

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, June 12, 2007***SENATE***Tuesday, June 12, 2007*

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 from today's sitting of the Senate to Sen. The Hon. Hazel Ann Marie Manning, Sen. The Hon. Howard Chin Lee and Sen. Raziah Ahmed who are all out of the country.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Professor George Maxwell Richards, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D.

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MRS. MAGNA WILLIAMS-SMITH

WHEREAS Senator Hazel Manning 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, 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, MAGNA WILLIAMS-SMITH, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 12th June 2007 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Hazel Manning.

Senators' Appointment
[MADAM PRESIDENT]

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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 11th day of June, 2007."

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MR. OVERAND PADMORE

WHEREAS Senator Howard Chin Lee 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, OVERAND PADMORE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 12th June, 2007 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Howard Chin Lee.

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 5th day of June, 2007."

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MR. ANTHONY SAMMY

WHEREAS Senator Raziah Ahmed 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, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, ANTHONY SAMMY, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Raziah Ahmed.

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 12th day of June, 2007."

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Magna Williams-Smith, Overand Padmore and Anthony Sammy.

**MR. JOHN COMMISSIONG
(Death of)**

Madam President: Senators, I think at this point, we will do our tribute to former Senator, John Commissiong.

The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, on behalf of the Government Senators, I am grateful for the opportunity to pay tribute to a former hon. Senator of Trinidad and Tobago, the late John Commissiong.

He was a Member of this honourable Chamber in 1986, and he did his duty to the nation in a most exemplary manner. Mr. Commissiong was always driven by a love of country and he served to the very end. In addition to all his many social activities, he made an enjoined contribution to our society through the People's National Movement which has been in existence for over 50 years, as one of the foundations of the political and social evolution of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. John Commissiong (Death of)
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Mr. Commissiong has therefore contributed to the democratic process in Trinidad and Tobago. His political involvement was multi-dimensional and he will be remembered as leader, soldier and comrade in the work of the PNM on behalf of Trinidad and Tobago. He was a member of the national executive of the party and chairman of the Pointe-a-Pierre constituency for a number of years in the post-1986 period.

From these positions he contributed valiantly to the renewal and revival of this national organization. He saw the party returning to Government and, indeed, becoming stronger than it has ever been in its 50 years of service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, if I may be permitted on a personal note. As you know, I became chairman of the PNM in 1987 after its defeat and when many in the country felt that the PNM was finished, John Commissiong was one of the soldiers who worked with the executive of the party to bring this party back into Government in 1991 and to continue the work it has been doing. Those of you in the country who were fortunate to attend PNM political meetings would understand the role that John Commissiong as chairman of those meetings played in the revival of the PNM. I will miss him.

But our best legacy as human beings lies in what we stand for during our stay on earth. In the final analysis, it all has to do with our character. John Commissiong was an approachable, co-operative, intelligent and industrious individual who was capable of the sacrifice of personal views and wishes for the sake of the general good. He maintained an infectious *joie de vivre* which was manifested even under the most trying circumstances in his very ebullient philosophy, personality and his very hearty laughter. All those who knew him well will miss John Commissiong. We thank him for his contribution to Trinidad and Tobago and pray that the Almighty richly rewards him for his work on this earth.

We on this side extend our deepest condolences to his family and friends during this time of bereavement and mourning. Thank you, Madam President.

Sen. Wade Mark: Madam President, on behalf of the United National Congress, I join with the Honourable Leader of Government Business, Sen. Dr. Lenny Saith, in extending our condolences to the bereaved family and friends of the late John Commissiong.

Based on what Dr. Saith has indicated, he served in this honourable Senate sometime in the 1986 period, maybe, just about four years before I began to serve at this level. I did not know the individual on a personal level, but I can say that

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his voice as chairman of these meetings could not have escaped anyone who is a “political animal” in this country. So, his voice is what I am familiar with, not the man. But based on what has been said by Dr. Lenny Saith, we on this side join with him, his family and his friends in extending our profound condolences to the family and, of course, his party, the People’s National Movement.

As I said, Madam President, I do not know much about the gentleman but I know that he was a member or a director of the South West Regional Health Authority. I know in the past as well, he served on the board of Nipdec, if I am not mistaken, and we too, would like to record our condolences to his family.

May his soul rest in peace.

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Madam President, the late John Commissiong had a reputation that preceded his presence and that reputation largely boomed through the sound of his political voice especially when he served so diligently and persistently as chairman of the party that calls itself “great party”. No doubt, such greatness being due to such foot soldiers as the late John Commissiong.

Lest you forget the virtue of his life, it is worthy on this occasion to remind ourselves that party politics and more generally democracy itself, depends on foot soldiers whose work is quietly done, who toil behind closed doors, merely and mainly to maintain the principle of multi-party politics and that in my view, having met him once or twice—perhaps fortunately or unfortunately, I am not a member of the People’s National Movement—but, the reputation of John Commissiong extended beyond party politics, perhaps leading some parties to feel that if they had someone chairing their meetings as John Commissiong, they might have been as successful or more successful than the People’s National Movement.

His voice was of the baritone kind and for a man to leave us with such fond memories of his voice, especially in politics, when talk means so much, perhaps, a replacement for Mr. Commissiong could be our own Rennie Dumas, if voice might be a quality of such. But I need say no more except to join with the previous speakers and celebrate the life of a man who has given so much service to his party and the politics of this country.

On behalf of the Independent Bench, my Independent colleagues, I extend sympathy to the family and friends of the late John Commissiong.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I join with the three Benches in extending condolences to the family of Mr. John Commissiong and to his PNM family which spread to all the four corners of this nation.

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We have heard of his term in this Senate and of other positions in other organizations where he served especially in the NIB which is really where I first met him.

As a training officer, he gave freely of his knowledge and proved himself to be an excellent mentor. To me, John was a friend, a person with whom I could talk and discuss matters. When I was chairman of the party as Dr. Saith himself was, John was one of those people to whom I could turn for advice or guidance. I smile every time I think of his booming voice as has been said here before. He did not need a mike, and I am certain that voice and his diction and his eloquence must have made him a good debater in this House, even in the short time that he served.

There are people who cross our path and leave memories that will always survive. For me, John will be one of them. His smile, his jolly laughter, and his caring demeanour will live on after him.

To his wife and his children, I extend sincere condolences on behalf of my husband, myself and the staff of the Parliament.

I have directed the Clerk to forward the sentiments expressed here to his family. Maybe I should just mention that his funeral service will be on Thursday at 4.00 p.m. at St. Paul's Cathedral.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION) BILL

Bill to provide for the supplementary appropriation for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the Financial Year ending September 30, 2007 of the sum of the issue which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2007, brought from the House of Representatives [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings.
[*Hon. Dr. L. Saith*]

Question put and agreed to.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

German Contingent (Details of)

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

With respect to the contingent that went to Germany during the period June 07 to 22, 2006, could the Minister inform the Senate of:

- (i) the names of the cities that the contingent visited;
- (ii) the cost of accommodation and airfare for members of the contingent; and
- (iii) the amount of fees, allowances and benefits that each member of the group received?

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams): Madam President, the 2006 FIFA World Cup Competition, the most watched sporting event in the world attracting over two billion spectators was held in Germany from June 07 to 22, 2006. Trinidad and Tobago was one of 32 countries to qualify and compete in the First Round matches which, in respect of our Soca Warriors, was held in the cities of Dortmund, Nuremberg and Kaiserlautern in Germany.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago viewed this experience as an opportunity to ensure that full advantage was taken to market the country in the areas of tourism including sports tourism, trade and industry and culture during the World Cup Games.

Trinidad and Tobago was expected to participate in the 2006 World Cup as the smallest nation ever to compete in this prestigious event. This outstanding achievement for a nation of our size attracted the attention and interest of the international community even before our Soca Warriors played their first game.

Cabinet in May 2006, agreed inter alia, that a Trinidad and Tobago contingent of 129 persons comprising six public officials, 119 cultural practitioners and four technical support personnel to be selected by the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, to participate in cultural events associated with the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany from June 07 to 22, 2006. Cabinet also agreed that the sum of \$9,987,754 be identified to meet expenditure in respect of the contingent.

As an overarching impact, undoubtedly, the cultural contingent facilitated the exposure of aspects of the country's rich cultural mosaic to large cosmopolitan audiences at the 2006 World Cup, and indeed, supported the achievement of their objectives in respect of tourism and trade and investment. Additionally, there was a heightening of the awareness of the International Community to the strategic enviable positioning of Trinidad and Tobago as far as economic growth and sporting talents are concerned. The value of the impact of the performances of the

cultural contingent and the favourable prospects for medium and long-term benefits in the area of trade and investment, tourism, international relations and cultural exchanges will far exceed the cost in respect of the cultural contingent.

Madam President, the actual size of the contingent that went to Germany was a total of 123 persons. The actual expenditure incurred by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago with respect to the trip to Germany by the cultural contingent was \$8,772,831.06, which was some \$1.2 million less than the approved sum \$9,987,754.

The names of the cities in Germany that the cultural contingent visited are Dortmund, Nuremberg and Kaiserslautern. The cost of accommodation for 123 members of the contingent is \$2,242,922.03, while that for the airfare was \$3,394,591.

The total expenditure incurred in respect of fees, allowances and benefits to members of the contingent was \$2,246,575.20. Fees, allowances, benefits incurred by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in respect of each member of the cultural contingent are as follows:

Public officials, 6 – \$17,223.08 each

One Chef-de-Mission, Mrs. Roslyn Khan-Cummings;

One director, Mr. Eric Butler;

One Administrative Assistant, Mrs. Carlene Belmontes-Harry;

Three stage assistants:

Mr. Norvan Fullerton,

Mr. Michael Salickram

Mr. Michael Lucien;

Cultural Practitioners, 113;

Three Soca singers:

Mr. Shurwayne Winchester (Power Soca Monarch and Groovy Soca Monarch 2006)—\$80,721.60

Mr. Kees Diffenthaller—\$50,529.60

Mr. Neil Iwer George—\$52,416.60.

Four Calypso singers:

Ms. Mc Cartha Lewis (Calypso Rose)—\$52,416.60

Mr. Leroy Caliste (Black Stalin)—\$ 80,712.60

Mr. Morell Peters (Luta)—\$61,851

Mr. Andrew Marcano (Lord Superior)—\$68,141.60

One Chutney Singer:

Mr. Samraj Jaimungal (Ricky Jai)—\$61,851.60

2.00 p.m.

Fifteen members of Roy Cape All Stars soca band:

Mr. Roy Cape, Sr. Leader—\$65,625.60

Mr. Roy Cape, Jr.—\$23,369.60

Mr. Carlylse Roberts—\$25,369.60

Others members of the band each received \$17,821.60. They are as follows:

Mr. Garvin Marcelle

Mr. Michael Lindsay

Mr. David Jacobs

Mr. Arnold Punnette

Mr. Marcus Ramsaran

Mr. Dexter Stewart

Mr. Anthony Boynes

Mr. Virgil Williams

Mr. Lyndon Kelly

Mr. Stephen Jardine

Mr. Thomas Patton

Ms. Rita Jones

Oral Answers to Questions
[SEN. THE HON. J. YUILLE-WILLIAMS]

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A 25-member conventional steelband, Phase Two Pan Groove, accompanied them:

Mr. Len Boogsie Sharpe, Captain—\$30,401.60

Mr. Roland Harrigin, Pan Tuner—\$30,401.60

Other members of the band each received \$12,789.60

Mr. Franklyn Olliverra

Ms. Johann Chucharee

Ms. Hapty Prince

Mr. Ronald Ashton

Mr. Dereck Boucaud

Ms. Akiela Hope

Mr. Terry Bernard

Mr. Allmond St. Rose

Mr. Mark Sealy

Mr. Keith Serrette

Mr. Jamal Glynn

Mr. Ronnie Collins

Mr. Steve Taylor

Mr. Anthony Franklyn

Mr. Kenneth Harewood

Ms. Tiffany Joseph

Ms. Ashika Gaspard

Ms. Judy Noel

Mr. Dexter Wilson

Mr. Derek Ford

Ms. Jenessa Baptiste

Mr. Leason Jacobs

Mr. Wayne Pinder

Fifteen Pan Round D' neck members of the Defence Force Steel Orchestra:

Ms. Cheryl Ann Scipio

Mr. Roger Best

Mr. Dennison Reid

Mr. Barry Salandy

Mr. Dion Joseph

Mr. Marlon Andrews

Ms. Patrianna Phillip

Mr. Randell Endeavour

Mr. Junior Stevenson

Mr. Dion Alleyne

Mr. Robert Tobett

Mr. Hayden Ifill

Mr. Sheldon Peters

Mr. Godwin Elie

Ms. Dorian Betaudier

Four Tassa Drummers at \$12,789.60 each:

Mr. Sookdeo Sooknanan

Mr. Dinesh Sooknanan

Mr. Andy Sooknanan

Mr. Sooklal Sooknanan

Limbo Dancers:

Ms. Kimmy Stoute Robinson, National Limbo Queen, \$16,553.60.

Others each received \$14, 676.60:

Ms. Jameelah Phillips

Ms. Aquisa Fredericks

Mr. Robert Taylor

Oral Answers to Questions
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Mr. Travera Eversley

Mr. Donald Noel

Ms. Xavier Phillips

Eight traditional mas performers:

Mr. Felix Edinborough—\$17,821.60

Mr. Rochard Reid—\$14,676.60

Mr. Dion Biggs—\$14,676.60.

Other mas performers each received \$12,789.60:

Mr. Keenan Huggins

Mr. Augustus Telesford

Mr. Austin Wilson

Mr. Ronald Alfred

Mr. Ashton Fournillier

Our Chutney dancers each received \$14,676:

Ms. Susan Badree

Mr. Neera Seenath

Ms. Candice Bedessie

Ms. Saranna Moonesar

Ms. Devani Ramnath

The costumed dancers each received \$14,676.60:

Ms. La Donna Rouse

Ms. Samantha Flores

Ms. Sherma Burke

Ms. Stanis Wallace

Ms. Adanna Cobbier

Ms. Xiomara Radjman

Ms. Sanelle Renaud

Ms. Mandy Foster

Mr. Dalton Frank

Ms. Thalia Baptiste

Eight “Moko Jumbie” performers each received \$12,789.60:

Mr. Yusuff Bobb

Mr. Neilon Morris

Mr. Kareem Williams

Mr. Dexter Stewart

Ms. Kerry Jairam

Ms. Jonadiah Gonzales

Mr. Kenton Byron

Mr. Junior Bisnath

Seven costumed mas’ performers and assistants:

Mr. Lionel Jaggessar Junior—\$14,676.60

Ms. Anra Bobb—\$14,676.60

Mr. Leroy Prieto—\$14,676.60

Others:

Mr. Earl Thompson—\$12,789.60

Ms. Ann Marie Ryce—\$12,789.60

Mr. Kieron Sargeant—\$12,789.60

Mr. Ian Baynes—\$12,789.60

There was one liaison person, Mr. Junia Regrello, \$17,821.60. The technical support comprised one show manager, Mr. Christopher Brathwaite, \$20,966.60; Assistant Show Manger, Mr. Keith St. Cyr, \$12,789.60; one wardrobe mistress, Ms. Raquel Darceuil, \$20,966.60; and one choreographer, Mr. Ramon Ross, \$24,111.60.

Sen. Mark: Could the hon. Minister indicate to us what follow-up action, if any, has been taken to take advantage of our presence in Germany, in particular and what benefits have the country derived from this particular experience? Could she provide us with some information on that?

Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams: It would be nice if you had posed that at another time. I am sure you would know of our increased clients for carnival. In addition, as a result of this, we had two tours coming out of this; one to Europe and one to the Far East. Two trade and investment missions were accompanied by cultural contingents. This is as a result of the number of requests that we have had from countries abroad because of the impact of the Soca Warriors.

As I said last week, I would have been pleased to bring a prepared statement to this Parliament, dealing with the results of the Soca Warriors trip to Germany plus the results of the Far East tour and the tour to Europe. While I am on my feet, I want Sen. Mark to know that on all three tours, we had representatives from Pan Trinbago and TUCO and they took advantage of the opportunities out there for their membership. You would learn about that as well in my prepared statement.

**NCC TV
(Breakdown of Operations)**

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

Could the hon. Minister provide the Senate with a detailed breakdown of the operations of the NCC TV in respect of the following areas:

- (i) the number of employees and the nature of their employment;
- (ii) the value of government's capital injection into its operations from its inception to the present time; and
- (iii) the profits and losses experienced by the NCC TV since its inception to the current time?

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams): In November 2003, Cabinet agreed to the closure of the National Broadcasting Network Limited (NBN). The network ceased operating on January 14, 2005.

At the closure of NBN in January 2005, approaches were made by NCC to other television entities to have the fullest possible coverage of the then upcoming national festival, Carnival 2005, which was a mere three weeks away. Of the

number of suppliers, only one television station had the necessary capability to cover the national festival in a meaningful manner. The conditions set down by this media house was that they would undertake to do only three shows of the national festival, namely Panorama, Dimanche Gras and part of Carnival Tuesday. This being totally unacceptable, bearing in mind the NCC's national responsibility, NCC could not have accepted this offer in that it excluded all the other events in Carnival 2005. NCC afforded the national community, both in Trinidad and Tobago, the opportunity to view and be a part of all the splendour and creativity of Carnival 2005.

In January 2005, Cabinet agreed that the NBN enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the NCC for the lease of Channels 4 and 16 to the NCC to facilitate the broadcast of events organized by the Commission for Carnival 2005. Through an MOU, the facilities of NBN and the Information Channel were available to the NCC for a period of three months commencing January 15, 2005. Cabinet subsequently agreed that the MOU between the NBN and the NCC for the lease of Channels 4 and 16 be extended on a number of occasions from April 2005 to June 2007. The programming of the station was expanded to include cultural programmes, documentaries, public information programmes and coverage of parliamentary proceedings.

The staffing utilized at NCC falls into two broad categories, namely, monthly-paid and daily-paid. The monthly-paid staff comprises 16 employees categorized as follows: four producers/presenters; one engineer, one operations manager, one operations supervisor, one administrative assistant, one accountant, one accounts clerk, one network administrator, one telephone receptionist, one office courier and one traffic clerk.

There are 31 daily-rated employees categorized as follows: 23 operators, three directors, three cameramen, one graphic artist, one production assistant.

As it relates to part (ii) of the question, Government injected a total of \$10,387,062 into the operations of NCC TV from its inception in February 2005 to March 2007.

In response to part (iii) of the question, NCC TV Channels 4 and 16 recorded a total income of \$22,003,599, including the Government's injection of \$10,387,062, and an expenditure of \$22,286,412, resulting in a deficit in the amount of \$282,813.

Thank you.

Sen. Mark: Could the Minister indicate to us the nature of the employment of the daily-rated, as well as, is it on contract or are they permanently employed?

Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams: They are on contract. They have been extended over a period of time. They are on short contracts.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, it is now 2.15 p.m. and we have to move on from questions.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

**Operations of NCC TV
(Government's Intentions)**

70. Could the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs inform the Senate whether there is any intention of the Government to discontinue the operations of NCC TV, to have it merged with the Caribbean New Media Group (CNMG) or whether the government intends to continue to operate indefinitely into the future? [*Sen. W. Mark*]

**National Primary Schools Assessment Examination
(Details of)**

72. Could the Minister of Education indicate:
- (a) What number of students in primary schools have repeated standards 1 and 3 based on the National Primary Schools Assessment Examination, in the academic year September, 2005 to July, 2006?
 - (b) What number of students will repeat the S.E.A in 2008 as a result of the non-availability of school places? and
 - (c) How many students who sat the 2007 S.E.A Examination had the experience of repeating any prior academic years? [*Sen. R. Ahmed*]

Question time having expired, questions 70 and 72 were not dealt with.

**STATEMENT BY MINISTER
EnterpriseNetT
(Development of)**

The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, I am grateful for the opportunity, on behalf of the Cabinet, to make the

following statement to this honourable House. This administration is now implementing a fast forward national plan for the fullest possible deployment of information and communication technology, in the daily life and business operations of Trinidad and Tobago.

One of the objectives of the plan is the development of electronic commerce, which is today one of the fastest growing areas in global business operations.

The Government is particularly concerned that our micro, small and medium enterprises participate in this new activity because it is an excellent opportunity to overcome traditional hurdles and generate higher levels of efficiency and productivity, including more effective penetration of markets at home and abroad; increased participation by public sector stakeholders in the electronic marketplace.

I am therefore pleased to update this honourable House on EnterpriseNeTT, an initiative of fast forward for the development of online business to business which, in the IT jargon, is referred to as a B2B Marketplace. This will facilitate much greater electronic interaction among trading partners, by improving the exchange flow of information to facilitate business transactions. We consider EnterpriseNeTT to be particularly important for the development of domestic electronic commerce and the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, henceforth referred to as the MSME Sector, both of which are important for the diversification of the nation's economy.

Through a competitive tendering process, the Government contracted the services of Universal Management Group to develop the pilot online B2B Marketplace. The pilot was intended to be a quick-win project, designed to encourage stakeholders, particularly MSMEs, to participate in e-commerce. This project was completed in September 2006, at a cost of US \$320,000 and the following has been achieved:

1. An assessment of the state of e-Readiness of the MSME sector for electronic transactions and an evaluation of the requirements for the further development of this project;
2. A review of initiatives in countries similar to Trinidad and Tobago and a determination of the models most suitable to serve as a baseline for the project in this country. This includes the role of Government in the electronic marketplace;

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3. An integrated and comprehensive business strategy for the online B2B Marketplace, developed through extensive consultation and participation with various stakeholders. Details include marketing, financial, technical and policy requirements for its success;
4. Development and launch of a prototype, which includes participation by at least 10 MSMEs. The prototype is fully functional and with the capacity for expansion into a complete online system; and
5. The development of a plan of action with a list of priorities for implementation.

There are other noteworthy achievements from this effort. For example, over 1,500 companies have already registered on EnterpriseNeTT and there is enthusiastic support and active interest from major private sector companies in the distribution, retailing, manufacturing, energy and service industries. Also, we are now in a position to utilise the technology of EnterpriseNeTT to support Government initiatives such as the exporters' database/registration engine, the Fairshare Programme, and Government Procurement Reform.

Further, there is now strong interest in having a single point of access to trade and business opportunities and related information facilitated by Government. For instance, we are now pursuing the registration, on EnterpriseNeTT, of an additional 1,800 export-driven local companies. Similarly, various public sector agencies are now considering the use of EnterpriseNeTT for the conduct of their operations.

Madam President, there is widespread consensus among stakeholders, public and private, on the need to continue the development of this project. There is agreement on the following:

1. The need to build a critical mass of participants to sustain a service such as the B2B Marketplace.
2. The economies of scale and increased value for money that would be derived from bringing together multiple services, including electronic procurement opportunities, in a single point of access such as the B2B Marketplace.
3. The importance of leveraging Government participation in, and endorsement of the MSME e-commerce sector, to build trust in the provision of this new service in Trinidad and Tobago.

4. The close alignment between Government participation in the project and other government policies with respect to:
 - Procurement Reform;
 - Fairshare Policy;
 - Promotion of the MSME sector;
 - Facilitating the use of ICT for economic development;
 - Decentralization of government processes; and
 - Rationalization of services for the private sector.

More importantly, we now have a roadmap for the development and expansion of EnterpriseNeTT. This will allow, inter alia, for licensing, dedicated hosting and professional services for EnterpriseNeTT; commencement of active trading with all suppliers and buyers registered on EnterpriseNeTT; further development and expansion of key functionality of the system; and increased participation by public sector stakeholders in the electronic marketplace.

The Government is convinced of the importance of this path for a significant expansion of business activity in Trinidad and Tobago. It will greatly improve the nation's competitiveness in the global marketplace and generate new wealth and employment for present and future generations.

Thank you.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION) BILL

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

That a Bill to provide for supplementary appropriation for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2007, of the sum of the issue which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2007, be now read a second time.

Madam President, this is a money Bill that was approved in the other place on June 06, 2007. The Bill provides for the supplementation of the 2007 appropriation in the sum of \$3,121,413,821 or \$3.1 billion to fund urgent and critical recurrent or capital expenditure to September 30, 2007 in areas where insufficient or no allocation was provided. The details of these proposed changes were circulated to all Senators.

During the course of the debate, my colleagues would provide additional information on concerns that may be raised as we proceed. I would, however, like to summarise the proposal and provide some details to support our position.

Of the total of \$3.1 billion of supplemental allocations proposed in this Bill, 15 per cent represents amounts to facilitate the payment of increased salaries and allowances, arising out of the new collective agreements for staff of the central government. The total incremental cost of the industrial relations settlement for monthly-paid and daily-paid public officers is approximately \$1.4 billion of which \$683 million represents arrears of salaries and COLA. These arrears as it relates to the impact of fiscal 2007 are one-off.

These are obligations that the Government must meet, in order to maintain a functioning public service. Madam President, 18 per cent is to facilitate settlement of BWIA liabilities, particularly in relation to trade creditors and business partners, and to assist with the capitalization of Caribbean Airlines Limited. The total cost of closing BWIA and capitalizing Caribbean Airlines Limited is \$2,308 million, of which \$1,027.2 million was met in fiscal 2006. These are one-off payments, which are necessary in order to complete the restructuring of BWIA as a basis for creating a viable aviation transport system to support Trinidad and Tobago's expanded levels of economic activity.

The sum of 17 per cent of the total supplemental allocation is for the petroleum subsidy, which keeps fuel prices in Trinidad and Tobago among the lowest in the hemisphere, and which protects the poor in our society from the full effects of global inflation, due to high petroleum prices. Another 17 per cent is allocated to upgrading the quality of our transport infrastructure, expanding access to education and to measures to mitigate the incidence of flooding.

Five ministries are being allocated 81 per cent of the additional resources that are being considered. These are:

- Head 18: \$767,115,000—Ministry of Finance;
- Head 22: \$557,195,100—Ministry of National Security;
- Head 39: \$313,296,362—Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment;
- Head 40: \$537,000,000—Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries; and
- Head 43: \$366,650,000—Ministry of Works and Transport.

As it relates to the Ministry of Finance, the allocation being proposed consists of supplemental funding for the following:

1. Increased salaries and allowances arising out of the new collective agreement for the period January 01, 2005 to December, 2007, \$68,214,000.
2. Catastrophe Risk Insurance Premium, \$30,480,000.

Following the devastation caused by natural hazards in the Caribbean in 2004, Caricom Heads of State invited the World Bank to establish the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Facility to provide governments with index-based insurance coverage against losses caused by natural disasters. The Government agreed that Trinidad and Tobago should subscribe to this facility with effect from 2007. As a result, the sum of \$30,480,000 is required to meet this country's commitment to the World Bank in this regard.

3. Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Fund (GATE): The demand by citizens accessing educational opportunities has increased and the Government is, thus, increasing the resources in the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Fund (GATE). These resources will ensure that all possible claims from tertiary institutions could be settled for the remainder of the 2007 fiscal year.
4. The closure of BWIA and the start-up of CAL: The financial resources required to restructure the airline industry amounted to \$2.3 billion. Supplementary resources in the sum of \$556,421,000 are being allocated to facilitate settlement of BWIA liabilities, particularly in relation to trade creditors and business partners.
5. Upgrading of Information Technology Systems, \$12 million. The exercise of upgrading the information technology in the Inland Revenue Division is continuing on schedule. As you know, we have embarked on a programme to have a technology system that brings together PAYE, VAT and all the various systems into one system that will allow us to easily access information on any taxpayer. This is happening through this programme. However, based on contractual commitments, an amount of \$12 million is now required and that is being proposed.

In summary, this proposal, as it relates to the Ministry of Finance covers:

- increased salaries and wages;

- premium for catastrophe insurance;
- additional allocations for GATE;
- BWIA closure; and
- information technology upgrade.

The Government is providing the Ministry of National Security with additional resources of \$557,195,100 or close to half a billion dollars in its continuing fight against crime. The allocation being proposed consists of the following:

1. increased salaries and allowances for First and Second Division Officers for the period January 2005 to December 2007, \$124,814,000;
2. salaries and related allowances to officers on contract in general administration, police service and coast guard, \$5,520,400;
3. provision for increased salaries and wages for the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service, \$122,750,000;
4. provision for increased salaries and wages for the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Services, \$86,250,000;
5. payment of arrears of travelling and subsistence allowances for 2005 and 2006 and increased monthly payments for 2007 for the police service and Immigration Division, \$10,000,000;
6. telephone expenses of the police service, defence force, coast guard and Immigration Division, \$7,317,200;
7. rental of new immigration offices at Chaguanas, La Brea and Sangre Grande, \$1,442,000;
8. outstanding payments by the Police Division to several car rental firms for the use of unmarked vehicles in undercover surveillance activities, and also to meet expenditure for the rest of the fiscal year, \$3,019,000;
9. procurement of materials and other goods and services by the prison service and defence force, \$4,252,000;
10. ongoing critical repairs and maintenance work on several buildings at the Defence Force Headquarters, \$2,000,000;

11. increased maintenance costs such as fuel, lubricants, and replacement parts, occasioned by the greater use of vehicles for joint army/police patrols and other activities in the fight against crime, \$750,000;
12. training of 1,500 officers in crime scene investigation by the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, \$15,000,000;
13. resources contributed towards the regional security effort for Cricket World Cup and additional support to the Strategic Intelligence Agency, Inter-Agency Task Force, Witness Protection Programme and E-999, \$55.6 million;
14. purchase of food stuff for the police service, prison service, regiment and coast guard—they must be fed—\$11,544,000;
15. expenditure related to the posting of two Immigration Attachés, each at the Trinidad and Tobago High Commission in India and Trinidad and Tobago Consulate in Australia, and one Attaché at the Embassy in Caracas on assignment in relation to measures to facilitate Cricket World Cup 2007, \$2,134,500;
16. medical expenses of members of the regiment and coast guard, national consultations on crime during April and May 2007, hosting of conferences and seminars, replacing of vehicles and procurement of bullet-proof vests and pistols, \$46,602,000;
17. \$58,250,000 to meet contractual obligations for:
 - the refurbishing of Coast Guard Vessel *TTS Cascadura*;
 - continuation of refurbishment works of jetties at Staubles Bay;
 - upgrade of the Piarco air wing to air guard base status;
 - refurbishing of Coast Guard Aircraft C26;
 - continuation of construction and refurbishment works at defence force facilities in Tobago;
 - installation of computer software for the computerization of the defence force;
 - completion of construction of the Sangre Grande and Couva Fire Stations;
 - continuation of improvement works to police stations;

- transformation of the police service in respect of training of officers, continuation of the communication and public relations plan, organizational development plan, the executive development professional programme, and the continuation of the anti-crime communication support plan;
- completion of the construction of the Prison Administration Building and upgrade of the electrical system as well as to construct a slaughter bay at the animal husbandry, Golden Grove;
- continuation of the automation of passports; and
- institutional strengthening of the Forensic Science Centre.

These are the uses to which these resources, totalling close to half a billion dollars, are being allocated.

The Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment is being allocated an amount of \$313,296,362. Of this sum, \$263,696,362 is required to assist the Water and Sewerage Authority to meet its operating deficit and to include an allocation for negotiations with daily-paid and monthly-paid workers of the authority still to be settled.

On the capital side, \$49,600,000 is provided:

- to purchase materials for 80 kilometres of highway lighting and installation of 118,000 residential street lights;
- to replace water mains under the priority pipeline projects;
- to provide consultancy for the integration of smaller private waste water treatment plants; and
- to continue the implementation of the Water and Wastewater Master Plan, under the Water Sector Modernization Programme.

Those are the uses to which the resources being requested under the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment are being used.

Under Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, an additional amount of \$537,000,000, or half a billion dollars, is required to continue the subsidy to the population on the difference between what it costs to produce gasoline and what the population pays at the pump. The total subsidy allocated for

this year is now calculated at \$1.1 billion and this amount would allow the Government to make these resources available to the National Petroleum Company to meet its commitment to Petrotrin.

Under Head 43: Ministry of Works and Transport, an increase in the amount of \$366,650,000 is being proposed. The major purposes for which these resources are required include:

- payment of increased salaries and allowances arising out of the new collective agreement, \$8,000,000;
- \$67,200,000 to facilitate the award of contracts for which the tendering process has already begun, to execute road repairs throughout the country under the programme for upgrading road efficiency;
- \$104,280,000 to extend the current programme of desilting and clearing of all major and minor watercourses throughout the country, as part of the Ministry's effort to reduce the incidence of flooding during the rainy season;
- \$68,720,000 to fund operations of the Port Authority in respect of:
 - payment of arrears in the sum of \$41,000,000 to port workers for a new collective agreement covering the period 2005—2008;
 - payment of \$27,720,000 on a loan of US \$66.5 million or approximately TT \$419 million for the purchase of the Incat 046, the T&T Express, as it is now called; and the Incat 060, T&T Spirit, as it is now called; to service the sea bridge between Trinidad and Tobago.
- \$32,000,000 to meet increased operational costs of the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) such as fuel, wages, salaries, maintenance, spares, utilities and security. These additional costs are a direct result of the:
 1. expansion of the corporation's fleet of buses by 75 buses from April 2007;
 2. servicing of new and re-opened routes;
 3. opening of terminus facilities in Point Fortin and Chaguanas and the refurbishing of the Sangre Grande terminus;
 4. increase in security presence on buses and at the PTSC compounds.

An additional sum of \$86,450,000 is also being allocated for the Ministry of Works and Transport, under its Development Programme to meet the following:

- the contractual obligations with respect to the rehabilitation of roads and bridges, rehabilitation and stabilization of failed slopes and the expansion of trunk roads;
- the payment of salaries and operational expenses to the respective project implementation units;
- the upgrade of equipment at the Electrical Sub-station South Terminal, Piarco; the completion of electrical works at the north side of the approaching roadway at Piarco; and
- the procurement of critical equipment for emergency response and flood relief.

In making these recommendations for supplemental funding, the Government proposes to maintain its policy position as promised in the 2007 budget in October 2006, where we programmed a surplus of \$28.5 million. We have now programmed an anticipated surplus of \$1,719.3 billion. Of this amount, \$1,716.5 billion is being deposited into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, which leaves us with a small surplus of \$2 million on a fiscal operation. This also means that at the end of this fiscal year, the Fund balance would climb to over \$10 billion.

Madam President, for those who say that this Government spends, spends, spends, that is true, but this Government also saves, saves, saves. While we have a lot to be proud about, it is important to briefly describe how we got here, since we did not get here by luck or by chance, but by meticulous economic planning and judicious economic management. [*Desk thumping*]

High oil prices are only part of the story of our economy's current success, and, by itself, high oil prices will not generate economic sustainability.

We are aware that there are several countries that have benefited from oil and other commodity booms and remained in economic difficulties, and with uncertain future economic prospects. Our experience in Trinidad and Tobago is not this. We can now report to the national community that:

- real GDP growth has averaged around 10 per cent over the past five years. In the process, per capita GDP has more than doubled since last year;

- the unemployment rate has declined to 5 per cent, the lowest level ever recorded;
- based on 2002 data, poverty declined from 35 per cent on the last occasion it was measured to about 17 per cent. Since this date, however, the economy has expanded further with the creation of several new jobs which would have reduced the number of persons unable to participate in our economy even further;
- the energy sector has been the main driver of our economic growth. However, the non-energy sector has grown at a robust 7 per cent since 2002;
- we have a very healthy non-energy export sector, which is the envy of the Caribbean, and further diversification into services for example, banking and tourism is proceeding apace;
- our energy sector has been diversified to reduce its vulnerability. Now we are a major world exporter of natural gas and petrochemicals; and
- while we are satisfied with this performance, we are not unaware of the challenges of poverty, new health concerns, climate change, natural disasters and the specific problems of many in our society. When we disaggregate the numbers, we see people in need and it is to this challenge that we are responding. After all, as we are doing today, our spending is for improving the quality of life for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have a healthy economy that is built on strong foundations and well positioned for growth and development. I would not repeat what a highly respected international agency has said, but I believe it bears repeating that we conduct our affairs in the context of:

- prudent monetary policy;
- recognizing a buoyant energy sector;
- looking at the sustained positive performance of the economy and the continued surpluses on the fiscal and external accounts.

In its recently published *Regional Economic Outlook*, the International Monetary Fund has also recognized Trinidad and Tobago as one of the fastest growing and more dynamic economies in Latin American and the Caribbean region. And, while some may have their views about the IMF and the World Bank,

the sentiments of our success have also been cited by the independent international rating agencies, which have confirmed the performance of the Trinidad and Tobago economy.

I wish to remind this honourable Senate that this impressive performance has been underpinned by the policy adjustments and structural reforms made in the early 1990s.

The second oil boom provided the initial financing for our now substantial petrochemical platform at Point Lisas. When we hear commentators say that the funds from the second oil boom were all squandered, we wonder how do they explain Point Lisas. See what it is today and acknowledge that it started with the foresight of the PNM, using the oil wealth derived from the second oil price shock.

There is no doubt that the economy went through great stress in the second half of the 1980s. However, coming out of this difficult period, the PNM Government developed and implemented a series of structural reforms which definitely set the stage for the long period of uninterrupted growth and development that we are now witnessing.

What were some of these reforms?

- we eliminated foreign exchange controls and adopted a floating exchange rate regime;
- we liberalized the trade system and lowered import tariffs in order to foster greater efficiency and competitiveness in our non-energy sector. Many manufacturers will tell you that the establishment of a more competitive exchange rate and the reduction in import tariffs boosted manufacturing activity in the 1980s;
- we removed interest rate and other direct controls on the financial system, which set the basis for a major expansion in financial intermediation and credit availability, as well as an increase in domestic savings;
- we reduced the size of the public sector, through privatization of non-core public enterprises. Those that we felt could be better operated by the private sector, we divested;
- we restructured the public finances, reducing the chronic imbalances in the central government accounts; and

- the Central Bank tightened the supervision of the financial system which was somewhat of an issue, and led to some financial stress during the 1980s.

These are but some of the factors, which set the stage for the growth and development which took place in the 1990s.

We are the first to admit, that the recovery of oil prices played an important part in our process, but it was not the only impetus. It so happened that the recovery of oil prices coincided with a period of financial stabilization and structural reform, which created the pre-conditions for robust economic growth.

Our innovative economic policies and foresight could be credited for the tremendous diversification of the energy sector. These policies have so strengthened our investment climate that we now have four LNG plants making Trinidad and Tobago the major LNG supplier to the US. We are now the largest supplier of methanol from a single source and we are a major world supplier of ammonia.

Building on what we have done, our strategy in the medium to long term is as follows: In agriculture, we have restructured Caroni (1975) Limited as part of the National Agribusiness Development Programme. We are establishing a number of large agricultural estates to facilitate mass production of several strategic commodities in which the country can develop a competitive advantage.

Our economic and social sector development strategy for the medium term is explained in our Vision 2020 Plan, in which we will continue to create the policy environment to develop a rapidly growing economy, comprising a diversified and self-sustaining non-energy sector that produces sustainable high quality jobs.

More importantly, we are planning that all citizens will enjoy a high standard of life where quality health care is available to all and where safe, peaceful, environmentally-friendly communities are maintained. It is the society that we are currently creating, where all citizens must share in the wealth by being able to access a quality relevant education system tailored to meet the human resource needs of a modern, progressive, technologically-advanced nation that we are engaging in, in the exercise that we are involved in today.

We are planning that over the medium term, poverty will be further reduced, based on continued rapid economic growth incentives for small business expansion, some of which are already in place, as many small contractors will confirm. Remember, we created the mechanism that allocated 10 per cent of

contracts to small business, and we operationalized this by amending the limit for Permanent Secretaries. We have the most comprehensive government assistance program for the disadvantaged and those that are in need.

It is this Government that developed earlier in this term, the Social Sector Investment Programme, in which we highlighted the challenges of poverty, the impact of natural disasters, inequality, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, among others, and developed and funded developmental programmes, remedial programmes and preventative programmes. These programmes are reaching those in our society who are in need of support in dealing with identified challenges.

In 2007, this Government's investment in the sector for social infrastructure programming and other social initiatives, in other words towards dealing with those in our society who are disadvantaged is in the order of \$7.1 billion.

Our economic strategy also targets the further diversification of the non-energy sector. To this end, we have identified for special attention the resuscitation and restructuring of the agricultural sector. In fact, over the last three weeks, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago hosted the Agricultural Donor Conference of Caricom, chaired by President Jagdeo of Guyana in which, for the first time, based on information available to me, Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Agriculture and the Donor and Research Community of Agriculture and the international agencies of the World Bank, the IMF and all those agencies pooled their collective resources to deal with issues of food security in the context of changes in the global dynamics.

In addition, we have identified for special attention the expansion of the financial sector activity, including the creation of an international financial sector, as well as seven specific areas for business development and job creation.

We see opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago to participate in the global financial business. Our financial sector has been expanding rapidly, both in terms of their local operations and through cross-border mergers and acquisitions. This expansion creates an increase in value added through employment, increased taxes as well as greater profit and dividends to shareholders.

In recent years, Trinidad and Tobago has become the unofficial financial centre of the region providing financing through direct loans and bond issuance to regional governments and regional sovereigns. The level of such finances reached US \$690 million in 2004 and has averaged US \$350 million over the past five years.

The Government's plan is to leverage this success, to make Trinidad and Tobago a true Pan Caribbean financial centre; a platform from which domestic and international banks can service not only the Caribbean, but further afield in Central and South America. We have the advantage of location, and we are working to improve our physical and technological infrastructure, and, of course, the quality of our human resources.

We are putting particular focus also, on the upgrading of our regulatory and supervisory regime, in line with international standards.

The seven specific areas of business development and job creation are yachting, merchant marine, fish and fish processing, music and entertainment, film printing and packaging and food and beverages. For these industries, there is a regime of special incentives which include marketing and promotional assistance, productivity enhancement support, research and development assistance and tax and custom tariff incentives.

The Finance Bill, 2007, which is in the other place and will come here thereafter, deals with some of these measures.

Beyond these targeted areas, the Government will continue to take steps to further strengthen and increase productivity in the manufacturing and services sector.

Ongoing initiatives that should benefit the manufacturing and services sector include:

- increasing investment in economic infrastructure such as the road network, electricity and water systems and port capacity, all of which would contribute to reducing production cost and improving business competitiveness;
- the liberalization of the telecommunications sector to provide the needed boost so that local businesses could compete in the global environment;
- investment in the upgrading of tourism facilities and the reform of tourism legislation to encourage local and foreign investment in hotel rooms;
- the establishment of the Tamana Technology Park at Wallerfield and of a Natural Research and Development Fund to stimulate innovation and technological upgrade in the manufacturing and service sectors; and
- export facilitation.

3.00 p.m.

Madam President, financial and monetary policies will be geared to setting the pre-conditions for sustained growth and welfare enhancement. The Government is committed to price stability in the form of a medium-term inflation rate of 7 per cent and a long-term inflation rate of at most 5 per cent and a stable and competitive exchange rate. The Government is also committed to maintaining fiscal balance or small fiscal surpluses, after transfers to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund as we have demonstrated in the proposal before Parliament.

The medium term will also see an improvement in fiscal performance resulting from a whole range of fiscal reforms some of which are already under way. Madam President, this Government is proud of our strong economic achievements and our vision and policies for the realization of a strong sustainable caring economy. We have said that our country's natural resources have played a critical role in building these successes. Nonetheless, as significant as the energy sector is to this country, we could not have achieved the successes that we have gained in the absence of vision, good policy and sound economic management.

We also realize that while our energy sector will continue to be a major asset, it will not be possible to achieve developed country status without disciplined financial policies and building new bases of committed advantage. We are well on the way to achieving this diversification. We will never forget that development is about people and that our development model would only be a success if it guarantees a more equitable, caring and humane society where a significant improvement in the quality of life is enjoyed by all. We are committed to this and we are sure it will be achieved.

Madam President, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Sen. Wade Mark: Madam President, thank you. The Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, 2007 was presented by the hon. Minister. The question that we pose from the very outset is: How would this—minus the arrears of emoluments and allowances which are accrued to public officers, as well as the petroleum subsidy—additional \$2 billion assist the poor, the working class, the grassroots and the ordinary people of our country?

Under PNM, it reminds me of the Mighty Sparrow's famous calypso: "Capitalism Gone Mad" under this PNM, where the poor are becoming poorer and the rich are becoming obscenely richer.

Madam President, I listened with some interest to my hon. colleague's presentation, and it is like if his legs and his feet are clearly not planted on the soil of reality. They seem not to understand the plight and the dilemma of the ordinary working man and woman in this Republic. So, here we have another supplementary appropriation; another PNM excursion into financial adventurism; wanton squandermania. *[Interruption]* I said minus that \$1 billion which public officers deserve and the subsidy. So, we are talking about a situation in which this Government has come to this Parliament to appropriate through the Consolidated Fund, more and more funding for projects that they ought to have anticipated in the last budget. We know this is a money Bill, and the Senate hands are virtually tied on matters of money and, therefore, this exercise is going to be one of futility.

Madam President, since this Government took office, we have had a number of supplemental appropriations. In fact, when we looked at 2003 to the present time, it amounts to close to \$19.4 billion that they have come back to this Parliament for over a period of six years. So, when we tally the allocation through the Appropriation Bills and Acts over the last six years, this Government would have spent over \$200 billion in the last six years, through supplementary appropriation as well as through the Appropriation Act.

We in the UNC had in our possession for six years, less than \$60 billion. In fact, \$54 billion was the amount of money the UNC had within that six-year period, and in six years they had \$200 billion. What is the legacy and the state of this economy insofar as the ordinary people are concerned in this country?

We know about the theft and corruption taking place under this administration, and I will identify elements of it today. The only problem is that the PNM theft is very sophisticated and it has become institutionalized. *[Desk thumping]*

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: They have mastered it; they have perfected the art.

Sen. W. Mark: We have a situation where we have spent—the hon. Minister has indicated that he is proud of the PNM's record; they have managed this economy judiciously; and they have engaged in sound planning. Madam President, the inequality of income and wealth in this country has worsened as it has never been before under this administration. They do not have the statistics because the Central Statistical Office does not provide those statistics or data to us. We know from the cries and our links with the grassroots that the poor are becoming poorer.

Madam President, if you look at the newspaper today, people are lying on the concrete floor of the San Fernando General Hospital. A woman with a heart condition is lying on the cold concrete floor in a country where a Government has spent over \$200 billion in the last six years, and we are talking about we are better off.

The Prime Minister in his illusionary trips says that he has put money in everybody's pockets and everybody is better off today. They have introduced debilitating inflation in this country over the last four years; killing people's purchasing power and making people poorer as a result of that. Crime has reached unprecedented levels in this country, as the police incapacity for detecting and solving crime continues to rise. Then we hear this ludicrous statement coming from the hon. Minister that poverty through some European Union—up to now, they are afraid to place on the Table of the Parliament the official report of this so-called European Union study on poverty. Where is the report that you are boasting about and saying that poverty has reduced from 34 per cent to 17 per cent? Who say so? Is it the Minister of Finance? Where is the data? Where is the evidence? The European Union is denying that they have given you a report on this matter. They said that the report is a preliminary report and they have not verified that report or certified it, and you are all over the place boasting.

Where is the report? Bring the report here and table it! That is all I want to hear from you this afternoon. I want an official report from the European Union on poverty reduction in this country. I want it for everybody to see. Do not come and tell us and use this ridiculous \$655 and tell people that if you are earning \$655, everything is okay and you are not poor. Not a single Senator on that side can live on \$655 a month in this country, but they are saying that if the ordinary man, the ordinary woman and the grassroots in this country are getting \$655, they are good.

Madam President: Would you give way to the Minister?

Sen. Enill: Madam President, just for clarification and I do apologize for this. Could the hon. Senator tell us where he got his expenditure number of \$200 billion? That is certainly not the information that is available to the staff at the Ministry of Finance. Could you just tell me where it is?

Sen. W. Mark: We would like you to go to the Auditor General's report. All your supplementary appropriations combined with your budgets—*[Interruption]* I have asked the Minister of Finance to table in this Parliament the report on poverty reduction. That is what we are asking for. Madam President, they tell you that you can live on \$655! Is that how you measure poverty?

Public health and education have collapsed in this country. There are criminals operating in the health sector today thieving openly—thieving from the sick and the dying in this country—and this Attorney General who is on his way out has done nothing about this. Imagine thieving from the sick and the dying! Stealing!

Infrastructural development is not on the cards. After six years in office and tens of billions of dollars—let us take, just for argument sake, he said \$134 million but I say \$200 million—could you imagine that people are drinking water from a chicken farm pond in this country after six years, and the PNM is now coming to fool people and say that they are going to supply water! Madam President, this Government should be taken to the Gulf of Paria. Let us carry them to Carrera Island. They are suffering the people.

The people cannot take the PNM any longer. They want to exhale—take the crumpled paper from your back pocket and give us the date.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Are you worried?

Sen. W. Mark: We are not worried. The people are going to eat you all raw. I am not worried about you. There is no water for the poor. There is high food prices; no cassava; no dasheen for poor people. We have a Minister of Legal Affairs and all she does is to survey prices; no controls. The Minister just surveys prices and tells us where to go and buy—go here, go there as the case might be.

Madam President, flooding has worsened under this regime. Agriculture is now contributing to half of 1 per cent of the country's GDP. They have effectively abandoned and murdered agriculture. Our environment is being threatened on a daily basis; our justice system is severely overburdened; our democratic institutions are being compromised and violated every day under this regime. There is reduced confidence in the Government on the part of the business sector. The quality of life of our citizens has deteriorated under this regime.

Today, after almost six years, we are witnessing a situation where our economy remains heavily skewed. We have growth without development in our country; we have increased expenditure on social programmes, but we still have persistent poverty in our nation. There is a massive construction boom, and yet you have labour and material shortages; huge expenditure on technical advice; and the support to fight crime and criminal activity is not there. There is unprecedented Government expenditure, yet there is falling living standards in our land; unprecedented Government revenue, but still poor infrastructure. Where are we going under this regime?

The Government expenditure, according to the Auditor General, exceeded revenue every year since they came into power. They have reduced taxation and yet there are lower real incomes in the country. We have a net migration of human capital in our land. Where is this progress that we are hearing and the Minister is boasting about? Only their friends and family are progressing under this regime; not the people. The people are not progressing under this PNM regime. In fact, they have no hope under this regime; none!

When Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill addressed the post-Cabinet Conference two weeks ago, the newspaper reported him as saying that the \$3.1 billion would have been required for subsidy allowances and arrears for public officers and allocation to the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), but we are now seeing from the facts that maybe he did not tell the press everything, or the press did not report everything. Where are we? We are being conveniently fed by the Minister of Finance. Whatever he wants to tell this country, he says, and if you do not have a sharp and keen alternative government to expose this regime, a lot of their crimes will go unpunished.

Madam President, I observed under Head 55, Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, some \$14.7 million. I understand that the hon. Minister had to suppress the non-profit institution vote in order to make arrangements for the Far East investment tour, and now she needs that money back.

In addition, we are told that to build all the various facilities for Carnival it costs this country \$5.348 million. When we talked about millions of dollars, I recall the Minister, in particular, saying: “No, it is not that amount. We talk about millions.” Madam President, whilst I am on this matter—I am saying that you should have informed this Parliament from very early. Look how we have to get information! They are always hiding information from the Parliament. I want you to tell this country how much money you have spent staying at the Hilton Hotel. *[Interruption]* That is public money. It is \$119,000 at the end of 2003! We want to know what the figure is at the end of 2006. I asked that question about 10 months now and I cannot get it. I am going to talk to the officials in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs. I understand that it amounts to over \$1 million.

Sen. Yuille-Williams: Madam President, I think why the hon. Senator is doing that is that he said things in this Parliament already, and he has not been brought to board for it. Even though he has been sent to the Privileges Committee, he got off from that and nothing has been said and, therefore, he has gone back to it. As long as you allow him to continue with this, he will continue to make

statements against people in this Parliament, and I really resent that now. He cannot just stand and say what he wants to say about people like that. I am saying again that he has no facts. There is something called the Privileges Committee and when he is taken before it nothing happens. Sen. Mark continues to say things about Members. I want him to withdraw all that he has to say, because what he is saying is not true.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you denying that it is \$1 million?

Sen. Yuille-Williams: You just be careful about yourself as well and do not even make any statements to me. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, did you hear what she said?

Madam President: Senator, I am on my feet. Sen. Mark, I really think that you should not be attacking or bringing forward any of those kinds of accusations. Those were brought already, if I remember. I think it was a question. I do not remember.

Sen. Yuille-Williams: He asked that it be sent to the Integrity Commission. The Integrity Commission sent it back stating that there was nothing that they found that I had done wrong or anything like that. [*Interruption*] Just be careful. I am speaking. Just allow me to speak, please.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I am on my feet. Does she have a point of order?

Madam President: Well, I asked her to clarify for me—

Sen. W. Mark: Well, could you find out from her for me? She is wasting my time.

Madam President: Please, Senator, you are now wasting time.

Sen. W. Mark: No, I am on my legs. I am speaking. [*Interruption*]

Madam President: Sen. Mark, are you shouting at me?

Sen. W. Mark: She is taking my time.

Madam President: Well, you brought up the whole issue. I asked her to clarify for me whether this matter was discussed here before. She is now saying that somebody had written to the Integrity Commission and it was cleared up. I am asking you, Sen. Mark, please, do not bring this matter here. Let us stick to the money Bill which is before us.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I want to advise that you go to May's 4(3) and you see me, I have the right to speak. I have the right to refer to any document without reference to them.

Sen. Montano: Madam President, is the Senator arguing your ruling? He is out of order.

Madam President: Senators, how many times do I have to tell you all that when one person is on his feet the other one cannot be? So, when one stands, then the other one should sit. Sen. Mark, I did make a ruling and I would expect you to abide by it, please.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, so I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether she is aware of what is taking place in the National Self-Help Commission which falls under her jurisdiction? Madam President, I have a bunch of receipts here, and I want to pass them on to her. These receipts are from the National Self-Help Commission, and a hardware store called Chan Ramlal. I want the Minister to tell us whether there is a special relationship between Chan Ramlal Hardware and the Self-Help Commission. I want to know. People have come to me and said that they have approached the National Self-Help Commission for help and they get the \$10,000 voucher and they are told by a chap, a fellow called Rajkumar or Krishna or his staff, that you can only go to one store to cash the voucher. If you are living in Barrackpore, you have to go to central to Chan Ramlal.

I want to know if there is a link between Dave Ramlal, the Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) and Chan Ramlal. I want to know the relationship between Chan Ramlal, Dave Ramlal and the National Self-Help Commission. I would like the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs to investigate; launch an enquiry into a corrupt act that I understand is taking place involving the National Self-Help Commission. So, Madam President, I want to pass on this to the hon. Minister so that she could investigate it. There is, in fact, a criminal activity taking place there where they are forcing citizens to go and buy their hardware there.

Madam President, do you know what is even more alarming? We understand that a bag of cement is about \$40 or \$50 and when you go by Chan Ramlal it is \$69 and \$70. I am saying that it is millions of taxpayers' dollars that are involved here, and we are calling for an enquiry. I would want to refer this to the police, because I believe this is a serious matter, and I would want some answers.

Madam President: Do you want to pass it on to the Minister now?

Sen. W. Mark: I am going to pass it on shortly. [*Interruption*] I am asking for answers. I want answers. I do not care who was under us. I am not prepared to allow anybody to steal from the public's purse.

Hon. Senators: What!

Sen. W. Mark: I am not going to allow anyone to steal. If the PNM is thieving, I must expose them. We want the hon. Minister to investigate this. We are very concerned that while some people are having a ball, poor people are sleeping on concrete in the hospital. That is a criminal activity on the part of the PNM! You all should be charged for crime against humanity in this country. [*Desk thumping*] How can I support that? So, we are very concerned about activities taking place in that ministry.

I want to go to another one. [*Interruption*] You are cool for the time being, until you tell us if it is \$1 million. That is all we want you to come and tell this Parliament.

Sen. Padmore: You gone back to that.

Sen. W. Mark: How do you mean that I gone back to that? If you are spending my money at Hilton Hotel you must account to me. Let me continue.

Madam President, join me on page 17; the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. I want to know where \$3.9 million is—let me read this thing carefully and let me explain my concern; my money and taxpayers' money.

Sen. Yuille-Williams: The airport.

Sen. W. Mark: You could say the airport; you are living in Hilton.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: The Tarouba Stadium and the National Performing Arts Centre—

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, \$3.9 million is needed for a grant approved by the Cabinet as financial support to the Trinidad and Tobago Pro-League Limited for fiscal 2007. This support to the league is based on deficit funding of the approved budget. I want the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs to come to this Parliament and tell us who is this Trinidad and Tobago Pro-League Limited? Who? We want to know; we want answers. I realize that this Cabinet is engaged in a campaign of nepotism. I want to know why we must spend \$4 million for this particular league.

When I enquire into this matter, I realize that one Mr. Brian Manning, the son of the Prime Minister has a relationship with this pro-league. We are being told that the Cabinet has granted \$4 million as a grant to start a professional basketball

league which starts in the month of September and ends in November. Who is the man in charge of it? His excellency, the son of the hon. Prime Minister. This is what we understand. Tell us who is this pro-league! Where is this money going?

I understand that this gentleman has a basketball association called the Caribbean Basketball Association. I went to the Registrar General's Office to see if this organization is incorporated, and there was no information on incorporation and, yet, he has gotten a licence from the National Basketball Federation of Trinidad and Tobago to start a professional basketball league; \$3 million. Who is giving him that? We are giving him that; the people of this country.

Madam President, that is not only corruption! This is police investigation. We want an investigation into this \$3.9 million that is being given to the son of the Prime Minister through some basketball league. We want information! We got information and we are seeking clarification. I hope that the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs and everything could tell us if I am wrong. There is something called the National Professional Basketball League. There is nothing on the register; nothing on the books; and nothing in the Companies Registry, but you are coming here to fool this Parliament and to tell us that you want \$3.9 million for this. This is politics! They are using taxpayers' money through the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago in order to launch a basketball league and, therefore, it is coinciding with election. So, this is an election fund. All I ask of the hon. Leader of Government Business is to clear the air for the taxpayers of this country. Is this \$3.9 million—

Sen. Dr. Saith: I want to make sure what he is asking is clear. I do not see anything in the document that talks about basketball. I see Trinidad and Tobago Pro-Football League. It is football.

Sen. W. Mark: No, no. You are confusing—I am dealing with the \$3.9 million. Where did you see football?

Sen. Dr. Saith: I am in the Cabinet and I am telling you that it is football.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I am dealing with what is before us. I am not seeing any football. If the hon. Minister could come and give this Parliament a clear statement on how, who and when this money was allocated, he would clear the air for the whole country.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Madam President, I am about to do that. You asked me to clear the air.

Sen. W. Mark: Not now. He has to contribute—

Sen. Dr. Saith: Madam President, there is nothing here like a pro-basketball league. I am telling the honourable Senate that this money was given to the Trinidad and Tobago Pro-Football League. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I think Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith is confusing this paragraph with the following paragraph which says, additional funding of \$13 million was given to the Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation. I believe he is confusing both.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Madam President, let me clarify it again. The sum of \$3 million was given to the Pro-Football League; \$13 million was given to the Football Federation. There are two separate entities. As he knows, the advisor to the Football Federation is Mr. Jack Warner; and the Pro-Football League is a pro-league on which, I believe, one of the teams is also Joe Public.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I would like him to bring that in black and white for the Parliament. I am not prepared to take old talk on public funds. I am entitled to ask questions. As a parliamentarian, I am entitled and I have freedom of speech to ask questions and nobody, including the Front Bench before me, will try to stymie or stifle me and my right to speak and to deal with you; that corrupt bunch in front of me. [*Desk thumping*] So, Madam President, these are issues that we seek clarification on and once I can have them, I have no problem.

Madam President, if you go to page 17, there is \$32 million to meet increased operational cost of the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) like fuel, wages, salaries, maintenance and repairs; expansion of the corporation's fleet of buses by 75 from April 2007. I think we need a public enquiry into the purchase of buses by the PTSC. We want to know: Who is the commission's agent that is wiping out millions of taxpayers' dollar as a result of this particular importation of buses? We want an enquiry into this matter.

We understand that there is a commission agent that is creaming off millions of dollars when PTSC could go directly and buy its buses in Germany or Brazil. We understand the chap name is Harry Ragoonanan. He is the man who is importing buses and getting millions of dollars as commission. We want to get that information from the Government. We want answers from the PNM, because that is corruption. We want answers from the Government on this matter. We have more to say about Harry Ragoonanan, but for the time being we will pause.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. Saith, could you tell us whether there is a plan afoot to sell Petrotrin platform which cost this country some \$400 to \$500 million to be constructed for US \$20 million to EOG? I would like the hon. Minister when he is

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[SEN. MARK]

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addressing this Parliament to tell us if there is a plan to sell Petrotrin platform which cost the taxpayers close to \$500 million to be constructed by somebody called EOG for US \$20 million or \$20 million. You would tell me about that when you are winding up. [*Interruption*] I am asking. I want it now.

Madam President, I want to also deal with the Ministry of Planning and Development. There is a lot of lawlessness taking place in our country. I want to bring to your attention the plight of people from a community called Shorelands; a very quiet neighbourhood of about 52 single units and a couple apartments. Madam President, you must know Shorelands. The former President of the Senate lived on Paria Avenue.

Madam President, we understand that in 2004, the then Minister of Planning and Development, granted approval for the construction of two towers in this neighborhood. If you know the discomfort this is causing to the residents. This particular tower called the Renaissance goes from \$10 to \$11 million for a three bedroom; \$13.7 million for a four bedroom; and \$25 million for the penthouse. What is happening is that the people of this community are saying that their rights have been violated. They want to know how the Government of this country could allow these people to build something like this. [*Sen. Mark shows the Senate a picture*] Madam President, look at it. This is on 84,000 square feet of land. Do you believe that? Do you know what is going to happen? This is between \$11 million to \$25 million.

You know, when a fellow called Carlos Sabga applied to build just three storeys, the Town and Country Planning Division under the then Minister turned him down. Do you know what happened? A couple months later, they bought the land from Carlos' son and others—four blocks of land comprising 84,000 square feet—and they got approval for 22 storeys. In a neighbourhood, that is illegal or unlawful. The people are calling on the Minister of Planning and Development and Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith to stop that project now.

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. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Madam President: I have often said to you all in this Senate that you are not to tell anybody else to keep quiet. If anybody is to do it, I will.

Sen. W. Mark: I know my friend does not want me to speak any longer. This project called the Renaissance Project, involves four top Government Ministers; all in the Cabinet.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: Hear it now. Listen!

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, we have done the research. I want to make available to Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith the Deed of Covenant that says that in Shorelands, Bayshore, no one should erect more than one storey high, and yet the then Minister of Planning and Development, in early 2004—I do not know who it is. I have to check the record—approved 22 storeys or 21 storeys. This is the covenant that prohibits anyone from going beyond one storey. When Carlos Sabga applied for three storeys, the Town and Country Planning turned him down.

Do you know what? That is corruption, connection, PNM big boys and nepotism! I hear one of the companies is called Amera, and before it was called Broadway Construction. When you look at the names of the owners and the directors of that company, you would realize that it is big powerful Ministers who are involved, and they have their partners silently sleeping, but some of them are advancing themselves. They are sleepers—silent partners; dormant partners.

So, what we would like to advance to you and the hon. Leader of Government Business, Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith is a stop to that illegal project. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, they are reclaiming illegally without the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) permission. So far, they have reclaimed 40 feet of sea already, and they are going more and more out. They are going to build a mariner without Town and Country Planning approval and the EMA approval. How can the Government sit there and allow this illegality and unlawful behaviour to take place. We want to know if Minister John Rahael is involved in this!

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: That is 51 per cent shares.

Sen. W. Mark: We want to know if John Rahael is part of this criminal activity.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: Why are you all so quiet?

Sen. W. Mark: The people of Shorelands went to their MP, Dr. Rowley, and he turned them down, so they came to me and said: “Sen. Mark, we want a voice.” I said: “Here is the voice.” I am speaking on their behalf. [*Desk thumping*] Dr. Rowley who is the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West does not

want to represent the people's interest. I wonder if he has an interest, and that is why he does not want to represent their interest. Madam President, you have noise level, traffic level, the sewer level, the water level and transportation problems.

The people of that community are citizens of the country. They might be rich, but they are citizens of this country and they are entitled to justice, fairness and peace. When that 22 storey tower goes up—presently it is about 10. I saw it myself yesterday—all the lights that you are accustomed being exposed to as a resident is blocked off. You cannot go to the sea any longer, because they have blocked off the whole area. How could this Government allow Rahael and his gang to do that kind of thing in the area? His family was put as directors of the company and he took a background.

Hon. Senator: You are imputing improper motive.

Sen. W. Mark: I am not imputing any improper motive. I have the evidence here. I do not want to call others right now. I have already called one. The people are saying that this project in Shorelands is proceeding—you are cool. You are staying at Hilton Hotel. We are paying for you. You do not want any apartment for \$25 million. We are paying your money. So, you are cool. That is coming to an end just now.

Madam President, they are saying that is an illegal structure and we are calling on the Government to stop it now. It is about 10 storeys high. The people are saying that they do not want it to go any further. They do not want it to be broken down, but they are saying they have rights to. In another country that building would have come tumbling down. They have done an illegal act in the area. They are reclaiming the sea without a licence and without the EMA approval.

Why is the Government allowing these sharks to swallow up small people? They need someone to speak out for them, and they know that the UNC would speak out for them, because nobody else is speaking out for the poor. [*Desk thumping*] We have to do it and we are going to speak out for all of the people of this country regardless of the consequences. [*Interruption*] I did not pick any fight. I am dealing with justice and fairness. That is all I am dealing with. I have all the information here to pass on to the police, and the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) on this illegal and unlawful act that is taking place. I wanted to raise these points, because I am very concerned.

The other person under the Ministry of Planning and Development that I want the Government to investigate is—could you imagine there is a fellow who owns a company called Geneva. He comes to Trinidad and Tobago through his

Canadian connection and buys a boat called *The Ace of Hearts* from Calder Hart for US \$138,000 in the middle of last year. The boat is right down there at Crews Inn. I have all the details of who sold it and how much. I have it in writing.

Madam President, since this man got in bed with this Canadian who is in charge of a \$10 billion Trinidad and Tobago company called UDeCott—would you believe that Geneva does not know anything about health and safety and they got a big contract to deal with the scaffolding problem. Look in the papers! What do they know about water apart from one project they committed in Toronto recently? They got a contract through their connection with the *Ace of Hearts* for US \$7.6 million.

Madam President, before that they were involved in small projects. Hear the projects that they were involved in. They were involved with the Breakfast Shed; the relocation of the Cruise Ship Complex; they were the managers of the Waterfront Projects, the three of them; the restoration of the Stollmeyer Castle, the restoration of the Red House, Mille Fleurs restoration; the rehabilitation of the Central Business District of Port of Spain; the Chancery Lane Complex in San Fernando; and they were also involved in the design of the Prime Minister's new official residence.

There is a link between this gentleman and Calder Hart. We want a forensic audit into UDeCott! We want to know what is happening with our moneys there! Madam President, would you believe that every single employee's hands in UDeCott are fingerprinted? Is it a Gestapo operation Calder Hart is running up there? How could the Government sit and tell me that it does not know what is taking place at UDeCott? How? Then you have the link now. His wife is a Malaysian Chinese. So, apart from Geneva, which is Canadian—he is from Canada—his wife is from Malaysia. Madam President, hear the link now; the Shanghai Construction Group.

Madam President, UDeCott has given the project to the Shanghai Construction Group. The PM's residence is being built by them; the Performing Arts Centres in San Fernando and Port of Spain are being built by the Shanghai Construction Group; the National Carnival and Entertainment Centre, which is costing over \$500 million and where there has been a pause for a little while is being built by Shanghai Corporation and the last project is the Ministry of Education.

Madam President, China is the No. 1 bribe paying country in the world. Do you see why the PNM is bringing in Chinese? Nobody could go to China and demand any investigation. That is a communist regime and they give you money easy.

Sen. Dumas: That is your comrade.

Sen. W. Mark: When it comes to the national interest, I have no comrade. Anybody who is putting their hands in the till, I have no friends. *[Interruption]* I have always made that declaration. Madam President, we need a forensic audit into the operations of UDeCott. We want an audit to establish the link between Geneva, Shanghai Corporation, Mr. Calder Hart and his wife. His wife is a big influence on the Chinese and she is the woman who is moving and pushing the knobs on behalf of Calder Hart.

Madam President: Senator, you have four minutes. Please, you just do not bring people's wife in.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I am dealing with public money and anyone who is taking our money or tampering with our money, I am going to expose them in this Parliament. *[Desk thumping]* Anybody!

Sen. Dr. Saith: Madam President, the hon. Senator has no evidence of what he is saying. He cannot—especially people who do not have an opportunity to defend themselves in this Parliament—be making allegations against them.

Sen. W. Mark: Your Attorney General—*[Interruption]* *[Crosstalk]*

Madam President: Could I have some quiet.

Sen. W. Mark: Sure, Madam President.

Madam President: Your privileges allow you to speak freely, but when it comes to people like people's wives who have no connection—they are not employed by the Government—I would draw a line there. I would want you to be very careful.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, over the last 18 months, 16 persons have been run out of UDeCott by Calder Hart: Ian Telfer, Chief Construction Engineer, gone! Winston Agard, gone! Arnold Kato, gone! Debra Singh, gone! Samantha Lezama, gone! Ms. D. Joseph, gone! Darwin Tota! Keith Hordad! Jeffrey Laudatt! Anson Seukeran! Donna McCall! Donna Mae Cedenó! Richardo O'Brien! Dustin Serrette! Marvin Sinanan and the last person is a woman called Shamlal O'Cal or something like that, the Internal Auditor.

This UDeCott is a slush fund for the PNM. We are saying that we want a police investigation into UDeCott. *[Desk thumping]* We want the connection between Geneva, the Shanghai Corporation, the PNM and Calder Hart. We want this Police Commissioner who is saying that: "I want to see you Dr. Gopeesingh", to go and see Calder Hart and the fellow from Geneva and do a public investigation.

4.00 p.m.

They are "tiefing", stealing the public moneys, and we in the UNC will expose them and come after them. As soon as the election is over, everybody who "tief" money in this PNM Government will be hunted down and brought to justice. They will get a fair trial, because those persons who steal from the public purse, we will not tolerate that kind of activity that is taking place under the eyes of the PNM.

Madam President: Wind up, Senator.

Sen. W. Mark: We call on the Government and this Minister called Sen. Dr. Saith, whom I will say more about on the campaign trail shortly, to take steps to investigate Calder Hart. The Government must investigate him and stop that project down at Shorelands, the Renaissance Project.

Madam President, I lost 15 minutes. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Sen. Mary King: Madam President, we have before us the Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, 2007, in which the Government is asking—not that we in the Senate can refuse—for a further allocation of \$3.12 billion, required to fund urgent and critical recurrent and capital expenditure to September 2007; in areas, according to the document, where there has been insufficient or no allocation provided in the budget. This allocation is in addition to the \$38 billion which was already approved, reaching, as of now, to \$41 billion.

In the budget speech, which is the main request usually for appropriation for the year ahead, it is customary for the Government to give us both sides of the picture; that is, the expected revenue and expenditure, which will include proposed borrowings and any savings. We have before us the additional expenditure proposed, but nothing to tell us how we are actually going to fund it.

We can assume, of course, now that oil and gas prices are somewhat higher than were estimated in the budget, that the Government will have at its disposal more income than expected and disposal of more money than expected, which, according to the recently passed Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, should also redound to the improvement of the balance in the Fund. I will like to examine the process of adding moneys to this Fund.

If we look at the Act in section 13(1) it states:

“Where petroleum revenues collected in each quarter of any financial year—

- (a) exceed the petroleum revenues for that quarter...by more than ten per cent, the currency of the United States of America equivalent of the excess revenue shall be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund...”

And put into the Revenue and Stabilisation Fund.

- “(b) exceed the estimated petroleum revenues for that quarter...but do not exceed...by at least ten per cent, the Minister may direct that the currency of the United States of America equivalent of all or part of the excess revenue shall be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund...”

It also goes on to tell us in section 13(2) that:

“The deposits...shall be made no later than the end of the month following the quarter in respect of which the deposit was calculated.”

It identifies for us what they mean by a quarter. It means any:

“...three-month period ending December 31, March 31, June 30 and September 30.”

For completeness it also states in section 14 that:

“A minimum of sixty per cent of the aggregate of the excess revenues shall be deposited to the Fund during a financial year.”

So I think it is incumbent upon the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance, to present to this Senate the source of funding for this further expenditure and also to bring us up-to-date on the records of the Revenue Stabilisation Fund.

The Act demands that the Minister comes to Parliament with the quarterly records of the petroleum revenue collected, such that the statutory deposits can be placed into the Fund as required by the Act. So I do not think it is good enough for the Minister to tell us today that he is going to be adding \$1.7 billion into the Fund, but we need to get the quarterly reports, what the oil price was and what the percentage going into the Fund was. I will like the Minister to bring us up-to-date, please, on these records of petroleum collections.

We signed some two or three years ago an extractive industry initiative in the United Kingdom whereby we would also have reports on revenues to the Government from the oil producing companies. To date we have never had any reports on this particular initiative that we have agreed to bring to Parliament. Those records will help us all to see how the process is working, what exactly we are working with and what those revenues and royalties have been.

It was stated in the Lower House last week that in any budget allocation it was a normal practice for governments to come before the House with appropriation and supplemental bills; but budgeting is not a peculiar function of governments; we all budget. Private sector companies budget and we as guardians of the household purse also budget. If we or private companies were to come back to boards and money providers to ask for appropriations, we probably would be looked at with a very critical eye, since, in the first instance, it was supposed to be done by experienced professionals.

Usually what would be allowed would be new money for things that really could not be foreseen, for emergencies that had cropped up, perhaps because of price increases, overruns on project or whatever; things that could not have been foreseen. This also should hold true for professional executives coming with a budget to this House.

We also seem to have a penchant for completing negotiations with public servants at the very end of the contract period. If we look at the documents before us today, the request is for \$683 million for salaries and wages that I am sure the Executive must have been aware of as an outstanding balance, yet no allocation was made in the budget of October 2006.

We are also told that some of this money is required for additional expenditure on new goods and services, minor equipment, current transfers and subsidies, statutory boards and similar bodies, to a massive tune of \$2.6 billion, and another \$500 million for the implementation of the ongoing Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) projects. I look on this as a chronicle of poor budgeting or, at best, some slackness in the budgeting process; but maybe because a government—particularly a majority government—feels that all it has to do is return to the House with a Supplemental Appropriation Bill and, voila, it will get it, this, in fact, is what we seem to have before us today. The Executive can actually begin to spend new money, even before it puts that request to the Parliament.

We now have a Finance Committee existing in the Lower House, consisting only of Lower House Members, whose process and procedures inhibit it from making a proper assessment or any modification, a priori, of the budget which is being proposed. I am recommending to our country what other countries have done, that we also institute a Joint Select Committee of Parliament in finance to help plan and oversee the budgeting exercise and, in so doing, it will eliminate this laissez-faire exercise in which we can, like *Oliver Twist*, come back and say that we would like some more, particularly when petroleum revenue is good.

I will not go over all the particular items one by one for which new funding is requested, but I am sure the Minister of Finance and his ministerial colleagues will try to justify why every single request is urgently needed. If they really were urgently needed, then why were many of them not foreseen in the October 2006 Budget? Perhaps a jump in October to \$41 billion would not have been politically expedient at that time; so, perhaps, it is a case of, “Why not take it in two bites”, especially when the revenue stream now becomes clearer.

My main problem is not at the microeconomic or micro-accounting level of the business before us; my concerns are at the macro level. It is general knowledge that the Government is spending a lot of money and, in many persons’ views, much too quickly. We cannot seriously justify this incredible spending rate by saying that it is time the people reap the rewards of the revenues earned by the energy sector, while at the same time we are damaging the self same economy in which these same people have to live. The Governor of the Central Bank has not been mincing his words when he lays the woes of the economy squarely at the feet of the Government; woes such as the inflation rate, particularly in food and building materials, the increase in the price of housing and, critically, the public’s expectation of continued inflation. When you have public expectation of continued inflation, this positive feedback drives inflation even more.

Our economy—and I think I have said this before in another place—is a put in and take out economy. As far as the Government is putting money into circulation through its prolific spending, the Central Bank has to take it out and freeze it. This is also at a cost to the public, because they take it out with an interest rate being paid so that the Central Bank can maintain some monetary controls over our economy’s interest rates, our inflation rates, our foreign exchange rate and, of course, our foreign exchange reserves.

We have also seen the increasing spend of foreign exchange by the Central Bank to meet the demands of the market. It shows that the population, those who have the money—lots of us do not have—are on a spending spree. We only have to look around us to see the extent of the spending spree. The mess on our roads is one indicator of the spending. I think it is high time that we ask the Government to please reduce the subsidy on gasoline and bring our people into the real world. Another \$537 million in additional gasoline subsidies is requested here today for National Petroleum. If gasoline prices were increased, we would have less mad young drivers on our roads.

This increase in spending of our foreign exchange may reduce liquidity pressures in the economy, but it is doing so at the expense of decreasing our

foreign reserves. So we have to ensure that we are controlling the whole system and not part of the system.

We have now found ourselves in the ridiculous situation, due to the overheating of the economy, that we have to import labour from the other side of the world to put up artefacts, which, in our minds, make us a developed economy, while we are actually ignoring the sector that would build us into a developed economy. I have spoken about this at length: The creation of an experimentally organized economic environment in which we focus on building the fourth level persons: post-tertiary level persons, innovative persons; that is the key to national development.

I think we need a lot more than NEDCO and the Business Development Company (BDC). We certainly need NEDCO and the BDC, but we need a lot more than that. These micro, small businesses will not by themselves create the onshore economy. The onshore economy has got to be in place within the next two decades, by 2027 at the latest, to take over the baton of earning foreign exchange from the energy sector. We all know that the energy sector is a wasting resource, therefore, we have to have something to take over the baton of earnings from the energy sector.

Our people are supposed to be benefiting from these revenues from the energy sector from our budget allocations, but many of us cannot get water to our houses and our public health system is in disarray; in the last few weeks we have all seen to what extent. We as members of a Joint Select Committee investigating health are also very aware of the problems in health. Our transportation system has clogged up. Housing prices are escalating, which is making the Minister of Housing look like Santa Claus to all of us; so much so that he has told us that no government should attempt to house the whole population. But how can persons buy houses if the private sector is selling a two-bedroom condominium for \$1.2 million?

Looking at our entire system, our electricity supply is at its limit. We have to be thankful that under the last government we did put Trinity Power Plant into place; it is desperately needed at the moment. The desalination plant which we never should have needed is now also a godsend, and all of this, obviously, from a lack of forward planning and management systems.

I said that I will not look in great detail at the request for some of the money, but when I saw an additional allocation of \$557 million to the Ministry of National Security, it was like a red flag before a bull. I am not suggesting that it should not be spent, but we have had a continuing debate before this Senate, over

two or three sessions now, on the crime issue. Actually, some of us have contributed two times and some of us three times to the particular crime issue which has come before this Senate. I made the point on both occasions that fighting crime was more than simply catching perpetrators. locking them up or trying to prevent crime by instilling the fear of being caught in the criminals.

I spoke at great length on the need to rebuild our families and, in particular, about keeping our needy mothers at home with their babies for the first few years, the period during which the absence of love and caring breeds criminals. This is a proven fact; this is not “ol’ talk”. I see nothing has been budgeted to provide this support for these families. The Government spokesmen are saying that URP and CEPEP are jobs for our women to keep them out of abusive relationships. Pre-schools can never replace mothers at this crucial stage and the pre-school does not start till they are age three and, therefore, I want to know why we continue to ignore these families at risk, not when we have so much money at our disposal.

I see that one of the very important tasks before the Government is to reconstruct the onshore economy. The Government has been paying lip service to this for quite a few years now; and not just this Government, but previous governments talked about the pillars on which they are going to build the onshore economy. They talk about tourism, printing and packaging. We also hear about the small companies that NEDCO has spawned and that it has given out \$6,000 in loans to small businesses to create these small companies.

The Business Development Company is looking at creating larger sized companies, and its vehicles are guaranteeing loans and leasing equipment. All these are needed; they are indeed laudable, but, as I have already said, they do not on their own provide the globally competitive and innovative small, micro entrepreneurial enterprises that are needed to take over the earning of foreign exchange anywhere near the scale required that of the present energy sector. We also hear that the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and Tamana Park are going to do that; but if we were to look at the ads in the newspapers, even for the proposed research and development at UTT, we would see that they are, in general, referenced only to the energy sector. We are looking back to the future: The energy sector is in decline; we have to look forward to the future. We have been looking back for too long.

We have to exploit our natural resources. We have to exploit our people, creating advantages which are enhanced by knowledge and by intellectual property in the creation of new locally-owned companies. Even if we were not looking back, a university and a technology park where we do not know what

they are going to be doing besides manufacturing aluminium motor car wheels, we need to know more than that. We need to have real planners in place. They may be part of what I describe as the environmentally experimental, organized economy, but they alone do not form the complete diamond which is required for the reconstruction of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, two aspects which I refer to again and again in this Senate are the necessity to create the financial structure that will support these envisioned small and medium entrepreneurial enterprises. Venture capital, corporate venturing, that was promised to be brought back to this Senate for I think three years, has not come back. Development and research grants and initial public offerings are the things we need in order to support these small and medium enterprises, and, of course, a supporting marketing strategy for the products of these enterprises. Again, unfortunately, there is no evidence that these are being established or even being thought about.

To have all this work together, we need to have them working in tandem with each other. We need to have some government-powered body which will oversee the management of national development. So besides the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Planning and Development doing their work, all of them have some theory with some influence on the tasks required, but we really need to have a coordinating national development unit, to coordinate and oversee the efforts, so that we are not all pulling and tugging against each other and going nowhere fast. [*Crosstalk*]

The energy sector has been with us for a long time and it will be with us for some time, at least, the next 15 years; hence we have to make the optimum use of our natural resources. Even though some of us choose to ignore it, there is no doubt that the world is approaching peak oil, as far as petroleum production goes, with the accompanying climate chaos that we see all around us. This is not only my view. If you examine some of the reports and the research being done by other major companies, such as Shell—Shell sees peak oil approaching just after 2025; that is 18 years down the road. The US Energy Information Administration and its energy department think that this could be around 2030. Other experts see peak oil production between 2015 and 2030, so we are looking at 10 to 13 years.

The demand for oil is also expected to rise to 121 million barrels a day by 2030, from today's present at 85 million barrels a day. To meet this demand, it is considered economically and geographically infeasible, almost impossible. So in this regard, our current oil boom is different from what we had in the 1970s and

1980s. What is actually before us today is a non-return to low oil prices, but the concern is really the impact of these escalating prices on the macroeconomics and the political situation. Oil prices affect the prices of everything; all imported goods and services, and remember we are a very large importer of food.

Saudi Arabia and other countries with high energy levels are not putting more crude oil on the market, even if they could, to meet this envisaged demand, because they see that this will only lower the price of oil. Saudi Arabia recognizes that petroleum is going to be extremely more valuable in the future when huge quantities of transportation fuels and petrochemical products would be very essential. So the Minister of Energy of Saudi Arabia, Mr. Ali al-Naimi, has said that his country will increasingly use its natural gas and its petrochemical industry to form clusters of industries, modifying its traditional role as an exporter of crude oil. How were they able to do this? [*Interruption*]

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

Sen. M. King: I will be finished in three minutes.

The ability to do this came from the nationalization of their energy resources and their companies in the 1960s and 1970s. This gave that country the power to control what it actually does with its own resources. If we look around us, President Chavez of Venezuela is also nationalizing his resources. He has the sixth largest reserve in conventional oil and one of the largest heavy oil reserves in the whole world. Chavez' colleagues, Morales of Bolivia and President Lulu of Brazil, are all in the same position of being able to control their assets and their own resources, so that in the run up to peak oil and beyond, these countries can optimize the use of their resources for the total benefit of all their people.

We in Trinidad and Tobago, where our resources are being utilized in the modern day plantation economy, have mainly producers who are foreign direct owners of our plants. We have been unable to develop for ourselves the clusters that Saudi Arabia is now planning. Point Lisas is not developed in a cluster in that sense. They are all disparate companies owned by different persons, with no central planning. The companies of the developed world are single-mindedly committed to as fast an extraction as possible of basic products for shipment to the north, from the wells under production here and in some other developing countries, from our proven reserves, the LNGs, et cetera; an approach that the Saudis are certainly going to avoid from now on.

So unlike Chavez, we have very little flexibility in what we do with our remaining proven reserves. The producers that are here are not about to mimic the approach taken by Saudi Arabia, for the reasons I just gave; so our resources are restricted to resources not yet discovered and the few proven reserves that we do have. Perhaps if Mr. Chavez allows us to use some of his, then we could put that into the pot.

Our task is: How do we use them? How do we conserve them in this environment of increasing value for petroleum, such that we reap the short-term benefit of peak oil? I am not hearing any mention from any government planner or any planner, in fact, in Trinidad and Tobago, taking us beyond peak oil. Where are we really going?

In closing, we have a dual challenge. We have 15, at most, 20 years more of petroleum, if we continue as we are going now. Prices are going to continue escalating, they will remain high, and worldwide this is going to put severe economic and political pressure on us all. We have to rethink our whole development philosophy. What we are doing thinking of using more of our energy resources in basic commodities? We have to move away from the thinking of smelters and LNG plants, and more foreign direct investment whose aim is only to export as much as they can and as fast as possible. [*Desk thumping*] It will not optimize the use of our reducing resource and increasingly valuable natural gas.

The other challenge is to build the onshore economy and the resources of this can come from the energy sector earnings. So our Government appears not to be looking through this window of opportunity. It appears not to be implementing any new ideas on how to address this dual challenge. Instead we see them building the artefacts of a developed world and more smelters.

I thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, we shall now suspend for tea and return at 5.05 p.m.

4.35 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano): Madam President, the debate this afternoon is about a supplemental appropriation by the Government of the day, to appropriate approximately \$3.1 billion from the Consolidated Fund to supplement its planned spending for the present fiscal year.

The first speaker on the other side had really and truly very little to say about what we are really about here this afternoon. Of course, one would expect that because we are rapidly approaching the season some refer to as the “silly season”. There is an election approaching. The contribution on the part of Sen. Mark was really more of a political speech, rather than a speech about the economics of the country. The first thing he started off saying was that he lamented the fact that this was a money bill and that the Senate had no vote on a money bill. While that may be true, I think that when you listened to Sen. Mark, he seems to sing a different song backwards and forwards and to contradict himself frequently. The Senate is part of the Parliament.

The word “Parliament” comes from the French word “parler” which means “to speak”; that is what the Parliament is all about. The fact that Members have a vote in the Parliament is not necessarily to twist the arm of the Government or to try to force their views on the government of the day. It is merely to register their disagreement with the views of the Government. The Government is the majority, elected by a majority of the people and has a right to govern for the duration of the period for which it has been elected. Ultimately, the Government is accountable to the people, if its policies are not in favour with the people.

What happens in the Senate is not to be controlled by Members of the Opposition or the Independent Benches, their job is to speak, to say what is wrong and why it is wrong or what is right and why it is right; that is the job. It is a tragedy to think that a Senator with the experience of Sen. Mark could come here and lament the fact that he does not have a vote. His language alone would tell the story. Now that this Government, this administration, has sought to televise publicly the proceedings of the Parliament, the people can hear for themselves and can judge for themselves what the Government is doing, be it right or wrong.

The Government is not afraid of the criticisms of any Senator. It is their legal duty to speak their minds in this place, provided that it is done responsibly. Of course, during the course of Sen. Mark’s contribution we had many things said that were certainly not responsible, but that is another issue. Therefore, on that point, it was a disappointment, in the extreme, to have a Senator of that level, with so many years of experience, lament the fact that he has no vote. He has a voice and he can say what he likes. The people will hear what he says and they will decide and will ultimately cast their vote.

One of the things he said that I would take issue with, was that the inequality of wealth had worsened since we came into power. He went on to say that inflation was making people poorer and that he wanted proof that poverty was

down. I do not know where the good Senator lives. I happen to live in Trinidad and Tobago and it is not difficult to see what is taking place. You can get statistics from anywhere you like; the facts speak for themselves.

Let me just say this: When we came into government in 2002, we found that there was a complete absence of a housing policy. There was no housing policy. There was a policy to provide land, but no policy to provide housing to persons who needed it. There was a tremendous demand for housing in the country; they just did not know how to solve it. This Government came in with a policy to say, "We will provide low cost housing to those who cannot otherwise afford it." What we do recognize is that we are an island economy and very much of what it takes to build a house is not necessarily produced from entirely indigenous products. The foreign input, the imported input, in the construction of a house is very high.

We do not make steel. While we make paint, the ingredients for the paint we do not make. We simply blend it and stick it in a can. We do make cement, but a lot of the ingredients for cement is imported and blended here with other sands and that sort of thing. In the course of building a house, we use a lot of steel; while we have a steel mill, we have to import the billets, which are then heated and rolled and steel is made out of it. We do not make glass here. The imported element in the construction of a house is very high and, therefore, the Government is not completely able to control the cost of construction, because so much of the input comes in from abroad.

What this administration did, as we had done in previous administrations, except on this occasion it was on a much grander scale, we said that we would subsidize the cost of housing to those who otherwise could not afford housing. We have now produced and delivered in excess of 26,000 houses and we are producing them at approximately 8,000 houses per year; this is by the Government. At the Housing Development Corporation (HDC) they have a list of persons in excess of 70,000 who have applied and are waiting for houses.

When we came in, the UNC had said that they had a list of 25,000 which they could not find or produce. That list has grown to 70,000; it is not because of the fact that all of a sudden the demand is new, the expectation is new; the expectation that you can have a house, no matter how poor you are; that is what has changed. The expectation is a genuine one, because even someone earning as little as \$2,000 or \$2,500 a month can afford a state-produced house on his own. There is now hope.

A house is a major expenditure. The usual yardstick in terms of one's income to the cost of either renting or purchasing a house, is that you will use about one-third of your income to house yourself. So by far, a person's largest single expenditure is to find a house to live in. Sen. Mark said something about the inequality of wealth. He is not living in reality. We are producing houses for persons who could not otherwise afford them and now they can. The 26,000 persons who have received state subsidized housing will stand up and tell you, now and in the next election, "We can afford our own homes and what Sen. Mark is talking about is rubbish, just absolute nonsense."

The fact of the matter is that the health care system in the country is big, cumbersome, unwieldy and is taking a long time to reengineer, but it is being reengineered. The extent to which the health care system is generating services is on a significantly higher level than it was six years ago. There is now no backlog for surgeries. When we came into office in 2002 there was a backlog of several years; now there is no backlog. If you need surgery, within a matter of weeks it is scheduled and you can get your surgery. There are some things we can do and there are some things we cannot do. We recognize that because there are limitations, not only in terms of equipment, but also in terms of the expertise, the doctors we have or do not have, as the case may be.

The Government is investing in a huge oncology centre that will make a major difference in terms of the quality of health care that we are providing. More than that, we now have hundreds of persons, at any one time, in private health care facilities that are being paid for by the State. There are situations where the service cannot be provided in a state-owned institution, it is now being done in private institutions and being paid for by the State; a very different situation. These are the persons who otherwise could not afford that. Sen. Mark said that there is inequality; I do not know what he is talking about. I do not think he knows what he is talking about.

Tertiary education—every person in the country, no matter how poor you are, now has an opportunity for free tertiary education. [*Desk thumping*] Even if you cannot pay the fees or you cannot afford to go to the school or you cannot live there, you can get state funding under the Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP) to fund your books, residence, transportation and whatever else that is necessary. It pertains not only to state institutions, but also to private institutions as well, where not all the fees are paid, but a very significant part is paid. No child is left behind. [*Desk thumping*] You do not have to have a name coming from

Goodwork Park or Shorelands and so on, to be able to afford to go to university any longer; you can come from Laventille or anywhere else. Under this administration you have the opportunity to go to university to get a degree. [*Desk thumping*]

When you look at what is happening in terms of the number of jobs we have created over the past six years, you can see the effect of what that has done to the entire economy. Look at the number of vehicles on the road. Who is buying them? The persons who otherwise could not have afforded a car. The roads are getting clogged with an increasing number of vehicles because more people can afford them. It is plain and simple; it is not rocket science. That is a very significant yardstick that you do not have to count and measure. When you get into your car and get on the road, you see exactly what the situation is, and that is exactly as it should be. Persons who never before had an opportunity to buy a car, could now buy a car because they have a job; and they have a decent job. That is what has changed.

Sen. King said that NEDCO was not enough. It may not be the complete answer to unemployment or development, but it is a very significant part of the answer. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, NEDCO has granted about 7,700 small business loans. [*Desk thumping*] There is a problem with NEDCO, and I will tell you what it is in a minute. The 7,700 loans has generated approximately 18,000 permanent, sustainable jobs. [*Desk thumping*] That is more than one quarter of the total number that was unemployed in 2002; just NEDCO alone. The money that they have earned, they spend it on everything.

The first thing that a low income family spends money on is food; Economics 101, day one, room one. The first thing a low income family will spend money on when they have a little extra cash is food. The Government does not own any food retail outlets. So with the increased demand, the fact of the matter is that the private sector has capitalized on the significant, huge increase in demand, because these poorer lower income families now have substantial incomes. They now have two and three and four members of the family employed and their purchasing power has increased substantially. Prices will rise, and they have risen.

The Minister of Legal Affairs was chastised by Sen. Mark for not controlling prices. I want to know if it is the policy of the UNC to control prices. He should stand and say that, because the private sector would like to know whether it is the policy of the UNC to control prices. Let me tell you right away that it is not the policy of this administration to control prices. We will control prices only of the products and services delivered and produced by the State. We will try to

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influence prices in the marketplace, but we will not control them. We have come a long way from that regime and we are not in any rush to go back to it; I make that very clear. [*Crosstalk*]

He said that inflation was making people poorer. Let me put the lie to that. The lie to that is this: If you see what is happening in the business community, if you go into any downtown area, any area where there are shops, and you look at the commercial activity taking place, you tell me if people are getting poorer. The average person outside there would have two cellphones; not just one, he would have two. The other day Sen. King said that we should reduce the subsidy on gasoline. You would realize that we did that a couple years ago; we reduced it by 15 cents a litre, which worked out to about 5 per cent. That was the first time we had changed the price of gasoline in some 15 years.

There was a huge outcry; they talked about inflation and consumer spending. A taxi driver came on the television and complained about the price of gasoline and the fact that there had been an increase. He was holding in his hand a bottle of water. If anybody does the math, this water costs more than gasoline. [*Sen. Montano lifts a bottle of water*] The taxi driver was drinking the water, but complaining about the price of gasoline. They have the purchasing power; nothing is wrong with that. It puts the lie to what Sen. Mark said, because they have the purchasing power. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Mark said that he wanted proof that poverty was down to 17 per cent; it could be 17, 15, 12 or 18 per cent. The numbers are not that significant; what is important is the quality of life of every citizen of the country and that is what this Government is about. [*Desk thumping*] At the rate of unemployment today, the Government is making a concentrated effort and an even bigger effort to bring down further the level of unemployment in the country. I cannot tell you what is happening behind the scenes to make sure that every person who wants a job gets a job. That is where we are headed. [*Crosstalk*]

Do you know what else is happening? In my Ministry, the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, we are beginning to realize that all is not what we seem to think it is. The Central Statistical Office (CSO) goes out to do its research and comes back with a lot of information. The information that we are getting at the Ministry is that the information produced by the CSO with respect to unemployment is not the whole story. I do not want to say that it is not accurate; it is not the whole story.

The information we are getting is that most of the people they are interviewing—and the problem is that we do not know to what extent, but we know that it is very significant—a lot of them who say that they are unemployed are making a living, but it is an underground, unreported economy. It is not really visible, so you do not really see it; it is not measured; there are no taxes being paid. It is not measured as part of the gross domestic product (GDP), but they are there. They explained it to me. One person said to me that all you have to do is to come out of Grand Bazaar on any given night and see the number of food stalls outside; that is what they were talking about. That was the kind of activity they were talking about. All those people are unemployed in the definition of the CSO, and fair enough, but the fact of the matter is they are making a living. They can make a living because of the purchasing power of the average consumer in the country today. So things are not as bad as they might look.

Even if you look at the statistical data, it is probably better than what the numbers actually show. But you know that Sen. Mark tends to be grossly inaccurate in the things that he says. He said that we had spent \$200 billion over the six years. The Minister in the Ministry of Finance corrected him, that it was \$134 billion, and he did not want to accept it. He wanted proof. In other words, his wild nonsense somehow has to have fertile ground, but when the Minister in the Ministry of Finance got up, he could not misrepresent to the Parliament something like that. He would be in a lot of difficulty if he were to mislead this Chamber.

The Minister said that it was \$134 billion, but the Senator does not want to accept that; somehow his \$200 billion flies. As far as I understand it, the \$134 billion included the expenditure into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, because the way the Government accounts for it, everything you take out of the Consolidated Fund and do anything with, is expenditure; even if it is savings, it is expenditure. So it is only really \$125 billion. It was just arrant nonsense.

He said that the quality of life had deteriorated. I have spoken a little about that. We are spending \$7 billion a year on social support spending; he really has no real idea what is going on in the country. The gasoline subsidy works out to about \$5,000 a car per year. The subsidized housing is about \$2.5 billion a year. The conditional cash transfer for low income families, those who have less than \$400 a month to spend on food per person in the household, and are given direct cash subsidies by the State, amounts to, I think, \$500 a month. We spoke about the GATE programme and HELP. There is also the subsidized fast ferry and the air bridge, which we all enjoy.

5.30 p.m.

There are 100,000 free breakfast meals a day for children of low income families. There are 19 government-sponsored training programmes that I know of and all of them pay a stipend, so those who are not employed can go into one of these training programmes and get a stipend that is approximate to the minimum wage. What is he talking about?

Madam President, families are not dependent on a programme like this as the primary source of income. It is adding to the family income and making a huge difference; it is making the difference between really, as they say, “scrunting” or making things a little easier. Of course, people in training can come out of programmes and find a better job. The Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP), a programme that I wholeheartedly endorse, has about 6,000 persons. The wage that they earn, I think, needs to be adjusted, and I think the Government is looking at that. He said the quality of life is deteriorating; the Government has done everything possible to make life better for low income persons in society, so Sen. Mark is absolutely, 100 per cent wrong, as usual.

Then he decided to talk about PNM nepotism and that the nepotism is corruption. Madam President, Mikela Panday has a government job in the Opposition office, paid for by the State, a job for which she is not qualified, has no experience and which he does nothing about. That is my understanding and they want to talk about nepotism.

He quotes the Trinidad Pro League—

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: I think the hon. Member is imputing improper motives. [*Crosstalk*] He said that Mikela Panday, as far as he understands, is not qualified to hold the position. I would inform the hon. Minister, if he does not know, that Mikela Panday is an attorney-at-law practising before the courts of Trinidad and Tobago and she is entitled to work as an attorney wherever she gets a job.

Madam President: Maybe, Minister, that part was wrong that she is not qualified because—[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: Madam President, thank you very much. If I were wrong, I would withdraw it, but the job requires someone of 10 years experience, which she does not have. That is just out and out nepotism.

I have already dealt with some of the issues with which Sen. King dealt. The Senator asked about the source of funding. [*Crosstalk*] With your leave, Madam President, the Minister will explain that.

Madam President: Everybody on this side will get their turn. [*To Sen. Mark*] And you had yours already! [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: But you did say one or two things that I need to challenge. You said that because it is a money Bill and there is no vote on this that we can spend the money before it is approved by Parliament. That is not so. It still needs to come through here before the Government can spend it, so that is not accurate.

One of the things I took issue with is that the Senator chastised the Government for having to bring a supplementary appropriation Bill. Madam President, I have been back from my studies in Canada since 1976 and, as far as I am aware, every single year there has been a supplementary appropriation Bill. It is one of those things that happen and it is a process of a mismatch between the budgeting and the actual expenditure. It is on a cash basis.

Senators need to understand that, for one reason or another, there are always matters that come up in the process of government spending that either gives the opportunity to enhance spending or to retard it. These things are usually unforeseen and, with the best will in the world and with all the experience of the experts in the Minister of Finance, successive administrations have been unable to have a complete crystal ball. It really is nothing out of the ordinary.

As the Minister indicated, we are not, by doing this, pushing the expenditure into a deficit. There remains a substantial surplus that is being allocated to the Heritage Stabilisation Fund. [*Interruption*] You did suggest that Government spending is damaging the economy. That is the word that was used and I would have to take issue with that. Government is developing the economy.

One of the things I thought the Minister said very well was that he went back into history, into the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and talked about the development planning that had been done. Despite the problems we faced in 1984, the fact is that by 1993/1994, with all the things that this administration had put in place, when we opened the market, this economy was ready to receive what happened; not just in the government sector, but in the private sector as well. The private sector was much more efficient in the 1990s than they were in the 1980s.

In the 1980s, they could not spend their income as quickly as they would have liked and they stumbled and eventually many large businesses, including Mc Earneay Alstons, went into receivership. That was one of the premier companies in the country. By the 1990s, all of the companies had trimmed out; they had invested in management and in systems and got themselves ready to receive the next oil boom, if you want to call it that. That is exactly what happened. The economy was ready to receive it and this economy has responded. We are not damaging the economy; we are developing it.

It is the role of the Governor of the Central Bank to monitor and manage the currency in the country. That is a role of the Central Bank. If liquidity is too high, they will sop it up; if it is too low, they will inject. The Government must not do that. The Government relies on its banker to do precisely that.

We have set up the systems; we have engaged the private sector sufficiently. As you know, Madam President, the Government has formed a number of what we term private sector special purpose companies to execute many Government programmes. We did it that way because those companies are staffed exclusively by persons from the private sector who are willing to give their time to the development of the country. These are the guys who know how to get it done efficiently. They are doing precisely that.

It is not the Ministry doing this or the Ministry doing that anymore. It is these entities, under the auspices of the Ministry, which are executing all the projects all over. There are well over 1,000 persons from the private sector in these state-owned companies. If we did not have those things working, we could not do what we are now doing. We can do it because we have engaged the efficiency and the energy of the private sector. That is what we have done that is significantly different and they are benefiting in all kinds of ways from the financial activity of the Government. We are not damaging their businesses at all. Their businesses are going from strength to strength. They themselves have to invest in their own businesses in all kinds of ways, bringing in all kinds of expertise from all over the world.

Last year, the Government approved 4,700 work permits. They did not come into the government sector; they went to the private sector. Of that, only about 400 or so were Chinese; and, of that, only about two-thirds were in the construction sector. Believe it or not! The rest went into other parts, in the private sector. Just to put things into perspective.

Madam President, we spoke a little about the National Entrepreneurial Development Company (NEDCO) and Business Development Company (BDC). Sen. King said that we needed something post-tertiary education but did not really articulate what would be necessary. NEDCO and BDC are not the only initiatives of the Government. The Senator went on to say that we need to have something beyond the energy sector. The words were not actually used, but the inference was that when the oil and gas run out what are we going to do?

It is very simple. We have developed the national economy to the extent we can, but the one thing we continue to invest in is people. It is the most logical thing. It is education, because it is people who build your economy. Your economy does not exist in isolation; it is people who build your country and if the oil and gas is ever gone or if it is less of a contribution to the coffers than it is now, we will have our people to develop. Furthermore, we will have created and engendered the opportunity for those people to find a place in the national economy and we are doing that through entities like NEDCO and BDC. You cannot just have an education, you have to have the opportunities as well and we are doing precisely that.

Madam President, I was surprised at one other thing. Sen. King was asking how we use our oil reserves. I thought everybody knew what we were doing with the oil. I thought everybody knew what we were doing with natural gas also. I venture that the question has been answered and I think everybody understands. I am not going to stand here and articulate the oil and gas policy.

Sen. King did say we do not need an aluminium smelter. Whether it is an aluminium smelter or whatever, I do not think this administration has any particular preference as to what kinds of industry comes here, as long as it is reasonably safe and does not harm the people and the environment. As it stands now, the policy is that nobody can put a new plant here unless there are downstream activities. It is not that a primary plant comes in and exports everything. There must be attached to it downstream industries. We have done enough of that now and the policy is now no more. If you put down a plant, you have to come with downstream activities or you cannot come.

That is the issue that is now facing our core. There may be some resistance to doing that because originally when they came here it was to do the one thing—do the smelting and take the material out. That is not on the cards anymore. The policy is that you can come here, but it has to be downstream. It must not just be the primary product. I think that is well known.

Finance (Supplementary) Bill
[SEN. THE HON. D. MONTANO]

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

There are other things, too. There is, at least on the drawing board, a strategy for trying to process Venezuelan gas here in Trinidad. We have the expertise here and we are close to the fields and it makes a tremendous amount of economic sense for the Venezuelans to process gas here. The suggestion also has been made that we partner with them to put down a new refinery in Trinidad. Well, you cannot say we do not know what we are doing or nobody knows what is happening. This has been clearly articulated before.

So, Madam President, I think the Government has done very well. If one were to disaggregate the tax revenues and look at what is happening and at the amount of corporate income tax that is being paid every single year, we see that despite the fact that we have dropped the rate of tax, the tax revenue goes up. The amount of tax collected from individuals goes up every year even though we give these huge tax breaks—now it is up to \$5,000—because more persons are employed. The collection of tax continues to rise. The only explanation is that more people are working. There are more companies doing better than they ever did. Every year the increase in profits is substantial.

I venture to suggest that the companies not listed on the Stock Exchange are actually growing faster than those listed on the Stock Exchange. I can say that with a measure of certainty because I still have an interest in an accounting firm and I do see some of the results. The growth in the hands of the private sector is phenomenal because of consumer spending, which comes largely from discretionary income. Are we doing badly or are we doing well? I rest my case.

Thank you very much.

Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh: Madam President, I begin my contribution on this Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill by answering the question that Sen. Montano just raised. Are we doing badly or are we doing well?

The citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are extremely fed up at this time and, wherever you walk throughout Trinidad and Tobago, they are telling you that they are fed up because this Government has been unable to perform. There has been massive economic mismanagement. There has been widespread corruption, nepotism and cronyism. There have been weaknesses in terms of the inability to implement anything. The infrastructures have fallen; there is no improvement in the health sector; none in education and none in utilities.

So, Madam President, when the hon. Minister almost ends his contribution by asking if we are doing well, this is what the people of Trinidad and Tobago tell us on a daily basis and this is what has been happening over the last five and a half

years—this country has had the worse economic mismanagement ever in the history of Trinidad and Tobago.

They have spent nearly \$200 billion. [*Interruption*] Whether it is \$140 billion or \$150 billion—in Trinidad and Tobago, we used to talk about millions of dollars, now this Government has billions of dollars to spend. Now, what is \$150 billion is almost one-sixth of \$1 trillion. Take \$150 billion into 1000, it is almost one-sixth of \$1 trillion that this Government has had to spend over the last five and a half years and they have absolutely nothing to show. They can show two pre-schools, no health centres, no interchange they were supposed to build, no bridges, no hospitals, no police stations, so how can they pat themselves on the back and say they have done something right? It has been an abysmal failure by their administration. They ought to recognize that and if they sit there and try to pat themselves on the back and feel they have done something, they know within their hearts that they have failed the country and they should demit office as fast as possible.

Every year the Government comes asking for more money in an Appropriation Bill. Look at their track record. In 2003, the Government increased expenditure by \$1.7 billion. In 2004, they asked for \$2.7 billion more; in 2005, \$4.7 billion; in 2006, \$7.2 billion and now, 2007, \$3.1 billion. This was nearly \$19.5 billion. Is this the type of competent administration that really looks scientifically in terms of accounting procedures from the Ministry of Finance? I have a lot of respect for hon. Conrad Enill, whom I like very much, but I am afraid he has a lot of work to do.

There are supposed to be three Ministers in the Ministry of Finance. He does not seem to get any help whatsoever and things are going haywire.

Sen. Enill: Madam President, he was going well until he decided to get involved in the personal business of the Prime Minister. The fact is that it has nothing to do with the Minister. It has more to do with the system. The system by which we operate, for any government, is the same. If we move out tomorrow morning and he comes into office, he will find the same technocrats and the same system. The system is the function of what we have to do. I just want to clarify that.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: If it is the system, they ought to change it. They have had five and a half to six years and if the system has not been working well, they had an opportunity to change it. Unfortunately, they did not, so they have to take the blows for it.

They are asking for \$3.1 billion and on that there is an expenditure of \$500 million for development programmes. We know, in the budget debate of 2006, in terms of expenditure, that \$1.5 billion was put in there for the development programme and \$2.3 billion for the Infrastructure Development Fund, that is \$3.8 billion. Can the Government tell us how they have spent that \$3.8 billion on the development programme expenditure and the Infrastructure Development Fund? But you have the audacity to tell us—although this is a Finance Bill and we have nothing to vote on and you have just brought it as a matter of formality—that you want \$500 million more for the development programme.

How have you spent that \$3.8 billion? Why are you asking for more? Where is that going? You have \$3.8 billion under the development programme and Infrastructure Development Fund and you cannot explain what you have done with the money but you are asking for \$500 million more.

Madam President, they talk about the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and they are boasting that it will go from \$8 billion to \$10 billion. Every year, when we ask how they calculate how much money is received beyond the price of oil that was put by the Government on the budget debate, we get all sorts of conflicting figures of how the calculation is taken to put into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

This year, the budget was predicated on US \$45 per barrel of oil. The average price of oil this year was about US \$70. Do you know what they said? That the average price of oil this year was US \$55 and they were only able to get this amount of money to put in the Heritage Stabilisation Fund. The country is bereft of the information and knowledge on how you calculate this money beyond the US \$45 that was predicated to be the price of a barrel of oil, when they are receiving US \$70 generally throughout the year. So they have, in excess, on average over the last year, almost \$25 per barrel of oil, give or take another US \$5. How do you determine what you put into that Heritage and Stabilisation Fund?

This country is left with unanswered questions from day to day and from year to year. It is airy-fairy in terms of the calculation and we are not comfortable with the calculation of the money that is being put into the Fund. Show us proof of the real average price of oil per year. They should say: For these three months, this was the average price therefore that is the amount of money we could have put into the Fund. [*Interruption*]

When he is winding up, Madam President. [*Interruption*] We have time for that. When you borrow \$3.1 billion from the Consolidated Fund and put it in the Stabilisation Fund, you are borrowing money to put into a Heritage and

Stabilisation Fund? So you are borrowing \$3.1 billion and you say you are putting \$1.7 billion of that into the Stabilisation Fund? What has happened to your revenue? Why are you not taking money from the revenue that you have derived because of the excess in the price of oil and put that money into the Stabilisation Fund? Why do you have to borrow \$3.1 million and use part of that money to put into the Fund? He has a lot of explaining to do and he will have the opportunity to do it, Madam President.

The other thing is that they want to transfer to statutory boards and similar bodies. When I raised a question in the Senate on the Auditor General's statement of close to \$18 billion being financed by the State—in fact, they have signed that these state companies can borrow to the tune of \$18 billion—the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance said that it was closer to \$13 million and she questioned the fact that we were asking about these state companies borrowing money and Government's standing guarantee for it. Government has stood guarantee for these statutory authorities and state boards to the tune of \$13 million.

The hon. Minister said, at that time, that these state companies were making profits and doing well; that NP was making \$600 million profit. Today, we come here and have to give \$1 billion in subsidy to NP, but they are making a profit of \$600 million. Where is the accounting in all of that? We are not little children. At least we know some basic accounting. How could NP be making a profit of \$600 million when we are being asked to subsidize NP?

Sen. Sahadeo: Madam President, he is misleading the Senate.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, they have time to answer. I have enough to say.

Madam President: Just now. There seems to be the growing tendency in this Senate to refuse sometimes to give way to somebody. That is not courtesy and I am getting really concerned about that.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, I will respect your wishes.

Madam President: Thank you very much. I expect that from you.

6.00 p.m.

Sen. Sahadeo: Thank you, Madam President. Again, I think by now Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh would be fully aware that this subsidy is not dealing with NP or any inefficiency. What it really is, is the subsidy that the citizens of this country enjoy, in terms of what is the price they pay at the pump vis-à-vis the price which NP gets. And that is very clear, Madam President. Thank you, Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, you know I want to come back to a little thing that I said earlier on. My colleague just assisted me in some mathematical calculations. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, but I missed it; but he has just brought it to light to me. For 2002 to 2007 of the Auditor General's Report of 2006 is \$172 million. They could refer to it on page 78 of the Auditor General's Statement of 2006. So you would refer to that. So they have spent \$172 billion from 2002 up to this time, 2007.

Madam President, moving along the point in terms of the state boards and statutory authorities. When we have 105 state boards, statutory authorities and state corporations, Government has to sign a guarantee of almost \$13 billion or \$14 billion and we are being asked today again to allow for \$382 million to the state boards and statutory authorities, where are we going? Here we are saddled in the country with a number of state boards that are not functioning properly, not cost effective and they are not making profits, but we are propping them up because you know what they do, they hire PNM people on a daily basis and this is how PNM party groups are built throughout the country; in these 105 statutory authorities and state boards. The chairmen and all the members of board attend; an average of 10 people on a board multiplied by 100; that is 1,000 people who hold senior positions and the taxpayers in this country are asked to subsidize these state corporations to the tune of \$14 billion or \$15 billion by Government guaranteeing loans to these state corporations. It is untenable. How are we going to function as a country? If they are not doing well, divest these companies; send it to the private sector, but you are propping up state corporations and state boards and they are making huge losses, but you only want to focus on BWIA and Caroni, but I am going to come to that pretty shortly.

Let me just come to the first part of the appropriation; the Judiciary. They are asking for \$21 million for the Judiciary. I think the Judiciary has a budget somewhere—let me just see if I can find it—\$21 million; they are asking for more. They had money to spend on the Judiciary. They have not been able to build the San Fernando Magistrates' Court. They have not been able to increase the number of judges. They have not increased the number of magistrates. They have not reduced the backlog of cases in the Magistrates' Court. The Industrial Court is begging for a place. In the mornings the people have to get their act together in the Industrial Court and transfer boxes across to another area where the court is being heard. So in one area on a morning, they are gathering all the information on particular matters and then they have to carry boxes across to another court.

What have they been able to do for the Judiciary? Madam President, \$253 million allocated to the Judiciary at the end of 2006 and they are asking for \$21 million more, but what have they done? The dilapidated conditions at the Magistrates Court; all those lawyers laugh at the Government, because they cannot, even if they stand on the floor in the San Fernando court—the holding bays are filthy and the area is breaking down, and for five and a half years you cannot build the San Fernando Magistrates' Court. You cannot get an Industrial Court properly. You cannot have more judges appointed. You cannot have more magistrates appointed. You cannot reduce the backlog of cases. You cannot bring the gun court. You cannot bring the kidnapping court. You cannot bring the night court. So what are we giving you the money to spend on the Judiciary for? What do you want the money for. They have fractured the Judiciary. They have broken the Judiciary at the highest levels down the middle in terms of politics. On one half, you have a number of judges who are pro-PNM and the other half they perceive the other set of judges as being anti-PNM; that is what they have done. This Judiciary had a tremendous reputation all along. It is only this administration that has come in there and they have messed up the Judiciary; they have messed up the Magistracy, when the Chief Magistrate could be found in sync with the Attorney General and so on, where have we reached? You think anybody could get justice in this country, Madam President? You and me cannot go before the courts and get any justice in this country. From the time we reach there we know we are guilty until proven innocent. But the rule of law is that you are innocent until proven guilty. So, you want money to improve the Judiciary; you have done nothing and you have fractured the Judiciary down the middle.

Sen. Padmore: Why are you bad talking the Judiciary?

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I am not; that is a fact. You accept the fact and you could write about it. [*Crosstalk*] Dana is an angel. Dana is a solid girl; she is a solid person.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: Jealous? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: She knows the troubles that she goes through everyday in the courts, although she may act for the State on some occasions, she knows the difficulties.

Madam President, I move to the next area, the Office of the Prime Minister; they are asking—

Sen. Padmore: You still aspiring. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: If we aspiring?

Sen. Padmore: You.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: No, my brother, I would never aspire for that whatsoever. [*Laughter*] I do not want to be in politics, but because my conscience tells me—you know I love my profession—I cannot sit and be governed by people like you; I have to come out and fight for my people. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] I will not rest until I remove this Government from power and that is my whole mission in life. When that has occurred I could sit back and I could rest, my brother. [*Laughter*] You know me from a long time. He knows me from a long time, my brother. Madam President, I know him from since the 1980s, so he knows. I said to myself if I ever vote for PNM in my life I will cut off my finger. [*Laughter*] He knows that.

Sen. Yuille-Williams: You are in for a long, hard road.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You are my friend too; everyone there is my friend, but when it comes to politics and governance for the people—

Sen. Yuille-Williams: You are in for a long, hard road.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Well, I would like to receive you in St. Joseph when you come next time for the next anniversary. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*]

Madam President, the Office of the Prime Minister; he wants \$2.3 million to buy radar and other security equipment. I thought we had \$61 million equipment of spy things and I thought the Prime Minister said that he had locked down Trinidad and Tobago and he had radar in the North, West, East and the South. I wonder where that is coming from now; what he wants the money for and VMCOTT is the one that is buying the \$61 million in equipment and abort it. So why we want to give more money? For him to spy on all our telephones? It is all right, we could talk all sorts of things over the telephone and they could listen on a daily basis; it does not matter to us.

What is even more ridiculous is the question, development programme establishment of a dance orchestra. So, the Prime Minister now wants a dance orchestra for his new mansion in St. Ann's; \$145 million, then \$78 million to refurbish it, but he wants \$2.2 million to establish a dance orchestra for use in the Prime Minister's residence. This is the type of thing that they are bringing for us to approve here in Parliament. Imagine a dance orchestra for the Prime Minister's residence, but we really reach; we really reach.

Sen. Mark: What is that? What is a dance orchestra?

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, we have no difficulty about this \$30 million for the Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance to the World Bank. We understand that Caribbean governments, Caribbean islands, as small island states, we are vulnerable to hurricanes and to a lesser extent, earthquakes. If we have to take out an insurance to assist our countries within the Caribbean and to make sure that the Caribbean countries and the small island states, which are about 53 in the world and most of the Caribbean countries are small island states; that \$30 million is well spent for this Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance. We have no difficulty with that.

Now it comes to the \$100 million shortfall of GATE. A sum of \$100 million is needed to meet a shortfall in the cost of obligations to tertiary institutions under the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses.

Sen. Mark: That is Abdul, you know. Abdul went to the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago in 2000; what kind of—

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Oh yes, I heard Mr. Panday say that you went to him for a “wuk” in 2000 and you asked him to be a research assistant.

Sen. Kangaloo: Who are you talking to?

Sen. Mark: The Minister of Science, yes.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The Minister in the Ministry of Science.

Sen. Kangaloo: You are talking to Madam President.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, I will come back. Can this Government tell us how much money is spent on GATE at the moment? Which are the institutions that are benefiting from the GATE? We have absolutely no problem with thousands and thousands of students who want to get tertiary education; we applaud that and we are very happy, because we started that programme under our UNC administration of Dollar-for-Dollar. So, the GATE programme which they are continuing, but they have not given us an accounting of where the money has been spent over that period of time.

To ask us for \$100 million more, hon. Minister, which you would have probably requested for this, I think it is tantamount to an insult to us because we do not have the basic information as to where this money has been spent over a period of time. What money has been spent on GATE and why he needs this \$100 million.

Now we come to the \$556 million for BWIA. Madam President, \$556 million required to facilitate settlement of BWIA liabilities, particularly in relation to trade creditors, business partners and for capitalization of Caribbean Airlines Limited, as agreed by the Cabinet.

In 1995, 25 per cent of the shares of BWIA was sold by the present Minister of Trade and Industry and the Cabinet and his Government to Ed Acker for US \$10 million; meaning that BWIA, a 100 per cent was US \$40 million, TT \$240 million. In 1998 to 2001, BWIA continued to make a profit until 9/11; when the private shareholders came into BWIA and they bought BWIA, it was run successfully.

You know what? When they asked the Government in 2003—I want you all to listen to this carefully—for US \$18.3 million to assist BWIA to bring it to viability, they refused and one private sector investor was prepared to give US \$5 million; that is only US \$18 million that the Government refused in 2003. Today, the Government is spending over \$2 billion to bring BWIA into Caribbean Airlines, when they could have spent TT \$100 million to make BWIA a success, because it was a success until 9/11 came into being.

Subsequent to that, now all the airlines around the world, most of them, Delta, American Airlines, all of them are declaring profits now. But here it is that we have to take \$2 billion of our money and you are asking us to give BWIA \$500 and something million when in effect all they have done, is to just change the name from BWIA to Caribbean Airlines, by just putting a bird on the plane.

Madam President, if they can tell this country how they have really structurally reformed BWIA in terms of making it profitable and what they have done with BWIA substantially so that we have to spend \$2 billion of our money to just change the name from BWIA, which was 60 years old to Caribbean Airlines by putting another bird on it; you have not done anything to this country to justify that. You want to close down Caroni, but you spend \$2 billion on BWIA and we are not in favour of supporting that at all, whatsoever, because BWIA ought not to be closed down; it should have remained BWIA. [*Desk thumping*] Sixty years of good name all over the world; somebody came with a bright idea and said let us change it to Caribbean Airlines. [*Desk thumping*] You know what is worse? It is now a Caribbean entity; it is moving between countries in the Caribbean and competing with LIAT. They have lost the London route. And the London route was sold for a meagre £5 million—

Sen. Dr. Saith: Ten.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: —£5 million the Minister mentioned last time, and Branson offered US \$18 million at one time; it was refused. Charles Branson had offered \$18 million for those spots. So now we do not even have a spot in London and you are telling us that this airline would do something for Trinidad and Tobago. You cannot even land in London anymore; you have given up the slot. So you land at Gatwick, who wants to fly with BWIA now, because they cannot go straight to London.

BWIA was supposed to be the airline for the hub, for transportation when you all said that you were going to get Trinidad and Tobago to be the centre of FTAA; BWIA was supposed to be the airline that is moving people from Miami, Toronto, London, all over the world, down to South America and now we have lost all of that; where is BWIA as a centre for that? BWIA is no more; Caribbean Airlines is inward looking in the Caribbean. It is a shame and disgrace that this Government is asking us to prop up now Caribbean Airlines for \$2 billion. How many people have lost their jobs? 2.3 billion. Hundreds of people have lost their jobs with BWIA and all the VSEP that they say they are supposed to have and they are supposed to have shares in BWIA; they have lost all of that as well and they employed only a set of gay—I take that back. All they have done is employed a set of people that are PNM hacks and party stooges and they have thrown out anybody who does not look like PNM. The staff went down from 2,000 to 1,200. When we asked the question in Parliament the other day, the Minister could not explain what happened to the other 800 people.

Sen. Montano: Madam President, what does the PNM look like?

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You just think about what they look like.

Sen. Montano: What exactly does the PNM look like?

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Are you standing on a point of order?

Madam President: Maybe they look like you, Senator. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Montano: Is he making a racial slur?

Sen. Mark: They look like you; PNM look like you, boy. I like that one. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Montano: He has to answer that.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We do not have to answer anything, you know what they look like. They look like you, Danny.

Sen. Montano: Is he suggesting that they only hire persons of European origin? Is that what he is saying?

Madam President: Is that what you are saying, Senator.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, we leave that for him to answer. That is an open ended statement, it is not a rhetorical statement that I made.

Sen. Montano: It is a racial statement.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Not at all; we do not preach that at all on this side. We know PNM stooges.

Hon. Senator: What do they look like?

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You see them all over the country; "Ah born a PNM, ah die a PNM." You know that. You know that. [*Crosstalk*] Let us move on, I would not engage in bantering across the—

Let us come to the Ministry of National Security.

Sen. Mark: "Abdul, you was looking for a wuk in 2000 as a researcher."

Sen. Abdul-Hamid: I rather be in jail.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: They are asking for \$557 million to be given to the Ministry of National Security. The Ministry of National Security got \$2.65 billion in 2006; they got \$2.187 billion in 2005 and they got \$1.87 billion in 2004. Just for the last three years they have got about \$8 billion and here it is they are coming again asking for half a billion. Now part of what they are asking is for the Police Division to meet outstanding payments to several car rental firms for the use of unmarked vehicles in undercover surveillance activities.

What is happening in this country? We see sometimes a black vehicle because they follow us all over the place; they look at us; we do not care; we are not doing anything wrong; they could follow us anytime. They follow you with a black vehicle and you see the little thing on the roof of the vehicle. Then all of a sudden you see a blue light come on at the side and there are hundreds of vehicles around like that; sure the police got to do their work. But you know what happened, the kidnappers began to do that and their cars were almost similar to what were being used. So all these people, all these cars, we do not know which car rental firms they have come from; we do not know whether they got these vehicles from their party friends; who they are renting from; where the rentals are coming from.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, I was enjoying the story. I beg to move that the Senate continue to sit until the completion of the debate on this Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION) BILL

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, we are asking which party supporters and which party friends and so on they are renting these vehicles from and who are really in cohorts with this present administration in terms of providing these vehicles. We understand that Neal & Massy is one of the groups of companies and Southern Sales is another group of companies and we know Southern Sales is a strong supporter of the PNM Government; Neal & Massy as well. So, you scratch my back, I scratch your back. We are being asked to agree to provide money for several car rental firms.

The next one is \$5.5 million for payment of officers on contract. Where are these officers? Who are these officers? Every day we hear when we talk with the Police Service Commission: We do not know who are these people employed. So who are these contract people working within the police service and the Ministry of National Security? Are they spies? Are they intelligence people on contract? What are we paying for? People to spy on us, but not deal with the crime situation? We do not know whether this money is going to be paid for these officers who have come down from the so-called Scotland Yard; where is that? And you know they come so sketchy; all the information is produced in one line and we must just accept that. No explanation whatsoever as far as that is concerned.

Another \$1.2 million for employment of civilian contract staff for the model stations. The first time the other day we heard about model stations and people on contract; the Minister of National Security spoke about that. We do not know where these contract officers and what are they, but we have to approve it. What is even more significant, 1,500 officers trained in Crime Scene Investigations (CSI) by the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT) and another 500. Because of the lack of funding under police, SAUTT utilized its fund for that training.

SAUTT and the Anti-Corruption Bureau are not legally constituted as yet. They say they report to the Commissioner of Police, but they are really reporting to the Attorney General. What the Attorney General has to do with the Anti-Crime Unit

Finance (Supplementary) Bill
[SEN. DR. GOPEESINGH]

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

and Special Anti-Corruption Bureau? But here it is 1,500 officers are being trained; all he uses them for is his own personal vendetta of political victimization and political persecution, but I am going to come to another part of that pretty shortly.

Because the police did not have the money, not in the Police Bill, the SAUTT spent the money and asking us now to approve it later on; totally illegal. The whole constitution of the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago and the Anti-Corruption Bureau are illegal entities. They do not report to the Police Commissioner, they report to the Attorney General and it is wrong. They said long time now that they would bring legislation into Parliament to deal with that; to legalize it and they have not done it, but we have to approve money, expenditure for the Special Anti-Crime Unit; the party boys; the party police; political police.

If the Commissioner of Police wants to know what is a political police, it is easy on the website and I could give him a whole erudition. So when he wants to meet with me I will meet with him and tell him about the man who has \$300,000 with marked money and he promoted him again. He is afraid to come to me to talk to me, because he knows the information is right there and it is on the newspapers; three articles. We have to know why one of the members of the Nath family who gave testimony on that matter in the kidnapping; why is he in police custody? Because of the same person who has the \$300,000; they found the money. But he is afraid to come forward, he only bravado and so on and somebody must have told him, well call on Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh to come forward with the information. I have the information; let me tell him. If he wants to question what I am saying in Parliament now; I have the information; let him come and speak to me about it. He wants to play man. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

I have done nothing wrong and nobody could lock me up for anything. [*Interruption*] Yes, I am brave; I know that I am a good citizen. I know that I am a clean citizen.

So, they want to replenish the funds spent by the SAUTT on behalf of the police and \$15 million is needed for this. And you know how many officers they are training? Fifteen hundred. So it is costing \$1,000 to train an officer. So Special Anti-Crime Unit training people; I thought the Special Anti-Crime Unit was supposed to deal with crime, not to deal with training. But they are training people on behalf of the police and they want us to approve \$15 million.

Then the next one is the Strategic Intelligence Agency, \$24 million for that.

Sen. Abdul-Hamid: You cannot find him in the University.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You are a terrorist; I am a university lecturer, you are a terrorist. Madam President, tell him do not provoke because I will tell him how he sleep in drain. [*Laughter*]

Madam President: No! Not at all Senator, no! Everybody has their crosstalk but you do not look at another Member of this Senate and a Minister in the Government and tell him that he is a terrorist. Take it back!

Sen. Abdul-Hamid: Say that outside.

Madam President: Take it back, Senator, withdraw it.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, Madam President, on what? He is a terrorist?

Madam President: Yes.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Okay, but was he involved in the coup?

Madam President: Senator, I am not asking that question. I am telling you to withdraw that statement.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Okay, Madam President. I thought you wanted me to withdraw that he is not a terrorist but he was involved in the coup; I would say that he was involved in the coup.

Madam President: Senator! Senator, I do not have that documentation here and I have no proof and I will not have you calling any Senator, whether it is on this side or that side, a terrorist. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I take your pleadings and I always bow to you, Madam President and I withdraw that. [*Laughter*]

I was speaking about the Strategic Intelligence Agency and the Inter-Agency Task Force. What are they doing? What is the Strategic Intelligence Agency doing? Are they finding out about political opponents? They are trying to find out so for election they would come up with all sort of advertisements and so on and say this is what the Strategic Intelligence Agency is. You think that I want to allow my hard taxpaying dollars to go for a Strategic Intelligence Agency; to pay people who want to spy on me; \$24 million and spy on all opponents to the People's National Movement. No, Madam President, Strategic Intelligence Agency—I think you are a little jealous, Joan.

The Witness Protection Programme—I think people are becoming jealous about girls, you know.

Madam President: About what?

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: About girls; it is all right, Madam President. Witness Protection Programme; \$10 million they want for a Witness Protection Programme. Do they have a Witness Protection Programme? We do not know about a Witness Protection Programme. You heard about Canon Clarke's brother about to give evidence in a case the next day and he was gunned down by the evening. Where is the Witness Protection Programme for that? So we are approving \$10 million for a Witness Protection Programme. What is even worse, it is right here in the document.

Madam President, you remember when it came to Cricket World Cup discussions and debate and they brought in all these things about asking us to support the legislation for the Cricket World Cup and to bring in security forces and so on from outside and we had the Visiting Police Forces Bill and Visiting Security Forces Bill and these people came from abroad and some of our police security officers were through. So it was the Cricket World Cup; you know what it is now Trinidad has to fork out for that? \$25.3 million for that; for security, for people to come from abroad to help us here in Trinidad.

6.30 p.m.

Why are we paying for security officers coming from abroad to come and help us in Trinidad, \$25 million? We should not have to pay for that. And what did they do for the Cricket World Cup? We had no terrorist business in the Caribbean over the Cricket World Cup. Man, I think you all are just making fun with people's money. We have to pay for visiting security forces that come from abroad and we have to pay \$25 million for that. And listen to what the Ministry of National Security wants us to pay for: \$3.1 million is required to meet the promotional and other cost of conducting seven national consultations on crime during the period April 18 to May 18.

Madam President, everyone in this country knew that was a PNM consultation. Why should the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago have to fork out \$3.1 million to pay for a PNM consultation on crime? UNC had a consultation; we had to pay for it. Why should the State and the people's money have to pay \$3.1 million for a consultation in one month, for seven consultations? When people say that money of the State is being used as a PNM slush fund, this is a typical example of money of the State being used by the PNM at their own whims and fancies. Totally wrong.

Fourteen million dollars to buy new vehicles again. We thought that VMCOTT was supposed to be repairing vehicles, VMCOTT was supposed to be the company that was supposed to be repairing the vehicles on a daily basis, but here it is now they allow the vehicles to dilapidate; we are using VMCOTT to buy spy equipment, \$61 million, VMCOTT is not doing its work, not repairing the vehicles and now you have to fork out \$48 million to buy new vehicles again. Nothing is wrong, we need vehicles in Trinidad and Tobago, but oh God, maintain the vehicles that you have! You do not allow them to just dilapidate and go into ruin just like that and we have to shed \$48 million on that.

Madam President: Senator, would you give way? Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, I want to come to the health sector now in terms of what they are asking us for money to support. This is one of the most damning reports ever in the annals of Trinidad and Tobago on any commission of enquiry into any organization: "*Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Operation and Delivery of Public Health Care Services in Trinidad and Tobago, Volume One*".

Madam President, this report indicates a number of serious concerns and I will read from it some of the areas of special concerns in the public health service; the people of Trinidad must be told:

"In the course of its investigations, the Commission came across several circumstances that, in its view, warranted special attention by the government. In some cases, there is evidence of corruption or other malfeasance; in others the status quo simply cannot continue without incurring serious risks to the health of patients. These are as follows:

- (i) There should be an investigation into cases of 'Phantom' companies operating in the public health sector. Our enquiries have disclosed that nine companies were paid for services in the health sector without being registered with the Registrar of Companies or the Board of Inland Revenue or the VAT Administration Centre.
- (ii) Conduct a forensic audit of the five Regional Health Authorities. The audit should be conducted by an independent external auditor in

conjunction with the Auditor General's Department, since the Commission has found several discrepancies and irregularities in the operations of the RHAs.

- (iii) Investigate allegations of corruption, nepotism and mismanagement in the Engineering and the Dental Departments of the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex...
- (iv) An investigation should be launched into the Procurement and Contract Management Services of the National Insurance Property Development Company (NIPDEC) since many complaints were received about NIPDEC's inability to deliver...
- (v) The existing RHA Boards should be reviewed and new Boards should be appointed..."

And, Madam President, it goes on, pages upon pages of things that are wrong in the health sector and recommendations made for improvement, and today this PNM administration is saying that the health sector is running well, and you would remember over a period of time 23 babies died at Mount Hope from enterobacter, the Minister said that heads will roll. No head rolled with that, but he fired two poor nurses the other day because somebody was ordered to put a hot water bottle under the mattress when the incubator was not heating. They had roaches and rodents at San Fernando Hospital kitchen. You see today people lying on the floor at the hospital in south. I just want to, if you did not see it for the morning, Madam President—

Madam President: I saw it.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yeah, right, okay; no need for me to show it to you again. People lying on the floor of the hospital, people falling through the floor of the San Fernando Hospital laboratory, \$109 million went missing from the North West Regional Health Authority; the Scarborough Hospital overrun, over \$300 million in corruption; fire at St. Ann's Hospital; toddlers death at Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex; enterobacter, pseudomonas and staphylococcus in four of the areas in the neonatal unit in Tobago. And, Madam President, it goes on and on. And you know what? Promises after promises by this administration from year to year and nothing has been done as far as these promises are concerned.

They promised a new oncology unit and six years later they are now talking about constructing the cancer centre at Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. They promised a hospital in Point Fortin in 2002, six years later, that Point Fortin Hospital has not started. They promised four district health facilities and nothing

has started. We are not sure whether they have completed one health centre. They promised a burns unit at San Fernando Hospital, that has not been done. They promised to bring all employees under one authority, for six years they have not done it. They promised to bring a national health insurance system, nothing has been done about it, and so on, and the list can go on and on adding for items. Promises after promises, the most promising Government ever in Trinidad and Tobago, but unable to deliver anything whatsoever.

This administration has fallen woefully short as far as the health sector is concerned, and I am sure you will agree with me being a medical practitioner of distinction in your work as a medical practitioner. What happens around us on a daily basis is one big stink and this newspaper article really depicts it. One big stink throughout the country as far as the health sector. So you all have no moral authority to talk about anything as far as the health sector is concerned. You all have fallen woefully short in the education system, you have built only two Early Childhood Care and Education Centres, you have not built a primary school nor have you built any secondary school, so I do not know where you all are going in terms of asking for more money. To do what?

It leaves for me to answer one important area here and that is something raised by Sen. Montano. I want to put on record that Mikela Panday is legally registered under the Legal Professions Act to practise in Trinidad and Tobago. Her Bar Number is PAN 2006041 and she has had wide experience at a number of well-established legal firms in the United Kingdom, so I leave that to rest.

Sen. Mark: With 10 years—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. Senator: You must go to work.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, the Ministry of the Attorney General, he wants \$4.9 million—

Hon. Senator: You go to work once per week.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I am a university associate professor, my brother. Madam President, you could tell him to stop heckling?

Madam President: Talk to me and forget both of them.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, I do not bother with him because I said that already. Do not worry with him.

Hon. Senator: You see, he does not work.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: My brother, I am a distinguished medical practitioner; I got the Chaconia Gold Medal for my work in community service and medicine in Trinidad and Tobago in 1999. [*Desk thumping*] You will live through your lifetime and you would not even dream to have that.

Madam President: Minister, please and Senator finish your contribution the way—

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, the Attorney General is asking for \$1.9 million for the cost of legal counsels and technical advisers, who are to be retained to represent the State in proceedings before the courts. How can we, as an Opposition, the United National Congress, support the Attorney General, in asking for \$1.9 million? When we know that the Attorney General has been in a pursuit for political prosecution and political harassment against anyone who is opposing the People's National Movement, and he has spent \$3 million plus—

Hon. Senator: You cannot say that. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Montano: He is out of order. He is clearly out of order.

Madam President: Definitely! Definitely, Senator, that is imputing improper motives to the Attorney General. Please, do not go that way! You have a few minutes left, please finish your contribution.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, we want to ask, the Attorney General is on a quest to prosecute anyone, and I do not need to say it, the newspapers have shown that there are many meetings between the Attorney General and the Chief Magistrate and so on, we would not need to go there now.

Madam President: I think you better not.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, we would not go there now. But, Madam President, we want to ask the Attorney General why has the Director—

Sen. Dumas: Madam President—

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Is he on a point of order?

Madam President: Is it a point of order?

Sen. Dumas: Yes, Madam President. The Senator has made a statement, you suggested to him that it is out of order; it is imputing improper motives to the Attorney General.

Madam President: Yes.

Sen. Dumas: He goes on to explain and explain what he is not going to say or what he is going to say. Madam President, I have to ask that he withdraws the statement.

Madam President: Yes, I should have asked, and yes, you need to withdraw that statement.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: What is the statement?

Madam President: That the Attorney General—what was it again?—was prosecuting PNM—

Sen. Dumas: Non-PNM.

Madam President:—or something like that, whatever. Whatever statement you made about the Attorney General prior to this, please withdraw.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Whatever was said then I will withdraw that. But we know the relationship of the Attorney General with the Chief Magistrate. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam President: Please!

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I am not imputing, I say we know the relationship.

Madam President: Of what?

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The Attorney General.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: That was public knowledge.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It was public knowledge in the newspaper when it was reported that he was found together with the Director of Public Prosecutions at the Chief Justice's home. Justice Satnarine Sharma, that is widely—

Sen. Dumas: We do not know such thing. We do not know such thing. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Well, you did not read the newspaper.

Sen. Dumas: You do not know such thing.

Madam President: All right, please! Senator, unlike you and many in this Senate, I do not go by what the newspaper says, all right. At all! [*Interruption*] So do not come here and tell me that I know what the newspaper said. I do not know! And I do not want to know what the newspaper says, and I do not have any proof of that. I will not have that kind of accusation being made here!

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, I read the newspaper, I am sorry if other people do not read the newspaper. What I am quoting from has been shown on the newspaper and the whole of Trinidad and Tobago knows about it. So, I will rest that there. But we want to ask the Attorney General why the Director of Public Prosecutions has written him three letters, not to interfere with the prosecutorial arm of the State and only to look at the legal aspects and not to interfere with prosecutions? The Director of Public Prosecutions—we know for a fact that the Director of Public Prosecutions has written him three letters—

Madam President: That has nothing to do with the Bill before us!

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, but he is asking for money to pay lawyers and attorneys for prosecution, and that is not his role! His role is not for prosecution; it is the Director of Public Prosecutions' role to prosecute. It is not the Attorney General's role, and on three occasions the Director of Public Prosecutions—

Sen. Montano: Madam President, it is the Attorney General's role to source the funding for those agencies.

Hon. Senator: Exactly!

Sen. Montano: That is his role! He is doing what he is supposed to do, and he has to withdraw that statement.

Madam President: All right, yes. Senator, these State agencies fall under the authority of the Office of the Attorney General. He is the person, the Minister in a way, that is in charge of these organizations, therefore he has to get the money for them. I do not know if you understand that. So please, do not—the way you are putting it, you are putting it as though the Attorney General is asking for it for his own personal use, and please that is not right, so you need to take that back.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, I am not saying the Attorney General is asking for money for himself.

Madam President: That is not what I am saying!

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: What he is asking is, for money to pay attorneys for prosecution, and we know that he is not supposed to be dealing directly with prosecution. The Director of Public Prosecutions deals with—

Sen. Montano: Madam President, where is he going with that?

Madam President: All right!

Sen. Montano: He is imputing improper motives. The Attorney General is doing his job.

Madam President: All right! [*Crosstalk*] I explained that, Senator, and you have gone back there. You have gone back there! You are imputing improper motives to the Office of the Attorney General. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: He is the conduit for the funding to do this. Right, okay. [*Crosstalk*]

So, Madam President, he has a lot to answer why the DPP has written him three letters asking him not to interfere with the prosecution of any person in Trinidad—

Madam President: You have three minutes, “eh”.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, I want to speak on the Ministry of Works and Transport. They are asking for \$366 million, but the Ministry of Works and Transport, we saw recently where a family at Aranguez was pulled out of their home at midnight, in the night, and the residents of those homes—

Sen. Kangaloo: You do not have midnight in the day.

Sen. D. T. Gopeesingh:—were women, were mishandled by police officers—

Sen. Dumas: Madam President—

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You want to stand for everything. Is it a point of order?

Madam President: Is it a point of order?

Sen. Dumas: Yes, Madam President.

Madam President: If it is a point of order, Senator, you have to sit!

Sen. Mark: What is your point of order?

Madam President: Yes, what is your point of order!

Sen. Dumas: Madam President, this Senator does not know nor does this Senate know [*Interruption*] that there was any resident in that house, and therefore he is imputing that a Minister of Government dragged residents out of a house when he has no such knowledge and evidence.

Madam President: All right, thank you. Yes, Senator, that is true, you are imputing improper motives to the Minister of Works and Transport. So, please, Senator, you have but two minutes left.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I will pass this on to my colleagues on the other side where the family has written on what transpired there that day. There were members in the house and the police force with 30 police officers—

Sen. Dumas: Madam President, that is a matter that went to court.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I am not speaking about the Minister of Works and Transport now.

Sen. Montano: Madam President, there is a press release that disputes that completely. That is just nonsense! [*Crosstalk*] What he is saying is nonsense. [*Crosstalk*]

[*Madam President pounds gavel*]

Madam President: Hey, hey, hey; what is this!

Sen. Mark: Show them what is the press release.

Madam President: Next thing I will see the two of you getting at each other across the benches!

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You say you do not believe in press release [*Inaudible*]

Madam President: No, I said—look! Senator, you have one minute. One minute; exactly. Just wind up!

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam President, the incident with that family in Aranguez was inhumane, was uncaring—

Sen. Mark: Cruel.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—it was cruel, it was brutish by a police force of 30 Gestapo-type police, with 30 police officers going to these people's home and pulling them out at 12 midnight.

Sen. Dumas: Madam President, for the information of the Senator, the court has debarred comment on this matter.

Sen. Mark: Where? Where?

Sen. Dumas: Could I?

Madam President: Senator, sit! [*Crosstalk*] Senator! Senator, I said sit! [*Madam President pounds gavel*] The court has not debarred on this particular matter as far as I know.

Sen. Dumas: They have.

Madam President: All right, so just wind up.

Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: In winding up with my last minute, I want to emphatically state that this Government has been the worst Government ever in the history [*Interruption*] of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And there is massive corruption, massive mismanagement, and as far as economic mismanagement, is the worst type of economic mismanagement that we have seen in Trinidad and Tobago.

They should do the honourable thing, and particularly the Minister of Health should resign and if he does not resign, the Prime Minister should make him resign, and the Prime Minister and this Government together should all resign and give way to the United National Congress.

Sen. Mark: “Yeah” man, “yeah” man. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Madam President, I have no doubt as the Minister of Finance opened up his presentation that the Government is very seriously concerned about health, poverty and even security, and that can be judged by the vast amount of expenditures that go in that direction. If that is the criterion I think the Government is indeed, and as far as the jurisdiction of the Minister is concerned, I think he is quite correct in my view.

I had some notes, before this thing, to this debate which I will have to put aside and reply instead to some of the comments made, because I think in the spirit of the debate that is the way we should be engaged. But having said that, Madam President, this debate has shifted at two levels; one is a strict attention to the expenditure and justification for the number of dollars spent in this or that direction, but between that discussion and exchange there are some very serious economic and planning issues that I believe the time has come for this Government to pay serious attention, apart from merely expending money.

I want to draw upon the wisdom and experience of Sen. Padmore to recall the days of William Demas when economic and social planning was a very serious premise for budget management. [*Desk thumping*] I do not see much, if any at all of that kind of planning into which the budget and the items of expenditure will be inserted. It gives me the impression thus as the needs arise day-to-day, sporadically sometimes, money of course being available, naturally finds its way in that direction. Some of the important issues which have been raised, for

example, I think, by Sen. Montano, raised a number of issues which seem to justify a revisit to social and economic planning. Otherwise we are merely doing book keeping rather than using our income to enrich our modes of governance.

Let us take the question of poverty, you have a reputed percentage of 17 per cent classified as poor, but at the same time you have about a 5 per cent unemployment rate. The difference between that 5 per cent and 17 per cent has to be enquired into. Why is there such a relatively low rate of unemployment, and relatively speaking, 17 per cent classified as poor? [*Interruption*] Well that is the point, what is the minimum level at which you classify poverty? That is what I am saying, these are qualitative issues, and while the Minister of Finance, I am quite sure does not want to be bothered with qualitative issues, this is why planning is important in order to generate the fiscal policy.

The other question is government spending. Ever since this debate started about food prices and government spending, I am not convinced that government spending in itself leads to high food prices and accompanying inflation, even though you hear talk about the overheated economy and there are more dollars for the people to spend. I think there are mitigating factors between government spending and consumer spending, such spending subjected to what I think are inflationary prices and sometimes price fixing. I think Government is obliged to spend money in certain ways, especially if it brings greater comfort and convenience to public servants and in the particular case of erecting offices for that purpose. Why I refer to revisiting economic planning is because it seems to me and gleaned from the debate that we really have a distorted economy. It is not symmetrical. It is not rational anymore, to put it more forcefully. The economy is not rational anymore, and one evidence for that is that you have to come back here to ask for an amount of \$3.1 billion which is over 10 per cent of your initial budget, which is quite a hefty amount.

You have an underground economy, which, according to the World Bank figures run into billions of dollars floating all around the laws of supply and demand, resulting in exorbitant prices for some houses, condominiums and so on. In other words, that is a distortion of the laws of supply and demand, because the money that is available is not within any rational framework. It is almost as if the economy is being stolen from under our feet, and whilst we are grumbling, complaining and arguing about the formal economy, a lot of what is happening in terms of prices and services remain subjected to another kind of economy. I believe we have to go back and examine the picture. I think Sen. Montano made the point, which is another element that should go into revisiting social and

economic planning rather than purely accounting and bookkeeping. As you reduce the tax margin the tax revenue increases, you have to explain why and in what classification of work and so on is this additional tax revenue coming, even when you reduce the marginal rate. So all these should have been put now into a set of variables as you would, to come up with a more meaningful premise for continued budgeting.

This is a big story, and indeed, it has to be a big story because I am trying to premise budgeting by a more reliable social and economic framework, which I do not think we have. For example the reliance on the trickle down effect that if there is money spending, public expenditure, it will trickle down or if you give tax concessions to the business sector the savings there will redound to cheaper prices. Those things are not working. We have the opposite to what rational economic expectations would tell us, so I do not think we should, with due respect to the Ministers and the Government, keep on continuing in this way by just putting so many millions here and taking away so many millions there. We need a more appropriate conceptual framework and that is why I was tempted to rely on Sen. Padmore's wisdom and experience having been in government at the time when with the input of William Demas and a few others, social and economic planning was a premise for what we are doing here today.

There is another element that came up in the budget, there is an increased expenditure in social programmes, you have almost \$3 billion over the years in social programmes. Meaning, that people need help; some form of welfare assistance, and you are trying to see those ordinary citizens who need some financial help from the Government. But at the same time you are telling us more and more people are happy like pappy and they are doing well, the economy is buoyant and what is the problem. Both sides of the story may be true, I have no doubt, that is why I say before we make a judgment, politically driven or otherwise we should examine the facts face up and see why this apparent imbalance. Because the Government indeed, has done a number of good things, in terms of expenditure and trying to look after those who are in need as far as possible, and that is why Sen. Conrad Enill is correct at that level. The Government has shown compassion, sometimes too much compassion because it might generate the concern that people become too lazy to work hard and earn through the realm of meritocracy, because in their view things might become so easy for them to get, but that is another issue.

The Government for example, I think, this new bus service which is now reaching into all or most areas of the country, in the rural areas, some places are

new openings for public transport, I think that is a commendable achievement and service by the Government. The expenditure now going onto roads, although some might have some concerns about the timing, but the result is that we should get better roads, because a lot of the roads in the country really need repair and I do not need to belabour the point, except to say that is a good intervention by the Government at this time. The diversification of the economy is another good intervention by the Government; the results, we know that quite well now with the use of cellphones and other technological diversification.

Training of the youth, never in the history of this country have there been so many training programmes for young people. [*Desk thumping*] I cannot remember any other time when category by category programmes are being offered, and any young person, 15-,16-or 17-year-old who is left out, I think he or she will have only one person to blame and that is himself or herself. Because I get the feeling on that realm the Government can do little more except to go in the house and drag out people, handcuff them and take them to school or to the training institution.

7.00 p.m.

It came up in the debate incidentally, but it is a very fundamental contribution, that is the Government's agreement to have parliamentary debates broadcasted live. That in my view will be a lasting legacy of this particular Government and the Opposition in this particular Parliament.

So, there are a lot of good things happening, Madam President, but you know that some of us sit and listen, they have to understand that the Government and its spokesperson will try to overstate their case and on the Opposition, they will try to understate the accomplishments of the Government. That is quite evident, it is legitimate and there are reasons for having that system which we call the Westminster system. But some of us are worried, and increasingly so in the years to come there will be a big debate, much bigger than the one that there is now over the role of the IMF and the World Bank in advising economies like ours.

Madam President, the IMF and the World Bank have misled countries like ours many times before, and not maliciously, it is mainly of the variables they use. They do more macro-planning and macro-analysis; they look at your GDP; your debt ratio; your export, import ratio; those macro indicators by themselves are not sufficient to judge or to direct the economy of a country like ours. I thought that by now we would have learnt our lessons as to how much advice from the

IMF or the World Bank or even commentaries from them that we should take seriously, because the question is not the GDP only or how it has been doubled, the question for a country like ours is a measure of inequality and services.

If you say for example, you have 17 per cent poverty which is a reduction from what it is was previously, that poverty should be seen in terms of the services afforded and received especially by people who are poor. You would therefore allow me, Madam President, to speak on behalf of those hundreds who have to come from all parts of the country and line up for a passport, and surprisingly, even for a birth certificate. Surprisingly, because I thought our distinguished Minister had that under control. Something went wrong possibly and I do not know if it is as wrong as I am making it out to be, but services, not just 17 per cent poor, what is happening to the poor people as they seek services especially from Government agencies?

You will allow me therefore, to speak again, on behalf of the hundreds who I see lining up at our Licensing Offices. I was shocked and even saddened to see about a hundred people lining up at the Wrightson Road Licensing Office one morning, like animals with a guard at the door blocking them when they are pushing mid-morning. Of course, we can argue about prosperity and the GDP and the Heritage Stabilisation Fund, but the measure of living is not how much money you have in your pocket, but the quality of service that that money can obtain. So, forgive me if I speak on behalf of all those businessmen, small and big, who have to go to Customs and come back and go back and come back again to have their goods cleared and only passing on the extra cost to already hard-pressed consumers.

I need not speak about the hospitals; it is true Government has injected vast amounts of money on hospitals. But here it is there is a dilemma with how far the Government can go in delivering medical services, when in the middle there is another mitigating factor called the medical profession. If the medical profession does not commit itself more diligently to medical services in this country, the Government could find itself in its current dilemma.

Madam President, you will forgive me as well, if I refer to your tenure when you had taken this matter very seriously. It is something I always boasted about when Madam President was Minister of Health, she was after this particular issue, getting the medical profession to live up to what is their noble calling.

So the question of government services then becomes an important one, apart from how much money is being spent here and spent there, and I echo again, the

Minister's remark, the Government is indeed concerned, but being concerned is not all when you have so many factors, many of them mitigating between Government's desire, Government's expenditure and the very poor services that the country, especially its poor citizens are now getting. This leads me to another point, that is why I said I would put aside my point about the money for each Head or that Head and get into some of these very fundamental points.

Minister after Minister, especially the Leader of Government Business here and our distinguished Minister of Finance have spoken about the public service and its capability to deliver the services which Government promises. A Minister can work very hard and a Minister can do as much as he or she wishes, if the public service aspect of public policy is not well greased and prepared to deliver those services downstream, the Government and its respective Ministers will always remain frustrated.

This is not a new story and it is disappointing to me as an observer to see why one government after another never attended to this issue by reforming the public service and the accompanying service commissions [*Desk thumping*] to deal with this problem, this serious challenge. We hear complaint after complaint from regime after regime, the time has come, as you have tried to do with the Police Service Commission, to take the bull by its horns, otherwise you would always, as Ministers of Government share the brunt of the public criticism because they will tell you the buck stops there in the Westminster system.

It is therefore your duty, through you, Madam President, quite respectfully to let the Government use whatever mechanisms are available to get these public agencies, especially those responsible for delivering public services, some of which I have just mentioned, to buckle up and be accountable and Government and Ministers must not feel that when accountability is demanded from a public agency, be it the police, prisons, hospitals, customs, immigration, that is an attack on the Government. That is a very false feeling to have. A Government should encourage such accountability and I speak primarily of the use of the Joint Select Committees which have the power—three of them—to enquire properly of course, into these public agencies for the delivery of services primarily, so as to make the Government look good.

It is something I have never understood. That is one way that a smart government—we speak about smart card—should encourage, strengthen that mechanism, strengthen the role of Parliament to demand accountability from those public agencies which when they fail, will lead the Government to be accused of non-delivery. So, rather than it being unfair criticism, I think the

Government now should seek a way if not through public service and constitutional reform, to maximize what is available in terms of these select committees for accountability and an improvement in public services.

I also speak on behalf of those thousands of people who bleed when they go to the grocery. One week—and I am not telling you this by guess, I push my cart too at the grocery—the milk is so and so, the next week I have never seen prices rising like lightening and I do not think we can rely solely on the excuse that these commodities are imported. I have crossed the trail on that particular point once, but when the Minister of Finance promised that his Government will help ensure or create the pathway that all can share in the wealth of the country, I have a feeling that is wishful thinking, not because his desire is not genuine or his Government will not try, but I come back to the economy in which we operate.

A lot depends on the private sector, so when the Government says it will not have any price controls, it means that they will have to depend on competition or Government intervention by supplying either the product or the service so as to alleviate public hardships arising from private sector price mark-up. Two alternatives. It is not only food prices; hardware prices have skyrocketed and it is good to know that the Government is building thousands of houses for people who cannot really afford. They are getting it quite reasonable, I must say so, the Government is heavily subsidizing these houses for these people, and that again is a commendable intervention. But those people who want to build their own houses for themselves on their own with their savings, it is a nightmare, it is like catching hell. Even though we say that the steel comes from abroad, but there are a number of products which remain hidden away so as to create an artificial scarcity and artificial mark-ups. Then you have the whole gravel and stone scenario, manipulating scarcity so as to impose higher prices on the poor citizen who wants to be self-reliant and build his own home.

I believe the time has come now for any Government spokesperson, male or female as the case might be, to let us hear something about what the Government wishes to do, opts to do in terms of hardware prices too. Some signal has to go out there because if food prices were a maze, it is a jungle out there with hardware prices. Sometimes you feel as if with these artificial mark-ups and the hiding of goods so as to create an artificial scarcity, you wonder if such people have any conscience even though we exist in a free enterprise, free market economy. I think the free market economy—and once again I draw Sen. Padmore's attention to this—is going haywire, it needs a reformulation [*Desk thumping*] and that is why apart from practical affairs of politics and budgeting, we need some intellect input

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into this whole problem or this set of dilemmas now to sit down and rethink the blueprint upon which we are basing our budgeting exercise. I have come to this conclusion after hearing several speakers on both sides, especially Sen. Montano.

Madam President, a lot of people across the world, especially Latin America and the Caribbean are getting attracted to Hugo Chavez because some of the issues pronounced upon here today are relevant to what he is trying to handle or not handle. Their attraction perhaps is based on a sense of economic romanticism, it may not be practical in the end, and we should not perhaps follow that philosophy blindly or irrationally. But I am merely trying to explain that the free market economy and what it is offering to people, especially poor people through this archaic rule of supply and demand, this is driving a lot of people away from confidence and allegiance to the free market economy.

So, we now as a Government, especially Caribbean Governments have to sit up and think, otherwise we would be leaving the people far behind us. It is acceptable or should I say vulnerable to any kind of new wave demagogy might come their way. I think we should immunize them by letting us sanitize this free enterprise system somewhat by the first step being what I said earlier on, revisiting this whole issue of what is called the free market economy.

That is not what Adam Smith intended because he used the words, "Even though wealth should have an invisible hand, behind and around it, there should be moral sentiments to guide the supply and demand." "Moral sentiments." But people forget that, they speak just about supply and demand as if it is a jungle, so if Government spends plenty money, because people have plenty money, the prices must go up automatically. That kind of social injustice, even though legitimate, is not what Adam Smith, the founder of modern economics had in mind. So the question about all sharing in the wealth as pledged by the Government will have such obstacles in its way.

Sen. Mary King alluded to the rule of the Central Bank Governor and without elaborating about what she said, let me simply say that the reappointment of the Central Bank Governor is a welcome sign in these current circumstances. [*Desk thumping*] I think he has shown a mettle of independence and a flair for understanding the trench and a discretion to know when to tighten the noose and when to liberalize the fiscal policies in his jurisdiction. Sen. King also made another point which I think the Government should look at, the question of single parent homes, especially those homes where the single mother has to also go out and work with children in those homes.

I think the Government and the respective Ministry should take a serious look because the product that comes from those homes really do not get the kind of affection and care, especially emotional care which is a critical need at that age, two, three or four years old. Without proper emotional stability and care, the rest falls down, intellectual group will come afterwards. I think that is a gap in the system and it is because of the distortion in the economy that so many single mothers, poor mothers feel compelled to go out and work, because the economy is distorted not only through finance, but some other bad habits that some people have developed, especially those wayward fathers. That is another issue.

Sen. Mark said \$200 billion, but I prefer to use the amount that the Minister until Sen. Mark could convince me otherwise—\$134 billion, is still a lot of money. Still a lot of money. But I agree with Sen. Mark in having that poverty report laid in the House. I think it will help us to understand not only the \$655 per month level, but what other measures are used. So, we can have a more informed debate and perhaps help the process along by understanding what we call poverty more clearly in this country. There are some stories I got and that is why I referred to the question of hardware prices.

Even though Government does not want—I am not saying they should—to impose price controls, time and time again they should send a message that they know what is happening unfairly to citizens and they are worried about it and issue some implicit threat that if this continues, a responsible Government cannot stand ideally by because the consumer is getting “wood.” There is an advertisement about you get hard wood, soft wood, well the consumer getting big wood, hard wood, long wood, short wood, plenty wood from these hardware dealers. That is wood.

I have a cost of living, the Index of Retail Prices put out by the Central Bank, CSO and I think—which is another issue—the Minister of Finance could look at it, but you need to put hardware prices more specifically into this list of items you have. In other words, do not let the items or the classification remain static year after year. When you see things become dynamic, I think you should be contemporary and put in an appropriate category, so people would have a more reliable understanding of how the prices are shifting or not shifting.

Madam President, to shift gears now and taking off from where Sen. Mark left off, when I looked at each report by the Auditor General, it is a very sad tale of financial mismanagement, a lack of financial accountability, theft, financial recalcitrance and a long list of misdemeanours which should really be crimes. White collar crimes. When I look at how much money was drawn and spent

without being properly accounted for, no receipts—I would not read all of them, but I would refer for example, to the Auditor General's report on the Public Accounts for the financial year 2006 and it is from there that I will relate these sad tales of financial irresponsibility.

But, are these things taken on at all and by whom. Because year after year, as I am sure all Government Members know—all of us know—these complaints are redundant, they recur year after year and in report after report by the Auditor General. I really want to make an appeal for the Government to say something or do something about these forms of financial irregularities. These are crimes; these are innocent crimes, so if you can lock up a chap for stealing two mangoes and bring him to the Magistrate's Court or send him to the YTC, in the same interest of fairness, the people who commit these transgressions on public taxpayers should have a similar fate. So you begin to see how the laws discriminate; you begin to see when you examine these things how the society is structured and why poor people hate rich people so, because they feel that there is a lot of institutionalized unfairness and injustice in the system. And there is, so when we say everybody will benefit from the wealth, it will not be because of all these disparities which create what I would call a distorted economy.

This Auditor General is really a miracle worker. She is a miracle worker—well that person is a miracle worker—because for the number of agencies that come under that jurisdiction of the Auditor General's report and they still put out their work diligently year after year, examining institution after institution, even local government ones. That is a monumental amount of work. I think the time has come for the Government, and in particular, my good friend, Sen. Dr. Saith to review the staffing and the resources of the Auditor General's Office. Make that office more robust, more resourceful because its responsibility is enormous in this day and age of transparency and accounting.

These are the documents that we use for our parliamentary discourse and the persons delivering these reports should be properly resourced and staffed. I am saying so because on my enquiry from some of the officers there, they complain bitterly about the lack of staff, given the fact which all of us know that there is a grave rapid increase in the number of agencies they have to monitor, regional health corporations, a number of additional agencies piling one on top of the other, whereas relatively speaking, the staffing and the resources remain constant. Are we serious about accountability? If we are, I think that is a direction that the Government should lend itself to very quickly and judiciously.

Speaking about judiciously, I see that the Judiciary is getting \$21 million, all I can say is that I would sometimes wonder what is the Judiciary doing with the money that it gets. I also do not believe and I say so after serious consideration of management procedures, performance audit and so on, that just throwing down magistrates and more judges into the pot will not necessarily serve our case backlog. There are too many other variables involved and if I go to announce them I believe I will take a long time. But that too is another issue that those responsible should examine before they start delivering more and more of the same because the result over the years has been the same.

If you want to change the paradigm, the other things that need to be looked at apart from quickly putting more and more magistrates and judges, if they have to be put in there, must be certain other changes that would accompany such addition because I dare to ask. I had a question on the Order Paper, this is going for two years now, I have remained quiet because I know it is not the Attorney General's direct responsibility, but I have remained silent till my distinguished friend who always asks me, "What are you doing about this?" I said, "One of these days I will raise it". But since I see the Judiciary is getting \$21 million, I wish they could put a few hundred of that in preparing the answer to pass to the Attorney General to give the Parliament and the country the information that is so vital for the policy of bail and a fair trial.

This is no monkey business question, this is a serious question and I ask it not in my own behalf and not merely because \$21 million are given to them in addition to what they have. But each question here, I am surprised that they do not have the answer to each question to help them in their own decisions. So I am asking for example, of those refused bail in the Magistrates' Court, how many on appeal have had such bail subsequently granted in the High Court? If a judge or a magistrate does not have this kind of information, well then he is merely shooting in the dark and he is making decisions on hunches and the power of the attorney at the time.

So the rationality is not there or to put it in another way, the evidence driven decision-making that a judicial officer should have is woefully absent. There are questions here: While out on bail, what types of crimes have they been charged for? Are they repeaters? Is the bail system working efficiently? All those things I believe that the Judiciary should have. Why is this question not being answered when it was due since last year and it was on the Order Paper the year before? You want to tell me that the Judiciary should function without having such data at its disposal?

7.30 p.m.

Of those charged for each of such crimes while out on bail, how many have been convicted? You should know the conviction rate in relation to bail. You have judicial intelligence to have a proper functioning Judiciary. You are asking for more magistrates and judges, whereas what you need is the ammunition-based evidence to help you do your job properly. I await; I will not say with bated breath and I am not going to say that I am holding my breath. I hope that before this session ends we get this answer.

We could do without the other matters. I enjoy listening to the debate, especially Sen. The Hon. Montano who has given me some stimulation to open up with a request to revisit the whole question of social and economic planning. Sometimes, if you listen to Sen. The Hon. Montano you can get carried away easily by his mode of presentation and forget the gaps in the contents.

Thank you.

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie SC): Madam President, I only propose to speak briefly tonight. As a matter of fact, I did not intend to speak at all. During my very brief absence from the Senate I understand that Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh made the most of my absence to make certain wild allegations as is becoming his habit these days. My colleagues are saying that he is trying very hard. Elections are coming; that is not a secret and he is trying very hard to take over from his distinguished colleague on his right.

I will deal with the first issue which I understand that he raised in my absence—there are a number of issues with which I will deal—that is, in some way the relationship between the Attorney General and the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) is under strain and threat, so much so that the DPP has written me three letters calling on me not to be involved. I have to read because the *Hansard* is not ready and I have to depend on the memories of my colleagues. There are three letters calling on me not to be involved in the prosecution of matters.

Madam President, I hope that you will allow me to use this language because it best captures what he has said. That statement is an outright lie.

Madam President: Untruth.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Okay. He has been saying that he has copies of the letters for the longest while. He is man who likes to drop bombs. He cannot produce a single line from these letters. I invite him to throw these letters in the public domain. It is his duty. Do not give it to me. Tonight, give it to the *Express*,

your favourite people and TV6. [*Crosstalk*] My colleague there is telling you exactly who to give it to. There are three letters calling on me not to be involved in the prosecution of matters; Madam President, that statement is a terminological inexactitude. It is wrong. In some places outside of here it might be described as a lie. Of course it would not be described as that inside here.

The relationship between the Attorney General and the DPP is good; professional and based on mutual respect and confidence. It is one that allowed the Director of Public Prosecutions to find himself in my office today at 1.10 p.m. to discuss an issue of national importance. What has not occurred under my watch is the bacchanal which characterized the now infamous High Court action brought before Justice Bereaux involving the then Attorney General, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj and the then Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr. Justice Mark Mohammed and the question of the provision of immunity to a gentleman named Mr. Hypolite. [*Interruption*] When he cannot take it he tries to interrupt and distract, but I am not taking him on. I am talking to you, Madam President. You want me to talk to you. [*Crosstalk*] He had the opportunity to “grand charge”, a free run. He cannot take it. His friend is just smiling at him because having led him down the path he abandons him. He has left him in it.

Sen. Mark: You want me to intervene now?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: With respect to that first question, I think that I have dealt with that matter.

On the question of court buildings, I want to advise him that this responsibility no longer falls under the purview of the Executive. During the period 1995, they tried all sorts of things; senior lecturer, University of the West Indies. I do not know where they are going next. [*Interruption*] Madam President, I am speaking to you on what is before us and on what he spoke about. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: Who is he?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: He!

Madam President: All right. Please, please. You should get on your feet when you want to object. Mr. Attorney General, I would like you to please say, Senator.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Madam President, I am sorry. [*Crosstalk*] I used the word “he” to distinguish him from a her. I always meant Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh. That is the person to whom I am referring. He attempted to make a point about the court buildings. I am not speaking to the king now. I am speaking to one of his subjects. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Mark: The king does not bow to terrorists.

Madam President: You both have had your chances to speak. Please let whoever is speaking now say what they have to say. You spoke for your full hour and you were not interrupted.

Sen. Mark: “The king don’t bow to terrorists.”

Madam President: Senator!

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Madam President, thank you very much for your kind protection.

Another point that Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh made which was flawed—*[Interruption]* Madam President, I am speaking to you. Another point which Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh made in relation to court buildings—I do not know from where he got his information. I want to remind the Senator that during the period 1995—2000, what I refer to as those very dark days in the Judiciary of this country, a man wrote a letter complaining of Executive interference in the affairs of the Judiciary. To a man, the Judiciary of this country wrote a letter signed by each and every judge with one exception, Justice Ibrahim. In relation to that the judges said that they were under attack by the Executive. What has happened today?

This Executive has had a difficulty with one individual of the Judiciary. There has been no letters from any member of the Judiciary in support. I ask you, what has changed? Is it the Judiciary? The Judiciary remains as it was constituted at the time. You have had no letters coming from them complaining about Executive interference. Do you know why? Because there has been no Executive interference in the affairs of the Judiciary.

Sen. Mark: That is not so.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: The Judiciary is well, capable and able to defend itself against attacks of the Executive as it did during the period 1995—2000, when every one of them put pen to paper to say that the Executive was butting into the affairs of the Judiciary. That has not happened. Arising out of new arrangements which came out of that period, the Judiciary has been given greater autonomy in relation to the construction of new court buildings and the refurbishment of court buildings. When Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh or whatever he prefers to call himself said that we have starved the Judiciary of resources or have not built a single court building, he is looking at the wrong quarter. We have given resources as Sen. Prof. Deosaran pointed out—and I will refer to him as Sen. the hon. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran—in the course of his contribution, we have given the Judiciary everything they have asked for and more.

At the beginning of this financial year the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and I went to the Judiciary to advise them on their request as to how best to utilize their allocation. He will be able to speak to it in greater detail. Funds were being allocated to the Judiciary for all sorts of projects and they were not being spent. At the end of the financial year there was a return to the Exchequer. My colleague, Sen. Enill gave the Judiciary some valuable insight into how to spend this money. He is barking up the wrong tree when he looks at this Attorney General and speaks about court buildings. I am not the type of Attorney General that we had in those dark days who insisted in building everything; micro managing the Judiciary to the extent that perhaps, he wanted to see judgments written by the judges before they even came out. That is not my style. They run their shop and I run my shop.

In relation to Head 23, the Office of the Attorney General, the sum of \$4,945,700 is in there. Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh did not speak to that. He went all over the place; by the DPP and his letters and he flapped a piece of paper to say that was the letter. If it were the letter it would have been all around the Senate. We know that. The sum of \$4,945,700 is what we are talking about. Do you know what that money is for?

The sum of \$2.782 million as is stated transparently is required to facilitate implementation of an agreement on revised salaries and cost of living allowances in the public service. You might remember some weeks ago that it was widely reported in the media that the Chief Justice had asked to see me on a matter concerning an imminent strike of personnel in the service. That is behind us and it has been averted. There has not been a single peep out of anyone since that time. That takes care of the \$2.78 million. My friend obviously has 40 degrees but he does not have one in Maths because \$3 million plus that would carry us over \$5 million.

The sum of \$250,000 is to facilitate the purchase of a vehicle for use by the Anti Corruption Investigations Bureau (ACIB). Last week, I responded to a question on how the ACIB came to be set up. In my view, at some point in time in the future, as a Government and people we will have to determine what we do about the ACIP as an investigation bureau. I am not sure that it is located in the right place. I met it there. Thanks to the legacy of Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj. I am not sure that it is located in the right place. I make no bones about that. While they are located there they would need cars to chase the corrupt and the thieves. I am happy to provide them with \$250,000 to do that. What is left is the paltry sum of \$1.91 million to meet the cost of legal counsel and technical advisors who are to be retained to represent the State in proceedings before the court.

The prosecution of crime is the business of every law-abiding citizen living in every law-abiding democracy. That is the responsibility of every law-abiding citizen. We spent billions of dollars in the Ministry of National Security prosecuting blue-collar crime. What is required after he holds the blue-collar criminals and some of the white-collar criminals is quality counsel to prosecute those persons so that they would serve the time that blue-collar criminals would ordinarily serve. This is money well spent; that sum of \$1.9 million as I have said in another statement quite recently in the other place. During this period of time that I am now asking for \$1.9 million extra, we have recovered \$12 million [*Desk thumping*] in cash from the proceeds of crime relating to the airport. That is one trial, \$12 million and counting. The sum of \$600,000 came yesterday. I have not had a chance to factor that in. The money is going up as we speak. I ask for \$1.9 million for counsel.

I can show and I promised this House when I spoke last year in my budget contribution that the Office of the Attorney General will contribute to the Exchequer. I said that. I do not make airy-fairy promises. That sum of \$12 million in cash is there sitting down in the bank recovered from their friends and allies; the ones they will have us come here today to deny this \$1.9 million to counsel to go to get that \$12 million. They will have us come here today to deny the Anti Corruption Investigations Bureau \$250,000 to buy cars to chase the corrupt because they run very fast. That accounts for the three lines devoted to the Office of the Attorney General and the sum of \$4.945 million. The sum of \$12 million was recovered from the corrupt.

Thank you.

Sen. Anthony Sammy: Madam President, I rise to make my contribution to the Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, 2007. Are we doing badly or are we doing well? I believe that is the question that Sen. Montano asked. Let us look at some facts and figures to show the citizens of this blessed country how badly indeed, this Government has failed them, not at their expense but at the expense of every citizen, not only at present, but this mismanagement of our funds and mass corruption will also affect future generations.

Sen. Abdul-Hamid: You look like such a gentleman.

Sen. A. Sammy: I am. Thank you.

Every year except 2002—because there was a hung parliament—this Government has increased continuously, its funding outside the approved budget. The increase from 2003, \$1.7 billion grew every year and in 2006, stood at \$7.2

billion. In 2007, it is \$3.1 billion for now, but expect them to come back in or around September with another request for additional funds. The total supplementary funding for the last four years, including this thus far, is \$19.5 billion. In six years this Government would have spent approximately \$200 billion. Compare this with the UNC five-year term where we spent a total of \$54 billion. [*Crosstalk*] Even though all this money was spent—

Madam President: Senator, try not to repeat what was said before, please.

Sen. A. Sammy: Even though all this money was spent, this Government has achieved some of the following for which it must be complimented thoroughly. Please listen well. It is as follows: high level of inflation due to the reckless spending; crime has reached unprecedented levels; poverty continues to increase under its watch; public health care is in shambles; education is collapsing; there continues to be a lack of water even now in the rainy season; food prices continue to soar and flooding continues unabated.

Madam President: You heard me. You are repeating.

Sen. A. Sammy: Our environment is being threatened seriously with smelters. The business sector because of the serious crime wave has continued to lose confidence in this Government causing many businesses to close shop and their families are fleeing the country. I can go on and on. In general, the quality of life of our citizens has deteriorated and that is what the PNM sees as good performance.

Five and a half years later under this Government, we have seen increase after increase in government expenditure on so-called social programmes, but still a large part of our population remains poor and unable to provide themselves and their children with basic amenities. Massive construction projects that use mainly foreign labour instead of local labour are taking away money that should be given to our citizens. It is money that they should be enjoying but they are not. The Government tries to tell our contractors that they would give them 10 per cent of the value. What a shame! Enormous expenditure and technical advice and support to fight crime, but there is more crime and criminal activity now than there was ever before. A lower standard of living even though the government expenditure is so high; migration of human capital and I can go on and on.

This Government continues to lie or tell untruth to our people using statistics and spin. The summary that it presented to the public outside of the Cabinet excluded the details of expenditure for over \$2.0 billion out of the \$3 billion it wants now. I do not think that anyone on this side has a problem when the

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[SEN. SAMMY]

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Government wants to pay finally, our hardworking citizens what is justly theirs, like our First and Second Division Police Officers who are owed over \$125 million in salaries, COLA and other allowances that they earned since January 01, 2005 to the present. What an uncaring and incompetent Government! Why keep the people's money for so long, when food prices are skyrocketing and the inflation rate is heading again to 10 per cent? I just wondered. Has the Government who has been increasing its salaries at a pace not gotten their increase to date? I think not. And we expect the police to work with enthusiasm.

This Government has no problem with spending over \$1 billion on a cricket stadium that is not needed. When it comes to paying decent wages and earnings to ordinary hardworking, common men who must fight and sacrifice two and a half years to get the money they have earned, their families must go without whilst the Government spends wildly. The cost of the Prime Minister's mansion is twice the amount owed to over 7,000 police officers but priority is given to the PM's palace.

Let me speak a bit about health although there is much to say. Now that the Prime Minister has tabled the *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Health Sector*, we have learnt that not only are there ghost gangs in URP, but also like Jennifer Lopez collected wages. Just as billions have gone down the drain with nothing to show with respect to education, so too, the Ministry of Health has their ghosts. There are widespread allegations of corruption, nepotism, mismanagement; the need for forensic audit of five regional health authorities, phantom companies and a lot more. Whilst all this is happening, we learn of baby Justin's arm being burnt. Why? Imagine with all the money the Minister of Health claims that he has spent well, we still have water bottles being placed near to a baby to keep a baby warm. This is really unacceptable in this day and age. In order to cover up their incompetence and corruption they fired two nurses who had no choice but to work with whatever equipment they had been provided with.

8.00 p.m.

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

Sen. Prof. Deosaran mentioned milk prices skyrocketing, and if I am not mistaken he alluded to the rise in this particular commodity as being one that is being caused by uncaring businessmen. But one needs to understand what is happening in the world market with milk in particular. Last year, there was a very bad drought in Europe. That has caused the milk production to be low because the cows did not produce as much milk. In fact, some of the cows had to be killed because there was not enough grass.

Sen. Dumas: It is not the wicked PNM Government.

Sen. A. Sammy: I am coming to that. Further to that, what has happened is that there has been a heavy demand from Russia, China and Chavez who has now gone to most of the milk producing countries and offered them far more than anyone can pay and pay in advance. That is what is causing it. With all that is happening, when the Government removed the 5 per cent duty on powdered milk last year and failed to continue to do so in 2007, how can they claim to care about the prices people are paying for those basic commodities? Stop paying lip-service to the people.

Let us look at WASA. In mid-April, 2007 at the height of the dry season while the Prime Minister was touring Oropouche, he was greeted by people with placards advising him that they have been without water for weeks, months and even years. The newspaper reported on the said tour in the Monday 16 April edition of the *Express*, a story entitled “Manning begs South customers for patience”, and I quote:

“He (Manning) said the Government was quite aware of the problems with water shortage, not only in Diamond Village and environs, but most of South Trinidad.

So far, he admitted that only 30 per cent of the national community received a 24-hour water supply on a seven-day basis, but that amount would increase significantly soon. He added, however, that the water shortage was not only a problem in this country, but a Caricom problem as well.

We are not insensitive to the issue and it is an issue that we continue to give priority, Manning told the gathering.”

Twenty-eight months have passed since the Cabinet led by Patrick Manning committed itself to fixing WASA. In January 2005 they committed to spend \$27 billion. In April 2006 the Minister in charge of WASA, Minister Beckles advised that the Government approved \$1 billion to ease water woes. In August 2006 the Minister advised that \$12 billion was going to be spent to ease water woes of this country. 2005 and 2006 have passed. We are now in June 2007 and we are now advised that a further \$128 million is required to carry them through the 2007 financial year, and our Prime Minister continues to say WASA is performing well.

Twenty-eight months have passed and WASA is no better off and no one is held accountable for the mismanagement, the incompetence and the corruption. But they boast they will deliver. Deliver what? Especially when we were asked

just recently not to flush our toilets so often. What a ridiculous statement! WASA continues, in spite of all this expenditure to be forever in debt. For six years this Government led by the hon. Patrick Manning has not built one plant to facilitate the 70 per cent of our citizens who have been without water. But all of a sudden we are talking about smelters being put into Trinidad and he just as suddenly begins to talk about water for all. These plans to me are to offset the increased demand for water that the smelters would need, that will be fully financed by the Government, further subsidizing the smelter. So, it is not only the natural gas. It is also water. He is doing this whilst trying to hoodwink our people into believing that he is doing it because he cares for them—and one of their most basic needs, water. Care about whom? Not the 70 per cent of his citizens but his smelter pals. I can go on and on about the statistical conmanship that this Government has imposed on this country but I will leave some of the many issues to my fellow UNC Senators to bring to the attention of the national community.

I thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Mr. Vice-President, you always come on deck when I have got an elaborate address ready for Madam President.

I looked at the documents and listened to the hon. Minister and decided that there really was not enough detail to make a useful or cogent argument about anything. That does not mean I do not have something to say. For instance, at page 6, the sum of \$556 million is required to facilitate settlement of BWIA liabilities, particularly in relation to trade creditors and business partners, and for capitalization of Caribbean Airlines Limited as agreed to by Cabinet.

I do not know if that is the total sum that it is costing us to wipe out BWIA or whether some money has already been expended on that project and, therefore, I cannot comment.

Mr. Vice-President, if one looks at page 11, Regiment, \$986,000 for anticipated expenditure relating to several planned activities: passing out parades, anniversary day functions, Independence/Republic Day functions. This is something that could have been anticipated in the annual budget. There are many things here that arise because of insufficient allocation or no allocation and these are things that could have been anticipated. There are one or two items that seem to me to be urgent and necessary, items that I would have liked to hear more about and I would have been willing to give my applause for, for instance, on page 12, institutional strengthening of the Forensic Science Centre. I would have liked to be told that we have been working on the Forensic Science Centre; we

have done so and so and we find that we are moving faster than we expected. We need some more money to carry this very important project to completion because it is a major instrument in our fight against crime. If I had heard that I would say bravo, yes, take the money.

Mr. Vice-President, on general reflection, I am surprised there are so many items in here that could have been anticipated, and I am a bit disappointed that some of the items that I would have liked to hear more about, because they are urgent, I have not heard too much about.

Mr. Vice-President, I came from home with two points which I am not going to put aside although I would like to spend some time commenting on a few other things I heard in the debate. The first of the things I heard in the debate, and I have to say at once, I am not arguing it with anybody, I am not debating it with anybody, and I am not giving way if anybody wants to correct me—only on this point. I want to be like you all, at least, in relation to this one point.

Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Mary King pointed out that the budget has risen from \$38 billion to \$41 billion. My opinion, which I am not arguing with anybody is that \$41 billion is too high a proportion of our revenue to spend if we are interested in revenue stabilisation and measured development. That is my opinion and I do not want to be corrected. It is too much to spend and when there is too much to spend, you waste. Whenever I get a windfall, I waste my money, and when you are spending Government's money, the nation's money, you are not there to pay the penalty for your rash spending. When I spend my money foolishly, I pay the price so I feel we have to be very careful about overspending. We have to look at our size and so forth.

The next point I am coming to relates to the \$41 billion being spent. In my opinion, too much is being spent on showcase projects that have two main defects. These showcase projects are given priority over projects that would fulfil the needs of ordinary people in our country: water, hospitals, schools, roads, regional development, agriculture. And secondly—again, I do not want to be corrected—this kind of spending creates capacity constraints. That is the failing of the Government's development plans, so much so that they are importing labour. Not only are they importing building material, they are importing labour and creating for themselves a breed of prohibited immigrants. I am telling you, Mr. Vice-President, we are increasing our population through this imported labour and we are putting strain on the economy, on our resources. You may get your projects completed on time with what I call scam labour because these people are living on next to nothing and they can come and live on next to nothing. We are

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exploiting them just as their own country exploits them and they are not going back. They are going to stay here. Those are the kinds of problems we are causing ourselves.

Another thing I heard about—[*Crosstalk*] I am not even taking heckle—and it really stimulated me. Sen. Prof. Deosaran said Sen. Montano stimulated him. [*Laughter*] He stimulated me intellectually and politically too, he reminded me of what a socialist I am. You might say a Commie.

Sen. Montano reported on the Government's housing policy and the way in which houses are being provided for more and more citizens. I cannot complain about that but I really do have a question about values arising out of that. If I was controlling the budget and I was dealing with housing, I would not make as sharp a distinction as he does between giving people land and giving them complete houses on a piece of land. If there were people who wanted to build a house that looked slightly different from the houses in the settlements and who want to do their own thing, I would accompany my housing policy where I build houses and hand over; I would accompany that with a policy of facilitating low interest loans. There are many people in this country who will take better care of the house if they build it themselves. We should not attack the policy of giving land. The thing about "we will provide" just sends off bells in my head. I do not want to appeal to that freeness mentality. We know very well that the history of housing in this country is that people do not pay the rent and they do not take care of the houses. [*Interruption*] We should encourage self-reliance, we should encourage deference, we should encourage people to build their own homes at their own pace, we should encourage communities to help one another.

I do not like to hear statements which suggest that giving people land is a bad thing. I would like to see a better balance and more encouragement, letting people get the land, and arranging with the banks to get them low interest loans.

Sen. Montano: Mr. Vice-President, I wonder if the Senator would give way so I can clarify that. I did not say that giving land out was a bad thing. What I did say was the UNC had no housing policy. Their only solution was raw land. In fact, their solution was raw land, no infrastructure. This administration is providing land but fully serviced lots on a selected basis, because the experience has been if we do not do it people get the land and then can do nothing with it. All of the former Caroni (1975) Limited workers have been given the option of taking a piece of land, not houses, but serviced lots and that amounts to some 6,000 odd lots. It is not an exclusive policy by any stretch of the imagination.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: It really is not in my nature to not give way. That is why I tried to set up a wall beforehand so I would not give way. I am glad to hear that.

One of the warnings I have about giving houses to people is that you do not manage to collect the rent. After a few years they stop paying, they lapse and there are so many problems in collecting, it is not worth going after them.

Another thing that worries me is Sen. Montano's indicators of being well off, and one of his indicators is the number of motorcars on the road. I do not really think that the number of cars on the road is or ought to be regarded as an indicator either of happiness or success or achievement or well-being. If there are so many cars on the road it is partly related to the fact that we have never in this country—and it is not only this regime—worked out a public transport system which is reliable, timely and cheap, and which would encourage people to use public transport rather than buy a roll-on/roll-off and clutter the roads. It is one of the failings and if that looks as if I am supporting the rapid rail, let me say: if you want to create a railway system throughout the whole country where you link regions to one another, because you have a plan to develop the regions economically, so that people do not have to get out of the region every day to go to town to work, and if that is the plan for the rapid rail—I think you understand what lateral transport and interconnecting regions mean. Going to Point is not really—all those dirt roads and rock roads which link regions which are not being repaired, those are the link roads and that is where the railways should be going if you want to put railways. So, the proliferation of cars is not for me an indicator of well-being. And far less so, is the possession of two cellphones. If you know how I want to wring people's neck when I see them with two cellphones. They actually walk with two cellphones. If they want to play table tennis with themselves, it is better than taking two cellphones.

Mr. Vice-President, the cellphone is not an indicator of well-being. The cell phone is not an—is something—I have been reading something on the Net about the net or next generation which is forcing me to change my mind a bit. The first part of it is—I feel the cellphone really reduces us to being cells. It increases our isolation and separation from other people, and that is happening all over the world.

I find it very useful to have a cellphone. There are problems that come with the technology and for the time being I would have to say I still do not regard having two cellphones as an indicator of well-being.

Those points are touching on the kind of society we want to belong to, the kinds of economic development. And in a way, it chimes in with what my colleagues

have been saying about the kinds of development programmes, the kinds of social programmes we are carrying out at present, and my views were stimulated by some of the things that went on in the debate.

Now I come to what I am afraid may be regarded as the jokey part and yet it is the most serious part. When I saw this new Bill I said ah, new appropriation, second thoughts. You might get it right this time. Then I went through the Bill to see if there was anything in the new appropriations to do with climate change. In the last two months all the newspapers, the radio stations, all the radio programmes, television stations, all the international journals are getting serious about climate change.

They are recognizing climate change on the one hand calls for disaster preparedness. You are going to have storms, hurricanes, floods to name only a few. On the one hand disaster preparedness, changes in lifestyle and working style. I am warning, climate change is going to transform the nature of agriculture. We are going to have to learn to grow things in water. So much of our land is going to be flooded that if you want to have agriculture, you are going to have to develop new techniques and you are going to have to plan for that changed landscape. Not only in agriculture, in transport, but also in house construction.

I would have thought that if you are coming with an appropriation Bill saying that you have had second thoughts, that budget after budget you have not taken climate change seriously but now you have to take it seriously, I would say, good.

I have to say that the much maligned University of Trinidad and Tobago and the Academy of the University have decided to bring a couple of speakers, experts on climate change to deliver lectures throughout this country to alert people to the kinds of preparedness that are needed for climate change. The UTT is not just a science university. One of the interesting things about it, is that there was a deliberate intention to marry science and art and culture—the research academy of which I am involved has the mandate to bring to the science and technical university information and insights that will increase their scientific capacity as well as broadening their education.

Whenever I hear the UTT being maligned as just an engineering place, it is not doing anything and money is just being spent on engineering, I object. I am not trying to defend anybody. I am trying to defend certain ideas that have taken me out of retirement from academic work; it has brought me back and I am into the academic stupidity again. I should be resting but I brought it out because I felt this is a real chance to help to create a real university for the modern world.

8.30 p.m.

The second thing that I came to speak about is what Sen. Mary King said very dramatically, that the energy resource is drying. I think there are changes taking place on the energy menu. There are many countries now looking for alternative energies to reduce their dependence on oil and natural gas and there are many who, without thinking about that, are concerned about carbon dioxide emission and, therefore, are trying to move away from that kind of fuel for a number of different reasons, including the reason that the reserves may be drying up or getting harder to get at.

For a number of different reasons, our energy future is not as secure as we might like to believe and if we want to do something about it ourselves and if we also want to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions in our country, the time has come for us to budget money towards the development of alternative energies, especially solar and wind energy.

Year after year, I come to the Senate in the budget debates and talk about solar energy. I say there is a major construction boom, why not stipulate that every new government building be equipped for solar energy? Why do we not start there? You have total control over that. Why not give incentives to new house owners to install solar energy equipment and why not hire people to study solar energy and its applications? Even if the oil does not run out, it is better to use solar energy yourself and sell the oil. Let them kill themselves.

Those, to me, are two very serious omissions in the Appropriation Bill and I bring them up now in the hope that the hon. Minister would think about it and that the Government should be persuaded, in the next budget, that these two, alternative energies and climate change should figure in our projections for the future.

I thank you.

The Minister of Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I will start basically by asking two questions. The first is: Why do the UNC Senators, starting where Sen. Dr. Sammy ended, all seem to have the same speaking notes? I do not know if the intention is the argument that if you keep repeating something maybe somebody would believe you, even if you do not believe it yourself.

The house that is being built for the accommodation of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago is exactly that. The residence will belong to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and will accommodate whomever the people of Trinidad and Tobago elect as Prime Minister. The UNC seems to miss that. There is no

question of corruption and incompetence in the construction of a house worthy of housing the Prime Minister and housing the activities that should be pursued by a Prime Minister; activities that would bring the country honour, development and benefit by its use. It is not an act of incompetence to create such a structure that, hopefully, would last for hundreds of years. It is not an act of corruption to so provide the country with that quality of building, especially when it is done at a lower cost than anything of like structure in the country, according to arrangements we have made. In fact, it is a matter of pride.

The issue of wages and how they are settled in the country is a demonstration of the equality which the workers of this country have on the table when they engage in the process of negotiation to determine what those wages would be. If we understand that a government cannot dictate the wages that workers should enjoy, but rather would negotiate those wages in line with the proposal that the representative organizations put on the table according to that process of collective bargaining, then we will understand—again, it is a matter of pride that the system endures in this country; that good industrial practices dictate that that system of collective bargaining should occur—that the lag of a salary settlement over a period of 18 months is not a sign of negligence or ill favour towards the workers in the public service.

I do not know whether Sen. Dr. Sammy has ever been engaged in that practice on behalf of workers, but certainly we who have had the pleasure of representing workers in the country and engaging in the process on behalf of the workers know that it is a matter that we should hold dear and a practice we should continue.

The wages that are being enjoyed by the public officers, for which we are providing in this budget and the supplement to the budget, are as a result of collective bargaining and the Government did not impose those wages. Of course, limits were set and the procedure of settling those wages was engaged in the full glare of public scrutiny and can stand that scrutiny.

Mr. Vice-President, on the issue of the tax break given for milk, representatives of that lobby should be careful how they address that. It was given and the people who are supposed to pass it on to the general public, the wage-earning class of Trinidad and Tobago, somehow did not know that the tax break was given and the lower price change that should have occurred never happened. The people who represent that lobby should not speak of that matter, but rather it is an issue of shame to the individuals in the business sector who perpetuated that fraud on the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, expenditure by the Government does not create capacity constraints. They either exist or do not and, if they do, if you can identify labour as a constraint on your capacity to deliver on a planned programme, then the mechanisms you put in place to overcome that capacity constraint, once they are effective, should be a source of commendation to the administration that could devise a method around them, especially when it allows you to plan and execute a body of public expenditure that brings benefits to the population.

It is, therefore, a little unfortunate, I think, both from Opposition Senators and from some Senators on the Independent Benches, that they see the engagement of workers from somewhere else in the world as a negative. It follows the familiar pattern of xenophobia, where those who arrived first stopped those who were coming after from coming, especially when the argument is that maybe they would not go back. Maybe Trinidad and Tobago is under-populated; maybe we can do with a few more hundred thousand people, especially if they are industrious and have skills and capacities that are not now evident in the population.

Mr. Vice-President, the Bill comes at a time when we are seeing the fruits and benefits of the economic management practices of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago resulting in a direct fall in the poverty measures. It is interesting to sit on this side and listen. I remember clearly Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh, in an earlier debate, shouting from the high heavens that the poverty line was somewhere around 40 per cent or 50 per cent. When I challenged him, he said that was what the report said.

Today, when the document that comes from another source says 17 per cent, it is not acceptable. It is only when the document gives a negative line that it is acceptable to the UNC. It is only when the document says something is wrong with our processes; something is wrong with our programme that the document is acceptable.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: Show us the proof. If you say 17 per cent [*Interruption*] bring the report—

Mr. Vice-President: [*Pounds gavel*] Senator, please!

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: I want him to clarify what he is saying.

Mr. Vice-President: There is a way to do it.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Vice-President, as a result of the programme in public expenditure, in public practice, in public administration, unemployment has fallen to the lowest it has ever been, 5 per cent. Anywhere in the world, that is

a commendable measure. It would result in commendation for the administration that is able to bring it about. The Government turned around and said that there are some issues in terms of the distribution of that unemployment and, therefore, some areas, in particular the rural areas, need some particular address. Again, that issue should be a source of commendation and it would be by any observer, except the UNC. They have difficulty saying anything in this country is good.

The rate for serious crime falling, demonstrated law, but the UNC holds on to last year's figures and big men and big women, who went to high schools and universities all about, say crime is rising. Sometimes I wonder if we would take pleasure if the country becomes unsustainable and we are all driven in some vortex towards hell, whether flaming or icy.

Mr. Vice-President, the news for Trinidad and Tobago is good. Government spending, together with the mediating factors of good social policy, of good feelings by the general population, of having a social compact, which is developing and growing increasingly better; in which people are seeing communities within the country coming closer to each other, should all be a signal that we should continue the growth path that we are on; that we should continue the development of a peaceful, well-controlled, well-managed society. That is going on, but somehow we do not see it. I suggest that what we are seeing and what is continuing is the effect of a rational plan.

Sometimes I wonder why we try to deceive the population. We have a budget of \$3.1 billion, of which \$1.7 billion is going into a Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. If I had a back pay and I was able to save half and put it away and find meaningful ways, capital beneficial ways, to spend the other half, I would have done well and I am sure that any such measure will show that in saving and putting aside for the future, half of what comes as an allocation must be a good thing. If it is not a good thing, why all the years we have this clamour about the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund?

Now that it has been put in place and this \$1.7 billion ensures that we have a nest egg of \$10 billion in this Fund, somehow coming here with a supplementary budget is a negative thing. It is the result of deliberate and planned action and I think that should be taken into account.

Mr. Vice-President, this brings me to the second question. Why can we not see anything good? We are somehow incapable in some parts of this country, by some speakers who purport to want to run the country, to see anything good.

The other question I have to ask is: Which one of these expenditures would we not have? I want to make it clear that I want to see this expenditure. I want to see the expenditure on the subsidy for petroleum. I want to see the expenditure on the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and I want to see the expenditure on the Ministry of Works and Transport. When I look at the purpose of spending those funds, it falls squarely under the criteria of urgent and critical. That is what we have called them to do—examine the appropriation to determine whether it is urgent and critical against funding which is either inadequate or for which there was no allocation.

The question that nobody is answering is what should be left out. I suggest that the expenditure demonstrates that the programme is innovative and continues after critical strategic review. For example, Sen. Prof. Ramchand raised the idea of the risk that we run because of global warming and all the other issues. I do not know if Sen. Prof. Ramchand and the other Senators saw the catastrophe risk insurance premium—\$30,480,000. Have you seen that one? That expenditure is insurance against the risk that we run, guaranteed by the World Bank if there is a major catastrophe.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Will the Minister give way?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: After your behaviour, should I? Go ahead!

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: My mouth is different from my ways. I actually gave way. Mr. Vice-President, insurance is one thing, but insurance is not putting plans in place to deal with the consequences of a catastrophe and I hope that the Minister could add that to the insurance. Certain actions have to be done to prepare us for dealing with the consequences and anticipating consequences.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: I did not want to go there, Sen. Prof. It is kind of hard for a junior student to be telling a senior student that maybe he was not listening. You will have to go back to the previous budget. You have to go back to all during the year. There were announcements being made all during the year on what we are doing and there were allocations made in the original budget that treated with the development of ODPM with \$50 million. The expenditure by the Ministry of Local Government, the structure that was put in place in the Ministry of National Security, the money that was put in the Ministry of Works and Transport to buy new equipment, the desilting programme; all these things that are going on are part of that.

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There are a number of things going on. If you want to see the disaster management programme, you have to look in a number of places, but the programme is there. That was only one, but I am going to stop there. I suggest that you just acknowledge that maybe we have our foot in the door. I do not want more than that. Something is happening and I can tell you it will take a little while to tell you all that is happening. A lot is happening.

I want to add one thing. It is important to know that there are some people—there is still a mindset; PNM members do not run every local government body and some local government bodies have not yet come to the realization and acceptance that they have freedom to do some things so, for example, there is the ridiculous situation of the Leader of the Opposition and the chairman of a corporation standing in some place and saying that nobody brought in rice, water or flour from Port of Spain to treat with what they deem to be a disaster in their community when they have been empowered by letter, motion and funding to treat with any immediate problems that occur within the local government area. Again, you are changing the institutional arrangements to ensure that the disaster management process can go on.

Mr. Vice-President, the question of the initiatives GATE and HELP, the upgrading of hazard preparation and prevention, the question of the money spent by the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, including WASA—I heard some talk about that—I advise that if we are going to use the data, it is there. If you come today and say that 30 per cent of the population has access to water, then you have to use all the figures we give you. You have to say, yes 30 per cent may have a 24-hour, seven days a week, 365 days a year because we have given you the accurate figures.

Despite the allusion by one Senator of statistical wrangling, if there is any fixing of data, it comes from the other side. We are able to tell you clearly, for 100 per cent of the population of Trinidad and Tobago, exactly what can be the expectation of the use of water. We do not fool you and say that everybody will have water 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. We do not do that. We tell you what is happening and how the progression will occur.

The Highway Lighting and Installation Programme is happening. The Waste Water Treatment Plants are being structured. Are you going to say do not put any money in the water and waste water planning? What is this cry we are crying about the expenditure?

Mr. Vice-President, there is one that is very important to me. You see sometimes we have to tell people exactly what we plan to do. In the Ministry of Works and Transport, money is being spent for the Incat 046 also called the Trinidad and Tobago Express and the Incat 060 T&T Spirit, which will provide a sea bridge between Trinidad and Tobago. When the UNC criticizes this allocation, is it telling Tobago that there should not be that sea bridge between Trinidad and Tobago or does it support this expenditure? You must say whether or not you support this.

Sen. Mark: Once there is no corruption.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: How does corruption arise? You know there is none. Two honest boats, honestly purchased, serving an honest route, how can corruption—*[Interruption]*

You see, Mr. Vice-President, they have never gone to sea. They have never caught a fish in their lives; they do not know what a boat is and how it is described by fishermen. An honest boat is one that runs true in the water; is well balanced and one which, when you stand to catch your fish, you can pull your fish comfortably, lift it and drop it in the boat without trouble. They do not understand.

I want to treat with one other matter. It is important for us to remember. They get up all the time and say resign, throw you away, you are incompetent, get out of there. Do you know what they forget? Why is the PNM here and they are not. They forget that the UNC failed. They crashed. *[Interruption]* Let me say it again. I do not know if I have to ask for protection from Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, but hear my argument, Mr. Vice-President.

Mr. Robinson, then Member of Parliament for Tobago East, gave his friend, Mr. Panday, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. They crashed and, therefore, they lost the government. But they lost the Government after abusing Tobago; after having all those billions of dollars that they spent with the help of Mr. Robinson, on acquiring it, they abused Tobago. They abused the Senators. They abused the MPs sitting with them. Every single representative and Member from Tobago who came into contact with them was abused, maligned and discarded. That is the reality. So they crashed in their first alliance and then they crashed inside their own alliance. In other words, the UNC proved itself to be inadequate to the task of keeping a government together. *[Desk thumping]* It proved that it was insulting to Trinidad; it was insulting to Tobago; insulting to the process of governance of Trinidad and Tobago.

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The UNC proved to be undisciplined in government. The UNC proved to be full of spite and hatred for each other and incapable of managing the government. [*Desk thumping*] That is why we are here and, given the virtues of this party and given the way we have run the government to the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, we expect that the PNM will continue to be here while they continue to fret.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

9.00 p.m.

Sen. Dr. Glenn Ramadhar-Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. It is said that the people get the government that they deserve. But—with the old, the poor and the weak, lying on the ground of the hospital, vicious criminal elements attacking common citizens of this country and the Government persecuting their political opponents with a naked, excessive abuse of power—nobody deserves this Government, no country. It is almost as if they have given up managing this country. They cannot deliver goods and services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

A budget presentation—[*Continuous interruption and crosstalk*]

Mr. Vice-President: Allow us to hear the contribution of Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh, please.

Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh:—or Appropriation Bill before the House—in fact, the budget is a planning tool. No matter how many excuses we hear from them, this should not be occurring. The Government should not have come back in 2003 for \$1.7 billion; 2004 for \$2.7 billion; 2005 for \$4.7 billion and 2006 for \$7.2 billion. That should not have happened. This should be corrected.

This is a Government that wants to steer Trinidad and Tobago to 2020. If they cannot manage a short-term budgeting plan, how can they ever—if they cannot take us through a short planning zone such as a year—they take us to 2020? They cannot and they are wasting the Parliament's time. If they claim to be an efficient, high-tech and fast-paced Government, then they should have put systems in place. The excuse about needing a constitutional majority does not hold water. We have passed Bills that needed a constitutional majority. It is dialogue, consensus and the political will to solve problems, which will change the system.

I enjoyed the contribution of Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano. I found it to be an exercise in trying to convince you that black is white and white is black. I think that was well dealt with by the Independent Bench, in some regard, save and

except for his treatise on the health care sector. I would like to quote him. He said that it must be taken in the context that the health care system is big. Is that not the purpose of Government; to handle big things, big institutions, big roads and big hospitals? What is the fear? Is there some fear or trepidation in dealing with the health sector, because it is big? Does it overwhelm the Government? I think it does. Maybe they need to run smaller things, so we would put them in the Opposition at the next general election.

He said that they are in the process of reengineering the health system, the extent of delivery and that they had cleared the backlog for surgeries but there are severe limitations with the expertise. I do not think so, "doctor." I think we have good expertise here, but we are not utilizing our expertise. For example, with respect to national security, we have expertise at UWI. There are persons who are trained and versed in the local conditions, who could have been used. We are not pulling out what we can get from that expertise.

But, I think the most interesting thing he said is that they were investing in something big in the health care system called an Oncology Centre, which will bring value to the health care system.

Let me read from the budget 2002/2003:

"...we will install approximately 20 dialysis machines in the major government treatment centres and expand the capacity for cancer treatment with the establishment of a National Oncology Centre..."

In the budget 2003/2004 it is said:

"Construction is expected to begin during this year on the National Oncology Centre at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, the St. James District Health Facility and the Point Fortin District Hospital..."

There is a bomb at the Atlantic LNG Plant that could blow anytime. I have a clinic very close to it. There are no health care facilities. It is a sham at Point Fortin.

Let me continue:

"...18 health centres and six district health facilities will also be upgraded..."

In the 2005/2006 document it states construction:

"...in the Scarborough Regional Hospital, the National Oncology Centre and the construction of a number of district health facilities and enhanced health centres."

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The budget of 2006/2007 also indicated:

“By 2007, we expect the construction of the Point Fortin and Scarborough Hospitals, the National Oncology Centre and a new wing at the San Fernando General Hospital...”

Five years of broken promises. That is legacy, the reengineering, the extent of delivery, the limitations on expertise, and most importantly, it is just too big. They cannot handle or manage it.

After spending \$132 million—today in the country—or whatever the figure is—we would find out and give the real figure, \$172 billion. This country is in a state of anarchy. Crime is the runaway horse of this Government and it is terrorizing all the citizens of this country.

I would not belabour the point. We agree that the salaries should be paid. However, listening to the Minister of Local Government, one gets the impression that this is something good; someone could be promised an increase and they could get it two years later. I do not think any type of political justification would work for an employee who gets money two years after it was supposed to have been given to him when he has to face the raging inflation that exists in this country. The money would have less value by the time it is given to the employee.

Head 22: Ministry of National Security—they owe the prison officers and fire officers as well. One of the purchases is for vehicles. It seems as if after six years in office, they have just realized that the police need mobility to fight crime. It is almost like Rip Van Winkle when they woke up and finally realized that to fight crime, maybe, we should give the police more vehicles. This is five years after we have been making representation, on behalf of the police, in this honourable Senate; after thousands of families have been shot and terrorized by hoodlums.

Persons have been raped. Three women were raped in one day. More than 1,500 persons have been killed and that is a source of amusement for some on the other side. That is still something they can heckle about. That is very sad.

What about the vehicles that they had? They have sent them to VMCOTT. But VMCOTT does not have the capacity and is not delivering, because it is really involved in the procurement of spy equipment to spy on decent citizens of the country. The reality is that all the Senator was left to say was: “value for money”. There is no value for money.

More than 1,500 persons are dead and \$20 billion were bungled on crime by this Government between Mastrofski, Scotland Yardie, worthless blimp and secret inventions. Crime has spiralled and \$20 billion has been spent.

Just recently, after they spent \$170 billion and more, the CoP complained that car repairs are slow.

There was a big fracas at a school in Gasparillo and they called the police. The senior officer there said: "Vehicles are leaving our stations for repairs and they are not coming back. They are parked at the garage for months". A senior officer said that there were two vehicles at the station, one was in need of repair and the other was responding to another report. A lack of police cars was a concern expressed recently by the Couva/Point Lisas Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber President, Ashwin Mohammed, pleaded with the Minister of National Security to supply Couva police with a fleet of vehicles to fight the growing criminal activities in their community. If that is not enough, they finally woke from their sleep, like Rip Van Winkle, and realized that they needed vehicles.

A much sadder story is on the *Newsday* of November 20, 2005:

"Unarmed policeman shot dead

Colleagues of Mansingh yesterday expressed their sympathy to his wife and her family, but expressed outrage at the Police Service. Police officers claimed that they lacked guns and bulletproof vests. They told *Sunday Newsday* that they believe if the station was properly equipped with protective gear and arms that Mansingh's death could have been avoided. But it is too late now, we have lost a very good policeman and it is left up to the higher authorities to ensure that each officer has a gun and a bulletproof vest. We surely don't want this incident to repeat itself" a police officer said."

Two years after persons have died and after being in government for five and one-half years, finally they are seeking to purchase vehicles. It is quite sad, indeed.

In terms of the Ministry of National Security, prison officers are owed moneys. It is really atrocious, the conditions—

Sen. Joseph: On a point of clarification, prison officers are not being owed money. Moneys are put aside, because negotiations are currently taking place between the prison officers and the CPO and fire officers and the CPO. They are not being owed money.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: So, what are you negotiating?

Mr. Vice-President: Senators, please, I think the last hour has been very good. I do not want it to deteriorate, please. The Minister of National Security has explained something and I think everybody could understand the difference.

Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh: I am advancing the case of the prison officers in those circumstances. The conditions are atrocious.

The issue of crime is a holistic thing. If you catch the criminal, which the PNM seems to have severe difficulty doing, you take him through the court process and prosecute. He may then land in jail. If he is in jail, you do not want that man to become a hardened criminal, to come out and increase the crime network. You want reformation and recidivism. This is why I am dealing with the prisons. The prisons are in a mess.

Sen. Dr. Saith: You want recidivism?

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: You “doh” want recidivism.

Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh: We do not want it, sorry. Just imagine, not only doctors, teachers, labourers and public servants have protested, but even prisoners had a strike under this Government.

On Saturday, May 05, 2007 the article reads:

“Prison officers fed up with unfair treatment

Mass resignations may soon occur within the prison service, as disgruntled workers are fed up of being treated like their other protected services counterparts.

...officers were exhausted over the long negotiating process. Persad said conditions within the prison walls, which houses 3,700 inmates, were deplorable.

“There are 2,000 prison officers, but one must keep in mind that the officers are on sick leave, vacation and other leave, so there is a shortage.”

That year was 2005, but nothing has changed because when Justice Carol Gobin visited the state prison this year she said:

“Severe overcrowding, lack of appropriate sanitation practices...”

That is putting it mildly.

“poor health care, rampant disease and incidents of sexual assault.

The report was a grave indictment against the State and its treatment of persons under its care.”

There is an organization by the name of CURB that said that Madam Justice Gobin should begin to award large sums in damages for prisoners and former prisoners, who have been exposed to such poor and degrading conditions, because the precedent is set by the Ministry of Social Development, to enforce standards for the treatment of senior citizens, with fines and imprisonment, which ought to be applied to those entrusted with the housing and care of old persons as the old persons are protected by law. Fines can be imposed on the owners of these homes. Just as these prisoners are in the care of the State, so too if they are mal-abused, mistreated and assaulted, they should be given compensation.

The problem in this country is no secret. It is the issue of management and of not looking at the local situation and our local circumstances.

Our country has a rich, long tradition of colonial rule, the impact of it, architecture, culture and influence of the British, which are here with us.

Our police force has been fashioned in this way and communicated with the public in like manner. We were subjected to the Queen's rules for decades, but when we bring a consultant to fix the problem in crime and the police service, we go to America; Yankee Doodle as I like to say.

They have implemented a system called “Policing for People”. They used five police districts—this is the truth and apparently it is not going down well—for the initiatives. They have used the American system, where you have everyone coming into one person and then being diverted into CID, traffic, et cetera. It failed miserably. The officers were accustomed to operating in a certain way and they are implementing a foreign system that is not finding link and connection with our local circumstances. We have spent \$18 million on Mastrofski and we continue to engage a system that is failing and encouraging spiralling crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, I wish to turn to the youths and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, which wants \$5.238 million to pay for MTS for the provision of janitorial, technical and ground maintenance services. There are currently 257,516 persons between the ages 15—24 in our country. That amounts to 20 per cent. Those under the age of 15 make up 25 per cent of the population. Effectively, if you combine both groups, the youth make up 15 per cent of the population.

It was Aristotle who said: “All those who have meditated on the art governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of the empires depends on the education of the youth.” This is not the education of the youth. By the wave of a magic wand, turning a blue coverall into red and making the youths dance to their demise, throwing up rakes and hoes and garbage bags, is demeaning our young people and youth value.

Europe and Asia are walking around with mobile devices with GPRS locators with PC compatibility. They have high-tech equipment and the latest gadgets. Our young people are being demeaned. This programme has had no education element for five and six years under this Government and it continues unabated. In an election year we are hearing about reformation of the programme. That is an election revelation of knowledge; a programme that has psychologically enslaved them and humiliated their sense of self-worth.

These youths, in many instances, are working for approximately \$1,500 per month. It effectively puts them under the poverty line. After spending \$174 billion, Robert F. Kennedy said that in a society of plenty, poverty is evil.

But we do not have to—[*Interruption*] You are right, he was talking about the US. We do not have to go to the US. We have to go at the back of me. Sen. Mary King said that self-esteem is economic development. She said that our political leaders have denigrated our people saying that we do not have the skills to design and build these artefacts of development. We are too expensive, we are short-skilled of labour as they prescribe, not work but more make-work and skills training projects such as URP, CEPEP, MuST, YAPA, et cetera.

These are palliatives, as they employ the Chinese. They are at the top of Transparency International's bribe payers list; cheaper in the short run, but what about the long run. She is not here.

Let me quote from *The Economist*. [*Interruption*] I said that it enslaved them. It is psychological slavery and economic servitude. Let me tell you about the *Economist*, a very well noted magazine of April 21, 2007:

“In Shanghai and Beijing, where big corruption scandals involving top officials have been exposed in recent months, new cases of alleged high-level wrongdoing are still coming to light.

...According to the party charter, provincial commissions must still inform local party leaders if they plan to investigate them for corruption.”

This is China.

Mr. Vice-President, these programmes must be reformed to empower our young people to lift the standard of their education. There must be community outreach by the Ministry of National Security, to touch the young people.

The person who shot and killed our colleague, Dr. Russell John, was just in his early 20s. This is the targeted population that the Ministry of National Security should be aggressively pursuing. There should be a high-profile social development campaign targeting these persons, educating and empowering them and providing counselling. There should be network advocacy and support services, creating supportive partnership between youths and adults. In other words, offer a variety of programmes.

Why do we not like to talk about the young people? We should encourage youth at risk to develop healthy lifestyles so that they would stay out of crime. There should be education, health, counselling and teaching them, engendering them in recreation, culture, employment and work readiness. These are the things that we should be engaging in. I will not go into the state of the health system, because I think it was adequately dealt with. I think the entire population knows that there is hell in health.

At a glance, the average citizen knows that nine ghost companies were paid for services and the conditions for killer bacteria still exist. Port of Spain hospital is falling apart. There is a severe lack of professionals and bad management. It is a disaster.

Of course, I would talk this one for you. I have plenty articles. This is a reflection of how you are failing. If I tell you, you might not believe. Who pays the price for the failure of the Government to deliver health services? It is not the system, the work ethic, more discipline or more programmes to improve the health care institutions, but nurses become—

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh, do not.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: Do not what, Sir?

Mr. Vice-President: Do not tell me—

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: I am not telling you anything, Sir.

Mr. Vice-President: You just pointed to me and said: speak to somebody over there—

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, the Madam Minister—

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh, I rose to make a point. I will prefer if you just allow me to do that. I would prefer if you do not try to take control of the proceedings also.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: I am not, Sir. You can speak to your colleagues on the other side.

Mr. Vice-President: Senators, a short while ago I said we have been having a good debate. I would like that to continue, please. Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh, there are certain types of behaviours that increase your stature and what you are doing is not doing this.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: It is bilateral, Sir.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh, nobody from this side has attempted to do what you are doing.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh: You did not—

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh, please. Could you please proceed?

Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh: Thank you very much. I spared you going through the details of the mess of the health sector and the failure of the Government to bring an oncology centre that was glibly described by Sen. Montano as a flagship project of the Ministry of Health.

Who pays? Two types of persons pay. One is the ordinary taxpaying citizens who, in most instances come from a life of poverty that is being created by this Government's overspending and their creation of inflation. They go into the health services for an optional operation or elective surgery and children are scorched, burnt and die. The parents would kiss them and wish them well and never see them get up alive. Remember, Faith Williams, a baby was burnt with a bottle of hot water, at a time in this country when citizens in this country could not have gotten water. Ironically, a hot water bottle—who pays? It is the nurses. The system should pay for the failure of the system. The Government should be brought to bear its failure in the health ministry and not the poor people and the poor temporary nurse who was in training.

Both organizations in opposition to each other—trade unions, MPATT and PSA—united over this issue and spoke about the health workers not being given an opportunity to present their cases; an opportunity afforded to the perpetrator of even the most heinous criminal act. That is the state of the health sector and the people who pay.

As far as the Ministry of Works and Transport is concerned, there was \$62 million to facilitate the award of contracts for which the tendering process has not already begun. I quickly want to point out one thing with the Ministry of Works and Transport. After six years in Government, the headline says:

“More control over road digging soon”

There is WASA and all the state sectors that deal with digging the roads. After six years, you have now come up with a policy for road digging. This should have been addressed in the first few months of government. This is the type of inefficiency and ineffectiveness that this Government continues to demonstrate. Even managing the roads that have been paved, after six years they have now come up with a plan to do this. This is the atrocity that goes on in some of these ministries.

With regard to T&TEC, they want \$313,296,362 to give to the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. They are saying that \$49,600,000 would go towards, among other things, the purchase of materials for 80 kilometres of highway lighting and the installation of 118,000 residential street lights. This is your document.

The Prime Minister boasted about this project in the 2006/2007 budget. He said that the street lighting programme, initially proposed 82,000 new streetlights and 36,000 upgrades over a three-year period in the budget presentation, at a cost of \$626 million. He continued:

“We are proud to report that this programme has moved much faster than we anticipated. We must applaud T&TEC.”

We want to know that these 118,000 streetlights which you want to install, are they the same streetlights mentioned in the 2006/2007 budget or are these 118,000 new street lights? How is the Government going to pay the operating cost of these 118,000 street lights, after they have been installed? What is the plan for the maintenance cost? What method of procurement was utilized, with respect to the award of the tenders to supply the materials? Did it go through the Central Tenders Board, or did they use sole selective tendering? Can T&TEC properly handle tenders of this magnitude?

Also, we want the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment to tell us where these street lights are going. What parts of the country, and what process will be used to determine this? Will the Ministry liaise with the Ministry of Local Government to ensure that there is proper and fair distribution throughout the

country? We want to know. We also want to know if you have the capacity for Port of Spain, because the business people in Port of Spain are very concerned about capacity for electricity, in light of the fact that you want to set up smelter plants along the South West Peninsula. We want to know the capacity issues of T&TEC. I would spare you quoting from articles in that regard.

WASA seems to be the knee-jerk of this Government, water for all and water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink. This is like the old poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge; water all around Trinidad and Tobago and not a drop to drink for the poor people in rural communities. This is a city-centric government. This is a Government that pays attention to the city and forgets the rural communities, the poor and the far-flung communities. They want people to continue living in the 18th Century.

They passed a law for older persons in this Senate, to make sure that they are not abused in their houses, but there is abuse in the rural communities. The old persons have to walk long distances with pails in their hands. They have to go to wells and take water from where animals drink.

In Guayaguayare, they said that they were being treated like animals. Rural communities are taken out of this Government's view. That is a fact. We are told that water is really a Caricom problem. The Prime Minister said that. Maybe they should discuss it at the next meeting of Caricom. It is a Caricom problem. In fact, I think he is a bit of a management expert. He is a guru. He said that the problem with WASA is that we need a company to manage that company. The Prime Minister indicated that maybe the solution is to get a company to run that company because it is a \$27 billion headache.

Mr. Vice-President, the situation with water and the percentages, as said by Sen. Dumas:

“This Government will speak the truth. We will tell you how many people are getting water.”

Tell us what percentage is getting water. Thirty per cent or less of this population is getting water. When they send water to the regional corporations—where is my manifesto. We supplied 80 per cent of the population with a regular supply of water during our time in office. We took it there. When we came, approximately 8 per cent of the population was getting a 24-hour supply; 24 hours of the week.

They keep speaking about the transmission and the pipelines. They said that it is a big headache to lay these lines. In the budget they stated that it is a big exercise with over \$20 billion to lay the lines and that they cannot deal with that. Nothing is done.

We are hearing about smelter plants and palaces and buildings are going up in Port of Spain with the importation of labour from far across the world to help build these things, but no water for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, under this Government. The smelter activists said to forget smelter and set up water treatment plants. This is the way to go.

I now turn to the Judiciary. The Government comes to this Senate for approval in the sum of \$7 million in additional funding for the purposes of implementing the agreement and revised salaries and cost of living allowances in the public service, for the implementation of a development programme, respectively.

The criminal justice system in this country is pathetic. It is a system that has crumbled and fallen flat on itself. The cogs in the wheels of justice are not turning. What is turning is the door in which the criminals go in with handcuffs and come out with champagne glasses in their hands. There is a backlog of 400,000 cases in the criminal justice system. That is ridiculous and obscene in a country with so many resources.

The Government has attacked the Judiciary. Judge Amrika Tiwary-Reddy has been attacked as being a UNC functionary, after she ruled against the Prime Minister for his personal involvement in preventing Feroza Ramjohn from being appointed at this country's High Commission in London.

Mr. Vice-President, the conditions—I wish you could see some of the conditions at the San Fernando Magistrates' Court. Do you know what happens? It is a shame and disgrace.

Marlene Coudray had another issue with this Government. She is acting in the capacity of City Corporation Chief Executive Officer, a position that this Government, at one point in time, did not want her in. After inspection on October 08, Marlene Coudray wrote the Chief Justice, Satnarine Sharma, another man whom this Government has put through a lot. One person persecuted by this Government is writing to another person persecuted by the Government, informing him that the conditions of the court were far from satisfactory.

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Speaking on the issue, another person, Chief Magistrate Sherman Mc Nicolls, agreed and said that the existing building is in a dilapidated condition and is not fit for occupation and for continued occupation. He declined to comment further. That sounds familiar.

The nine-page report was signed by acting Public Health Inspector, Mark Allen and acting City Medical Officer of Health, Selwyn Waterman. Inspectors found that the outlets for urinals for the facilities provided for police officers was blocked and the free flow of urine impeded a rotting door at the entrance of the holding cells. A slop bucket was provided within one cell and apart from poor lighting, there was inadequate ventilation.

In the Second Magistrates' Court, the report on the floor showed excessive wear and the seating accommodation of lawyers was in a general state of disrepair. There was evidence of termite infestation and pigeons roosting on the window sills. All these things were observed at the Second Magistrates' Court. In a country with so much money and resources, this is a crying shame.

Mr. Vice-President: Are you nearly finished?

Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh: No.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. It will be remiss of me—as a former local government representative of the people for the district of Otaheite/Rousillac in the Siparia Regional Corporation—not to advocate for the state of the regional corporations.

I wish if the Minister of Local Government, Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas, had spoken to why his Ministry did not receive some funds. The Ministry of Local Government *Draft White Paper on Local Government Reform* speaks about decentralization. I was an elected councillor. It states that decentralization of local government must incorporate the decentralization initiatives of other central government ministries and that the Ministry of Local Government should decentralize administrative and operational responsibilities to municipal corporations, which will expedite the delivery of services to the people. What this

says, in layman terms, is that in order to deliver services to those rural communities—where the powers of central government are entrusted in an epicentre in Port of Spain—we must devolve and decentralize to the rural community so that you get empowerment to the level of the local community.

In Maturita and Biche, people will have control of their lives. If the police station floor is rotting, the regional corporation will have money and resources to assist so that we would not have to wait on the bureaucracy of Port of Spain, with the red tape to get the delivery of services at the local community. The emphasis should be on devolution of powers and decentralization, which is what would really create community empowerment.

Keith Miller in the article *Advantages and Disadvantages of Local Government and Centralization* indicated that the Ministry of Local Government has not gained from this Appropriation Bill. In order to have effective decentralization, we must build on this theme, advocated in the Vision 2020 document.

It stated that the new paradigm must facilitate full participation of all citizens, especially traditionally marginalized groups such as women and youth in the process of nation-building and governance. Such a participatory framework, along with adequate scope for local management, will release the abundant energy, innovative spirit, leadership talents, vibrancy and innate public-solving capacity, which reside in the Caribbean people.

There is an article which states that the PNM keeps Rio Claro in poverty. The Chairman of the Rio Claro Corporation has to bemoan that he really needs \$60 million to build the infrastructure in Rio Claro, which is neglected. However, they received a paltry \$3.8 million, while CEPEP gets \$41.6 billion and the funds are given to family and friends.

They said that they created these organizations to improve the delivery of services, but is that really true? Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Rural Development Community Improvement Services Limited is an organization which is run like a private business. They do not comply with the Central Tenders Board's regulations. In an election year, there is serious room for corruption in these organizations. We are asking that the moneys be spent transparently, through the transparent organization by the elected people, which are the regional corporations. Instead, the Government goes through a process to emasculate local government and pull power from the hands of the poor people in the rural communities.

Mr. Vice-President, it is no secret that government spending has influenced inflation and that the inflation rate has been bumping between 8 and 10 per cent, over a period of time. It is because of the housing programmes, the palatial mansions and skyscraping structures like Bahrain Engineering, that they are involved in that. This has caused the demand for aggregate and other materials and has influenced the inflation rate in this country.

The Chief Economist at the CMMB is telling us that there is a strong pick-up in inflationary pressures. Headline inflation is running at 7 per cent on an annual basis. There is substantial tightening in the labour market and the housing boom is impacting on inflation. He is advocating that the economy may be beginning to overheat. These are serious concerns for the poor people of this country.

The housing programme that they so highly speak of, is it really reaching the poor? When you look at the document put out by the Government, it says that households headed by single females are also likely to access reasonable mortgages, given that 58 per cent of female applicants to the Ministry of Housing earn less than \$3,000 per month.

In essence, this is the reality. The houses have now become so expensive that they cannot be accessed by the poor people for whom they were targeting in the first place. Sen. Christine Sahadeo said that the middle-class lots would cost more.

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

In this article in the *Guardian*, ex-sugar workers want to know why the Government did not consider them as recipients for 2,000 prime residential lots of Caroni (1975) Limited. The lots are in four areas: Orange Field, Balmain, Factory Road Chaguanas and Montserrat. They are to be sold to middle-income earners of the public, through the HDC. Sen. Sahadeo said that the 2,000 lots in the four areas would be sold at a considerably higher price than the \$20,000 to \$30,000 being offered to former Caroni (1975) Limited workers.

Sen. Sahadeo: I wonder if the goodly Senator would give way for a minute. Just, again, to correct the situation and not spend half of an hour in debate. First of all, in the Government's housing policy, we have a lot of support structure and subsidy, both in terms of infrastructure cost and subsidized interest rates, as low as 2 per cent for those with income less than \$8,000. Yes, we fully recognize that middle-income people have been squeezed out. In that regard, we are making facilitative arrangements.

You will appreciate, as your income increases you would not get the total subsidy, but at lower income levels.

I thank the Senator for giving way.

Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh: I am not dealing with lower than \$8,000. The poor people are the people who really need houses and are in extended families and they want to get out, burst out and go on their own.

I want to end this by quoting Rudy Indarsingh who questioned these claims and why the lots at the four sites were not made available to the ex-sugar workers. Sen. Sahadeo, within her speech to ex-workers two weeks ago at Woodford Lodge assured that ex-Caroni (1975) Limited workers would be given priority to lands before any distribution is to take place to the public. He asked: "Where is the priority, Madam Minister? Why are these lands being held back?" That is the President of the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union, claiming that they reneged.

Well, I want to quote the Senator again. "Oil would not last forever". Today we should be looking out for our youths and our children. Today is World Day Against Child Labour, June 12. Looking back at the history of our country, we must recall that during the period when our children were forced into the sugar plantation to work and assist their parents in earning the minimum wage so that they can buy basic food for only six months and starve for the rest of the year, that history is also filled with the struggle of a great leader, Mr. Basdeo Panday, who struggled against all odds and systems, the sugar planters and the Government, even the parents to take children out of the cane field and place them into schools. How many of our university graduates, who hold positions at the commanding heights of our community, owe this position to this beloved leader because of his relentless struggle?

I have another from another Minister.

Madam President: You have based your whole contribution on newspaper clippings.

Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh: No, No, I was quoting from several documents while you were not here, Madam President. This article is on cheap food and luxury. It is telling the public cheap food, such as cheap oil is something we may never see again.

This is the reality facing us, but this article says that Government spending is the key to inflation. There are figures in the other article by the trade unionist, Vincent Cabrera.

Madam President: Please, say where you are quoting from, which newspaper and which date?

Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh: It is a whirlwind tour.

Madam President: You need to do that in future.

Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh: The point is that the statistics used by the Government does not fool anybody.

Madam President: You have three minutes more.

Sen. Dr. G. Ramadhar-Singh: The Government is contributing to inflation, which is pushing up food prices. They are claiming that there is less unemployment. When there is less unemployment, you are supposed to have less crime, given studies that were done. The Government is mismanaging the economy. They are mismanaging the youths and they are mismanaging the future of Trinidad and Tobago. It is time that this country is saved.

It was Mahatma Gandhi who said: "I claim that in losing the spindle wheel, we lost our left lung and there we are suffering from galloping consumption." The restoration of the wheel will arrest the progress of the disease. This means that we are killing the sectors of our economy where we produce and manufacture and we are depending on the gifts of an oil boom. That is helping this Government to mismanage this country.

In a society of plenty, poverty is evil. The PNM must be removed.

10.00 p.m.

Sen. Basharat Ali: Madam President, thank you. I join the debate on the Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, 2007 for the provision of supplementary funds in the sum of \$3,121,413,821. I have read these numbers to remind myself that we are talking mega dollars. In future, I will be talking about millions and billions. This reduces to \$3.12 billion.

For the record, I believe Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas was not correct in saying that the amount of \$1.7 billion to be allocated to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund (HSF) was included in this \$3.12 billion. I believe that needs to be corrected. The \$3.12 billion is quite separate and apart from the \$1.7 billion which is proposed for the HSF.

Madam President, the HSF Act was assented to on March 15, 2007 and it became law on that date, and that was the date of commencement of that Act. As of that date, the moneys held in the Interim Revenue Stabilisation Fund should

have been transferred to the fund denominated in the currency of \$ US whereupon the Interim Revenue and Stabilisation shall cease to exist. I am working on the assumption that all the funds that were in the Interim Revenue Stabilisation Fund have found its way in the HSF as of the middle of March.

The end of March meant that we have had the end of two quarters or half a year of this fiscal year 2007. I believe, according to the Act, there may have been some transfers under section 13 of the Act. Sen. Mary King read that section, and I do not propose to do it again, but what I am going to say refers to that. My estimate is that the HSF should have US \$1.4 billion which is equivalent to TT \$8.792 billion. The transfer during fiscal 2006 was TT \$3.16 billion.

Section 13(1) of the Act provides for the transfers. I was a little surprised and even disappointed when the hon. Minister gave the number of \$1.7 billion that would have been made to the fund by the end of fiscal year 2007. I was disappointed because I expected it to be much more.

Madam President, looking at the transfers to the Interim Revenue Stabilisation Fund, in 2004 the transfer was \$1.263 billion with a benchmark crude oil price of US \$41; in 2005 the transfer was \$2.593 billion with a benchmark of US \$57 for crude oil; and in 2006, as I have just said, \$3.16 billion which we assume is a benchmark of \$63 which is the figure quoted during the budget speech 2007.

So, when I hear today that the proposal is to only transfer \$1.7 billion during this fiscal year, and while we will cross the equivalent of TT \$10 billion—in fact, what we would be putting in the fund is in \$ US, and that \$1.7 billion is really US \$0.272 billion. I thought, on my own, I would make some assumptions and do some calculations as to what I would have expected. Maybe my methodology and my assumptions were not quite correct, but I had worked out that if we took the half of a year which has gone for this fiscal year, and worked out the numbers, then we should have transferred \$1.43 billion.

My arithmetic is based on the budget estimate for 2007 which is income tax and royalty of \$14.94 billion, and half of the year for that would be \$7.47 billion. According to section 13(1), the excess of 10 per cent should be added to that so that is \$8.22 billion. That is what I consider to be the baseline for any transfer, based on US \$45 per barrel for West Texas Intermediate Crude Oil benchmark and for natural gas at the wellhead of US \$3.50 per mmbtu.

So, looking at what could have been the actual revenue for that period, I went back to the revenue collected during 2006 for the whole year of 2006, and that came up to \$19.3 billion. As I said, that was based on \$63 per barrel crude oil and

natural gas of \$3.50 per mcf. So, in accordance with the definition in the HSF that revenue would have yielded \$19.3 billion, half of which is \$9.65 billion. When I took out the budget revenue plus the 10 per cent excess, I came to a figure of \$1.43 billion. This is where my number comes up. When I multiplied that figure by two I got \$2.86 billion which is quite a bit more than \$1.7 billion.

I would like the hon. Minister to react to what I have worked out, and to let me know where I have gone wrong; if I had gone wrong. I think the basic assumptions are okay for pricing. I have looked at \$60 per barrel for those two quarters and for the rest of this fiscal 2007, and \$3.50 for natural gas. I await the Minister's comments to find out why are we so low down compared to the years where we have had high natural gas prices. The natural gas going to LNG was high and, indeed, the natural gas going into methanol and ammonia prices would have been also high, as far as the National Gas Company is concerned. Madam President, those are my comments on the question of the \$1.7 billion HSF deposit. I believe it is not made into a transfer yet.

I went through just a few items of the expenditures proposed and, primarily, in the development budget. I think under Head 13 the Office of the Prime Minister, "the establishment of a dance orchestra". I believe Sen. The Hon. Yuille-Williams referred to me in response to Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh, but I have to say that I have nothing to do with dance orchestras. My interest is as a supporter of a young group of classical musicians called the National Sinfonia and I am always looking for funds. Anybody here who would like to provide funds for their workshops and concerts in August, I am available to collect on behalf of National Sinfonia. A very good little band

Madam President, I believe this item referred to an advertisement which appeared in the *Newsday* on April 07, 2007. It was from the Office of the Prime Minister, an advertisement which was intended for bandleaders and musicians to be part of "the Renaissance of Formal Elegant Ballroom Dancing to Live Music". That is what was there. It is quite a comprehensive list of musicians. As far as I can see, there are about 23 musicians and two vocalists and, unfortunately, only one pannist is in the whole list here plus the bandleader who has to be a very versatile guy.

I do not believe that this has anything to do with keeping young people away from crime. In fact, the people who would form this band, the applicants have to be between ages of 18 and 45, and must know how to read music, et cetera. I do not believe that has anything to do with crime.

I have some idea that it is probably associated with the 2009 events; the Fifth Summit of Heads of State and Governments of the Americas and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting which is on the same page under recurrent expenditure, speaking of a “double secretariat.” I suspect that is more what this orchestra is being set up for and not for anything else. I stand to be corrected on that matter.

Madam President, because of the hour, I would go a little faster than I normally would. I would not stop at many of the places where I might have stopped. I would like to go then to the Ministry of Health development budget. It is a small item which says “start of construction of National Oncology Centre of \$9.5 million”.

Madam President, you would remember that I asked the Minister of Health a question in this Senate with respect to the National Oncology Centre. There was a prompt to it, because an advertisement appeared in the newspaper for a company called EllisDon who was seeking enquiries from interested persons for various items which were associated with construction. I went to their website and there is where I found out that they said that they had a contract for US \$24 million to do construction management, and this was the genesis of my question to the Minister of Health. The reply for that question came on May 08, 2007 and it was presented by Minister Colm Imbert on behalf of the Minister.

I found out from the question that the actual budget for the National Oncology Centre is in three parts: two contracts with the Comprehensive Care International which is an entity employed or recommended by a Canadian Government Corporation and that is in two parts: US \$10.4 million, equivalent to TT \$65 million and Can. \$23.1 million which is equivalent to TT \$134 million. The Canadian element is TT \$199 million.

The EllisDon contract which I was enquiring about is for US \$24.1 million which is TT \$152 million. From what I gather, this National Oncology Centre programme and project has a budget of \$351 million. Now, I had asked about financing for this amount, and I had been told that the two foreign contracts with Comprehensive Care International (CCI) of Canada which would have been funded by lending arrangement by presumably Scotia Canada, while the construction component was to be funded under the Ministry of Health Development Programme.

My figures to date suggest that for this project, in 2005 the expenditure was \$3.145 million; in 2006 \$1.355 million which comes up to \$4.5 million; in 2007 the original budget estimate was \$20,185,000, and now we have an additional

\$9.5 million. This is only \$34.2 million. It would seem to me that we are expecting some further amounts to be appropriated in September and into the following year. I am not too sure, because the scheduled completion for the National Oncology Centre is May 2009, if the information I have is correct. This is what I would like to put to the Senate. This is the first time I saw this kind of information, by accessing a website which gave me part of a contract which was eventually signed here in Trinidad and Tobago, and the other part which is under the government to government arrangement of Canada.

I had to go through this to find out for myself. I do not think that information would have been available here to the ordinary citizens, and by my own research into the website and my ability to ask a question, I was able to satisfy myself to know that, in fact, we still have a fair amount of money to come for the National Oncology Centre. Of course, I do not know what the condition of the loan will be. I am assuming that it is 100 per cent borrowing by the North Central Regional Health Authority guaranteed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Perhaps, I will get some clarification on that from the hon. Minister in due course.

The next item I looked at was Head 39, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and there I saw an item which says: “continuation of Water and Waste Water Master Plan”. I really could not find any amounts of money. In fact, these items were identified en bloc, so I did not know how much any of these items were. I read before and I had seen in the press that WASA had entered into a contract with GENIVAR. I did not know who GENIVAR was, but I went once again to GENIVAR’s website and found that GENIVAR had a Waste Water Rehabilitation Project in Trinidad and Tobago. That is on their website and they gave a little description of what it is; years 2006 to 2008. They gave what they were supposed to do which are all the designs, et cetera.

I do not know how much the consultancy contract is going to cost. I believe this question of using waste water in industrial sites was mentioned once or twice. This one goes into details, but the other GENIVAR contract which was recently signed—there were pictures and everything else—was for the development of “the water and waste master plan”, and it says here for the continuation and implementation of the plan. I do not think that plan is in concrete yet in whatever it is. I do not know what that contract is. We do not know what obligations have been given, and whether indeed this new contract with GENIVAR is really an extension of what they were doing before. I think we need to clarify that.

I have a grave difficulty, when I have to go through all of this to find out what we should know here, certainly in Parliament. My problem relates to something like this. On the GENIVAR's website I see another project, Water and Waste Water Plan for the city of Montreal. This is exactly the same thing, except that this is for the city of Montreal. That is another one of their projects listed. I do not know whether the title came from there. I would like somebody to react to GENIVAR. I know that GENIVAR is involved with the Water Front Rehabilitation Project. I read all about this on the website and this waste water contract and now this major consultancy. I certainly do not know and I do not know whether any of my colleagues are familiar with the terms or the cost of this which is, at this stage, a consultancy contract.

So the question of transparency and accountability pops up again in my mind. It is not the first time that I have spoken about it, especially in the field of procurement and whichever way it goes, whether it is through a Ministry or not. We know the procedure for a ministry but, more importantly, the process that we go through with the so-called special purpose companies that presumably have their own rules. They were supposed to come under the ambit of the legislation for public procurement.

In last year's budget speech I said that our Government is a very promising government, because they came with a Green Paper and they were late in bringing a White Paper and they came with the White Paper and it was tabled on the day of the budget speech, and by now we should have had the legislation or, at least, the draft legislation in place for this, but we have not seen it.

Madam President, the disturbing part of this is that on June 04, 2007 when the hon. Prime Minister spoke at a Breakfast Meeting with the Prime Minister, this subject was raised by a JCC person, Mr. Winston Riley, and I believe by the Transparency International person, and I got the impression that there were now reservations about the White Paper, and an implementation of it was basically being delayed, because it would slow down the process of nation building. Now, I find those two not incompatible; national building and being able to be transparent in anything. I do not know where we stand on that matter now. I think there is much disappointment all around.

Unlike Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano who seems to have a lot of faith in the Special Purpose Companies, I do not. I have said so before. I would like to see what their track record is; whether it is National Infrastructure Development Company, UDeCott, RUDECOTT, the Palo Seco Enterprises or the Education Facilities Company. Those are all private companies. I would like to see

something of their track record for expenditure and also how they enter into a contract, budget control and scheduling. How are they on scheduling? We have known that UDeCott had problems with the Brian Lara Promenade, and they have a lot of contracts.

With regard to the hon. Minister's defence of the importation of labour, I have no problem with the import of labour, and how many work permits that we grant. In a way, a lot of these work permits—we have seen a list here probably a year ago of work permits issued, and they were all companies. Many of them joint venture companies. So, they come whether it is Fluor Summit, which is a joint venture of Fluor, a US international company and Summit Engineering, a local company. We have Bechtel with some group which is based in Pointe-a-Pierre with the same kind of thing.

I know when these advertisements go out for people, because they always say send a copy of your resume or whatever it is to the Ministry of Manpower and Planning, and they use local attorneys to process that. We are short of people, and that is true. We are short of expertise, but I would have expected that when we do the building of these projects—the construction and implementation of these projects—there would have been a residue of technical capability. I do not see it happening. It seems that all we are interested in is getting the project done and the technical capability is not taken care of.

I have always been a proponent—and I have done project work before with the Government—of local involvement from day one until the plant is established and until it could move on. A good example of that is, indeed, the CL Financial Group who has done it that way, and have now set up a company in Oman to manage and implement the Oman methanol project. CL Financial is, of course, a 50 per cent shareholder in that project. So, there it is from projects that we have done in Point Lisas—Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith would be familiar with that—we tried to maximize the use of our engineering people in those projects, and those are the dividends that those projects have paid, and we are able now to have people with the capability to produce outside. It is not something new.

I remember when I was in Shell, I was visiting the Hague and they called me one day and said that they have a plant to start up in Singapore and they wanted supervisors. I said, sure we have them. So, in that early period, in the early 1970s, we were sending people from Trinidad and Tobago to Singapore which was not a giant as it is now to do start-up activities. My friend here says sustainable development but, I think it is more than that. We are always talking about

innovation, but we cannot innovate until we have the grasp of everything. Those are some of the comments I wanted to make on that and, particularly, in the light of what I see here with some of these foreign contracts.

I have one final point, and that is the only recurrent expenditure item that I picked out. I think the Minister in the Ministry of Finance would probably know what it is and that is a shortfall in the subsidy for the year 2007. The budget figure was \$563 million, and the subsidy is almost the same amount which is \$537 million which comes up to \$1.1 billion. That is a huge amount of money in the form of subsidy.

I have one question for the hon. Minister and it is this: Do these numbers include the petroleum product levy which at this level would be 4 per cent of gross income from those companies which produce crude oil? I see a subsidy variation. In 2004 it was \$713 billion; in 2005 it was \$650 billion; in 2006, \$1.332 billion and in 2007, \$1.1 billion. I would like to know whether this sum here of \$1.1 billion is the total subsidy or whether we also have over and above that a certain amount. It could be close to a billion dollar, if we look at the crude oil element which we cap at 4 per cent of gross revenue from those companies which produce crude oil.

For the benefit of the hon. Minister, in the Petroleum Production Levy and Subsidy Act, there is something set up, something called the Petroleum Subsidy Fund. I was wondering whether all the collection of levy goes through there. I looked at those numbers and in 2004 the public accounts gave a figure of \$64 million; in 2005, \$112 million; and in 2006, \$102 million. So, it is not that it is a dead fund; it is moving. I would really like to know what the true figure is.

Hon. Minister, you know that I am not in favour of all this amount of subsidy. One day the light will be bright and we will see where we are, or may I go the other way around; the light will get dull and we would not be able to move. When we subsidize this and we also subsidize electricity by such large amounts, we are doing ourselves a disfavour.

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand talked about global warming and climate change, et cetera. The first thing we can do, and I will support it any day, is to reduce the subsidy so that motor cars would consume less fuel. If you take a walk about the place do you know how often I see a motor vehicle just idling there, and that is because gasoline is \$3 a litre, and the same is for electricity. I think the Government has taken the first step and that is to improve the efficiency of power generation, and that is a good step. I have said so before and I would say so again.

Finance (Supplementary) Bill
[SEN. ALI]

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

It is a good step, because for the same amount of power you would use less natural gas, and natural gas is the cleanest form of fossil fuel, and there again you would have a saving.

According to the last report of the Regulated Industries Commission, the only persons who are subsidized now are the residential. As I have said before, come the end of this year, we might not see all of those subsidies of the residential. Once again, we would have the incentive if we have to pay higher electricity bills to save. To save means turning off our lights and not using them all the time. It is having shorter hot showers and programming our air-conditioning units, also contributing to the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. I am not too concerned about that. Trinidad and Tobago in terms of world emission is .11 per cent.

It is true that we say per capita that we are about 10th in line, but that is only 20 million tonnes a year or something like that divided by our population. So, that does not bother me so much, especially when you look at the global picture, we are .11 per cent of total global CO₂ equivalent emissions, but we must take the steps. We have an obligation and we must take the steps to cut our consumption down. I do not think that we have to go and say that we would not have these projects, because that is our lifeline. The fossil fuel projects are our lifeline and it is not us who are doing the pollution and causing the climate change.

So, Madam President, that is pretty well my contribution to this debate, and I look forward to getting some answers from the hon. Minister. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Overand Padmore: Madam President, thank you very much for just a brief intervention. I am sure that all of the specific questions that were raised, the very able Minister on this side would be able to provide the answers to them. We are here to deal with a supplementary appropriation Bill of \$3.1 billion. We have heard the Members on the Front Bench opposite. Sen. Mark said he has no problems with the provisions for the public service adjustments, because they deserve them. They have been arguing consistently that in a time of plenty we must save, and we are spending too much and we are not saving, notwithstanding an appropriation is being made into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund (HSF). In fact, out of the \$3.1 billion that is the supplementary appropriation, \$1.7 billion is going in the HSF; \$.7 billion is going to meet the salary adjustments for public servants. So, all the noise that they are making is about the other \$.7 billion. You would believe that it is \$3.1 billion that is being wasted by the Government. Madam President, \$.5 billion is what they are making all the noise about.

One of the benefits that somebody like me would have coming back into this distinguished Senate after an extended interval, is to be able to compare the Back and Front Benches opposite now from what they were when I was around some years ago. I could say the Back Benches remain of the same high standard that I knew when I was here last, but I must confess that the Front Benches have deteriorated, and this is a great pity. [*Crosstalk*] The basic fact that I am making is, I have said before, and I would say it again, we are now dealing with an Opposition that has a record and, therefore, when they make all of the statements they make, one can ask: What did they do when they had the opportunity?

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh talked about the record of this Government vis-à-vis the Judiciary. Well, the Attorney General dealt with that. He went on to talk about the SIA and spying on Senators Opposite. It is just a figment of their imagination, but they resort to statements like that hoping to catch newspaper headlines so that they would come back here in the Senate and regale us with those newspaper headlines, but without those statements having any relevance in reality, in truth and in fact, but they do not care. [*Desk thumping*] All they are interested in is trying to score cheap shots and they do not seem to understand that it is not resonating with the population.

He talked about witness protection and he said that Canon Clarke's brother who was to give evidence the following day was murdered. What is the connection between witness protection and that? God alone knows but, again, he hopes to get a headline. They do not understand that the population has become far too sophisticated to be influenced by that kind of non sequiturs. I mean, one has to be parliamentary all the time, but they tempt you to be unparliamentary at times.

Sen. Sammy made a lot of references about poverty and the lack of water and you would not believe that they were the ones who proclaimed water for all and that they had achieved it. How could you have had water for all and water remains a problem today? They do not even understand that they are trying to fool the population and the population has seen through it.

They talked about flooding, but no PNM Prime Minister of this country has ever left the country under flood conditions and go off to Tobago to play golf. Just consider, to play golf! You see a Prime Minister who claims—we heard Sen. Dr. Ramadhar-Singh talk about the distinguished Prime Minister Panday who did so much for the working class of this country, and that was the Prime Minister when his heartland was under flood waters left and went across to Tobago to play golf. You know, golf is not the working man's sport, but that is the sport he went to play in Tobago.

Sen. Mark: What is your point?

Sen. O. Padmore: I am saying these things, because—I would not go into too many of them, and I said that I was not going to speak long—what I want them to understand is if they think we are in a political season, and they can play politics with everything, then they must know that their record would be used to judge them by not just what they say. Let me give you two brief examples and you will understand.

When they first came into the Government in their first budget—

Sen. Mark: I just wanted to ask you if you would be so kind to point out to this honourable Senate, where in this document is there \$1.3 billion or \$1.7 billion allocated to the HSF. I looked through the figures and I saw \$3.1 billion, but I am not seeing anything here for the HSF.

Sen. O. Padmore: I listened to the Minister when he was presenting the Bill. In fact, it was close to the end when he said that we will be transferring \$1.7 billion to the HSF, and we still have a surplus of some \$2 million. Minister, am I correct? You were not listening.

Sen. Mark: You are wrong.

Sen. O. Padmore: You were not listening.

Sen. Mark: You are saying that what we are dealing with here is \$.7 billion, and I am saying that you are wrong. We are dealing with a \$3.1 billion request.

Sen. O. Padmore: That is what I told you; \$3.1 billion and \$1.7 billion to the HSF and \$.7 billion for the public service settlement.

Sen. Mark: You are wrong.

Sen. O. Padmore: I am wrong? The Minister is going to confirm it when he is winding up. When that government came in, the government of national unity which eventually became a government of national disunity. I think this is important, because every time they open their mouths, crime is the subject they talk about. So, in their 1996 budget statement, this is what they had to say on crime:

“No one can deny that the number one concern of the population at this time is the spate of criminal activity,...”

Note, they have just come in, so they were not talking about their record.

“especially violent crimes which have been occurring with increased frequency. What is most alarming as well is that the system of dealing with

criminals appears to be ineffective and although more and more laws have been passed, individual liberty has been infringed upon and disorder is rampant. This situation must be reversed.

To successfully launch our offensive on crime, Government will establish a Task Force assisted by the Fast Tracking Support Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister to prepare and implement a Crime Reduction Master Plan as a matter of urgency.”

I do not know that we have ever seen that plan.

“The attendant solutions will not only deal with the detection and punishment of offenders, but of necessity these solutions will address the prevention of crime. Four major areas have been targeted for inclusion in the comprehensive master plan: Policing, The Criminal Justice System,...

I say that and I want you to bear in mind the comments of the Attorney General when he intervened:

“Prison Reform and the Education System.”

Bear that in mind again with respect to that school on Sackville Street.

“Mr. Speaker, the police hold a unique position in the society. They are the trustees of the freedom of the population and it is imperative that they perform their duties in a manner that is not only socially acceptable, but also scrupulously within the framework of the law. There is no doubt that the focus must be on pro-active, pre-emptive approach to policing rather than being ‘incident driven’. Public confidence and support for the police will certainly be influential in the crime reduction process.

The rise in crime has not been an isolated social phenomenon. There is a striking parallel in the demise of discipline in schools. Our offensive on crime will therefore address the education system from the pre-school to the university level.

While crime is a complex issue, the key to making Trinidad and Tobago a less dangerous place in which to live is by changing the rules of the game. We must reduce the waste in the system. Sentencing must fit the crime, as well as the criminal. Sentences must be served promptly. This Government has been advocating—if you do the crime you must do the time.”

Madam President, it is important that they remember that. [*Desk thumping*] If you do the crime you must do the time. When you are trying to get those who do

the crime, if it is established that they have done it, they must do the time. They cannot come here at the same time and shout persecution. Now, that was their first budget.

Madam President, in their budget for 1999—2000, this would have been their penultimate budget; they were addressing poverty, crime, et cetera, and listen to them. When you listen to them now, you cannot believe that they understand these things. That is why I tell them they have a record and they must understand that they will be judged by that, but then they went on to treat with it. This is the budget of 1999—2000. They have a record in office.

“Mr. Speaker, the incidence of serious crime continues to be a threat to the safety of the individual, the business sector, especially the small entrepreneur...”

If you listen to them now, you would not believe that was the case when they were there—

“and the security of the nation overall. This remains a priority on our Human Development Agenda. There is a pressing need for innovation to curb the crises in many communities.”

Now, hear the solutions.

“Any solution to the crime problem in Trinidad and Tobago must recognize that:

- Proper parenting and schooling are essential.
- The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service must play a vital role.”

They played a lot of politics with that when we tried to get them to play a vital role.

- “The community must become a full partner in achieving public safety.
- Protective services must be modernized using current technology.”

You would not believe that when the Minister on this side gets up and speaks to these issues that they saw the situation in the same light. This is why we say to the population, you cannot get salvation from having a group like that, because it is utter hypocrisy they are engaged in. [*Desk thumping*] After all these years, we could now better understand why their Prime Minister threw his hands up in the air and said I cannot deal with this problem of crime. That is why it is important that we remind them from time to time that they are not going to come into the

Parliament and make all of these scandalous allegations and believe they can get away with them.

If they would only listen to the Back Benches, they will understand what reasoned intervention is all about; what attempting to address policy issues—confront the Government on the policy issues if you wish. They raise them all the time. Sen. Prof. Deosaran, Sen. Prof. Ramchand and Sen. Basharat Ali did that. Nobody can take exception to that. You may be critical, but at the same time do not distort and deliberately set out to mislead as they do all the time.

The last one—I think that I would just close on that—was the fact that Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh comes and makes this statement—again, everything they see in the newspaper they rush to treat it as gospel. They do not even recognize that the newspapers do not add balance to what they say. So, the family that claimed that they were evicted in the dead of night—Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh who always has a document to prove the point he is making, pretended he had not seen the Ministry of Works and Transport release on the matter. If only to complete the record so that it would not stand on the basis of what he said, I think it is important to say that the Government had acquired the site. At the time of acquisition, there were no permanent structures on the land in question; no one lived there; and the land is directly in the path of the interchange development.

The people who had the structures there were written to and requested to cease construction, because acquisition proceedings had commenced. They went ahead now to start doing some building, and they were written to cease construction. They were further informed that under the law there can be no compensation paid for anything erected after the notice of acquisition. That did not stop them. They went on.

Again, the ministry's release said that they were spoken to and/or met with on over 10 occasions, and they were also asked to submit a claim for compensation as recently as April 2007. However, up to Friday, June 08, 2007, the Daniels had not submitted a claim for compensation. However, they went and got an ex parte injunction to stop the Government from proceeding with the development. That was discharged in May because they did not put in an appearance, but a consent order was agreed to vacate the site on June 07, 2007. June 07, 2007 came and they did not vacate the site.

The release states that it should be noted that the properties in question have already been acquired in accordance with the law. Specifically, contrary to reports, there was no one living or sleeping in the building structures when the

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ministry took possession of the site on the morning of June 08, 2007. The structures had no utility connection or proper sanitary facilities and were thus virtually uninhabitable.

One of the reasons the ministry took action at night was to determine the truthfulness of the claim that the structures were occupied as dwelling houses. The reality is that the Daniels came to the site in motor vehicles from another place after midnight on June 08, 2007 and after the ministry had taken possession of the land and commenced removal of the structures.

It is untrue for anyone to say, therefore, that nine persons had been rendered homeless since the structures were unoccupied. The Daniels' account of the events of June 08, 2007 is just fanciful and false. It is not surprising that is the account that made the headlines in the newspapers—the same headlines that they like to bring to regale this Senate—and that is the version that they want to come to influence the record of this Senate with. We cannot accept anything they say on trust, because integrity of expression is lacking among them, and for that reason we have to reject them. [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ronald Phillip: Madam President, I rise to make my contribution on this Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill. I want to ask if Sen. Padmore was given a different document from me. When I look at this document it is \$3.1 billion that they are asking for under the different headings. So, I want him not to mislead the public and the Senate in terms of the different amounts.

Now, we have no objections to the moneys that are being asked, but it is the amount of money. The Ministry of Finance, \$767.1 million; the Ministry of National Security, \$557.1 million; the Ministry of Education, \$193.5 million; the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, \$313.2 million; the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, \$538.8 million; the Ministry of Works and Transport, \$366 million and the list goes on with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education asking for \$170.9 million.

The point is that in the five years that the UNC was there, we would have spent about \$54 billion. If you add this \$1.1 billion to the \$30 something billion that they had before, you are seeing where the appropriations in terms of money is close to what they are spending in one year, as compared to what was done over the longer period.

Madam President, clearly, what we had when Sen. Danny Montano spoke was a case of everything is hunky-dory, the people are happy and there is no concern. When you look at the system, there is little or nothing that is working; the health

care system, the education system. We are asking simply to get things working, rather than spend all this money that we are appropriating to different votes to allow these people to do what they have to do.

When we talk about housing, it is like the PNM basically is selling the house and becoming cash rich. Where is the sustainability in terms of it? In fact, economist Dudley Sears had looked at the Venezuelan economy as an oil producing country in the 1960s. What they came up with is the model that was referred to by Sen. King, in terms of the onshore and the offshore economy. The stability of the economy is not developed, basically on the oil and gas sector. In the oil and gas sector we have foreign and direct investments and we got people to come in. We have done that. The Point Lisas Industrial Estate has over US \$8 billion invested in foreign direct investment, and we do not own that.

What we have done is taken our natural resource, in terms of oil and gas—when the hon. Minister Christine Sahadeo acting as Minister of Energy and Energy Industries was quoted on May 11, 2007 saying that we have 15 to 20 years gas reserves, Sen. Mary King talked about it is not quite 15 to 20 years but 10 to 15. What we have done really is taken our reserves, and we have extracted it over a rapid period of time to make ourselves rich.

Sen. Sahadeo: Thank you, Senator. Madam President, in that statement, it was misquoted. The point was made that in Trinidad and Tobago much emphasis was placed in terms of development of a knowledge-based industry. The statement was made that oil and gas will not last a lifetime, and it was not at all given any definitive years. I do not have that data. Presently, we are doing an audit to determine what are the proven reserves, et cetera and, therefore, it would have been misquoted. I would like to clarify that for the record. The statement was as a responsible Government, where are we taking this country, and one of the areas we discussed was a knowledge-based industry, and much emphasis was placed in terms of the service industry and a knowledge-based industry.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sen. R. Phillip: Madam President, the hon. Danny Montano was making the point “if” the oil and gas would ever finish. You see, when they start believing in these fallacies—we are talking about a non-renewable resource that will finish, and because it will finish it means that we must have prudent measures in place to ensure that we manage the economy in the proper way. He started off his contribution by saying that he does not know where Sen. Mark lives, but he is a Trinidadian. If he is a Trinidadian he will also know that we have about 2,000

pumps that will always produce on a daily basis of two to 10 barrels of oil. So, we will always get some oil. Since in the 1940s, our oil production has decreased and it is only the gas production that has sustained the economy.

What this administration has decided to do is to extract the oil and gas over a very rapid period of time and make themselves rich. There is little planning in the onshore sector by using this money in a very meaningful way. That is the concern that we have. If you take this large sum of money and you do not manage it properly you will end up with problems. For instance, you will end up with the problem of a jobless growth. When you talk about jobless growth, you are talking about heavy capital investment in terms of the economy to build energy, methanol and smelter plants, but leaving just 15 to 20 persons to run it, there is no contribution to the economy in terms of sustainable growth in that way.

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The other point that we looked at is, when all this money is spent in the economy, there is the heating up of the economy. So it has implications for monetary policy and fiscal measures, and all these things must be done with the fact that we have our people to deal with and we have to provide these social services.

The point about it is that politicians live in a five-year cycle and this is what is happening; the first two or three years they take the money and spend it behind social nets and social services. When we come to the fourth and fifth year, you see where the Ministry of Works is spending over \$300 million to pave the roads. What we see on the highways as soon as they pave the roads they come after and do patching.

We want to know, basically, are these slush funds that are added for campaigning, because there is little or no accountability? We do not see from the documents basically, how the moneys would be appropriated. I would say the Minister will always say that moneys that are allocated are not moneys that are spent and I agree with that. We give the money to the different votes and it is the people to use it, but because of the add-on policy that they have with their accounting you always find that people are asking for exorbitant amounts and we have to be very careful in how it is we dish out this money.

In terms of the actual Bill itself, I would just like to look at the Prime Minister's Office, under Head 13. Just to make the comment about the development programme, where he talked about this music, dance and fine arts school in Tobago. It seems that he is jumping from one area, because recently he

talked about dancing crime away. So when he comes now and talks about a dance orchestra, I am wondering if he decided that, because to spend \$2.2 million in Tobago and part of that is the construction of an administration building. You cannot build a decent house with \$2.2 million in Tobago, much less to do all these things. There is no explanation for what he is going to do with this \$2.2 million and more importantly, how he is going to appropriate from his office into different people who he wants to be dancing against crime.

Those are the concerns that we have, where they lodged into the report areas now—you know they say, "Mr. Fiddler, give me a tune", then you do the jig to the pole—when we look at this Bill. If you are really looking to develop Tobago and as my colleague, Sen. Dumas spoke about, are we really adverse in Tobago? No, we like Tobago; we want to develop Tobago and that has always been our policy. Sen. Padmore was even commenting about our former Prime Minister going for vacation in Tobago and playing golf in Tobago; of course he likes Tobago in terms of that.

What we would like in the Bill is the fact that we could look at some financial management for Tobago and to move Tobago tourism from the kind of "bene ball and toolum" philosophy that they have kept the people in and to really develop the customer relations and the tourism training that we could have. [*Crosstalk*]

I am talking about the customer relations aspect of the tourism industry that we need to develop in Tobago. There is a Tobago master plan and the Tobago master plan would have talked about developing that kind of customer relationship. I have done work in Tobago in terms of being able to look at the labour market; to look at the customer relations and look at the things that have to be developed.

When we look at this appropriation in terms of the GATE programme, \$100 million, we recognize that the whole aspect about training our people is something that we need to do. It is because of that lack of a formalized training where we could demand some value for it; because what Minister Danny Montano talked about, there were 19 programmes where people could get a stipend and what this administration has done is really—people have become professional course takers. You go to a programme and you do floral arrangement, one time you get your stipend there; then the next time you go across, you are going to do some basket weaving or cake decorating and it is the same people they keep moving and moving and moving and there is no real contribution to the development of the people. Those are the problems we have.

What the hon. Minister probably could have done is to use some of this money and develop the training programmes in terms of getting more employers, getting their people trained and developing this national qualifications that they could have implemented. There is a big failure in that aspect and mention was made about the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and the heavy reliance, the looking backwards in terms of the oil and gas sector.

What we need to do is open up in terms of the artisan areas so we could make meaningful contribution of that. I am just commenting on the GATE programme. I looked at the expenditure; \$5 million is needed to increase the promotion of information with respect to Vision 2020. When we look at this Vision 2020 which is the policy, there is the need for \$5 million just for advertisements. Why are we spending or putting \$5 million just to promote advertising? What are these going to be? There is no explanation for that.

When I look at this expenditure there is a little concern here where they said the Immigration Department had spent \$656,000 for offices in Chaguanas, La Brea and Sangre Grande for the machine readable passport. To the best of my knowledge what they have done is closed down the passport office in Chaguanas for the past three months. And the Borough of Chaguanas, that services over 80,000 people, is without this service and there is no good reason for that. So while they are saying that money has been spent for the Chaguanas office, I know the Chaguanas office has been closed down.

In terms of the Ministry of Works and Transport allocation and we are seeing where the Ministry of Works is asking for \$104 million to clear watercourses. I just want to bring it to this noble House that the Caroni (1975) Limited, which they have closed down used to do these things. They used to clear all the watercourses; they would have maintained all the roads and there was no extra money that was asked for from the central government. So what they used to do is you would not have had to spend this \$104 million, they would have provided that service for you as part of the stuff they used to do.

In terms of the allocation to the Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation, I would ask why is it that we are talking about just \$13 million for the Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation; why only \$13 million. What we did in terms of this Bill, we asked for \$25.3 million, just to provide security for the World Cup. The whole idea about security for the World Cup is just \$25.3 million. We spent \$31.8 million in Carifesta, but the football that helps to develop our country and our nation and you see even though there is a sports development company, they have not been serious about developing that social aspect of the sports.

What they could have done, instead of spending this close to \$1 billion in Tarouba for this World Cup stadium; the World Cup has come and gone and they are still building the stadium that people have to decide what they are going to do with it. They could have taken this money and gone to the different communities and made sure that the local government had the moneys. They would have probably looked at the recreational facilities; make sure there are lights; make sure there are competitions. So you would have created a kind of sustainable club and pro-league system that you are able to move people into the Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation, rather than spending money.

If you do it like that you are really reaching the people and this is the problem that we are having with the large amount of money that we spend. We have literally extracted the gas in a very short time and I know it would not last more than ten years. After that what you end up with is a situation where we have nothing to show for it in terms of the development of the country. What we have to look at is, are we getting value for money. Are we really getting the kind of services that we need? We just want things to work.

When the Minister talked about people having cars and driving on the road and that is prosperity; that is traffic gridlock. People are leaving South at 5.00 a.m. in the morning to reach in Port of Spain for 8.00 a.m. They spend three hours on the road; an hour and a half to come; an hour and a half to go, even from Chaguanas. That results in loss of productivity; valuable time for the country. So we would like them not to hoodwink the country and to really say what the problem is and I just want to borrow the headline—well we still in Tuesday—the *Daily Express*, where we say, “It is a Hoax”, that is exactly what we have. We have a system where they come and they keep throwing money behind these services with the intention that things would work or we will get the kind of results and we keep having very deplorable conditions.

I just want to end, Madam President, with the story of no beds and water at the San Fernando Hospital and that is the condition that we have. We have a system where Justice Madam Gladys Gafoor has done an enquiry in terms of the health sector and three words resonate from that: corruption, nepotism and mismanagement. If we do that over and over again in this PNM administration you keep seeing that; you keep seeing Minister of Trade—Madam President, through you—where a baby was delivered and the mother finds the baby’s arm and the collar bone fractured. It is probably because of poor training; poor nurses being trained in the health sector and we are talking about building the oncology centre. I want to know what is the sustainable development.

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The Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, Sen. Danny Montano, has in his Ministry the National Human Resource Management Information System (NHRMIS) that since 1989 they are trying to get the human resource and planning. What they have done is forget the people of Trinidad and Tobago; they import the foreign labourers; there is little or no sustainability; it is the same thing that happened when the French people came and built the Mount Hope Hospital; we had a hospital but nobody to maintain it. These are the white elephants. This is exactly what would happen. In about 10 years time the whole Point Lisas Estate would stay; it would rust; it would be in a deplorable state as the oil and gas has finished, and where would the country be.

With that, Madam President, I thank you.

Sen. Brother Noble Khan: Thank you, Madam President, for allowing me to share some thoughts on what is before us, the Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, 2007. Basically as I see it, the Bill seeks to have an authority to expend, let us call it approximately \$3.121 billion dollars. This would be added to what has been previously appropriated and one would say quite a sum of money. As we know, the whole concept of the Government hinges around money. I think that is where we all started off from and it will allow me to share some thoughts to the concept of the State; even as from early times; even follow the western model, be it from Plato into Aristotle, into Hobbes and fast forward to Rousseau and some of these great thinkers as far as Europe is concerned, that set the platform for us and what we inherit here today and what we have been able to create follows in that pattern, some may say.

Even after 50 years or so, the question of where we are still remains a big question mark. Some of the questions that come to my mind and the fact that I have brought it here today to share with you, I think because it is still important and occupies quite a bit of our people's time outside; that is outside of this honourable House.

One wonders if ours is a country not yet existing. A country that perhaps has a flag, a national anthem where no one is excluded because of his or her religion or skin or colour or affiliation or being stereotyped on gender or being a child, and when perhaps we tell of our innumerable sufferings, we get no answer; there is nothing and also too, that is what turns out to be nothing. I am not mentioning here a sort of Neolithic arrangement for our people as a nation, but obviously what I think is the facts of life in "el monde real," in the real world situation.

For one second I would mention too, some passing reference has been made to it, because this land has been here for quite some time and many people have come to it—of migration I speak—and we have coming and going all the time, even before Columbus. We had the Spanish coming, the French, noble people out of the African mother continent, the Portuguese and other European countries, and later on we had Chinese and East Indian people coming from the Far East and from the Middle East, the Syrians and the Lebanese.

Also too, within recent times, we have seen a new wave coming, but I have mentioned coming and going. We have seen created between ourselves here the concept of Caricom; it comes, one wonders, this is part of the nation building process, some would say, how soon we will “became”; that is out of our very existence; referring back to migrants, our legal status, this movement of people coming.

One, we can easily surmise the educated, the elite and the experts; their business would be—to use a common parlance—well situated than the mass of other people coming; migrants whose rights are severely restricted and whose situations are poor living conditions and high unemployment.

Then thirdly, we could refer to the illegal aliens who are needed on the labour market. And though we could see it in our country here because of our situation that we find ourselves in, our people too in other parts of the world find themselves in that, because of the high mobility which instant transport allows for us. But those people, these last set, the aliens as we may call them, but who are excluded and have no rights and where existing rights are even undermined. This is a part of the present system of development of nation building rests.

One wonders then, because we know if we were to look at Rodney and even someone mentioned earlier, Adam Smith, he did make reference very early of the situation as far as Europe was concerned and this, as I said before, had been immortalized both by Rodney and even our beloved “Father of the Nation” in his very seminal work that still continues to have a great impact in the world as far as development is concerned; the question of movement of people and building on their sweat and blood.

Then even within ourselves as we exploit and we explore, what justice, what love, what peace, these are left to be seen. Later on, I did hear recently too as far as the latest statistics that you hear coming out and these statistics were mentioned, the question of 14 per cent of the population occupying or having command of over 65 per cent of the world's economy. If you think in terms of numbers what that would be like.

This is important too because when you think in terms of the initiatives being made to address the question of the structural unemployment that seems to plague ourselves from very early times and these initiatives of things like CEPEP for example. I was there when it started in Moruga and also to pay plenty attention to it and had high hopes for it, even as a crash programme was started very close to where I live now, what that has become.

If it was a question of bad thinking, bad planning, apostrophise that of if it was just a plain case of betrayal, of deceit, of using people, we see at a moment such as this time if this is a reoccurrence of what I have said there. To think of our people receiving a sum of money that just keeps them; that becomes a statistical unit; if that is the way to go. That is why I said before, even from our early thinkings, our early thinkers, this question if our country is yet to exist.

Even though we have many pet terms that become the question, the concept of sustained development, we have some oil and our chest is swollen big; we have money, and there is a statement that you hear very often, "You come like a sailor just land, plenty money in he pocket". If that is the type of mentality that pervades now or you might hear a "fella" with plenty money, "like he lock a Yankee neck". These are terms you hear on the ground and are still relevant in our very beautiful language that we know persists in our land and continues to inform us.

Now the important thing here that occupies my mind is how we could break out of this syndrome that we find ourselves bound in. Historically from ancient times we have heard and I would just like to make reference from some of our great traditions which inform us insofar as this budgetary plan that is before us, though it is expressed in dollars and cents, there is supposed to be a basic philosophy that informs it; where our values come to bear and we are seeing quite a bit of money being allocated and this might be very important for us under the Ministry of Education, \$193 million and under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, \$170 million. I would just like to refer to the Holy scripture and I give a quote from II Chronicles 1:10:

"Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people for who is able to govern this great people of yours."

I would like to bring to our minds here two words, "wisdom" and "knowledge". You would find that too even in my own tradition, where in a simple prayer, even this could be looked at as prayer and all words from the Holy scripture are prayers, when we say: My Lord, increase my knowledge, an "hikmat" of wisdom or "ilmit" and "hikmat" are very important in my own tradition.

Again, even in our great Hindu traditions we hear the importance of “wisdom”, the importance of knowledge and if I may advance, the question of wisdom and knowledge or knowledge and wisdom, I always think in terms of knowledge is what you are capable of, your conceptual stock and the question of wisdom is the wise use of that knowledge. Obviously it would be against a value system. When we think in terms of what is before us here, we would think in terms of using that wisdom which will inform us and guide us. We have heard it said that if a people has no vision we perish. Within recent times too, we have seen a high element of materialism pervading and that continues to occupy ourselves and we are transferring that stock to our young people.

One wonders if that is the way to go. I would like to bring our metaphor too, when we think in terms of watching our society and the budget is the chief instrument through which a people develop itself. It is the chief instrument where policy is brought to bear. In any plan for the year it is the high point unless some great catastrophe or some other event supersedes it, which could be very, very rare. But on the project for the year, the budget is it. This is, I take it to be generally accepted.

So at this time when we are dealing with a very important part of the budget it might be, and I take the opportunity to share the guidance which should allow us to go or to deal with our budget. I think in terms too, of bringing to bear our influences insofar as our stock of knowledge is concerned with respect to values. Of course, something has to be expressed and one wonders, are these succeeding budgets that we have had over the 50 years or so, that we claim to be independent or thereabout in how far we have succeeded in bringing to our nation, that land we would all like to see blossom.

I strongly suspect that we review ourselves; we look over what we are about and build within the budgetary process and also provide for it, the question of ensuring particularly our young. And no one could deny that there is need to address the question of our youth from the earliest and we laud the efforts of the Government, succeeding governments in their approaches towards education from early child care—if I may use that term—or even pre-primary into primary and what have you, going up into post-tertiary too.

11.30 p.m.

Very often to this might be planning towards a line of earning power putting you into a position, but I think strongly that there might be need to reinforce, and I think the world is recognizing this too, of bringing the value system education

into the mix. One wonders if that has been provided for, because make no mistake about it, all this could be of no use if we continue to go as the points have been showing, towards what has been emerging from our new nation. Some wealth is around, and we see, to some extent, the massacres that are taking place on the road, even brought around by our own children and even by some of ourselves by not having proper preparations on the roads, but I would not dwell on this. I think we are aware of these things but it is a question of having the correct motivation to address them.

You heard that big concrete slabs were on the road one day, people came into contact with them during the night or the early morning; no one knew how it came there and no one knew how it was removed. These could be built up into very many areas of our activity, so it is therefore important that we have some concept of the way we want to go, and to build within ourselves and to transfer that in a structured way. Between our own selves, even starting from here in our homes, in our schools, wherever it be, but I think we have sufficiently reached a state where we could have this transformation that we hope for, be it systemic, be it in the area of capacity-building, motivation, goal direction and achievement. We could call all of these things and we can see all of this in the question as far as our schools are concerned, our MBAs, BAs, doctorates and all of that, but unless we build that element within ourselves, I think it will not be as much as it could bear.

So in addressing this question before us, I will also like to bring to our attention something that has occupied my mind. I see part of the budget here is that it would be meeting payments toward workers and I laud that, perhaps because of the negotiations that have taken place and which today, we see that it may appear to be slow but we are seeing it reaching fruition. I do recall sometime ago that it was in the NAR Government because of the financial situation of the time, moneys were withheld, were not paid to civil servants and workers within the structure of the Government, but all these have been addressed. It had even reached the High Courts and it was felt in that time that what was done there was illegal, but what remained and I think this has been raised by individuals, particularly those who have retired and are in receipt of very small pensions. I would not go into the question of people who are on fixed income and what inflation does on that, but they continue to be at a great disadvantage in that their salary structures are not proper, their retirement benefits are not proper and I would really like to see that addressed.

I know historically from early times that—I worked in the government for quite sometime and as far as I know they never said that if they owe people money they would not pay them. We can give our succeeding governments that, and I make a strong appeal here that this question be addressed because it will be hurtful to me and to many people, if they have to resort to, maybe questions of going through the law courts or what have you because that could be very costly. It is an option and I mention it, not that it is one that one will easily seek out, especially what I have said. It is important, therefore, that with respect to the law which we have here, to be the first to respect, should pay respect to what is due to people and what is correct, because even from my understanding of it, the question that the negotiations between the union and the Government, as such, their agency, there was nothing that ever came about restraining people's benefits that were due to them and even at independence, when we got our independence, people's pensions were saved, so to speak, in the constitutional law.

So this is an important aspect I see mentioned in the Bill here that payments would be made to people and we are providing for that. So I do not know if there are sufficient funds in votes that exist that this could be met, but it should be given some form of priority because with each passing day we are dealing with people who have reached the top end of their lives and people are just going off when they should receive what is due to them.

In closing I would like to, again, remind ourselves of the noble ideals of the hope and aspirations, or the founding of our nation and that everything should be shared as far as practicable, equally, where belonging is not denied but is a reality. Again, I always will seek the opportunity, and I will preface it with one word, that the question of genuineness as far as participation is concerned, genuineness as far as consultation is concerned and genuineness as far as co-operation is concerned. So again, I would like to also suggest as what has emerged here, it is necessary that we invent within ourselves, not copy, because that in itself, if we are to really hurdle fast, questions are for whom or from whom, especially in this world today.

If we fail to meet the challenge of the time, and I speak here, the question as it has been inferred here, the question of creativity. There is a creative spark in each of us and we see it sometimes here in this Senate from all of us coming, we will recognize that. If we deal with that more, seek out that element and pay respect to it, I think we will be on the path that will definitely put us on a way that, even as within a thermometer will tell us what is warm or when it is hot, the thermostat will bring us closer to achieve what is ideal.

So, I therefore thank you, Madam President, for sharing these thoughts and God bless us all.

Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie: Madam President, I really did not intend to bother to speak but I just want to clear up something that Sen. Ronald Phillip talked about in just the area to deal with Tobago. Now, I want him to know that it was Dr. Morgan Job who, when he was Minister, started the music programme in Tobago and this music programme had qualified music teachers going around to the schools and teaching the children music in various forms. Some played the violin, some played the guitar, the classical music, et cetera, but for some reason this year the funding was omitted from the budget and this is to rectify that omission. I felt a little peeved about how he was referring to it, as if it was a pick up side and jig and reel, and as if he was actually denigrating something that we treasure very much.

So, I wanted him to know that this was not any mediocre type of thing, this was something of a very high standard and we saw the results of it when our schools and participants came to Trinidad in the music festival and did so well, not only in folk, but in the classical singing among the primary school children, in the orchestras and so on. So, I want to congratulate the Government on reinstating the fund this year so that the programme could continue and that type of development could come back to our children. Personally, I feel that not only the music but the performing arts, and I know this dance orchestra is something that is a mistype. I know that, so I am not bothered about that but I want to say how much I appreciate the fact that the fund has been reinstated. The other things that I had, people have mentioned them and so I would not repeat them.

Thank you very much, Madam President.

Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan: Thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity that you have given me to contribute to this debate on the Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, 2007.

Madam President, planning is fundamental to the success of any endeavour, at any level, be it at the level of the family, the community, regional level or the national level. So, I am sure Prof. Deosaran would agree with me when I say that an essential element of planning must be consultation and recognition of the fact that the planners, they are not the masters of the people, they are the servants of the people.

It is in this context that Minister Montano made a statement that I agree with, that the Government is responsible to the people. Well, I think his argument fell a bit, when he did not recognize that in this Parliament, he was replying to Sen.

Mark's observation that we do not get the answers that we need here, that we do not get the response and that we do not have to vote in this particular Bill. He said that all we can do here—we cannot control anything here—is talk, but I want to correct the hon. Minister and I want to inform him that we do more than talk here. What we do here, is represent the people, because the people are not here in this Parliament. We are here to represent the people; we are here to demand answers and to demand accountability of the Government.

We are not just here to talk, we are here to demand answers and to demand accountability, and they do not like that. They are murmuring at the use of the word “demand”, and that is why you have questions on the Order Paper for months and years and they refuse to answer [*Interruption*] because they do not recognize our role here as representing the people of Trinidad and Tobago, demanding accountability of the Government. They do not understand that at all, the functioning of government. [*Interruption*]

Madam President, I am saying that consultation is fundamental to planning. We are going to celebrate June 19 next week. The father of the modern labour movement, Uriah “Buzz” Butler, he recognized and he upheld this concept and that is why he was so beloved by the people of this country. That is why the revolution that he fermented in 1937, the Labour Riots and so on, led, practically, to a whole change in the political system where in 1946 we achieved Adult Suffrage for the first time and that was the basis of the struggles of Uriah “Buzz” Butler. The reason he was able to achieve such heights, politically, and in the Labour Movement was because he dubbed himself the chief servant and that is a lesson that those on the other side will do well to recognize, that they are servants of the people and they are not masters.

On June 19, we will look back as a people, we will understand and reminisce on the struggles that we have waged against the colonial system and the injustices of the colonial system, and the struggles our people are still waging today against the neo-colonial regime of this PNM administration. And we will understand as we walk in Fyzabad and Port of Spain that we will never achieve emancipation in this country from chronic poverty, from crime and from inequality and justice if we do not demand—I insist that the people of this country must demand that the administrators and the planners must understand their role as servants.

So, Madam President, in every region, in the rural communities, in the urban communities, and my colleague Sen. Dr. Glen Ramadhar-Singh, he made the point that every village, every little hamlet, every little community in this country must be part of the planning process. You cannot expect to have an administration

imposing a top down approach to planning and then have anything turn out right. This is why I believe this top-down approach to planning, this neglect of the input of people; they have a total disrespect, this administration has a chronic disrespect that has been cementing over the years for ordinary people, the people in the villages; they feel that these people cannot contribute, that they do not have ideas, that they do not have a vision for their own communities and their own villages and that everything has to be determined from Whitehall and the ministries and so on. And although they pay lip-service to decentralization and devolving authority to local authorities and to regional authorities and so on, they have not instituted that because they have no respect for the intellectual capacity and the capacity of people in the villages to have a vision, plan, implement and to acquire a better quality of life for themselves.

This is the basis of the very real resentment that people feel in this country. They feel that billions of dollars are passing through this economy and they feel neglected, they feel left out in the villages and in the communities, because this so-called trickle down effect is not reaching and effecting any real qualitative change in the lives of people. Ministers Dumas and Monanto spoke about the increase in goods and services, the fact that people have cellphones and the fact that people are enjoying a better way of life and the informal sector that is earning a living. The fact is, what Ministers Dumas and Monanto have missed is the reality that—and no one can deny it because these are CSO figures, Madam President—when you look at the major town centres, Port of Spain, Arima, Point Fortin, San Fernando and so on, and you look at the figures for the single mother headed households in these regions, you have a range between 26 and 38 per cent of the households are headed by single mothers in this country and that is very relevant to the kind of income that these households enjoy. Because you know and I know that women who are not highly educated and so on, work in service industries, work in the lowest paid jobs, they work long hours, there is no real labour code to protect them, they have to work whenever the employer says to work—holidays, Sundays, whatever—and they have to work hard. These are the people that constitute very high percentages in all the town centres, so then you can begin to understand what kind of poverty we are talking about in terms of being able to provide for children and being able to provide a stable economic environment for children.

Also, this is why you have a whole generation of young people who are very cynical about politicians and politics, because they have seen their mothers struggle; they have seen their grandmothers struggle in the same environment under the same conditions, nothing much has changed even though millions are being spent. It is very

frightening when you go into the villages, the rural communities, the urban communities and you talk to these young people, they have no hope and they do not want to listen to you, because they feel that you are coming just like the old political system that they have been exposed to. They feel that it is the same and nothing will change for them and this is one of the most dangerous phenomena that we face in this country, that young people have lost hope, they have no faith in politics and politicians and they feel that the only way that they can get ahead is to embrace a life of crime and get rich quick syndrome.

So, Madam President, I am very sorry to disagree with the hon. Minister of Finance, Minister Enill, and his confidence and the joy he feels in the fact that the IMF and international rating agencies are impressed with the economic performance of this economy.

I spoke to a mother of two children on Sunday afternoon way down in Mundo Nuevo and I do not think ordinary people have that joy and that confidence that the IMF and the international rating agencies have in the economy of this country. She was relating to me her husband is disabled and she has a young child and an older daughter and they are forced to live on the disability benefits that the husband gets, because she is unable to really go out to work for any length of time because he needs to be helped, somebody has to be there with him because he is diabetic and has to be taking injections regularly; she has to practically look after him and she has a young child also and a grandchild there. So she was explaining to me that when she goes to the grocery—and Sen. Prof. Deosaran spoke about it—the steep incremental increases in the price of milk and basic goods and so on. She told me on Sunday afternoon in Mundo Nuevo that she is no longer able to buy milk; she has scratched that out from her grocery list because she cannot afford it.

Sen. Mark: Joan, we want help, we have a situation.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: We have a situation where she has a young child that does not look more than two years and therefore that child would be growing up without drinking milk which is basic for the growth of bones and teeth and so on, and this is terrible. She also informed me that they applied for the so-called Smart Card and they have been getting a runaround, a family like that you would have thought would be first in line, to help them meet their expenses and they have all the bills to pay like everybody else. They have WASA to pay, they have T&TEC to pay and so on, and they are forced to subsist on that money. God alone knows what they eat and how they eat.

Madam President, the Minister of Finance, also in his presentation boasted about the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited which involves the decimation of herds of dairy cattle, herds of buffalypso. At the same time, while we are decimating out there, I was looking at the television this morning and a small ruminant farmer was talking about the fact that one of the largest cattle farmers in Carlsen Field where he lives has been forced to slaughter his herd because the dairy farming sector in this country has gotten no support from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources in terms of their subsidies, and it is uneconomical to maintain these dairy herds. So, on the one hand you have children who are growing up without access to milk because it is too expensive and then you have a few miles away dairy farmers slaughtering their herds, getting rid of their herds because they are unable to make that a viable and profitable industry. [*Interruption*]

And you know, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is a passive observer of all of this. He sits in the ministry and he presides over the liquidation of the herds and the farms; the farmers of Wallerfield are being forced out of production and there is no alternative being offered to them to continue to farm. He presided over the liquidation of thousands of acres at Union Estate and there is a plan to decimate the forests of Chatham, and nobody in that ministry, the Minister specially, is able to get up and tell the Prime Minister this is untenable, we cannot do this. The Minister of Finance also spoke about—you have all these doublespeak and doublethink that is going on here. On one hand we are decimating our farmers, we are putting them out of business, we are not giving them the proper subsidies to continue in business and so on, and then you are going to boast of hosting this Caribbean initiative on food security.

I saw the article in the newspapers and I thought it was interesting and I kept it. It is a *Newsday* business article, Thursday, May 31, 2007 and they said:

“Caribbean leaders will meet with bilateral, multilateral and regional donors and other partners in Port-of-Spain on June 02, to discuss financial and technical funding for the projects which they approved during their February inter-sessional meeting in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.”

And they will discuss major challenges facing the agricultural sector including inadequate infrastructural development, technology transfer, food security.

Madam President, it seems to me the height of hypocrisy to engage in all this rhetoric and all these conferences and talk about food security when this administration’s hands are still bloody from the dismemberment of Caroni (1975) Limited. Caroni (1975) Limited represented the heart of food security in this

country, because it was not just about sugar. Caroni (1975) Limited was not just about sugar and sugar cane, it was about the dairy herds, it was about the buffalypso herds, it was about rice, it was about citrus. It was about the 77,000 acres of arable lands which represented a chance for this country to produce food in a world that is increasingly hostile in terms of prices and in terms of availability; in a world where people are looking at bio fuels and ethanol from corn and where the price of food is going up, in a world where huge economies are coming on the market and competing with small economies like ours for food.

This is the vision of this Government: to decimate the hearts of our food security, and you go to all these lovely conferences and pay lip service and tribute to agriculture and food security when you have killed it. Everyday you have another bunch of farmers placarding outside somewhere, because they feel that this Government is not working in their best interest. Every Monday morning farmers have to protest against this Government. So what I want to find out is where is the planning? What is the vision? What are we planning for? Now if the people of this country had any input, as I said before, into the planning process it would not be like this, because people are not going to plan to self-destruct, which is what this Government is doing. So when you have this top-down approach, all the plans this Government has made over the last five years are to self-destruct this economy.

All the economists, the thinkers, the commenters and the technocrats in this country have identified the major economic problems in terms of the need for diversification of the economy, better income distribution, promotion of the manufacturing sector and getting rid of regional disequilibrium and so on; but do you know what is so interesting, this is nothing new. I looked at the National Physical Development Plan that was written in 1984, and in this document all these ideas were already postulated there, it was recognized very clearly that this is the way that we would have to go—diversify the economy, make sure that you have spacial planning, as well as sectorial planning aligning themselves so you get the best possible mix for development and so on.

Madam President, in this document you have proposed policy solutions, diversification of the national economic base, and they talked about increasing the role of the Industrial Development Corporation to identify research and implement industrial projects and so on. They talked about expanding the role of the main supportive institutions such as the Development Finance Company. What they said at the end of all the policies that they identified, here is what the

planners said after extensive consultations throughout the country which is the whole process that this plan had to go through. They said:

“These policy objectives are expected to encourage the movement away from the present highly capital intensive screwdriver type of assembly industrial processes towards the generation of more locally based manufacturing industries that provide a better relationship between capital and labour and reduce our dependency on transfer of technology.”

And then they went on to talk about the growth of linkages between manufacturing processes and local raw material, thus promoting backward and forward linkages between economic sectors and subsectors. We are still talking about that, we are still talking about the fact that the economy has not been diversified, that there is no forward and backward linkages between agriculture and manufacturing, and they talked about there is need to increase a labour absorption capacity of industry. We are still talking about those things; the reduction of the level of structural unemployment in the promotion of regional and rural development; we are still talking about those things. This Government is still talking about those things, 23 years after the first National Physical Development Plan, because they have not implemented any of the policies that were suggested that would achieve those objectives.

12.00 midnight

Madam President, we have a situation where they are boasting about 5 per cent unemployment and so on. Bogus figure as we clearly understand because when you go through the country, clearly, the unemployment figure could not be 5 per cent when you pass through the communities, whole communities of young men on the block, sitting, watching around with nothing to do, but to think about criminal activity. Clearly, it could not be 5 per cent. And the employment that they have generated has been clearly documented, that they have generated employment mostly in the service sectors and they are talking about knowledge-based industries and knowledge-based society and so on. Most of the jobs that they have generated are in the service industries. Where are the knowledge-based jobs; where is the transfer to technology; where are the high levels of training; where is the link between what people will do in school and in technical colleges and so on that we should have had over the years as manifested in the National Physical Development Plan for 1984? Where are all these things?

Madam President, it is so interesting because I was looking at the television yesterday, and the Minister of Planning and Development—this Supplementary Appropriation Bill—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Dr. Saith: That was day before yesterday.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: It was before yesterday? Okay. The Minister of Planning and Development was asked by the interviewer, Andy Johnson, “There is this perception that this administration has abandoned planning and what do you have to say to that?” She asked him, “Why do you say that?” It is important to note this unrepentant, brazen response, “Why do you say that.” Because we have before us in this Supplementary Appropriation Bill, we have an allocation of \$23,726,340 to the Ministry of Planning and Development. They say that out of this, \$2,988,062 is for the contract officers recruited in 2007, an additional \$5.1 million is to facilitate increased promotion and dissemination of information with respect to Vision 2020.

Madam President, I am saying that in any well-ordered society, this Ministry will not get a cent because there is no output from this Ministry. People keep saying this every year, year after year and so on, this request for more allocation and so on should be linked to the use of the project implementation and so on of the original budget. So, how can you can come here and ask for increased allocations and so on and there is no accountability; how have we used the money that was originally allocated in the budget? I am saying that in a well-ordered society people that are in charge of this economy, that people have a hand and so on, this Ministry will not get a cent because this Ministry has abandoned planning long ago and yet they are coming to ask for approximately \$13 million to spend in what, a few months before the end of the next fiscal year.

Madam President, I am going to substantiate why I said that this Ministry has abandoned planning. In the Public Sector Investment Programme, Vision 2020, under Planning and Project/Programme Development—this is 2006—of last year and it says here:

“In 2006, the Town and Country Planning Division will complete preparatory activities, which began in 2005 for undertaking the revision of the National Physical Development Plan. The process of reviewing the tenders and awarding contracts in four groupings: Population and Demography; Physical Infrastructure and Transport; Industry and Economy; and Environment and Ecology would be completed and consideration would be given to the establishment of appropriate institutional arrangements for monitoring and

supervision of the consultants. As the estimated time frame for completion of the exercise is 18 months, the consultants would be engaged over the entire 2006 period.”

Madam President, we are now in June, 2007 and there is not one iota of a plan coming out of this Ministry. What is happening? According to this document, they were supposed to complete the preparation for the National Physical Development Plan, all the work involved in it in 2006.

We have another document, the Post Caroni (1975) Limited, A Comprehensive and Integrated Development Plan, this also referred to the promised National Physical Development Plan in 2006, and it is important because what they are saying is that extensive development of Caroni lands will not be further undertaken by this Government in the absence of a National Physical Development Plan, that was the commitment made in this document. So, they make commitment then they go about their merry way without any care of fulfilling their commitment. It says here:

"Government is of the view that the *National Physical Development Plan* which was expected to be revised by the TCPD by 2006 should inform specific land use designations and should allow Government to manage and guide the future development of Caroni's lands. In this connection, Government is of the view that the implementation of that plan as it pertains to former Caroni's lands would be undertaken by the relevant Ministries in consultation with EMBD."

Madam President, just words, nothing has come out of it. We are alarmed and concerned because extensive development is taking place in Caroni lands in the absence of this plan that you promised to Parliament and they would ensure that it is in place before further work is being done. In the absence of the National Physical Development Plan—which is required by law of the Minister for Planning and Development—we have huge tracts of forest being decimated in this country in the Union Estate for the so-called Alutrint Smelter. We have hundreds of hectares earmarked for decimation for the Alcoa; 4,000 acres of Caroni's arable lands earmarked for built development. They have taken 4,000 because the original built development for Caroni's land, the existing built development, according to their own figures was 4,262 acres and then when they add on all their proposals, proposed usage for industrial and residential estates and commercial complexes, 1,027 acres. Then they have proposed housing developments to meet demand from former Caroni workers, 1,022 acres; proposed housing developments by the NHA and LSA, 1,318 acres and then they get a sub-total of

8,000 acres. So, what is happening here, that from the existing built development of 4,262 acres, they have a proposal for built development on Caroni's land, most likely on arable land because we have no idea where they are going to put these—what they have not broken down, the classification of lands that they are going to put this built development. It jumped from approximately 4,000 to 8,000 acres, in the absence of any sort of legal planning framework.

Madam President, what is happening in this country? Every sane commenter; every sane economist and so on; all the professors at the University of the West Indies and so on have been calling for a transparent approach to the development of our last residual hope for food security in this country and a transparent approach to how these lands are going to be developed. They are going their merry way developing these lands, bulldozing these lands, having plans for all kinds of prisons and everything else, friends and family grabbing up acres of these lands and we are still waiting in this Parliament to be given an overall holistic plan for the development of these lands. I do not see any justification for the allocation to this Planning Ministry when there is no output. Where is the output for the Planning Ministry? One of the most important things that the Ministry of Planning and Development would have had to do over the past two years was to get cracking and give us this National Physical Development Plan and they have not done so. But they are coming for more money, to do what? To do what, where is the accountability?

When we look at the extent, I could understand why they are refusing to deal with this issue because as I said when I started my contribution, one of the most fundamental elements of good planning is consultation. By law, Part II, section V of the Town and Country Planning Act requires the Minister to submit for the approval of Parliament, a development plan consisting of a report of a survey of the entire territory together with a plan indicating the manner in which proposals for land in the territory may be used. They have to go through a whole process here of consultation, of publication, of enquiry, of receiving submissions, responding to the submissions and so on. So, they are not interested in this, they want, every Monday morning to come with a new plan for a gap of land, another huge chunk of land, so the plans and so on are alien to their form of thinking because they want to do their own thing.

Madam President, in that interview it was very interesting and the Minister said when they she was elaborating about, “why do you say that” we have not abandoned the plan and so on. They asked her about the smelters. They said, “Well, you know, people have been saying that you all have plans for two

smelters all over the place and so on, what is the basis for that? How do you arrive at that?" She said, "Well, you know, it has been determined that the South West Peninsula is suitable for smelters and it has been determined that the Union Estate is suitable for heavy gas-based industry, and therefore, that is why it is going to be put there." But the question is, who determines that and how did you arrive at that? Who is the God and Goddess who sit in conference and determine these things when the country has a clear process by which we determine these things in consultation with the people in their communities; in consultation with the regional authorities; in consultation with the municipal authorities? So, who are these people who sit and determine these things and determine that people lose their house in one fell swoop; people will lose their land and people will no longer be able to practise agriculture? Who will determine that people will lose their dam, their source of water and recreation in Union Estate? Who determined that we would have a whole loss of bio-diversity when they massacred Union Estate forest and the howler monkeys and all the species endemic to that region and so on were just massacred? Who determines these things?

This is the danger of the abandonment of long-term planning and with each Ministry deciding—NEC, all of a sudden is a power unto itself and is supposed to be a subsidiary of NGC, but all of a sudden apparently they have the power to plan for the whole South West Peninsula as we have heard down there. They will determine what the South West Peninsula looks like and what is going to happen down there. That is the danger of abandoning long-term planning. The whole point of long-term planning was clearly enunciated in the National Physical Development Plan and that was to prevent exactly what is happening now. This *vaille-que-vaille* approach, every Ministry doing something, whatever they feel to do and there is no connection; there is no alignment; there is no understanding of how it affects people in the short-term and in the long-term.

Madam President, in the National Physical Development Plan, there is a concept of how you go about planning, what is necessary.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Anything in [*Inaudible*]

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Yes, and it is still relevant because nothing here has been implemented and that is why we are having all—I am going to come to that—these problems today. [*Crosstalk*] They talked about growth poles. Every Minister who got up here and spoke tonight has spoken about the housing policy of the Government and the housing policy, like if housing is the only need that we have in this country. We have a lot of other needs and the needs of housing and the need of people who are in need of housing must be integrated in the other

needs that the country has. It can be done in the abstract and this is recognized in the National Physical Development Plan, they said that you must have a strategy of growth centered development which can be defined as concentrated disposal of socio-economic activities in the space economy to promote and generate growth in selected areas.

So, what they are saying, Madam President, the implications for this, you must take into consideration in your planning; population and settlement, employment and employment opportunities; industrial location and type of industries; land use, particularly where conflicts with agriculture and conservation areas arise; infrastructural facilities, for example, transport, communication, physical and social infrastructure. They have to take all of this into consideration, they cannot just talk about housing and housing and we are putting little graps of housing all over the place in the absence of all these other considerations. This is where the danger of not planning comes into being because people feel that anywhere they see a piece of land, they grab it and they put down housing and that is called development. What is that? That is the furthest from development that you can get.

Madam President, that is why I am so worried about what is going to happen in Wallerfield, where they are talking about the so-called city that they are building at Wallerfield because I am certain that given the history of the Ministry of Planning and Development, nobody is manning the store. Nobody is looking at all the implications in that so-called city that they are going to develop in Wallerfield. I have seen a lot of houses, these little dolly houses there, very close together, all crammed together—that is on the highway—and as I said before, I want to know what plans they have for transport to get all those hundreds of people out of that area; I want to know what plans they have for schools and educational development; what plans they have for pre-schools inside there. They have not even left a little space, 2 square feet for a playground inside that place. Clearly, recreational facilities for the people who are going to live there is not on the agenda.

What are their plans for employment for all these people, especially when you are going to decimate the agriculture, there is no agribusiness there. You have to look at employment opportunities; you have to look at industrial capacity; absorptive capacity and so on; you have to look at all these things. Are they planning to get garbage disposal on track? Right now in Cumuto, we get garbage disposal three times a week and when you have all those houses being built right there in Cumuto, Wallerfield, they have to service hundreds of new houses, families and so on; will it come down to once a week? Will it come down to whenever we can? Who is manning the store? Who is looking at these things?

This is the danger you have, when you have the Minister of Housing running about talking about the housing policy and the Government housing policy and putting down houses in any little piece of flat land he could find. Nobody is talking about holistic planning, long-term planning, land use, agriculture, transport, infrastructure; nobody is talking about these things, all we are hearing is about housing.

So, therefore, what they are creating in this country is ghettos because they are going to degenerate in the absence—if you have the first generation, the mother and father, maybe if they might have had a job, they might be able to pay rent, the mortgage and so on. If you do not have a system whereby you have industrial activities, employment opportunities nearby and so, those children who are coming up in that household are not going to be able to find proper jobs and employment opportunities and so on. They are not going to maintain these houses, upkeep them, they are not going to be able to do anything and then it starts to degenerate; we have seen it already. We have seen that the housing estates which have remained, which have developed and flourished are the ones that are near to employment opportunities. We have seen that clearly in Diego Martin, Maloney, La Horquetta and other housing estates where you do not have that, you see the degeneration of the physical infrastructure, the social infrastructure and so on.

That brings me to a point which was made by Sen. Prof. Deosaran in relation to the young people who are going to be condemned to grow up in these sterile environments. There is nothing to do, only these rows of concrete houses very close together; very hot; no job employment opportunities; no recreational possibilities. They have not put in one field there for any of those young people to play a little football, basketball, tennis, nothing. They are just dropping house and saying this is the Government housing policy. What nonsense? Sen. Prof. Deosaran spoke about the fact that there are so many training programmes now, that every young person can access a training programme, it is not as easy as that. The young people now are so disenchanted and so disillusioned and the most important thing that they are surrounded by is a culture of drugs and the underground economy.

So, when you have a whole lot of young people whose culture now is thousands of dollars they have to earn very quickly, the drug economy because they want to buy these sneakers and so on and so on; the expensive clothes because that is the only way girls will look at them. When you have that whole culture dominating a whole community, it is very difficult for the younger ones coming up to say, “You know what, I will go and work in the service industry, I will go and work KFC or I will go to agriculture”, because the whole culture now

becomes one of being hip and having a lot of money. They have destroyed the work ethic in the communities because they have promoted the community leaders, the drug culture, the crime and the guns. How many young people can stay focused in the environment and really go to work in the HYPE, MuST, YAPPA?

Madam President, a young man told me that when you go—I admire these young men who can withstand these pressures and so on. He is working with a construction company that is paving the roads in Talparo, Mundo Nuevo and so on. He goes to work every day and he told me that when he was working at a particular mall and they were building the mall in La Horquetta and so on, he said these young people would come there—who are supposed to be working, learning trade in the MuST programme, whatever—and lime and smoke whole day. They have no interest in work because you have killed that culture and you have undermined the family because the mothers are very dependent on the very same drug pushers and the community leaders to give them a 10 days in the URP and so on. So, you have killed the family; you have undermined the cultural life of the village and the community and you expect all those children to come out with all this zeal and all this love for learning and development. It is a mess that they have created and they blame the young people, oh, you want to work; you do not want to do this; they do not want to do that, when they have poisoned the very air that they breathe in those communities where there are promotions of guns, drugs and violence.

Do not blame the young people. We have to get rid of that administration because they are poisoning the minds of the young people; they have killed the work ethic and the young people are no longer interested in developing themselves. Very few escape that trauma, escape that environment and I admire those who do and we promote those who do and we encourage those who do. It is so sad to see that so many of the young, bright, intelligent people in our society are unable to escape that devious net that this Government has woven.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Thank you, Madam President. [*Crosstalk*] Clearly, this administration which has been asleep on the job for the last five years is sleeping tonight again. Tired, sleepy, they want to go home, but go ahead, we

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[SEN. DR. KERNAHAN]

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have no problem, go ahead. I was talking about the fact that if this was a country where people were in charge of their lives and in charge of what happens in Government, not one cent would go to the Ministry of Planning and Development.

I want to bring back some issues of planning that this administration had abandoned over the years and have a direct bearing of what is happening in Port of Spain, in terms of flooding, Santa Cruz and so on and if we continue like that, refusing to plan, our great-grandchildren would face even worse conditions than we are facing now. I am saying we have to look back to where we came from, the mistakes that were made and the errors of omissions that were made by previous PNM administration, to look down the road and to see what is going to happen.

Madam President, they start to enunciate policies and then abandon these policies and we are reaping the effects of that. They had the Northern Range Hillside Development Policy 1976. Cabinet actually prohibited the development above a certain contour, above the 300-foot contour. That was abandoned in 1988. You know what is happening now? In areas such as Maraval, Santa Cruz, San Juan and so on, you have all this tremendous flooding with two minutes of rainfall because what was happening is that the policy guidelines would have ensured that the designated forested areas remained intact; that residential settlements be regulated and so on; that agriculture lands be retained for agriculture, all those were policy proposals of that administration in 1976, then they abandoned these things, and therefore, follow—

Madam President: Senator, I am trying to follow how this is relating to this Bill? I really, really for the last 15 minutes have been trying to follow how it is related to this Bill.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Madam President, I am saying that the Minister of Finance has to account for what—[*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*]

Sen. Mark: Madam President, could you take charge? If they want to leave, let them go.

Madam President: Senator, please sit down. Now, Sen. Dr. Kernahan, please, you have gone way off track for at least 15 minutes.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Madam President, I am saying that the Minister of Finance has come to ask for over \$13 million for this—

Madam President: Senator, according to this Bill that is for something specific and that is what you need to talk about.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Madam President, I am saying that there is tremendous cost incurred by this administration because of the lack of planning and I am saying that the policy proposals that they have had in the past that would have prevented the problems that we are experiencing today, they abandoned those proposals and I am saying today, they are abandoning the question to the National Physical Development Plan and our future generations will pay for that.

Madam President, they have asked also for \$5 million for promotion and dissemination of Vision 2020. Now what is that? \$5 million—they are not talking here about setting up any institutions; they are not talking here about anything tangible. It is pure propaganda; a means of giving \$5 million to their friends in the advertising industry, to write books, pamphlets. What is that? Are we going to agree? Is this country comfortable with the Minister of Finance coming to this Parliament to ask for \$5 million for promotion and dissemination of Vision 2020, when you are refusing to plan for 2020?

12.30 a.m.

There is no holistic plan for 2020; there is nothing coming out of the Ministry to ensure that our people will have a better quality of life, that they will have the infrastructural and educational resources. What are you spending \$5 million to promote? Underdevelopment and backwardness; that is what they are going to spend \$5 million to promote and give their friends.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources was the most cryptic of all in this Appropriation Bill. The Minister has asked for \$9,670,000 to meet contractual obligations relating to acquisition of sites for non-agricultural purposes. I am at a loss; I do not know what they mean; I do not know if it is a joke; I do not know if it is a prank. I am asking the Minister: What does that mean? The Agriculture Ministry is going to spend \$9 million to acquire lands for non-agricultural purposes. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] They have got to be joking. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Dr. Saith: You asked a question; I take it that you want an answer. You were in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources as a minister for a short period of time. You know that Ministry is responsible for land acquisition, therefore, it acquires lands for things other than agriculture.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Madam President, I am horrified that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, at this point in time, would be acquiring land for non-agricultural purposes. If you are acquiring land for non-agricultural purposes and other ministries are taking arable agricultural lands for non-agricultural purposes, where are we? It is a free for all. [*Crosstalk*] Where are we going with agriculture?

What is interesting in this context is that under the Public Sector Investment Programme, the Ministry has come for \$9 million, yet two years now the stakeholders in the agricultural sector are waiting for the results of the agriculture census that was supposed to have been finalized two years ago. Information was supposed to have been disseminated to the stakeholders. How can you come for increased allocations for this, that and the other, and we do not get a glimpse or overview of how our money is being spent? Are projects on stream? Are projects on time? Are we getting value for money? We are just rubber-stamping more and more money, and projects are not on stream; they are not coming in on time. This is important information with which persons need to plan, for example, the business community, to see where they are going and how they should react.

We talk about agri-business. The stakeholders in the agri-business need to know what is happening in the agricultural sector and what the trends are, to be able to do their long-term planning. How are you going to keep them a whole year, year and a half, hanging on and there is no word from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, with respect to the results of the census?

The Ministry of Trade and Industry has asked for \$6,776,851 for an increase in the price paid by the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited (SMCL) for farmers' canes. This is another horror story: lack of planning; abandonment of planning. This is important for the stakeholders in this country. The Minister spoke to the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited. One of the companies that was formed as part of the so-called restructuring was the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited in 2003. Their mandate was: The processing of sugarcane to raw sugar; sugar refining; operations of storage facility and shipping, and the operation of the port at Point Lisas. All of a sudden you are hearing that the sugar industry is to be completely abandoned. Why then did you spend millions of dollars? They spent \$30 million when they closed down Caroni and they set up all these elaborate companies. For how long; two and three years? That is the problem.

We say that we have no residual sugar industry, when the local demand for sugar is 60,000 metric tons a year. Important industries in this country are depending on the sugar industry: the bakeries, the soft drink industries, candies, sweets and so on. They do not understand that the agricultural sector is also dependent on molasses and on baggasse for litter. When the National Physical Development Plan talked about backward and forward linkages, that was what it meant. When you shut down the sugar industry, when there is no residual sugar industry, when there is no production of molasses and baggasse for these

backward and forward linkages, people suffer; you have unemployment and poverty. And they are talking about eradicating poverty. On the one hand they are giving you a little CEPEP and a little URP in the villages and on the other hand they are shutting down all forms of productive work where persons can earn an honest living on their own in their communities. [*Interruption*]

Madam President: Senator, you have four minutes.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Apart from that, the SMCL was conducting feasibility studies for the production of ethanol. They were conducting feasibility studies for the production of beverage alcohol from molasses. [*Crosstalk*] All this information came from this document, the report from the SMCL to the Joint Select Committee. [*Crosstalk*] They were conducting feasibility studies with respect to the expansion and redesign of the shipping terminal to accommodate the import and export of wheat, corn and potatoes.

You set up all these elaborate companies because you said that you were restructuring; but if you set them up for two and three years and then mash them up, what did you do? You did not restructure Caroni; you mashed it up, because at the end of this year when the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited is no more you would have nothing to show. What is going to happen to all the important functions that this SMCL was expected to perform, the refining of sugar and so on? We are now totally dependent on Belize and Guyana for sugar. The local industry here is dependent on outside sources for sugar.

We had a trade officer that had the following functions: The import and export of raw, refined wash grade sugar; to ensure that all sugar imported was sourced at the best price and scheduling and tracking of all exported sugar. What would happen when they shut all that down? Everything will be haywire. People will have to fend for themselves; industries will have to source their own sugar and get it at whatever price they can. They are going to exhort higher prices, because we do not have a residual industry.

This Government is destructive. They have no vision for the future of this country. They have decimated the sugar industry, and they go and talk in conferences about food security. We the people will decide in 2007 and we are going to get them out of government.

Sen. Parvatee Anmolsingh-Mahabir: Madam President, previous speakers have dealt with many issues emanating from the Bill before us, especially in the areas of health, housing, public utilities and the environment, to name a few, so I

will not repeat any of those issues. However, it will be remiss of me if I too did not voice my concern in, at least, one area. I refer to the Ministry of National Security.

This Ministry has been allocated the second highest amount and deservedly so, because it has to deal with serious challenges facing our country and must have the necessary resources available. However, I must express my disappointment that under Head 22 I did not see any allocation for surveillance cameras to be placed at strategic locations on our roads, intersections and highways. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam President: Hon. Senators, show some respect to the person speaking, please. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. P. Anmolsingh-Mahabir: It is disheartening to read or witness the carnage on our roads; the death toll continues to increase annually. The lawlessness displayed on the nation's roads on a daily basis must be curbed. While a greater police presence on our roads is necessary, if there is not enough manpower we must use the available technology to catch the offenders and bring some order back to our roads. This technology is used in all developed countries. Too many of our citizens have lost their lives on our roads and urgent intervention is needed.

Madam President, I join with many citizens in requesting the Minister to use some of the resources available to his Ministry to put measures in place to curb the carnage on our roads.

I thank you.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Madam President, let me on behalf of the Government thank all those who contributed to this debate. We started yesterday and we are still here.

There are just a few things that I must deal with at this time. I will deal with them very quickly. During the course of the debate, there has been a lot of discussion about Government's fiscal position and some concerns were expressed about our new situation. Let me just take you through. On the last occasion we had indicated that there was a budget surplus of \$28 million; there is an increase in revenue of \$4 billion; we have a supplementary allocation of \$3.1 billion; we are depositing to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund \$1.7 billion; we have some savings identified and we expect to end up with a new projected overall balance somewhere in the order of \$2.8 billion. That takes care of item No.1.

Item No. 2 has to do with the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. I am sure the question was asked that on the basis of the Act passed, quarters one and two should have had deposits into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and it was based on somebody's estimate or guesstimate on numbers we have put out. For your information, we had anticipated at the beginning of the first quarter to have a projection somewhere in the order of \$4 billion worth of revenue, and we actually received \$3.5 billion, therefore we had a deficit of about \$1 billion. On the basis of the formula there was no requirement for the Fund. In quarter two we had a projection of \$3.9 billion; we actually collected \$3.4 billion. We had a \$573 million shortfall again and, therefore, no deposit was made to the Fund.

We anticipate though, at the end of the year, that we will, in fact, correct that. On that basis, 60 per cent of what we estimate to be the final number; it will be \$1.7 billion, which we have programmed. It is important for me to explain why this is so.

The programming for revenues in government is based on receipts from companies. We actually get receipts from supplemental petroleum taxes, petroleum profit taxes, production sharing contracts and royalties. Generally, persons make provisional sums payable to the Government over the period; they are entitled so to do. During the period when they finalize their accounts, they then come up with the numbers. So you find that in quarters one, two, and certainly by the end of quarter three, you make up any deficit. That is what you do; you plan for that on the basis of understanding that.

Every year, as long as this Parliament sits, now and in the future, you are going to have to come back during the year for a supplemental appropriation, and it does not really matter which government is in place. That is just the way the system works. Let me try to explain to those who believe they understand what we are dealing with.

First of all, Government is the largest business in this country. We have just about 25 separate businesses; we call ministries businesses. You deal with about 82,000 employees of all ranks and sectors. I do not know if you understand the reality of trying to manage the output of 80,000 people and get it to a space where you have made the appropriate choices. Let me tell you how it works: No decision is made unless the Cabinet approves it. Once Cabinet approves it, it goes into a pool. The aggregate of that pool, based on last year, is \$32 billion. This means that the Government goes through its process as follows: You will determine that there is some activity required; there is a process that you go through for that; you do the feasibility; you do the justification and the numbers

and then you make a justification to the Cabinet. The Cabinet sits and says, "On the basis of this justification, this is okay, put it in the pool." You have \$32 billion of those currently available.

This is important for those who believe that they want to form the government. Let me explain to you how it works, so you will have a fair understanding when you get into office; if you ever get there. When you get into office you come into the situation with a pool which is growing every week, because every week a ministry, on the basis of stakeholder or some other discussion, is saying that, "I need these resources"; this, that, roads, whatever.

We have a system that allows you as a minister, ministry and accounting officer to make judgment on the basis of need, within the parameters that we have established. The parameters are as follows: In the first instance, when the Parliament approves an appropriation, you can move within the Heads, but you cannot go beyond the total amount. If you find circumstances in which you need additional funding or you need to move around moneys from one ministry to the other, you have to come back to the Parliament; this is what we do every year.

The budgeting process begins when this one is finished; so immediately as I am finished here, we go to the ministries and say, "On the basis of trying to determine what you would need between October and September next year, tell us what those requirements are." They have to make decisions like: What do you think the cost of running the Government is going to be? What do you think the cost of goods and services are going to be? What do you think the cost of transportation is going to be? What do you think the cost of toilet paper is going to be? What do you think the cost of all the things that you would normally put in a business is going to be? They have to sit and make those guesstimates now. I do not know if anybody here could tell me what the cost of any item five, six or seven months down the road is going to be. So at best you try to put an allocation in place to deal with the eventualities.

Let me demonstrate how that has occurred. You talk about expenditure; at the end of 2000, the cost to the Government in terms of personnel expenditure was \$3.1 billion, salaries and wages. That was what your 80,000 persons cost. By the end of 2006—not this year; this is in respect of last year—the same expenditure was \$5.5 billion. So where has the money gone? It has gone in the pockets of the employees. In some instances you cannot have people without pen, paper, ink and the supporting infrastructure, so other goods and services in 2000, \$1.2 billion; by 2006, \$3.5 billion. That is where the money has gone.

In terms of interest payments, you have debt that you incur because that is what happens when you do capital programmes. The way the thing is structured is as follows: We have recurrent expenditure; you have a small amount of capital expenditure. If you have to do a project, in order to get the benefit of structured payments over a period of time, the only way to do that is by borrowing. So you basically have a programme where capital expenditure is funded on the basis of borrowing; so you borrow. What you programme into the system for consistent payments are interest payments. So you have, for example, in the year 2000, interest payments averaging \$2.5 billion, and by September 30, 2006, \$2.4 billion. In fact, during that period of time, the Government restructured high cost debt. So that what we did, in fact, was to reduce the charge on your recurrent expenditure by reducing the interest costs and thereby saving expenditure.

Subsidies, current transfers, acquisition of physical capital assets and transfers to statutory boards are the expenses. Let me tell you the one that basically you should think about. In 2000 transfers were \$3.1 billion; by the end of 2006, it was \$16 billion. Just in case you are interested in understanding what that is, the \$16 billion is where the Government decided that it was going to invest very heavily in educational institutions, households and other transfers. The other transfers included issues like GATE, health, CEPEP, national social development programmes, the petroleum relief for Caricom States, Infrastructure Development Fund, among others; in household, public officers' pensions and gratuities, old age pension, social assistance, disability grants, school feeding programmes. The biggest jump has been in education where, as a consequence of the policy by Government, that is where significant amounts of expenditure has gone.

Also included inside here is expenditure in relation to CDAP, housing and a number of those things. We can easily, and we will, at some point in time, not tonight, provide details of the movement from a year to year basis on where the money has gone; but it is not correct to say that the Government has not accounted, because every single year, when we come to the Parliament, the tons of books we bring provide you with every single line of expenditure in terms of original, variation, changes and explanation for changes. So I hope that after this we would not hear the statement about the Government not accounting, which is actually not true. By law we are required to account and by law we, in fact, account.

If we did not do that, we could not have this book. The book is the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It basically tells you that it audits the books of the Government and gives

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an indication of what has happened, where the challenges are, how the activities go and how the Government is operating. We are required to look at this and make changes to deal with that. So the whole question of accountability, the whole question of what we do and how we do it, the whole question of structure is based in legislation; they are things that we must do. The public officers that we have will not allow us to do anything different.

Let me deal now with some specific issues. The question of the cameras was in the original budget, so there is no requirement for additional funding. This is simply for additional funding. I understand that the RFPs are now out and very shortly you should get a response on that. Your concern is a valid one, but it is in process.

Madam President, Sen. Dr. Kernahan had a contribution that was very engaging. For the first half she argued that everything was bad and in the second half she argued that everything was bad and in the third half she argued that everything was bad. [*Laughter*] We would agree to disagree. [*Crosstalk*]

First of all, I do not know where she got the notion that there was no planning. This Government came into power and the first thing we decided was that there was no plan in place. So we brought together the best non-aligned political technocrats in the country; we moved ourselves away from the exercise and mandated them to develop 25 strategic plans to accomplish the objective that we had set out. That accomplished, we laid it in the Parliament. I have 25 of them in my office for each sector and that informs how we get to Vision 2020.

Beyond that, there is an operational plan which we have not shared with you, for a particular reason. That plan sets out the objectives that we have set for ourselves, the performance indicators and the benchmarks, and that is what we are using to determine our own movement forward in relation to the five specific objectives that we had set for ourselves. In the course of time, once we approve the allocation for the Ministry of Planning and Development, we will make that information on what we have achieved, how we have achieved it and which benchmarks we have used, available to the general public. It is in those situations you would understand that we have planned extremely well, and we are going according to plan.

I find sometimes that those of us who aspire to public office must understand what we are dealing with. Sure, you can always find some individual anywhere in this country who has a problem and who you could give bad advice. For example, Sen. Dr. Kernahan spoke to someone who had a particular problem; the person

did not know how she would do A, B or C. Just on the basis of it, the advice this person should have been given was that she should go to Minister Yuille-Williams and get a caregiver who, on the basis of the programme that we have, would assist with the issue and would also advise you on how to solve the problem.

That was the advice that should have been given to the individual. Also, that insofar as education was concerned, we would pay for the children, send them to school, feed them and all of that, so she does not have to worry about that. In terms of health, based on the issue, we would pay for it. There are a number of things which I would not go into, but, in a real sense, we should be giving persons good advice about accessing the programmes available, rather than coming here and talking about the issue without a solution.

We are doing a disservice to the people of this country, where the Government provides particular opportunities for all citizens, and when you go out, you interact with them and do not provide a solution based on what the Government has provided. It is not the PNM, it is the Government that is allocating for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that we must provide that and it is available.

Concerning the other issue on the notion of farmers, on the basis of technical information available, everything that Sen. Dr. Kernahan talked about was not consistent with reality. The reality is that anything that any ministry has to do, it has to get the permission of the Ministry of Planning and Development. One of the greatest challenges that they face—and I know it because I interface with them all the time—is the regulatory bodies. We are talking about the system—on the basis of trying to give to the Caroni employees what we had promised them, there was a calculation done, that if we use the current resources and the current system, for us to satisfy the requirements it would take us eight years; just on the basis of the resources.

Clearly, that is the system, but it is a system that we intend to change. It has nothing to do with the promises we have made to them. It has to do with the system; if you want to get the thing transferred to them in a particular way, with all the bureaucracy built into the system, it would do that to you. We are going to find a solution to that. If we simply go with some of these things the way that we have always gone, we will never ever get anything done.

Sen. Phillip talked a lot about oil and gas and a number of other things; let me put him right. Whatever the story is, this is the truth. When we look at hydrocarbon production in the context of Trinidad and Tobago, we see that over

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the next 15 years, on the basis of the production we have, if we do absolutely nothing, our production will take us through a period. If we look at it, in terms of the relationship between oil and gas, it says that in terms of barrels of production you have about 120,000 barrels per day, and in gas about 500,000. If you understand the structure of those two industries, you would recognize that we have exposures on the oil side. When you factor that into the equation, you would realize that as we have used the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, we are going to buffer any challenges that we have to the commodity shocks.

Thereafter, once we saw that we had this under control, we went to the producers and said that in the context of negotiating new tax arrangements with them, they will commit to a work programme. In committing to a work programme, we would share some of the upside risks in terms of going into deep sea exploration. The long and short of it is as follows: We have a plan; we know what the plan is; we are working the plan, and those who do not understand the plan are free to make any statement they want to, but the truth is that the Government is firmly in control of this sector and we are very clear on what we are doing. [*Desk thumping*]

How do you appropriate? Quite frankly, some of the statements made about *vaille-que-vaille* and willy-nilly could not happen. It is based on the Exchequer and Audit Act and the Financial Regulations Act, which has penalties for public officers that misbehave or who do not follow the Act. I find some of them antiquated, but we have not gotten around to changing them as yet. In a real sense, everything in government is based on some law or some Act and is subject to you getting into some difficulty if you do not follow it, and, therefore, nobody wants to get into difficulty; so the system of itself operates in a particular way. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam President, I have dealt with Sen. Ali's issue. I have heard this statement made in a lot of instances, that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) does this and the IMF does that. I sat in this Parliament and listened for three years to Sen. Mark use one line of negative comments from the IMF to basically talk about how bad the Government was doing, how we were not taking on the IMF and we were not taking on anybody, and he was right. The IMF has said to us in some instances that we should not be doing some of the things we are doing. Somebody said that we should not be subsidizing gasoline, because according to economic policy that is not right; you should take the money and do other things. We have a different view which says that in circumstances where transportation weighs heavily in the determination of the inflation index, if you change the petroleum structure, it is going to affect inflation.

Inflation affects poor people and, therefore, unless we put supply side consideration in place to normalize it and bring it where we want to, then we are not prepared to do that just yet. But there is an argument which says that if you are going to do that, you are giving a benefit to those who do not need it. Therefore, it cannot be right that the petrol that you pay for your BMW and the petrol that the poor man pays for his vehicle, are the same. It cannot be right, but that is what happens at this point in time; therefore, we have to find a way, and we will find a way, to deal with that. That is going to happen.

There are some models we are looking at and, in fact, we will be looking at that. Sen. Dr. Ramadhar-Singh spoke about overspending and inflation. We had an objective in this country in which we felt that everybody who was looking for a job should get one. I heard some persons talking about those who were not looking for a job and who do not want one, being unemployed. I do not understand that. The statistic is very simple: If you are looking for a job and you want one, one is available. If you are not looking for a job, you do not want one, then you are not unemployed. So if you go to a place and you see "fellas" smoking and they say, "Well, we doh want to wuk", I do not understand how they are unemployed; that is not how it works.

I have a document from the Chamber of Commerce in which they have identified at various levels 3,115 opportunities, as we speak, for positions that cannot be filled. The choice is very simple: Relocate industries to other countries or bring in labour. In the circumstances that we are seeing today, we say, "Bring in labour." [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: What about training?

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: Let us talk about that for one minute. You can train individuals, but the attitude towards the job is what you cannot deal with. We have a situation where you train persons, you put them in a position where you think they will stay, they get the money they want and they say, "Bye bye; I gone." We have seen a lot of that. We have seen a lot of situations where we create opportunities, we train you and put you there and you say, "This wuk too hard; I not doing that; I gone." So we have to deal with that situation as well. Training of itself is okay, but then some of these operations require individuals with a particular attitude because people could die. We have a situation; we train people; no problem; top of the class; construction site, you are required to pass a drug test, "cyar happen"; you are not going on the site, because you have failed to meet a requirement based on Minister Montano's OSHA requirements. So we have all those challenges, and in dealing with those challenges, in trying to solve those

issues that we are, in fact, contributing to dealing with some of the challenges, but it is bad.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran talked about poor services and about the fact that the Auditor General needed more resources. We have approved all the resources that the Auditor General requires in terms of staff, but more than that, for a very long time, the Auditor General has had available to her a device in which she could use any private audit firm to do the work that she herself cannot do; so for many of the state enterprises, for example, they outsource. The National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) for a long time has been looking for the Auditor General to come in and do its work, and they cannot, so they have given them the approval to use a private firm. That is how many organizations do some of their work.

Poor services—many of the ministries that we have today are, in fact, spending some time on this whole question of customer service. In fact, the one that you bash a lot, the Ministry of Health, has put in place a customer service officer at all its locations. But that is not the problem; the problem is that the system we currently operate by does not support customer service, because there are no penalties and rewards within the system, and when you are dealing with the large numbers you are dealing with, the only reward you get, in many instances, is doing more work. That is the system. In a lot of instances, even when you do good work, the system of promotion is not something that you have control over, so it is very possible that those who do the least work get the highest jobs. Then when they get into the highest jobs, they are just there.

I tell this story all the time. Somebody was sent to my Debt Management Unit and on the first day he came he said, "I doh like accounts." You tell me that you would have somebody in a debt management unit managing billions of dollars and they do not like accounts? But that is what you get; you have no control over that. So the system that you operate by—and it does not matter who is in power—is set up in a particular way, and it requires you to understand what you are dealing with before you start talking about issues that are irrelevant. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Prof. Ramchand talked a little about climate changes. We have been looking at this for a long time; we have increased the contingency fund; we have put in place the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) and that is working well. We have done some things in local government and we are looking at a number of other things. We have a group looking at some of those issues. Most of the protocols we have we are dealing with and, therefore, we are okay with that.

The script that Sen. Sammy had was the wrong script; that was five years ago. Those things he talked about: inflation high, crime, poverty increasing, education, food prices, I will deal with them on another occasion, because I think that we need to deal with them. That was not us. [*Crosstalk*] I just want to deal with one other issue to round off this contribution, Sen. Mark. [*Crosstalk*]

There are four ways in which you receive income, either as an employee, self-employed, a business owner or an investor. The rich of the world are business owners and investors; the poor and the middle income are employees and self-employed. The reason is because on the one side you work for money and the other side money works for you. If you understand those concepts, you will, therefore, understand that as the economy increases and you have a business working for you, it is going to generate more wealth for you as the owner than if you were to work for it; plain and simple.

As there are more opportunities, those who have businesses and those involved in investments will have more income. What the Government has sought to do by policy, is to attempt to get more individuals involved in business ownership. That is what CEPEP in its original state was intended to do and will still do. It is where you take persons and give them opportunities, who ordinarily would not have gotten the opportunities that we give to the business community.

One of these days I will provide you with information of what we give the business community in terms of subsidies. The amount of write-offs that the business community gets is more than the total cost of CEPEP and, therefore, when you try to provide the same benefit to persons who would ordinarily not get it, there is a disconnect in terms of understanding what you are attempting to do. [*Crosstalk*]

When you decide that you have a home which basically costs \$200,000, you subsidize the infrastructure cost and a number of things, and then you decide that the individual who receives that unit is going to pay \$140,000 or \$130,000 for it, the minute you give him the keys, you have transferred wealth to him, because the day before he had nothing. Today, on the basis of the market value of the property and on the basis of what he earns is a difference; that difference is on a stake that you have set up. So we are, in fact, transferring wealth to the poor man by doing what we are doing in the housing policy. That is a way of transferring wealth.

Hon. Senator: Education is wealth too.

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: Education is wealth. When we talk about some of these issues negatively, it worries me. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Senators: No, no, no!

Sen. Mark: I just wanted to indicate to my dear friend that I am in the Opposition office every Thursday and many citizens come to seek help. They want a home, but their income and what the Housing Development Corporation (HDC) has, do not match. So whilst you are talking about subsidizing, persons' incomes are still below the level that they can afford to access. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: I am very happy that you have given me the opportunity to talk a little about that particular challenge, because you are right. We saw that situation and the way we chose to deal with it was that as long as your household income was \$2,000, you will get a subsidized mortgage of 2 per cent and we have a value of a house that you would get. I believe it is \$120,000; so there is an escalation.

You have two things: you have 30 years, but you also have intergenerational transfer, so that in the event you are 60 years where under normal circumstances nobody would give you a mortgage because you are going to retire in five years, you can, in fact, get a 30-year mortgage. [*Crosstalk*] We are not talking equity in distribution, the issue is that when we came into government there were 38,000 requests. Over the last five years it has created more demand as we started to put more on the market.

The Government by policy, recognizing some of those challenges, is putting things in place to deal with them; unfortunately you cannot do all of it in a short space of time. Recall that when we talk glibly about "de Government have all dis money" and we have all these kinds of resources, it is only for the last two years that we have been able to ramp up those kinds of revenues, because of investment in the two new trains that we have brought on and the production, as well as changes to the taxation law, to take care of the price that we now have of better products.

You would recall that I had said on a number of occasions that when I came into government, certainly in the first year, we had high oil prices, but we were getting less money, because the tax structure was one in which during times of high oil prices the capital expenditure that you could have brought into the system was high enough so that you paid less revenue. We fixed all of that. It is as a result of that we have released revenue. Because we had a bank of all these needs that we could not fund and we had to chop and cut, we are trying to do some catch up to deal with some urgent and important expenditure. That is basically what is happening; that is the reality.

In a lot of instances, we are simply doing it on the basis of the priorities we have established, which are: education, health, housing, national security and social services; after that we did infrastructure. That is the plan; that is the intention.

Madam President, this is a lovely way to start the day, in the service of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. With those few remarks, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

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

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate be adjourned to Monday, June 18, at 1.30 p.m., at which time, as circulated to hon. Senators, we will debate the Bail (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill, 2007. As you recall, we debated this Bill about three months ago on a 90-day time limit. Those 90 days expire next week Thursday and, therefore, we need to have this Bill debated. We will do that on Monday.

Sen. Mark: I want to advise the hon. Leader of Government Business that we have been cooperating over the last three weeks in having a number of motions on the adjournment deferred. I advise him that at the next sitting I have about five motions that are outstanding. We should try to take, at least, three of them; two from me and maybe one from Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith: Madam President, I would advise the hon. Senator that according to the Standing Orders, we take motions on the adjournment when there is time. If we persist in this kind of debate, then there is no way that in the wee hours of the morning or late at night that I am prepared to entertain five or even three motions on the adjournment.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 1.23 a.m.