witnesses. How many matters can you get heard in one day? It may be two and maybe the hope that some people would plead guilty. They delay everything and they get frustrated and they plead guilty in approximately 85 per cent of those cases.

Let me back up, 95 per cent of all criminal matters are resolved in the Magistrates' Courts. How are they finished? That is the issue. Some of them might be heard, maybe less than 5 per cent. Five per cent might plead guilty and the others go through the effluxion of time, get dismissed. I have never heard about the man who stole my stuff, my \$145, my new shoes that I expended some pounds on and my chain. That is all gone. That is not the issue. I still regret it. The point is it took 1993 to 1999 and of course, he is out there somewhere robbing people again. This is why we will not—if we do not see the connection, if we do not connect the dots—deal with the point.

Many parliamentarians do not realize what is going on in real life; I am sorry to say. Those Magistrates' Courts have been like that since I came into practice 26 years ago. I do not see any fundamental change except air conditioning. In the old Arima Court, there was no need for air conditioning because it was large and the breeze was going in. Now, there is a fire trap in there with three courts close together, instead of one and there is no room. Everyone lines the steps because there is no room in the inn. The steps are dangerous. There are signs indicating: "Watch your step." People have slipped and have fallen there. I use that as an example, because I am more familiar with it. That is not to say this is not happening in many courts throughout the country.

The point that I am raising is not to put down anybody and make them feel bad, I am pointing out these things because I think that people do not realize the reality. This is why crime will continue because the bulk of the perpetrators will never pay. First of all, you will not catch many of them. Detection is low, but the State has put in measures. The Government has brought in DNA legislation and

they have the DNA facilities and the forensic lab, fine. We are going to give the police training. There will be increased detection and we would charge more people, but what about basic things in the courts?

They told me three times that we are going to get audio/visual recording. That is nothing. You cannot believe it again because nothing is happening to bring those matters to resolution. Until we deal with that, Madam President, the crime situation will become progressively worse. It became so, not overnight. It is like putting on so many pounds. You do not put in on today, it is a gradual thing and it will also be a gradual thing unless you starve yourself to death and lose the weight. To deal with the crime we have to have measures that can have gradual impact. However, apart from getting the police equipped and putting those things to use, I do not see the real recognition that swift justice is what we should go at and swift justice will be achieved. I think that people need to visit these courts and see what is happening. [*Cellphone rings*]

Madam President: Take off the cellphone, please.

Sen. D. Seetahal, S.C.: The third issue, I move from the courts, which I feel very strongly about and actually wrote a couple of times, is that there is this pervasive feeling in many courts that Trinidad and Tobago is a corrupt society. Everybody says that everybody is corrupt. It is like long time ago when people would say that everybody is stealing. I do not know if it is a true statement but I heard that. It was a popular refrain. "All ah we tief." I just dismissed that. As a prosecutor and somebody in the legal field, we say that people like to exaggerate. In the last two years, I have come to realize that the average citizen feels that passing some money is the way to go in this country. The problem is if that is the feeling we all had, then that would be something to be dealt with, but it is based on reality.

I would give you an example. In relation to Justices of the Peace in this country, they are appointed by the President. They get a warrant, and are supposed to be good citizens. They have a reputation. They can authenticate voluntary statements and certify that they are voluntary; statements where people are charged with murder. They are supposed to be well respected people. They, under the last administration, I believe, were supposed to get expenses paid when they came. They would get a little allowance by the State. Everything was done because they are good upstanding people who want to busy themselves in the community. Do you think it operated like that?

Ask anybody who has a relative who was arrested for the last Easter. The Easter weekend is a good weekend to arrest people. You arrest them on Thursday night and the next day that they would be brought before a magistrate is Tuesday morning. You have Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. During that time, bail can be had from a Justice of the Peace, if a police officer does not fix bail. A police officer can fix bail for obscene language, but not possession of drugs, firearm or more serious offences, probably rightly so. These upstanding citizens are the ones who can fix bail. The police officer would pick up the phone and call or tell you: "You know the JP can give you bail." They would point out the particular JP. Perhaps, some of them are being helpful, but when the JP tells you his fee for coming to that police station and his fee to fix the bail, you wonder. A fee to fix bail could be between \$1,000—\$2,500. That is one person. Think about it. I am not exaggerating. I know somebody else in this Senate who can tell you from personal experience, what that person had to pay. Many people will not report this because after their relative gets bail, they want to forget about the thing. Also, they do not want to go through the trouble of going to court again. It will take years or so many times you have to go before you get the matter heard.

All the JPs association will come and defend that. They must know that three-quarters of them, if not more, are in this corrupt activity. They call it a fee. Some lawyers, I think, condone it, maybe. They would say that they have to come out on Easter Sunday, Saturday or Friday. Who told you to sign up or ask for a warrant to be a JP? Nobody begged you. Perhaps, the State should give a fixed allowance of a little more, but you cannot tell me to come out there; you are not a lawyer, you are not giving advice. You are going to fix bail. It is not your bail. They do as if they are dispensing a favour; \$1,000 or \$1,500 to fix bail. It is my belief, based on what I have been told by people I trust in the legal field, that some of the police in the area—I am not casting the white brush on anyone—get their cut. It is reasonable, if they are the ones making the call and saying that JP X will grant you bail. That is a kind of underlying corruption that we are having and it is not being dealt with because, I guess, there are so many other things to deal with. It is something that is connecting and is making itself appear to the rest of the society that this society is based on corruption. People are expecting that to get bail, or for the police to treat you well in the station, you must pay something. No "Thank You" card in this; you pay thousands of dollars. That is one big area.

Another example that I found out recently—people always say if you have to get a firearm you have to "run" money. I, again, said that this is "ol' talk". One must dismiss "ol' talk" because too many people like to make these aspersions and say this about everyone. For all you know, they might say it about all of us, but when a

member of the public who does not know who you know and they call a name and say: "I was told to give it to Mr. X or that sergeant," specific persons, who specifically can approve these firearms, then you have to wonder, if you hear it more than once, what is going on there in this whole thing. Let me say at the upfront that they are not calling the Commissioner of Police name. I still might not get it. The Commissioner of Police might not, but the persons along the line are taking the money to either recommend that application or put it on top. It is prevalent and it is continuing for a long time. I did not want to believe that because everyone says these things. I am getting facts about this kind of underlying corruption.

My point is when you have a society where there are those kinds of issues, corruption that is prevalent; the things that would affect the ordinary person—the mass of people who are arrested on weekends and have to come to JPs for bail; the not so wealthy person who has to pay that kind of money to get that bail—is not going to trust anyone here or look at these programmes and take them seriously. They would say: "Yeah man, if I can get a quick buck from CEPEP or URP, I deserve it and I will still do what I have to do because you all are the corrupt ones." They would look at everybody and say: "Those big shots" and that kind of statement.

The other one is the slow movement of cases in the Magistrates' Courts. You actually detect crimes and there is no punishment in general and the majority of cases will follow.

The first point I made was with respect to the kind of parents and connected with that is the racism and negative kind of messages that are being conveyed through some media and feeding people who are already—this will affect the children in a society and something must be done about that. Those are the comments I wish to make.

Thank you very much, Madam President.

Sen. Vasant Bharath: Thank you, Madam President, for allowing me to join in this most important debate before the Senate. I do not believe that there is doubt in anybody's mind in Trinidad and Tobago that we are today in deep crisis. According to many commentators, we are actually on the verge of social and moral collapse. After decades of being one of the wealthiest and richest countries in the western hemisphere, Trinidad and Tobago is now being described by many as a failing state. At every level, there is evidence that society is collapsing around us. Decay and instability are rapidly becoming our natural state. The authorities appear incapable of finding effective solutions. Despite a multitude of never-ending promises, they have not been able to deliver the security and protection that this country needs and demands.

A recent Ansa McAl poll of last weekend indicated the following: When asked if you had a child, how fearful you would be of your child being a victim of a sexual predator, 93 per cent said "afraid" or "very afraid"; Do you feel enough is being done to deal with gang warfare in this country? Ninety-two per cent said "no." How would you rate the Government's handling of crime so far this year? Seventy-one per cent said "poor" or "very poor". This is a Government that has spent millions of dollars of taxpayers' money, much of which remains unaccounted for and all of which have failed spectacularly to produce any results. The statistics show that in less than four years, since this Government came into power, under suspicious circumstances, I may add, the PNM Government has presided over the murder of 1,250 of our citizens. No wonder 85 per cent of the people polled recently, again in an Ansa McAl poll, said that violence was fast becoming a way of life in Trinidad and Tobago and 87 per cent stated that crime was the number one issue confronting us today.

I want to speak specifically today on the effects of crime on the economy. A recently concluded UNDP report entitled *Crime Costing Trinidad and Tobago Business Big Dollars* stated:

"A study of all countries show that Trinidad and Tobago suffers the third highest cost to business as a result of the excessive crime and violence." As Paul Quesnel, President of the TTMA stated: "Already, there has been capital flight, migration of business people and a hesitance to reinvest in the economy."

People are afraid. They do not know what to expect next after murders, kidnappings and bombings. This country is on the edge and the Government must act now before its citizens reach a point of no return. We live in a state of national insecurity. Our fundamental right to live in peace, harmony and safety has been totally compromised by the spiralling crime situation.

Every day firms across the globe face important decisions. A local manufacturer ponders whether to expand its local or export markets; whether to invest in plant and equipment; and whether to hire more people. Multi-nationals evaluate alternative manufacturing locations and distribution facilities. These decisions have import implications for the growth and prosperity of the locations that they choose and the decisions will depend largely on the way Government policies and behaviour shape the investment climates of those locations. Crime plays a major role in these decisions.

A good investment climate will provide opportunities and incentives to invest productively, create jobs, expand and make profits. Creating and nurturing such a climate is critical to developing nations such as ours, particularly as another UNDP report in 2005 stated that almost 50 per cent of our population now survive on less than US \$2.00 per day.

Private firms are at the heart of this development process. Driven by the need to generate profit, they invest in new ideas, plants and equipment that generate economic growth and prosperity. They provide more than 90 per cent of all jobs. They provide the goods and services needed to sustain life and to improve living standards. They are also the main source of tax revenues, contributing to public funding of education, health and infrastructure. It is therefore critical that there is a stable environment to ensure sustainable development.

How does crime impede development? Crime erodes social and human capital. Crime degrades the quality of life and can force skilled workers to emigrate, while the direct impact to victimization, as well as the fear of crime, may impede the development of those who remain.

A report done by the International Monetary Fund, between the years 1965 and 2000 shows that 79 per cent of all tertiary graduates have left Trinidad and Tobago in that 35-year period. I am almost certain, if you look at the up-to-date figures today, you will see that figure has increased significantly in the last four years. You only have to drive by any of the embassies: the Canadian, Australian or American Embassy to see the long queues of people waiting to flee Trinidad and Tobago and to get out as quickly as they can. At the same time, we are looking to import labour from other countries such as the Philippines and other Caricom countries, to replace those who are leaving us in their droves.

The effect of a single incident of victimization can cause ripple effects that affect whole communities, as we saw recently with the Sean Luke incident, which horrified and struck mortal fear in the hearts of every parent in this land. Death and disability can rob entire households of their only breadwinners. Fear of crime can paralyze the development at grassroots level by making people risk averse. It also retards entrepreneurial and other economic activity.

Moreover, by limiting movement, crime impedes access to employment and educational opportunities and discourages the accumulation of assets. Starting a business may not be worth the trouble of the owner, if it increases the visibility of the entrepreneur as the possible target. Crime is also expensive because of the

medical costs involved, loss of productivity and the serious drain on public health funds. It also impacts more seriously on the less fortunate in our society because they are unable to afford private health care or to fly off to foreign destinations to seek that health care.

In making investment decisions, both local and foreign investors see crime as a sign of social instability and foreign attitudes which reflect those of local investors. A high rate of violent crimes can have many adverse repercussions. It has a negative impact on the investment climate and can actually deter or delay both domestic and foreign investment and, hence growth. It leads to a higher cost of doing business, since it leads to a need to employ all forms of different types of securities: metal grills, security guards, special fencing, dogs and burglar alarms. This diverts investments away from business expansion and productivity improvement and may lead to less than an optimal operating strategy. It leads to business losses, arising from looting, arson, theft, extortion and fraud. It leads to a loss of output because of the reduced hours of operating, including avoidance at night shifts.

I find it difficult right now, at my plant, to get people to come out to work at night simply because they are afraid. They cannot leave during darkness to either come out to work or go back home. It may lead to the permanent closure of firms and may lead to firms relocating their offices and plants abroad.

It diverts public resources, excessively away from productive uses that would potentially have had a high impact on social development and growth areas to such areas like police, the justice system and the medical system. An example is in Jamaica where over the last 15 years, the allocation for health has grown by 23 per cent annually whereas the budget for national security has gone up by over 62 per cent. No wonder our position on the growth competitive index published every year has slipped from 31st to 60th in a space of four years from 2001—2005.

Domestic capital flight has also become prevalent in Trinidad and Tobago as investors liquidate assets at a rapid rate to transfer funds abroad. Hence the rapid decline recently in the local stock exchange, which has declined so rapidly in the last four years, which has gone from high in 2001 to its lowest point at this weekend. Indeed, the Central Bank earlier this year had to pump more than \$100 million into the economy to stabilize the exchange rate between the TT dollar and US dollar; this, at a time when billions of dollars of foreign exchange are flowing into this country.

An emerging opportunity exists in the expanding tourism sector but crime, particularly against tourists, has a negative impact on the industry. Many travel advisories have been issued over the last 12 months, but none more damaging than those issued recently by the Canadian High Commission and the British High Commission. I want to read for you what the British High Commission recently said:

“Crime against tourists in Tobago is a concern. There were a number of serious robberies against tourists in Tobago in 2004 and 2005. Some of these incidents were accompanied by violence including rape, against foreign nationals. A number of these attacks had been targeted against privately rented villas in the southwest of the island, the most recent of which occurred on February 05, 2006 in the Mount Irvine area.”

Several articles have also appeared internationally. An extract from the *LA Times* in January 2005 stated: “An ugly social ill threatens the perpetual party atmosphere. Kidnapping, a crime so endemic, that Trinidad and Tobago ranks second in the world behind Colombia for its rate of abductions.” The response from the Minister of National Security to this article last year, was an immediate denial of the problem.

On April 04, this year, the *LA Times* again wrote on crime in Trinidad and Tobago. It stated:

“Homicide rates have soared. Jamaica last year achieved the alarming distinction of being called the homicide capital of the world and Trinidad and Tobago is not far behind, with suspects walking free because of the ineffectual courts and corrupt law enforcement. Vigilante justice is also on the rise. The killings and revenge attacks have the once ideal islands on a choke hold and threaten to taint their allure to the millions who visit. This is an indictment of the Government's treatment of the handling of crime with regard to the tourist industry and others.”

Whilst tourism is not a panacea for all development woes, it comprises a major part of the economies of both developed and developing nations. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, it is responsible for over 10 per cent of global GDP and 12 per cent of exports and provides 8 per cent of global employment. Tourism is particularly valued for the number of low-skilled jobs it generates in the hospitality and food service sectors and it is a sector that we cannot and must not ignore. We ignore it at our peril.

Crime and especially corruption directly undermine democracy by destroying the trust relationship between the people and the State. The most basic obligation of this State or any state is to ensure the safety and security of its citizens. When

the State fails to do this, or worse, provides protection to some, but not to others, the people will effectively reclaim their right to use force in the resolution of disputes, often with disastrous consequences.

When crime rates are high, the police are inevitably blamed. The effects are obviously stronger where the police are part of the problem or perceived to be part of the problem. As we note with alarm, certain senior officers have recently been arrested and charged in several high profile kidnapping and extortion cases.

3.00 p.m.

Madam President, complaints against the police with regard to brutality are also on the rise, moving to over 4,000 cases between 2001 and 2004. In addition to all of this, Cedric Neptune, President of the Police Social Welfare Division, has consistently maintained that the force is greatly under-resourced. Detection rates are at an all time low—I believe it is less than 15 per cent—and prosecutions are even lower; I think it is nil.

When the public lose confidence in law enforcement, the rich turn to private security whilst the poor must rely on self-protection. What begins as self-protection could eventually degenerate into a protection racket, as we have seen in many parts of the world including Jamaica, and then it expands into other areas of criminality.

In fact, we have a situation in this country where private security guards almost number as many policemen in Trinidad and Tobago. Other forms of corruption also interfere with the ability of the State to promote development. A corrupt government does not serve all of the people. At the most basic level, corruption may interfere with the ability of citizens to access basic public services as corrupt officials demand bribes. The speaker before me, Sen. Dana Seetahal, SC talked about that.

The cost of corruption to the national accounts could be considerable, as the value diverted into the pockets of corrupt officials is not realized for the benefit of the public at large, such as health and education. Corruption also promotes excessive spending on large public procurements and works projects, for example, blimps, helicopters, gun ships, sport stadium, carnival complexes, private jets, aluminium smelters and so forth. The opportunity to skim off the top is plentiful, and the quality of delivery is often poor, as corrupt contractors do not feel compelled to stick to specifications. Madam President, this excessive expenditure could come at a cost to important development services.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently stated that corruption hampers a country's ability to attract investment, the effectiveness of its institutions and revenue generating ability. Additionally, when privileged classes and individuals are allowed to flout the law, the disadvantaged feel very little moral compunction or imperative to obey it.

What we have created, as Sen. Dr. Kernahan has said earlier on, is a culture where we promote gangsters. In this country, we have a "culture of bling", where everyone wants to walk around with gold chains, gold teeth and \$1,500 sneakers. If they cannot earn it, they would find a way of getting it. This is in the context where our Government chooses to attack and criticize doctors; university professors, but embraces so-called community leaders and, therefore, encourages this "culture of bling".

Madam President, the situation is such that younger females in our society today find this "culture of bling" quite attractive. I read recently where many younger females are attracted to this gangster attitude. They are attracted to men who have bullet wounds and stab wounds. So good-looking fellows like Sen. Ato Boldon, Sen. Wade Mark and Dr. Tim Gopeesingh would never stand a chance in this new social order. [Laughter] [Crosstalk] Maybe the fellows in the new political party, the Democratic National Assembly (DNA) might succeed, because DNA is meant for catching criminals. So, some of them may be able to survive in this world order.

Madam President, over the years, Trinidad and Tobago has distinguished itself in many facets of its national life. Its athletes including Lara, Yorke, Crawford, Mottley, our own Sen. Boldon, the Soca Warriors and the steelband, et cetera, are some of the things that are worthy of note. Unfortunately, our areas of expertise have now flowed over into activities that have gained us international reputations that are negative in context. Among those are murders and kidnappings that have propelled us to the top of the list with some of the most violent countries in the world.

As I have mentioned before, over 1,200 persons have been mowed down and murdered in the four years that the PNM Government has come into power. Madam President, there are more casualties than the Iraq war. We as a people have now almost become numb to the situation. There is no longer shock-value in even the most gruesome of killings. We as a people have become immune as we recoil and recede into our homes, close the doors, draw the curtains and hope that the next victim is not us or one of ours.

Madam President, conventional wisdom suggests that people, particularly those in countries such as ours, rely and are influenced by their leaders, particularly to set examples in the areas of law and order. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark: Not Patrick!

Sen. V. Bharath: It is the view of many of our citizens that if there is one thing in which the breakdown in discipline and increase in lawlessness could be attributed to, it would be the example set by this Government over many decades in power, and the manner in which they have conducted the country's affairs. [*Desk thumping*] Whether so or not, a perception has developed that over the years this Government has been in collusion with, encouraged or has turned a blind eye to criminal elements in the society.

The open embrace of so-called community leaders has done nothing to dispel these perceptions. The identification by the Ministry of National Security last year of the existence of 66 gangs, and subsequent non action by the Government, speaks volumes of the Government's complacency in this matter.

Sen. Yuille-Williams: When you say "community leaders" what do you mean?

Sen. Mark: Criminals!

Sen. V. Bharath: I am talking about criminal elements who have been defined or classified as "community leaders" and persons who have been shot to death recently. I think we all know whom we are talking about.

As mentioned previously, the Government's own lack of accountability on major issues like Labidco, the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP), Landate, the Scarborough Hospital and many others that are too numerous to mention or to name, send signals to the wider community and society that anything goes. Madam President, the sentiment is that if they could do it at the top and get away with it, who are we? [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark: What has happened to Labidco? [*Interruption*]

Sen. V. Bharath: Unfortunately for us, strong, decisive, unwavering and dispassionate decision-making has never and will never be the hallmark of this Government that has the country dithering on the brink of collapse. [*Desk thumping*]

Governance by nepotism, favouritism, strong-arm tactics, high-handedness, arrogance and autocracy is the order of the day. There could be no doubt, even in the eyes of the most partisan of their supporters that the ills being suffered today

have been spawned, nurtured and cultivated under the watch of this present leadership over many years in power, but particularly the last four. [*Desk thumping*]

The Government's continued policies of dependence and underdevelopment has inflicted—

Sen. Yuille-Williams: Madam President, I am trying to relate what is happening now to the Motion. [*Interruption*]

Madam President: Okay. We know that we are talking about crime, but I think Sen. Bharath has gone off a little on a tangent and maybe he needs to come back to the Motion before us.

Sen. V. Bharath: Madam President, although I respect the interjection, I am dealing with the causes of crime and why we have reached this current situation in this country. [*Desk thumping*] I am showing that a culture has developed over many years, and this is the reason we have reached this position. As Sen. Dana Seetahal, S.C said, this is something like adding weight; it does not happen overnight.

Madam President: Come back to the wording of the Motion.

Sen. V. Bharath: Madam President, we are constantly reminded by this Government that crime is on the increase and that crime is everybody's business. I do not know of any other civilized country in the world where solving crime is the responsibility of its citizenry. [*Desk thumping*] Is that not the job of the Government? Are they not responsible for utilizing the resources of the country in the most efficient and judicious manner to provide the basic amenities of life such as health, education, welfare and infrastructure? At what point we as a population must accept the responsibility for this? Are we now the guardians of peace against criminals? Are we responsible now for our own safety and security? Are we to employ private security firms?

The Minister of National Security, in his submission, laid out many beautifully crafted plans and things that are being done and will be done, none of which has made any difference so far. How long are we prepared as a nation to wait on this trial and error methodology? How many more brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers must be snatched from us? How much longer are we prepared to wait? As my colleague, Sen. Boldon said in his submission, it is the result that counts; it is the bottom line. [*Desk thumping*] We are not concerned with what is being done; what will be done and what has been done, but we are concerned

about what is going to work and what has worked. None of that was shown. We must face reality. Are any of the present crop capable of delivering it? [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: Not at all.

Sen. V. Bharath: That is the relevant point.

Sen. Mark: The PNM must go.

Sen. V. Bharath: A cursory glance in that direction would suggest that their credibility has been so destroyed by any measure of performance and management that nothing short of a simple changing of the guard would do, with new ideas and new political will. [*Desk thumping*] What we need is a complete shift in our thinking that would breathe an air of confidence into the business community and the nation as a whole, so that businessmen could begin to take risks again and the Stock Exchange could start on the upward climb again—

Sen. Mark: The Stock Exchange is collapsing.

Sen. V. Bharath:—so that persons who have fled this country and who are living abroad could feel comfortable to come to Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: Not under the PNM.

Sen. V. Bharath: Madam President, I just want to say something with regard to returning residents. Two years ago, India opened up its market to its foreign nationals who were living abroad and, as a result, because of the economic climate they have encouraged, it attracted over US \$50 billion in the space of two years, not to mention the intellectual capital they got back into their country. There is no reason why we in Trinidad and Tobago cannot do the same. But there is too much at risk.

Madam President, someone once said that the loneliest place in hell is reserved for those who take a neutral stand on the greatest use of life. Madam President, I want to assure you and this good Senate that we in the Opposition would never shift our responsibilities.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Walton Francis James: Madam President, thank you. The level of crime in this country continues to increase, in spite of the efforts being made to reduce it. This gives rise to the question: Have we fully identified the main reasons for the increasing crime level? Are we taking appropriate corrective action in a timely manner?

The Minister of National Security, earlier in the debate, identified narcotics-related and gang-related activities as the main contributors to the crime level. Outside of his portfolio, I would add to this the failures in the education system. Until we are producing secondary school graduates, all of whom meet the requirements for either going on to tertiary level or into the job market in this country, we would continue to have large numbers of unemployed young persons who are likely to be drawn into criminal activities.

In this context, a top priority must continue to be the removal of the secondary school shift system as soon as possible—[*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Manning: We are getting there.

Sen. W. James:—thereby making it possible for the nation's children to become more involved in girl guides, boy scouts, athletics, cricket, football, et cetera and even reading after school hours. Let us give them back their youth! [*Desk thumping*]

Drugs have been identified as a major contributor to our high increasing level of crime. This is indisputable and leads to the question: what are we doing about it? Are the measures being taken effective? Trinidad and Tobago is a transshipment port of the supply chain from the drug producers to consumers in the metropolitan countries. Some of the drugs obviously stay in Trinidad and Tobago, and they have serious effects in our society. It has been recognized that to insulate Trinidad and Tobago from these effects of drugs, it would be necessary to establish patrols and secure possible points of entering of drugs by sea or by air.

Sometime ago, we were told that the Government would acquire three large patrol boats, sufficient in size to remain offshore on patrol for extended periods, and several small fast patrol boats to give chase to would-be offenders. We were also told that a radar system would be installed to cover the entire costal area of Trinidad and Tobago, and our borders would therefore be under surveillance on a 24-hour basis.

This sounded to me like a very good plan, but its implementation is taking some considerable time. To quote an old adage, “while the grass is growing the horse is starving”. In this instance, while we await the radar and the patrol vessels, our young men and some not so young are dying. Certainly, these measures are so important that while we await these vessels, we ought to be able to find an alternative to get the same effect on a temporary basis until we get our own vessels.

It would seem to me that the countries to which the drugs are destined would be interested in stopping the transshipment through Trinidad and Tobago. They have navies and some arrangement could be made for these to assist in patrolling. There may be some cost involved, but the lives that are being lost are priceless. I, therefore, support Sen. Prof. Deosaran's Motion which gives an opportunity to air and discuss this grave problem and, hopefully, to assist in finding solutions.

Madam President, I thank you.

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Sen. The Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid): Madam President, thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*] I rise to make my contribution on the Motion that is before us, as presented by Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran. From the outset, I just want to say that I would try to do mine—unlike Sen. Vasant Bharath—in a Trinidadian accent. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*]

Madam President, any serious sociologist or criminologist anywhere in the world would know and understand that the roots and causes of crime are many and diverse. We could find roots or causes in sociological factors; we could find them in historical factors; sometimes political factors; psychological factors, economic factors; and there are cultural factors that impact on the existence and propensity of crime in some societies; as ideological factors are relevant in any assessment by any professional sociologist or criminologist. All of those factors are relevant in the determination of the roots and causes of crime.

Many people around the world—not the least being here in Trinidad—have made entire careers with just the study of crime. They have made a good living. Many have constructed international reputation for themselves, and they have developed a scholarship very much advanced.

The reality is that anywhere in the world criminal behaviour could constitute—and in many instances it does constitute—a subculture with criminals representing a subsector of society. Of course, like any active subsector, they have vested interest in the proliferation of crime; in the creation and maintenance of a culture of crime, because it is out of criminal activities they generate their well-being and their own livelihood. They create for themselves a sense of psychological peace as they advocate this culture of crime. In this process, you would find that they try to make crime sociologically and culturally acceptable; they try to make crime economically viable; and in that process they use that as the basis to recruit criminals, and to advocate and spread their own values. I say this just to point out that any country that proposes to address crime must recognize it is dealing with a very real and powerful force.

Secondly, we must recognize that there are those persons who contribute to crime without even being aware that they are in fact contributing to a crime. They may be doing so as a result of errors of omission or perhaps errors of commission, and they do not recognize that they are in fact making an active and definitive contribution to a set of circumstances that may spawn criminal activities later, regardless of whom they may sleep with. [*Laughter*]

Madam President, this really has to do with an inability of a people, of a society to connect behaviour and consequence. Sometimes, culturally we do not nurture and develop that competence where we are able to connect behaviour and consequence, so we engage in a certain kind of behaviour and the consequence descends upon us, sometime in the future, like an avalanche. With respect to this particular point, we could look in our society and discuss issues like sexual behaviour in an attempt to determine to what extent irresponsible sexual behaviour lays the groundwork for future difficult circumstances for ourselves.

If we could move away specifically from crime, in terms of our inability to understand behaviour and consequence, even with eating habits we see a deficiency and an inability in ourselves—and sometimes within our culture to understand behaviour and consequences—and not understanding that eating habits are related to diseases, et cetera. We see it in our driving; we see it sometimes in the way we talk to people—meaning that we talk to people in a particular way and we get a certain kind of response. Over time, we create a culture, not understanding that the origin of some of these cultural behaviours have been generated and developed by us. This is the very culture that we despise.

Madam President, some years ago, I did a course at the University of the West Indies and SY103 was the code name for the course. It was Introduction to Sociology. In that course—I recall the lecturer was Prof. Bartolo from South Africa—we examined a number of perspectives on the evolution or creation or existence of society.

I recall that we looked at the Marxist and Leninist theories. There were other views expressed by persons like Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. Those are the three that I recall most vividly. I want to say a little about the functionalist theory mainly advocated by Talcott Parsons. That is a theory among sociologists that has been widely accepted and has good currency. I think that might be the language that they might want to use.

Madam President, that theory suggests that there are a number of institutions in society that are designed to complement each other—

Sen. Dumas: The boy is good.

Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid: Madam President, they resist the theoretical foundation so they would never understand the practical applications. [*Desk thumping*] That is what gives rise to *vaille que vaille* government policies. [*Desk thumping*] According to the theory, all these institutions complement each other and make a significant contribution to the well-being and welfare of the society. Each institution has its role to play; each institution is specifically designed to play the particular role that it has been assigned; each institution is well suited to achieve particular goals; and one institution may not necessarily be able to competently perform the role of another institution.

So, within the society, we have the family as an institution; we have the Government; the education system; religious institutions and so forth, all of which make a contribution to the well-being of the society—all playing very specific and particular roles and each contribution being complementary to the other. At the end of the day, we have a functional society.

Madam President, let us look a little at the institution of the family. According to this theory, the family is responsible for giving society its members—procreation and you get people who populate the society and we have a society to start with. The institution of the family is also recognized as the first agent of socialization. This means that the family has very specific responsibility to teach its members the norms of society, values, the difference between right and wrong; and not only to teach them what they are, but to instill in the members of the family a capacity to submit himself or herself to the norms and values of the society. It teaches the society what is acceptable behaviour; what is improper behaviour; and what is completely unacceptable by the society. That is a function of the institution of the family and a critical function to be played.

I do not imagine that any government anywhere in the world could in fact fulfil that function, and certainly not according to the functionalists perspective. You cannot get one institution performing the roles of others. Institutions may support others, but the extent to which they could actually complete and fulfil the objectives of the other is something that may be questionable.

We also have the education system which I could say a bit on. The role of the education system is to confirm the values that would have been taught at the level of the family, and to complement the values that would have been taught. It is

there also to provide training and education so that members of the society—members who would have come from the family into the education system—would be competent and equipped to make a contribution, economic or otherwise, to the well-being of that society, and help the society in its ability to provide goods and services. The education system is then responsible for confirming the values, assisting and providing the society with its workforce.

Madam President, the religious institutions also have a role to play, and their role is to cement values and deepen convictions among the members of the society. They provide a framework within which the values, norms and principles could be sustained. They introduce prayer and a number of other necessary features in the lives of individuals so that they could sustain their standards, values and principles.

The Government also has a role to play. We are responsible for the legal framework; we are responsible for ensuring order; and we are responsible in many ways for facilitating development and providing services. Madam President, I was taught, and as I have explained, a number of institutions are involved in the well-being of the society.

Sometimes I find it strange that academics at the university take off their academic suits and put on their fatigue and unteach me all of these concepts and principles that a number of institutions are responsible for—I am now faced with something asking me about the government handling crime, and I do not hear the relevance and importance of the other institutions in society.

I have gone through that little presentation on the role that a number of institutions play to really put the Motion in an academic context and in its scholastic context so that we could understand that there are a number of institutions—

Sen. Prof. Deosaran: Could you tell me, in that context, how many of those institutions collect taxes from its citizens? [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dumas: All.

Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid: Madam President, I am talking about a piece of scholarship and an intellectual consistency. That is the point that I am making. [*Desk thumping*] We must recognize, across the board, that all the institutions in our society need to recognize that we all have to fulfil our roles and play our roles as we deal with the general well-being of the society. That is the only point. This is not a matter for the Government alone. Even so, in this society, we have recognized that we do have challenges with the family.

We have the problem of unwanted pregnancies. This is not only among young persons. Sometimes we have this view that young persons are the ones engaging in a certain kind of behaviour which might be creating unwanted pregnancies, but that is not always the case. People could have an unwanted seventh child or an unwanted sixth child or an unwanted ninth child. We ought not to be unduly critical only of our younger persons, because sometimes it is misbehaviour of which many persons in the society are guilty.

Madam President, as a consequence of this, we find children being born in very difficult circumstances; sometimes in aggressive and abusive situations with abusive parents. This is not only about economics. When we talk about children being born in difficult circumstances, it is not only about economics. There are difficult economic circumstances and there are also difficult social circumstances. Persons could be born into very stable economic situations, but find themselves subject to all kinds of abuses which impact adversely on the quality of life that the individual lives; and impact adversely on the quality of the human being that the individual becomes.

In these circumstances, you find children growing up sometimes very angry, and not being able to experience what might be a reasonable standard of living as it relates to their social settings. When they have reached the age of 13, 14 or 15—out of those difficult social circumstances—they find themselves enraged and prepared to commit crime. That is not something that has been lost by the Government.

Two years ago, when I was the Minister of Social Development, one of the things that we did—and this was mentioned earlier and it was never done before—was to look at the relevance of the institution of the family directly, and pull together a committee comprising representatives from various areas. We came together and we had a major consultation over a period of one year and a half.

We looked at the nature and the condition of the institution of the family; we looked at the sociological factors and historical factors. We went back to examine whether the period of slavery had an adverse impact on the quality of the institution of the family in the society; whether in fact the colonial masters deliberately and systematically destroyed an institution and the colonial state, as powerful as it was, deliberately and systematically destroyed an institution; and upon emancipation, did they leave it to other institutions to repair the damage. That was the kind of thinking that went into the development of the document.

We examined other issues as we moved forward into the history, like what was the impact of indentureship and slavery on the quality of the institution of the family; and the effect of drug use, et cetera. It is a very comprehensive document and there were very specific recommendations.

In fact, this year's budget consulted that document significantly for the development of some of the proposals that we have in there, contrary to what may have been suggested. [*Desk thumping*] That document was a major reference document. You would recall that the theme of this year's budget was "Building Stronger Families".

To go back to the point about children being born in difficult circumstances, we developed a pilot training programme and we employed a private consultant to deliver the programme to one of our depressed communities. We marketed the programme as a leadership training programme. Essentially, the programme was to get persons in touch with their own emotions; get families in touch with their own behaviour; and understand the impact that their behaviour might be having on other members of the family with an attempt to guide them in terms of how they construct their own behaviours so that they would get the kinds of responses that they would like to get.

Madam President, when I attended the graduation a lady took the podium and started to cry. Do you know why she cried? She cried because she had a 17-year-old son and she never felt love coming from that son, and the reason was that she, herself, was not aware that she was damaging the relationship with her son. For the first time, she began to recognize that she was the root of this and her behaviour is what created this particular son. We were able to help her get in touch with that. That is just one case. We have to do it case by case. This is going to take time, but these are the kinds of projects that the Government has to play its role in by supporting the institution of the family, and the family would then fulfil its function as I have articulated and outlined earlier.

We are hopeful that all the persons who have participated in that particular programme and the other programmes that would have come subsequently are, in fact, experiencing improvements in the quality of life that they are living, and the individual members of those societies would be living and experiencing a healthier and happier crime-free existence.

Over and above that, the Government has been providing tremendous assistance to NGOs. Some years ago, the Government took a policy decision that the Government is an administration and it would not necessarily be involved in

the implementation or the delivery of those programmes. The Government was designed and set up to be an administration. As a consequence of that, what we found happening was the Government started to engage the NGOs more and more and it funded the activities of the NGOs, so that the NGOs would deliver the services. There were a number of factors that went into that. Some felt that the NGOs were more competent at providing a particular kind of service, and they would not be bogged down with the bureaucracy of the state sector. The Government has been offering tremendous assistance to a number of NGOs.

Madam President, if I could just outline some of them in the Ministry of Social Development for the year 2005: agencies for persons with disabilities, \$12,189,000; children homes, \$17,900,000; industrial schools, \$10,100,000; socially displaced, \$3 million; ex prisoners, \$500,000; family life and counselling agencies, \$1.9 million; substance abuse rehabilitation agencies, \$149,000; and homes for senior citizens, \$183,000. This is only a portion of it. I am looking at a subtotal here of \$46,781,000. I say this in response to the contribution made by Sen. Walton James. He did talk about girl guides, boy scouts and youth councils.

Last year, out of the Ministry of Sport and Culture, we saw \$14,600,000 going to exactly those kinds of institutions. My understanding is that the amount of money that would be forwarded to those institutions this year is going to go up. So the Government is partnering, in a very meaningful and tangible way, with a lot of these institutions that are playing a valuable role and offering valuable service on the ground.

It is not fair—it is not that Sen. James said it—to perceive that the Government is not playing its role. The Government is playing exactly the role for which it was designed in supporting a number of institutions in the society. There are a large number of NGOs in here that I could talk about, but I would not go into any more details.

We also understand the valuable role that NGOs are playing in strengthening institutions and, at the end of the day, would have the effect of reducing crime. We are aware that there is need to improve the framework that governs the relationship between the Government and the NGOs. We have developed a document—my understanding is that this document is almost ready—that would govern the relationship between the Government and the NGOs. This would allow for proper monitoring and evaluation which would allow for a proper assessment of the quality of services and the quantity, in terms of the number of persons who may be positively affected by the work of NGOs. That is nearing the end of its period of preparation.

I would like to move away from the social development aspect and our contributions in terms of strengthening other institutions. Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas made the point that to treat with crime you need a comprehensive approach. I think he used the word “holistic” and that we had to deal with a number of different agencies. I think that was reflected in a number of contributions, even those made by the hon. Senators opposite.

They talked about what they interpreted to be the deficiencies in a number of areas. The point that needs to be made is—I am attempting to outline that yes, we have been addressing all these agencies and deficiencies that they have been talking about. I want to talk now in terms of the nature and the degree of our contribution in the education sector, which primarily forms part of the Ministry for which I am now responsible.

We all understand the extent to which our work in education is directly related to creating a healthier society—a society that is more comfortable and a crime-free society. We know education brings reason in that it develops the mind; it helps the individual to manage concepts; it helps the individual to think through his personal and other issues and, as a result of that, it informs constructive behaviour. Education also brings self-esteem, self-assurance; it provides the individual with competence and, very importantly, it makes an individual able to provide for himself or herself. I described that as being very important.

Many years ago, you would remember that in the campaign of 1995, the Opposition made the point that unemployment was creating crime, and there was need for individuals to be trained and be skilled so that they could become employable and it was difficult to provide employment for persons who are not employable and who do not have any particular skills. What we found happening, even after that position was taken when they campaigned was that a number of the training programmes were abandoned by the government of 1995 to 2001.

When I went to the ministry in 2002, there was only one functioning training programme dedicated to training persons. This was separate and apart from the formal education system. What that meant was there were a large number of persons in the society who may have come out of the education system and without having the specific skills. There were no provisions being made for them. Immediately, we found that to be a potential factor for a crisis. We moved immediately to formulate and develop programmes to deal with that very urgent situation.

Madam President, worse than that, some of the existing institutions found themselves under-funded and unable to do the work that they were designed and established to do. I make specific reference to John S. Donaldson Technical Institute and the San Fernando Technical Institute and, more so, John S. Donaldson Technical Institute. This is an institution that has been providing training for many years for our young people—the same training that provides persons with skills and self-esteem, self-assurance and the ability to provide for themselves and which may give them skills and competence and everything else—and that institution was starved for funds. What was the consequence of that? The consequence of that was an even larger number of persons unable to access an education and an opportunity, and joining the unemployment line and this group of persons who, by virtue of their circumstances, made them more vulnerable as it related to committing crimes.

I had the horror of visiting John S. Donaldson Technical Institute which has been assigned to COSTAATT in 2002. There were one or two functioning toilets. The physical structure was cracked. There was a particular class that needed computers to do a particular course—they needed to use Mac computers because this was a graphic arts course—and they could not complete the course and graduate from the programme until they had completed this particular course.

Madam President, this course was supposed to be done early in the programme because it was a prerequisite for other courses. Do you know what was done? They kept pushing this course down toward the end because they never bought the computers. To cut a long story short, this Government accepted our responsibility and we spent over \$25 million refurbishing the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, and we continue to spend more money on that institution. [*Desk thumping*] Today, that institution is being restored, not only to its former glory, but well beyond what it may have experienced in the past. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me add that the management structure of that institution is in the process of being changed. We have assigned that institution to the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), so UTT would be managing the operations of John S. Donaldson Technical Institute. That institute would now be dedicated to providing training from the level of the National Engineering Technician Diploma upwards. Students would be able to enter at the diploma level, and proceed at the institution to do their Bachelor of Science degree or Bachelor of Engineering degree, and a number of degree programmes as we matriculate from one level to the other within the UTT system.

Madam President, with respect to the training programmes, we found a dearth of training programmes and we moved immediately to correct that. Before I talk about the training programmes, let me make one point that is characteristic of all of our training programmes that we operate within the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education.

We have created a life-skill component. The life-skill component is in recognition of the fact that there are individuals who need to go beyond these specific skills, and who may not have had the benefit of the socialization that I talked about before; who may not have had the benefit of a wider education and, as a result, they find themselves incompetent in a number of areas. I am talking about socially incompetent. We have built into these life-skills training programmes, matters as simple as hygiene, because it is all part of the whole development of the person.

Our life-skill component has seven modules. I am going to talk about some of them. We teach all the trainees about their social environment. We help them to understand what life is about, and as a human being how to exist in a physical and social setting. So we have one module which is dedicated to the social environment, the physical environment, et cetera. We also teach them how to set personal goals and objectives; and how to manage themselves as they move toward achieving their goals and objectives. We also teach them how to communicate with people—basic communication skills; and we teach them two modules on preparing for entry into the workplace.

We have found that many of them do not have any idea about how they should conduct themselves in an interview. They had no idea, even before that, how to write an application or how to fill out an application form where it might be necessary; they had no idea about their personal image; and how they should present themselves as they approach an employer seeking a job. All these things are covered in some of the modules that we teach.

There is a module called “You and Your Finances”. We teach them how to manage their finances, and how to create a budget for themselves and balance it, et cetera.

An extra component is the introduction to entrepreneurial development. We are teaching them to think about investing and to be creative as they go out into the open world. That life-skill training programme is a very important part and a very successful component of our training programmes. It applies to all. In our view, it plays a significant role in helping our citizens to grow. As citizens grow and strengthen themselves, you would find that they are less likely to be susceptible to encouragement to commit crime.

I would go directly into some of the programmes. The MuST programme is a brilliant programme, if I may say so myself. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, understanding that in Trinidad and Tobago we continue to have a portion of our population unskilled, we have recognized that there is the potential for employment in a number of industries. We have identified three industries: the construction sector, tourism and hospitality sector and the agricultural sector. Having identified those three sectors and given them priorities, we are now faced with the task of how we are going to transform a large pool of unskilled persons into persons skilled in the various disciplines in each of the sectors that I have identified.

Madam President, if you look at the construction sector, there are numerous opportunities for employment available in the construction sector, but the problem is that many persons do not have the skills. We created the MuST construction programme. I am going to give you an example of how that programme works.

We have hired 100 training instructors. Each instructor is assigned 16 trainees. Now, to become a trainee in this programme you do not need any O level passes or A level passes. All you need to have is a willingness to get off from that stone that you might be sitting on and fill out an application form. In fact, if you do not fill out the form we would help you fill it out.

We are so eager about this programme to the extent that we have been sending people from the ministry into the communities to encourage persons on the streets to fill out the forms and to bring them into the programme. The programme is specifically designed to deal with many persons in the society who sometimes the sociologists call “economically inactive”—meaning that they do not have any inclination to move toward employment. They are not working and they are satisfied with that. We have been actively and deliberately pursuing these persons and bringing them into the programme.

We assign 16 trainees to a training instructor. The trainees are then provided with all the gear that they need like overalls, steel-tipped boots and hard hats. This is free. The Government pays for it. They are provided with basic tools like hammer, trowel, measuring tapes, et cetera; they are provided with insurance in the event that they are injured so that they would be covered; and they are provided with a \$60 per day stipend so that as they come and train; their personal needs are not being left unattended.

The way the programme works is that the training instructors provide guidance, guidelines and supervision to the trainees. The trainees then work alongside more experienced persons on these construction sites. This is for over a

six-month period. They are exposed from foundation to finish in masonry, carpentry, plumbing, blueprint reading and a number of other disciplines within the construction sector.

4.00 p.m.

Madam President, that programme has been working so well that more than half of our trainees find themselves being offered employment by the very contractor with whom we are partnering on a particular site, so long as they have the level of competence. The main issue that the contractors have been saying is attitude. Because once they bring the right attitude, more often than not, we find that they are able to deliver and achieve the level of competence that we are expecting and hoping for.

On April 02, 2005—the first graduation—we graduated 639 persons from the MuST programme. [*Desk thumping*] On September 17, 2005, six months later—it is a six-month cycle—we graduated 842 members of the MuST programme. [*Desk thumping*] On April 01, 2006 at UWI/SPEC, we graduated 1,373 persons from the MuST programme. [*Desk thumping*] Since its inception so far 2,854 persons, so-called economically inactive, are the people we have been training; moving them away from the potential to commit crime and moving them towards a more constructive life.

Madam President, as we speak, there are 2,064 persons enrolled in the MuST programme. So our next graduation we are looking at over 2,000 persons. The Minister responsible could always come here and say anything, so I want some of these trainees to do some talking for me. We did some interviews with a number of them from both the hospitality and tourism sector. We are doing the same thing in the tourism and hospitality sector. The same principle 1:16, one trainee instructor to every 16 trainees. We enter into an agreement with the restaurants, hotels, et cetera and we send our trainees to work alongside experienced persons in the tourism and hospitality sector under the guidance of our training instructor. We provide them with uniforms or whatever they need to work in a hotel and that relationship has been working very well. As you know, there is also an increasing demand for service personnel in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Madam President, I would just like to read a few testimonials, as it were, from very real trainees.

Angela Paul-Peters, hospitality sector, says: "The MuST programme gave me courage and strength, increasing my self-esteem and leaving positive impact. I am now certified in housekeeping and property upkeep. I see the job of such duties as making people comfortable and I take pride in the work that I do".

Roosevelt Wong, construction sector: "If it was not"—I am reading exactly as he said it—"for the MuST programme I would have been in poverty. The MuST programme gave me opportunities. It did me good and I am moving on. I am now employed with Plumbing Solutions. I am going to John D. for more papers so I can work at WASA."

Pamela Phillips, female, construction sector: "I was a housewife and the MuST programme has made me independent. I enjoyed and learnt a lot in construction and now I have my own home building and I can contribute towards that. I am employed with the STHA Construction and can take care of myself and my family".

Alicia Chrysostom: "Before the MuST programme I was not working anywhere. When I entered it, it made me excel. It opened my eyes to higher horizons. I cannot wait for level two of the programme to begin to put my second foot forward. I am now employed with HCL and can take care of my kids." [*Desk thumping*]

John Boopsingh, construction sector, this was a gentleman at our very last graduation; a very, very emotional story: "Before entering the MuST programme I used to beat cards with no direction in my life." He said it was "wapie". "Someone told me about the MuST programme and during my six months of training it transformed me in a different way to how I was. Right now I am positive; I have a positive manner to everything. Success is there for me to take the right steps. MuST was there for me to take those steps. Right now I am employed with HCL where I do soil testing and also building bridges."

Madam President there are so many more. Let me enjoy myself and read a couple more. I hope you would indulge me.

Phillip Delpano, construction: "Before I was on the block liming and getting into the wrong side of life. Coming to the MuST programme has changed my life. During the six-month period I trained in masonry, carpentry and welding. I am now certified in those areas. I currently have full employment with HCL, Stores Department".

Ian Aps: "The MuST programme did a good thing for me. I have gained employment with H. Lewis Construction as a carpenter. The MuST programme has given me experience in the field. I feel great. It has put me at a higher level of skill."

Madam President, I have so many more, but I would leave the rest to your imagination. I am, and the Government as well, extremely happy and extremely proud of what we have been able to do with this particular programme.

Madam President: Let me interrupt your pleasure at this point, Minister. Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid: Thank you very much, Madam President, thank you hon. Senators.

Madam President, this programme has been so successful that we recently took a note to Cabinet and got approval. Right now we are at capacity in the construction sector. We are training 1,600 per cycle which is 3,200 per year and we recently got approval to hire 100 more training instructors which would take our capacity to 3,200 per cycle or 6,400 per year.

We are spending over \$56 million in this programme; with the addition, we are looking somewhere in the vicinity of \$70 million. When they ask where the oil money gone; the oil money going in the people. [*Desk thumping*] The money is going in the development of the human resources. [*Desk thumping*] The money this Government is spending—talk about mega project, this is a mega project too. This is a mega project and mega investment in the human resource development of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and in particular our young people.

To move on to another beautiful training programme, the Re-training Programme targeted at citizens slightly older, 25 to 45 years. This is the one programme that they had retained. The Re-training Programme is a very mobile programme, meaning we could take it into little communities anywhere. There is a wide range of skills training that we offer.

We offer training in aquaculture, cake baking and decorating, computer repairs, fabric design, food preparation, graphic design, landscaping, recording engineering, steering suspension, brakes and alignment. Again, the way this programme is structured, we source a training provider who would go through a rigorous standards assessment. The training provider would go to the particular community, whether that community be Piparo, as we have done, we have done a grow box programme in Piparo, as I recall. We have done programmes in Mayaro, Los Bajos, St. James and Diego Martin. We even did a barbering course,

training 10 persons to become barbers in St. James. We did a curtain and draperies in Patna Village in Diego Martin; hair-dressing in Tunapuna; a number of programmes throughout the length and breadth of this country.

Again, because we understand that persons cannot abandon their existence and come to train, we provide them with a stipend—the stipend in this case is \$45; they have less travelling to do because we normally operate within their own communities; we did a tailoring programme. I went to Talparo and I asked them: “What are you interested in?” They were not sure; they appointed one of the ladies. The ladies collaborated led by the Village Council chairman and they told us tailoring. We found a provider and did it in the community centre in Talparo, so they would not have to move. This is one of our, again, successful programmes.

To give you a sense of our numbers, over the last few years, in cycle 6, 2002: 773; cycle 7, 2003: 510; cycle 8: 257; cycle 9: 310; cycle 10: 526; cycle 11—which the hon. Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie would know very well—we did 95 people and cycle 12: 600. Cycle 11 did 95, that was our first effort in Tobago. We had that graduation about a week ago and the hon. Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie, in her usual brilliant form, spoke at that graduation, providing motivation where we could not dare tread. We looked at the specific target groups and we were able to adjust the needs of all of these various groups.

Madam President, the On-the-Job Training Programme—a big number programme. The On-the-Job Training Programme was designed for persons who would have left secondary school with minimal qualifications, two or three O levels as the case might be, but they find themselves short of 5 O levels and they also find themselves being told that they do not have any experience. As a consequence of their lack of experience, employers in the public and private sectors have great difficulty in hiring them. So we created this programme back in 2002. This programme is designed that if you have O levels you apply to the programme and we would find a job for you. If it is in the private sector we would pay half and the private sector company would pay half. Private sector companies are becoming more and more interested in the programme because they can see it as their contribution to national development. They also get a pair of hands on deck, as it were, for half the normal cost. If you are employed with the public sector we would pay the entire cost of your training. We pay to the trainee \$1,600 per month if you have O levels. If you have A levels, \$2,500 per month; if you have a degree—and there are lots of people who come out of the university with a degree still needing some experience—you are paid \$4,000 per month; so you have an appreciation of the breadth of our impact.

From July to September, 2002, 913 trainees placed; from October 2002 to September 2003, 5,136 trainees placed; from October 2003 to September 2004, 5,927; from October 2004 to September 2005, 7,156; from October to December 2005—short; just three months—1,660 and from January to March 2006, 1,789. Since the inception of the On-the-Job Training Programme we have been able to provide on-the-job training for 22,581 citizens of this country. [*Desk thumping*] All of those persons between 1995 and 2001 had no place to go. Remember that.

Madam President, to come to deal specifically with two matters as they relate more directly to the question of crime. We all know that recidivism has been—there was that Ramdhanie and Deosaran Report that spoke about recidivism as being a major problem in the society as it relates to crime, and at Social Development—I know that that Ministry had undertaken to provide a system to a number of NGOs which are involved specifically in providing services, accommodation, et cetera to ex-prisoners.

At the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education we have taken that idea and we have gone a bit further. We have developed a programme called Rehabilitating Inmates Through Training and Re-training. What we are saying with this programme—Cabinet has approved it—is we understand when people come out of prison that they are coming out without any skills. In many cases they come out without any skills and without any money. So they are unskilled and without funds, a perfect opportunity, which makes them very vulnerable, very susceptible to commit crime. We looked at it and we said to ourselves, all those prisoners who are due to be released within a year, those are the prisoners who are nearest the gate, as it were, what do we do about them?

We developed a training programme in conjunction with the prison authorities to target persons in the prisons, who are scheduled to be released within a year. We provide training in masonry, carpentry, upholstery, plumbing, five skill areas, so we are virtually assured that once they come out they can move into the active construction sector. The Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education is going into the prisons to provide the training for the inmates while they are in the prison, so that the day they come out they are coming out with a skill; more than that, understanding that outside of the prison system we provide stipends. So how then do we deal with the issue of stipend? Understanding that they are in prison and they have no transportation cost to pay, et cetera, we decided to pay to them a reduced stipend, \$30 a day. But we would not give them the stipend while they are in prison. We would hold the stipend for them in trust and it would accumulate, so the date that they leave prison, we would give them the cumulated

value of the stipend that would have been paid to them over the period. It is quite conceivable that if you are on a three-month training programme, \$30 a day, you might be looking at \$2,500. You are leaving the prison with a skill and a \$2,500 stipend, accumulated.

The benefit of that—and this is for training that they would have undergone—is that you do not leave the prison "broken" as we say, and without a skill, ready to thief. You leave the prison, you can pay rent for a month, and you can catch yourself. You have an opportunity to fund yourself for some time. Now there are the cynics who are going to argue that they could take the money and buy a gun. But, Madam President, they would get the gun in any event, they could do a robbery to get the money to buy the gun, if they were so determined. We are being very creative in terms of trying to find a number of ways to positively impact on the criminal situation, largely using training, education, re-training, and the development of the individual.

There is one particular issue with the MuST programme that a lot of the people who come are very interested in. The contractors, who are our partners, have said that they are not in favour of admitting onto the programme, onto their construction sites persons who are using drugs, because they worry they may be a danger to themselves and to other workers on the construction site. So we have had to build into the programme, into the admission process, a drug test, and you do find persons presenting themselves with alcohol in their system, they are regular users of alcohol and perhaps some other drugs as well. We had to decide what to do with them. Is it reasonable that a man would have left his village or his community, come and presented himself, subjected himself to a urine test in order to move forward and then we say to him, no you failed the drug test, go home. We did not think that that was reasonable. We think if you stepped forward, made the effort, then we should take advantage of the opportunity that we have to invest in your development. And what we decided to do was introduce a new programme called the Positively Altering Lifestyles.

Again, we are contracting a professional to work with these persons for a period of up to three months so that during that three-month period, we are hopeful that we can move them in a forward direction to help them to deal with their personal issues and their drug use issues, all of which may contribute to their being able to move forward with the programme.

Madam President: Senator, you have two minutes.

Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid: Madam President, I have only spoken about a few things, I have not even touched GATE yet or the Higher Education Loan Programme. We are doing so much to build the human resource capacity of our country. We are investing so much in the citizens of this country, hundreds of millions of dollars. When they ask where the money is going, those are mega projects of the People's National Movement, this particular Government. I say that all we on this side are guilty of is loving the people and looking after the welfare of the people. [*Desk thumping*]

Thank you very much.

Sen. Brother Noble Khan: Madam President, allow me please, to shed some words on a very timely and very important matter which is before us and had been for quite some time, this matter of the debate of the Motion by Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran. Timely, because even after more than 50 years the hope of a better society, the hope of a better way of life, the hope of a better Trinidad and Tobago still seems to be far, far away from us, and one of the chief reasons to which we could ascribe this estrangement, this distance, is because of the elements of crime.

Some would say that crime has been around from the earliest time, very early if we were to look into Holy Scriptures and it seems to be there right through and possibly insofar as the modern state is concerned, within the last 300 years or so, this has also been recognized. This question of crime where it is usually held to be countenance that the first law, the first matter of governance that we should put on the table is law and order. Today it seems that when we reflect, apparently that law and order has not yet been achieved and other than law and order seems to be galloping away. Even if we may try to delude ourselves in all the plans that we have put into place, all that we are trying to implement—that is another story—may seem to be mere utterances when one looks against the fact that we have this matter before us and what is the real situation. This, I think, is an important aspect with which we have to address ourselves.

With each succeeding generation a host of things happen and a succeeding generation happens, though we may count it as one, two, three, it does not move in that way. I would possibly use a mathematical expression; it might be more along analogue lines as against just counting or digital lines just using numbers in this way. This makes it a bit more difficult possibly for the transference of that knowledge that should and does take place. The big question is the command that we have over that knowledge and how we do the transference.

Obviously, the elementary method that we have is to try to motivate people by giving them good things for good things that they do, and other than good things,

when other than good things take place. This is a very simple model, I think it has been what all the great traditions have followed and it is time honoured and time tested.

One of the first areas that we try to bring into play, from time immemorial, is the establishment of values and what has been referred to as proper values. Then the yardstick of what are values and what are proper values seems to go, even as some may say, according to the policy by the major decision makers of the time. This again, if it does not follow certain immutable principles could shift.

I remember as a young boy we heard that one of the British policies was "Honesty, is the best policy." I do not hear much of that again. I do not know if it is because one thinks in terms that policy is something that could change, and if we were to take that as one of the inputs that could be changed, one would understand if it is that other values change, what would happen to honesty. So this is just by the way, but unless we have established a fount of proper values, we are in for some trouble.

I would say our country, Trinidad and Tobago has been well set on a proper pattern, particularly with the initial expressions that precede the meat of the Constitution. It recognizes the position of the Creator; it recognizes spiritual and moral values and a host of other things including, importantly, the family. Now, it could be then that the hope and aspiration of our founding fathers; the hope and aspirations of our country as in the Constitution seems to be very, very far away in realizing.

Obviously the first thing that one would have to look at in addressing this is to see our relationship with these major elements within the Constitution, I would say, which I have said before, the position of the Creator, the position of the family, the question of spiritual values, and spiritual values here could mean different things for each one of us, but a connectivity from the Creator, and this is an important aspect. This is where the question of revelation, who have come in the path from the Creator down to us and where these values are supposed to form the basis of our society.

I would take it that our legal system, and one could definitely take it that the codification of any legal system cannot—and we take this as a fact—cover every aspect of our being. Even as our dear colleague Sen. Dana Seetahal, SC has shown and illustrated to us—and I think all of us believed what she has said, the honesty with which she has stated it and from our own personal experience—that even the systems that we have in place, even if they were “correct”, the question of their operation remains questionable.

This I think is an important factor having thoughts, putting them on paper, or legislation as in this case, when I refer to the codification and having them expressed, as a lay person this is how I see it, and then the question of the operations. Unless even the 300 years ago with the establishment of the State that one of the major points of the creation of the State is being able to carry out the law, being able to enforce the law and to make sure that the persons who are under that law follow and abide, the best way to control—I would put on the table—is by having people on their own free will moved by these values, so that there is no need to force people to do. I strongly suspect that the legal system of our country rests on this basis: that we would expect our society to be moved, to be motivated by what the society has preferred and has brought to us.

This is why it is important where we are here in this hallowed House, the question of the Parliament, the three inputs, downstairs as we would say, the representatives, the Senate and the President being the structure upon which everything rests, and to make that functional we have the Judiciary and of course, the Legislature. These are things that we know as far as administration or governance is concerned.

So it is important therefore that insofar as the creation of the law, the persons who have the major inputs in the creation of the law and also in the execution of the implementation of the law—this is all there within the function, because we have control over this. The Senate may not have as much as it would like to have over the control of the purse, but these are the major inputs in the structure. Even if, I would pose, that there is some deficiency in the society to cause this Motion to be before us—I am not going to speak about the trauma that is taking place outside between the wider society—one wonders if what has been said so far, or what we are doing, we are on the correct line.

Madam President: Senator, how long are you going to be again?

Sen. Bro. N. Khan: I really cannot say.

Madam President: Then we would have to take the adjournment. You have spoken for 10 minutes. What do you want to do? I do not think the hon. Senator is going to finish now.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams): Madam President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, May 02, 2006 at 1.30 p.m.

Adjournment

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

On Tuesday we would be looking at two Bills. I know that we are already prepared for the Fifth Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission and therefore we would add to it An Act to provide for the establishment of a Fair Trading Commission. We would do those two not in any particular order. But having done one already, I know that you can easily put the other one together.

Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.30 p.m.