

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, May 27, 2008***SENATE***Tuesday, May 27, 2008*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Emily Gaynor Dick-Forde and Sen. The Hon. Tina Gronlund-Nunez, who are out of the country.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

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

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MR. NOEL GAYLE

WHEREAS Senator Emily Gaynor Dick-Forde 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, NOEL GAYLE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of Senator Dr. Emily Gaynor Dick-Forde.

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 27th day of May, 2008.”

Senators' Appointment
[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT]

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

“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. JOEL PRIMUS

WHEREAS Senator Tina Gronlund-Nunez 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, JOEL PRIMUS, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 27th May, 2008 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of Senator Tina Gronlund-Nunez.

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 26th day of May, 2008.”

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senators Joel Primus and Noel Gayle took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL

Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2008, 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. M. Browne*]

Question put and agreed to.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2005. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne)*]
2. A Green Paper on Local Government Reform: Roles and Responsibilities of Local Government Bodies. [*The Minister of Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning)*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Tertiary Education
(Grant of Financial Assistance/Scholarships)**

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

- A. Could the Minister inform the Senate whether her Ministry has provided financial assistance or awarded scholarships to persons desirous of pursuing studies at universities in Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean region and/or internationally?
- B. If the answer is in the affirmative, will the Minister provide this Senate with the following information:
 - (i) a list of the names of persons who have benefited from such assistance for the period 2002 to December 2007;
 - (ii) the amount of financial assistance provided to each person; and
 - (iii) the names of the institutions involved?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Vice-President, question No.11 is not yet ready.

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, we were told last week that the Minister would require one week to present the answer. I ask the Leader of Government Business when this question would be answered; it has been outstanding for four and a half months.

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Mark knows very well that on the last occasion a question like this arose, we, basically, had to move it to a written question.

The question requires us to find information from 2002—2007, and the information is not resident in one place. It is trying to collate the data and dealing with multiple agencies that is presenting the particular challenge. The answer to the question can only be available when those agencies have brought it to our attention.

At this point in time, I am in no position to say when the exercise would be complete. I am in a position to say that as soon as it is available, we would bring it to the Parliament.

Question, by leave, deferred.

Mr. Douglas Mendes SC
(Details of Retention of Services)

12. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Attorney General:

Could the Attorney General provide the Senate with:

- A. A detailed list of the matters in which Mr. Douglas Mendes SC has been retained by:
 - (i) the Government of Trinidad and Tobago;
 - (ii) the Integrity Commission;
 - (iii) the National Lotteries Control Board;
 - (iv) the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago; and
 - (v) any other state enterprise and/or statutory authority during the period January 01, 2002 and December 31, 2007?
- B. Could the Attorney General also provide a detailed breakdown of the fees paid to the said Senior Counsel during the same period?

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George): Mr. Vice-President, the answer to that question is not yet ready. I assure you that efforts are being made to make the answer available in the shortest possible time.

Question, by leave, deferred.

Granting of Scholarships/Funding
(Committee Members)

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

- A. Could the Minister provide the Senate with a list of the Members who comprise the committee in the Ministry of Community Development,

Culture and Gender Affairs charged with the responsibility for determining the grant of scholarships/funding to needy individuals?

- B. Could the Minister provide the Senate with copies of the brochures/pamphlets containing the procedure and criteria adopted by the committee for determining the eligibility for scholarships/funding?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Vice-President, although really question No. 15 requires the advice of the Attorney General, that advice is not yet available; therefore, the question has been deferred until such time as it is available.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Conduct of the Chief Justice
(Legal Advice Offered on)**

28. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Prime Minister:

- A. Could the Prime Minister make available the official legal advice offered to him by Dr. Lloyd Barnett, QC and Mr. Mark Strachan, QC from Jamaica and the United Kingdom respectively on which his decision to have the President of the Republic establish a tribunal to investigate the conduct of the Chief Justice?
- B. Could the Prime Minister also provide the Senate with details of the legal costs and fees paid to both Dr. Lloyd Barnett, QC and Mr. Mark Strachan, QC for the said advice?

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George): Mr. Vice-President, the response to that question is not yet available. It is being worked on, and as soon as approval is obtained, it shall be made available to the honourable House.

Sen. Mark: We were told the same thing by the hon. Leader of Government Business last week, so we do not know when we would get a response to this question.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Todd's Road
(Status of Land Distribution)**

34. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:

- A. Could the Minister provide the Senate with the rationale, if any, for the allocation and distribution of the 3,000 acres of land cultivated with citrus located at Todd's Road?

- B. Could the Minister also state whether these lands were subdivided and if so, by whom?
- C. Could the Minister further inform the Senate whether the final distribution and allocation exercise was approved by Cabinet and if so, when?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Sen. The Hon. Arnold Piggott): Mr. Vice-President, the response to that question is not yet ready. As soon as it is available I shall bring it to the Senate.

Sen. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, I ask through you to my hon. colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources: When will the question be ready; is it a week from now; two weeks from now? Could you tell this Senate and the country?

Sen. The Hon. A. Piggott: Mr. Vice-President, I would expect the answer to be ready within three weeks.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Ongoing United Nations Development Project
(Computerization of the Licensing Office)**

45. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

With respect to the ongoing United Nations Development Project for the computerization of the Licensing Office, could the Minister advise the Senate:

- (i) what is the status of this project;
- (ii) what was the sum of money allocated for this project;
- (iii) how much money, if any, has been spent on this project so far; and
- (iv) whether the project has been abandoned or is there a new completion date?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Vice-President, the answer to that question is not yet ready. I am not in a position to indicate when it would be ready.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Public Transport Service Corporation
(Status of Local Agents for Volvo Buses)**

- 46. Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:
- (a) With respect to the Volvo manufactured articulated buses owned by the Public Transport Service Corporation, could the Minister inform the Senate who are the local agents for these buses?
 - (b) Could the Minister also inform the Senate whether those agents have a workshop and spare parts facility in Trinidad?
 - (c) If the answer to (b) is in the affirmative, could the Minister state where this workshop and spare parts facility is located?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Vice-President, this question falls on the heels of question No. 45 and precedes question No. 68. They are all for the Minister of Works and Transport. I am in no position to answer when they will, in fact, be submitted.

Sen. Mark: Has the Government collapsed in office?

Sen. Joseph: That is another question. [*Laughter*]

Question, by leave, deferred.

**United Nations Development Programme
(Status Report of Funding)**

- 47. Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment:
- (a) Could the Minister inform the Senate whether the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has been able to access funding from the UNDP's programme for critical development and technical projects?
 - (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister provide the Senate with a status report on the funding accessed from the programme during the last three (3) years?
 - (c) If the answer to (a) is in the negative, could the Minister inform the Senate:
 - (i) whether Trinidad and Tobago has graduated out of the programme; and
 - (ii) whether projects that could have been funded by the UNDP must now be financed by the Government?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Vice-President, 81 questions were, in fact, submitted. The Government has answered 64.2 per cent; so not answering questions is not the issue. The question is about providing the data. In some instances, it is time consuming. With respect to question No. 47, that is now not available. On the basis of the information that is available to me, it should be ready the next time that we meet.

Question, by leave, deferred.

Eco-lodges (Details of)

59. Sen. Dr. Adesh Nanan asked the hon. Minister of Tourism:

- (i) Would the Minister inform this Senate, how many eco-lodges have been constructed from 2002 to present in Trinidad and Tobago?
- (ii) Would the Minister also identify the location of the said eco-lodges, the local or foreign investors involved and the estimated investment in the said eco-lodges?

The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Joseph Ross): Mr. Vice-President, section 2 of the Tourism Development Act, 2000, defines the term “eco-lodge” as:

“A nature-dependent tourism accommodation facility that meets the principles and philosophies of ecotourism, in that, it is developed and managed in an environmentally sensitive manner; affords protection of its operating environment, and offers an educational and participatory experience to visitors.”

It is to be noted that only information on tourism projects for which fiscal incentives are requested by investors, are submitted to the Ministry of Tourism. Based on these submissions, information such as capital expenditure, revenue foregone, ownership, et cetera, for projects, are entered and stored in a database. This database, therefore, excludes tourism projects in respect of which incentives have not been applied for.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago sees itself as being responsible for facilitating the establishment, growth and development of the ecotourism component of the entire tourism package. Indeed, Vision 2020 speaks specifically to the creation of an enabling environment for competitive business development.

Based on the available information, the eco-lodges constructed since 2002 are as follows:

- (1) Aquaju Hotel, this eco-lodge which is located at No. 209 Paria Main Road, Gran Riviere was constructed in 2004 by a French investor.
- (2) Estara Hotel, this eco-lodge is located in Cumana, Toco and was constructed in 2006 with local investment. The ministry understands that the facility has not yet opened for business.

Information regarding the amount of investment in respect of these two eco-lodges is not yet available.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

**South West Regional Health Authority
(Scrubs)**

60. Sen. Dr. Adesh Nanan asked the hon. Minister of Health:

- (i) Would the Minister inform this Senate whether a decision has been taken for doctors attached to the South West Regional Health Authority to be supplied with scrubs on a daily basis for use outside of the operating rooms?
- (ii) If the answer to (i) is in the affirmative, would the Minister indicate:
 - (a) whether any cost benefit analysis was done before instituting this measure;
 - (b) the name of the supplier of the scrubs; and
 - (c) whether any other health facility has adopted this measure?

The Minister of Health (Sen. The Hon. Jerry Narace): Mr. Vice-President, the South West Regional Health Authority has indicated that no firm decision has yet been taken to supply scrubs to doctors on a daily basis for use outside the operating theatre. However, this matter is under consideration at this time.

In addition, the Ministry of Health recognizes that the standard hospital practice in developed countries dictates that medical officers must wear the appropriate medical attire while on duty on wards and clinics, and, in particular, outside the operating theatres. This is necessary to reduce the transmission of infections.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Health is giving consideration to a national policy on this matter. In the circumstance, part (ii) of this question is not applicable.

**Solicitor General
(Application for Position)**

65. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Attorney General:

- A. Could the Attorney General provide the Senate with the number of candidates who have applied for the position or office of Solicitor General over the past three (3) years?
- B. Could the Attorney General further state whether her office endorsed or supported the application of any of the candidates and the reason, if any, for such endorsement and/or support?
- C. Could the Attorney General further state when the Office of Solicitor General will be permanently filled?

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George): Mr. Vice-President, the Judicial and Legal Service Commission is the body legally charged with responsibility for the appointment, promotion and acting arrangements of judicial and legal officers.

The Judicial and Legal Service Commission is also responsible for the receipt of all applications from persons wishing to be considered for posts and positions as judicial and legal officers and, therefore, the information sought is not within the knowledge or the possession of the Attorney General.

Thank you.

**Licensing Authority
(Measures to Stamp out Illegal Practices)**

68. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

With respect to the numerous reports over the past seven (7) years of fraudulent activities at the offices of the Licensing Authority, particularly the Port of Spain office, could the Minister inform the Senate of the steps or measures taken by his Government to stamp out such illegal practices?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Vice-President, question No. 68 is not yet ready.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**National Insurance Funds
(Government's Contribution to)**

69. Sen. Mohammed Faisal Rahman asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

Could the Minister state whether the Government has any plans to contribute to the NIS funds to supplement the contributions of employees and employers to enhance benefits at maturity?

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne): Mr. Vice-President, since the inception of the National Insurance System (NIS) in 1972, and over the 36-year history of the National Insurance System in Trinidad and Tobago, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has never been required to provide any funds to the National Insurance Board, regularize shortfalls or to enhance benefit payments.

The National Insurance System was always intended to be self-financing. It is in that vein that section 70 of the National Insurance Act mandates the National Insurance Board to conduct an actuarial review of the National Insurance System, at least every five years, for the purpose of assessing the balance between the rates of contributions and the rates of benefits.

Although section 58(2) of the National Insurance Act does provide that temporary insufficiency in the assets of the fund shall be met from moneys advanced by Parliament, there has never been the need to resort to the use of this provision.

Further, there is no indication at the present time that any injection of funds from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is required by the NIB and it may be inappropriate for the present Government to commit future governments by undertaking to make such provisions now.

With respect to the investment of funds, it should be noted that over the five-year period 2003—2007, funds under management by the National Insurance Board increased by 48 per cent, and delivered an annual average investment return realized and unrealized gains of approximately 9.08 per cent. The Board's current strategic target is to increase funds under management to \$23 billion by the year 2011. In keeping with actuarial projections and to achieve an average investment return of 10.52 per cent, ensuring effective contributions, income collection and undertaking prudent investment strategies are therefore key measures that contribute to the financial sustainability and the growth of the national insurance fund.

The National Insurance Board currently maintains a very high level of compliance at 88 per cent and perhaps the highest in the region. It should be further noted that the government agencies remit NIS contributions to the National Insurance Board on a timely basis thereby enhancing the compliance system which has positioned the NIB to be amongst the most effective social insurance contribution collecting agencies in the region.

Sen. Rahman: Mr. Vice-President, recently we learnt that the contributions are being increased because there is a fear that the insurance funds will not be able to be self-sustaining and this appeared to have resulted from Government's use of NIB funds for certain developmental works.

In light of the fact that the Government receives a benefit from the National Insurance Board's funds, and having regard to the fact that the review had recommended that better avenues be found for investment—

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Rahman—

Sen. Rahman: I am getting to the question.

Mr. Vice-President: Okay.

Sen. Rahman: Why does the Government continue to deny the reality that there is a need for its own contribution to the fund?

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: I have a little difficulty understanding the question, but I will try to reply.

The Seventh Actuarial Report recommends—and actuarial reports review the contribution system in determining the demographic variables. I think I was at pains in the last motion to discuss the dynamics of the National Insurance Board's fund and the actuarial review.

Again, I think a supplemental question was asked in the past, and it was clearly demonstrated that the Government is not funded by the NIB. I do not know if that was the question, but the Government is not funded by the NIB, that is the first point. The NIB does invest, however, in certain government bonds as any other investor does in the system.

With regard to contributions, it is normal practice for every pension fund to review its liabilities in relation to its current historical contribution rates and projections. It is for that reason that the actuaries recommended and made graduated increases in the contributions and that is contained in the actuarial review.

Thank you.

**National Insurance Board
(Review of Investment Policy)**

70. Sen. Mohammed Faisal Rahman asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

Would the Minister inform this Senate whether Government intends to advise the NIB to review its investment policy in light of recommendations made by the actuaries of the ILO to enhance returns?

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne): Mr. Vice-President, that question is not yet ready and will not be ready for two weeks.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Trinidad and Tobago Roads
(Registered Vehicles on)**

71. Sen. Mohammed Faisal Rahman asked the Hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister provide the following information for the period January 01, 2002 to December 31, 2007:

- (i) how many vehicles have been registered for use on Trinidad and Tobago roads?
- (ii) of that number, how many are diesel powered?
- (iii) of the number that are diesel powered, how many have been registered as “p” vehicles for private use?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Vice-President, the answer to question No. 71 is not available at this time.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Emperor Valley Zoo
(Upgrade Report on)**

79. Sen. Dr. Adesh Nanan asked the hon. Minister of Tourism:

Would the Minister provide the Senate with a status report on the upgrade of the Emperor Valley Zoo?

The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Joseph Ross): Mr. Vice-President, I would like an additional two weeks to have the answer to this question ready for the Senate.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Tobago Coral Reefs
(Protection of)**

80. Sen. Dr. Adesh Nanan asked the hon. Minister of Tourism:

Would the Minister indicate the strategies employed, if any, to protect the coral reefs around Tobago?

The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Joseph Ross): Similarly, Mr. Vice-President, in another two weeks the answer will be ready.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Ecotourism in Trinidad and Tobago
(Promotion of)**

81. Sen. Dr. Adesh Nanan asked the hon. Minister of Tourism:

Would the Minister outline the strategies employed to promote ecotourism in Trinidad and Tobago?

The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Joseph Ross): Again, Mr. Vice-President, in two weeks time I will have the answer.

Question, by leave, deferred.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move,

That a Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2008 be now read a second time.

Mr. Vice-President, this is a money Bill, it was approved in the other place, yesterday, May 26, 2008 shortly before midnight.

The Bill contains two proposals with respect to the 2008 appropriation. The first proposal was for the provision of supplementary funds in the amount of \$3,490,016,910 to fund urgent and critical recurrent and capital expenditure to September 30, 2008, in areas where insufficient or no allocation was provided.

The second proposal was for the variation of the appropriation for fiscal year 2008 in the sum of \$1,026,426,647. The increases and decreases in the appropriation to be effected by this variation reflect the reassignment in ministerial responsibilities as assigned by His Excellency the President, acting on

the advice of the Prime Minister in accordance with the provisions of section 79(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, which was published in the *Trinidad and Tobago Gazette* dated December 18, 2007.

Mr. Vice-President, the increase in the appropriation as a result of the supplementation would provide additional funds for the following Heads:

Head 01: President	\$ 10,137,000
Head 05: Parliament	\$ 15,000,000
Head 06: Service Commissions	\$ 1,000,000
Head 12: Public Service Appeal Board	\$ 522,360
Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister	\$ 1,700,000
Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly	\$ 50,000,000
Head 18: Ministry of Finance	\$893,010,120
Head 20: Pensions and Gratuities	\$ 8,712,691
Head 21: Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment	\$ 26,527,000
Head 22: Ministry of National Security	\$317,141,000
Head 25: Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources	\$ 27,556,000
Head 26: Ministry of Education	\$ 45,492,000
Head 28: Ministry of Health	\$ 68,449,000
Head 31: Ministry of Public Administration	\$ 87,138,000
Head 39: Ministry of Public Utilities	\$247,928,000
Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries	\$1,010,624,200
Head 42: Ministry of Local Government	\$ 88,195,015

2.00 p.m.

Head 43: Ministry of Works and Transport	\$262,367,000
Head 47: Ministry of Foreign Affairs	\$ 56,522,800

Finance Bill

[SEN. THE HON. M. BROWNE]

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Head 54: Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education	\$240,237,000
Head 55: Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs	\$ 27,514,124
Head 57: Ministry of Information	\$ 4,252,600
Total	\$3,490,016,910

Mr. Vice-President, the details of these proposed changes have been circulated to all Senators. It is anticipated that during the course of this debate these proposals contained within the Bill will be addressed by various members of the Government. Please permit me at this time to advise the Senate of the proposals applicable to five Heads of expenditure which will be receiving the largest increases in the supplementation of the appropriation.

These five Heads of expenditure amount to 78 per cent of the supplementary funding required. The five largest Heads requiring supplementary resources are: Head 40: the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, \$1,010,624,200; Head 18: Ministry of Finance, \$893,010,120; Head 22: the Ministry of National Security, \$317,141,000; Head 43: the Ministry of Works and Transport, \$262,367,000; and Head 39: the Ministry of Public Utilities, \$247,928,000.

Mr. Vice-President, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries advised, in February, that based on the prevailing high oil prices and the current usage, it is estimated that the total subsidy on petroleum products will be approximately \$1 billion more than expenditure anticipated for the year submitted during the preparation of the 2008 budget. Therefore, there is need to augment the Ministry's allocation by \$1 billion to meet the additional subsidy requirement. An additional sum of \$10 million is also required for the National Energy Corporation to complete the purchase of Union Estate to facilitate the industrial development of that estate.

Mr. Vice-President, in the case of the Ministry of Finance, the additional resources are required primarily for the following reasons:

- to replenish \$80 million utilized to assist 3,420 cane farmers for direct and indirect transitional support as a result of Government's decision to exit the sugar industry;
- to meet the cost of a one-off equity injection of \$152.4 million to Caribbean Airlines Limited to launch and operate the airbridge service between Trinidad and Tobago;

- \$462.7 million in initial equity and other costs associated with the construction of a power plant by Trinidad Generation Limited at Union Estate to supply Alutrint Smelter Complex with electricity and to supply bulk power to the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission;
- to increase Government's equity investment in the Export/Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago by \$50 million. These resources would in turn be utilized to retire an existing debt of \$36 million to a local financial institution. That loan enabled the EXIM Bank to fund a number of small and medium local enterprises to upgrade their plant and equipment, which would have given them a competitive edge over their regional and extra-regional competitors in accordance with the mandate of the EXIM Bank;
- to provide additional resources, through a special window, to the Caricom Petroleum Fund at the rate of \$6.5 million a month to assist the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States with infrastructure construction;
- to meet \$4.6 million of cost associated with the administration of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund;
- to meet \$46.3 million of interest and capital cost related to the payment of an RBTT loan raised on behalf of Nipdec in the sum of \$286.3 million to finance projects under the Ministry of National Security Construction Programme.

Mr. Vice-President, through this supplementary appropriation, the Government is seeking to ensure that the security services are adequately provisioned. In pursuit of this objective, the Ministry of National Security is being provided with additional resources for the following reasons:

- to meet additional costs in the Fire Service to pay arrears of salary and allowances to fire officers and auxiliary fire officers, emanating from industrial agreements, and to meet the increased National Insurance Scheme rates;
- to cover arrears of salary and allowances in the prison service as a result of the industrial relations settlement, as well as that associated with increased National Insurance Scheme rates;

- to meet outstanding arrears to Special Reserve Police Officers and additional contributions to the National Insurance Scheme; and
- to cover additional costs in the Immigration Division and Cadet Force and to meet payments for contract employment.

With regard to the Ministry of Works and Transport, additional funding is required mainly for the following reasons:

- to enable the Highways Division to continue its road repair programme on the nation's highway and secondary road network;
- for the Drainage Division to continue to award contracts for walling, paving, desilting, dredging and embankment works and sediment control of watercourses;
- to enable the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to meet arrears of salaries and COLA and wages, as well as remuneration based on a new collective agreement;
- to fund the Public Transport Service Corporation to meet payments of arrears of wages as a result of a new collective agreement, increased cost of spare parts and services, increased security, insurance for 75 new buses and to purchase a Driving Simulation System and tools.

In the case of the Ministry of Public Utilities, an additional \$234.8 million is required to meet arrears of salaries, wages and COLA owed to WASA workers in respect of the industrial agreement for the 2005—2007 period in the amount of \$223.8 million, as well as interest on the Desalcott Loan Facility of \$11 million and \$13.1 million to supplement the resources of the NSD Programme for the completion of several social infrastructure programmes geared to providing and improving water services, street lighting, electrification of residences, multi-purpose social and recreational areas in communities.

I take this opportunity to inform this honourable Senate that \$316.6 million of the supplementary resources provided for in this Bill is earmarked for the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP). This need emanated from a mid-year review of the PSIP that was undertaken by the Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with other ministries and departments.

I wish to assure hon. Senators that the Ministry of Finance has reviewed Government's finances for fiscal 2008 and wishes to assure that the supplementary funding proposed will not impair Government's fiscal position.

The majority of the supplementary funding is in respect of current transfers and subsidies. Supplementary funds are also required for personnel expenditure, transfers to statutory boards and similar bodies, acquisition of physical capital assets, debt servicing, goods and services, and the Public Sector Investment Programme; all of which are unavoidable.

This Senate will recall that when the 2008 budget was presented to Parliament by the previous Minister of Finance, in August 2007, a surplus of \$89.2 million was projected. This was derived from projected revenue of \$40,381.2 million, an expenditure of \$40,292 million.

Based on the mid-year review, revenue is projected to grow to \$46,647.5 million, an increase of \$6,266.3 million. It is noteworthy that \$2.5 billion of that increase is projected to come from oil companies and \$994 million from other companies, which is reflective of the prevailing high oil and gas prices, as well as buoyant petrochemical prices. Other significant contributors to the projected increase in revenue are VAT in the sum of \$995 million and property income, which amounts to \$1.6 billion. This increase in VAT is reflective of the general buoyancy of the economy, while the improvement in property income is influenced by higher profits from the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and royalties on oil.

On the expenditure side, additional expenditure of some \$3,490 million will be undertaken as a result of the supplementation of the appropriation now before this honourable Senate.

The sum of \$1,718.8 million is projected to be deposited into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, by direct charge, in keeping with the provisions of Act No. 6 of 2007, which established the Fund. Additional expenditure of some \$35 million is planned under the URP to meet the increased cost resulting from the higher remuneration rates now being paid in the programme.

Additional expenditure of \$721.8 million is also projected by way of direct charges, primarily to meet salaries and allowances in elements of the public service, such as the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, as a result of new remuneration packages, as well as increased pensions brought about by Government's decision to increase the minimum pension paid to retired public servants.

Capital expenditure under the Infrastructure Development Fund is expected to be about \$990.7 million above the \$4 billion originally projected in August 2007, and this will be drawn from funds previously appropriated to the Fund.

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Mr. Vice-President, in the process of the review, it was noted that a number of projects and programmes being undertaken by ministries and departments have not been progressing at the rate originally envisaged. As a result, a reorganization and reprioritization exercise was undertaken which yielded unspent balances of approximately \$606.1 million, which when factored into the analysis, results in a projected fiscal surplus of \$5.3 million for the year 2008.

Once again, this administration demonstrates that it is committed to the prudent management of the country's financial resources. The population can rest assured that the Government will continue to address its social and economic needs in a fiscal and prudent way.

Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Sen. Wade Mark: Mr. Vice-President, the purpose of human existence is to ensure the generation of human happiness and this must always be done for the greatest number in any society and the only purpose of any government is to so arrange and utilize the resources of the State to generate and promote human happiness.

This Government, which has now presented this Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2008, has presided over human misery in this republic over the last six and a half to seven years. Mr. Vice-President, whose interest is this particular package designed to promote and advance? Is it the interest of the working people of our republic? Is it the interest of the grassroots and the poor? Is it the interest of the vulnerable in this economy and society, or is it the interest of a minority and carefully-selected few that continue to enjoy the vast amount of wealth and income that we have been generating over the last few years in this country?

2.15 p.m.

Unfortunately, this Government is not what the Minister in the Ministry of Finance attempted to paint or present, a Government of prudence and proper management of the resources of the nation. What we have witnessed over the last six and one-half years is wanton squandermania by the Manning administration. Therefore, this Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill represents or marks another episode in this PNM's incompetence, ineffective and inefficient approach to national budgeting in our republic. It is not the first excursion by the reckless, corrupt and inefficient administration into financial

adventurism and recklessness. Certainly, it will not be their last. What the nation has witnessed over the last six and one-half years is a wild and irresponsible approach to the financial management of the nation's affairs by this administration.

This Government has generated severe pressures, as a result of its economic policies, worsening and intensifying in the process, a situation in which inflation is double-digit in this country, or almost double-digit. According to their friends that they have brought from London, the economist intelligence grouping, they have admitted to the Government that their obscene and excessive spending is what is generating inflation in this country. Whereas they were predicting inflation to be reduced to 8.5 per cent at the end of 2008, they are now predicting that inflation would be over 10 per cent. That is what their friends from London told them a short while ago.

This reckless spending pattern on the part of this administration, has created pools of poverty in our beautiful country, where the poor, the vulnerable and those who are unable to take care of themselves, are eking out an existence.

This Government is on record as saying if you are earning \$655 per month you are above the poverty line in this country. I would like to see any one of those Members in the PNM Benches exist on \$655 per month in this land, but you want ordinary people to live on that.

I have done a rough estimate between 2003 to the present time and this Government has, in fact, from 2002/2003 to the present time, spent close to \$250 billion in taxpayers' moneys through gas and oil in the main. We were there for six years and we only had in our possession less than \$60 billion. You, the PNM, in six and one-half years, have spent and would have spent, at the end of this fiscal year, close to \$250 billion. What do we have to show for it?

This regime is presiding over large-scale theft and grand corruption of the public funds and the public moneys in this land of ours. They are virtually raiding the nation's Treasury and "tiefinig" has become more sophisticated and institutionalized in this country, under this administration.

Sen. Rogers: On a point of order. Is the Senator imputing improper motives on behalf of the Government?

Sen. W. Mark: "Ah did not call yuh name. If ah call yuh name then ah imputing improper motives." I did not accuse anybody, Sir.

Mr. Vice-President: He did not accuse anybody specific.

Sen. W. Mark: I did not accuse anybody.

Sen. Enill: He accused everybody.

Sen. W. Mark: May I continue? I will demonstrate, in my contribution, the wanton squandermania that this country has been experiencing and the cost overruns that we have now taken for granted.

Today, we are being asked by this Government to grant them an additional \$3.5 billion. The budget today, for fiscal 2007/2008, is roughly \$46 billion. What do we have to show for it in this country? In terms of the Minister of National Security, who is an abysmal failure and who should tender his resignation, pack up and go home, he has not been able to offer any security and safety for the vast majority of our citizens.

Would you believe that this Minister and his Government have experienced under this administration, a situation where between 2000—2007, over 106,683 serious crimes were committed. Under that hapless Minister of National Security, all we have been able to detect so far is 26,694. Today, in our republic, 80,000 serious crimes have not been detected in this country. The only consolation we can get from this miserable and feeble Minister of National Security is to have patience and hold strain. People are being bludgeoned to death in this country. People are being murdered like flies and dogs and all we get from this Minister and his Prime Minister is to hold strain, have patience and have faith.

There have been murders under this brutal and vicious administration for the last six and one-half years. Between 2000—2007, there have been 18,010 murders in this country and only 503 of those murders have been detected by this Government. We have a Minister who is a junior Minister, coming to tell us about prudence and that they have been efficient in managing the resources of this country. This is the most concentrated bunch of incompetent ministers we have ever seen in an independent republic since 1962, when we got our independence. This Government is incompetent. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Vice-President: Two of you are standing.

Sen. George: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. I would like to draw reference to Standing Order 35(4), offensive and insulting language about Members in the Chamber.

Sen. W. Mark: Did I offend you? Are you incompetent?

Sen. George: I am a Member of the Chamber.

Sen. W. Mark: You will get your chance to speak.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, could you refrain from—

Sen. W. Mark: He will get a chance to speak.

Mr. Vice-President: I am sure he would not use the language you are using.

Sen. W. Mark: He is a young person. He is a neophyte. He does not understand what is taking place in his Senate. He is not sure where he is. Let Sen. Dr. Saith advise him of what takes place in a Parliament. This is not a church. I know that they have a lot of preachers on that side. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Dr. Saith: Ignore him.

Sen. W. Mark: Anyway, may I continue? This Government is a total failure. What is the justification? Did this junior Minister of Finance or the Minister in the Ministry of Finance—[*Interruption*] No, the junior Minister. [*Interruption*] You have been promoted? Let him tell us. He has not given us in this Parliament one iota of justification for this increase. [*Interruption*] Yes, that is the Prime Minister's scintilla. He has not justified to us why they have gone that way. What we do know is that recurrent expenditure would amount to \$3.2 billion and capital expenditure would be something like \$317 million.

We on this side are disappointed. The UNC-A is disappointed with this Bill. First of all, it is not relevant to the needs of the masses of people; the poor and suffering people, who are only collecting crumbs from the master's table. I would have thought that in the face of the malnutrition, growing hunger and starvation by tens of thousands of citizens, particularly children and single female-headed households, there would have been some provision in this Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill to provide subsidies to food, so that we can help those people and their children. There is nothing like that, but I would show you who they are giving subsidies to.

They are giving subsidies to their friends and their foreign investors, but poor people's children are not getting subsidies. What did the Emperor say? I beg your pardon, what did the Prime Minister say? He said that he is not subsidizing. "He living in ah palace. He doh buy food. He gets food free. So he doh care who dead or who alive." Collateral damage, who starve, starve.

I thought we would have gotten some kind of provision of allocation towards subsidies for basic food items for the weak and vulnerable in our country. Subsidize milk, rice, oil, sugar, chicken and red beans. Subsidize the people. The Government has the money. "Doh tell meh about corruption." It is done in India. We could do it here.

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2.30 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, we are disappointed in this Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, because there is absolutely no mention of any increases in transfers to old age pensioners; to recipients of public assistance; to government retirees; to the hundreds of thousands of non-unionized workers in this society, who are still labouring and toiling on a minimum wage of \$9 an hour, and the PNM is caring! After being in power for six and a half years, the minimum wage should have been \$25 an hour or \$30 an hour, but they do not care.

Poor people are killing each other in the country. The murder rate is now 200 in 150 days or thereabout. Mr. Vice-President, this is going to continue. The people have to get rid of this albatross called the PNM. Until we get rid of the PNM, there would be no liberation and no emancipation for the poor and oppressed in this country. You have to go! PNM must go! Mr. Vice-President, this Bill is an insult to the ordinary people in this country.

Five years ago, one could have purchased a bundle of food items for about \$130 and, five years later, that same bundle of basic food items is costing over \$325. It includes basic things like rice, oil, butter and milk. Agriculture has collapsed under this Government, because of vicious vindictiveness and political vindictiveness. They closed down Caroni (1975) Limited because they believed that by killing Caroni (1975) Limited, they had killed the UNC. But, today, if you go to Brazil or any developing nation, sugar is in production. Sugarcane production is rising, and not for sugar production, but for fuel consumption and ethanol. That is the way to go.

The Government of this country has no vision. If they had a vision, the industry would have been alive today, and they could have gone into ethanol production. All the subsidy that we are talking about today, we would have had alternative energy sources to reduce this heavy subsidy that we have on basic petroleum products in our country.

Do you know what the contribution of agriculture to GDP is? It is a half of 1 per cent. That is under the PNM. About six years ago, it was about 6 per cent but, today, it is half of 1 per cent. That is the legacy of the PNM. They would not help the poor, but do you know who they are helping? They are helping Essar Steel.

According to a Legal Notice that I have, No. 268, they gave Essar Steel a total relief from corporation tax for five years; total relief from customs duties, and then subject to subsection (16) of the Act, total relief from income tax on

dividends or other distribution other than interest out of profits or gains derived from the manufacture of approved products. This is dated the 5th day of December. They are giving billions of dollars to Essar Steel, but they do not want to subsidize the poor, they are subsidizing big business. You are a big business Government! You are not concerned about the poor; you are concerned about the big shots. It is a “big man” government that you have here!

I have collected many legal notices that they have issued to companies, and every one is getting 10 years tax free; no corporation tax. There is only relief for the big man and the rich and powerful man, and the ordinary people are “ketchin their aunt, nenen and uncle” in this country. Is this fair? This Government is provoking the country and the population. I want to tell them that what goes around comes around.

Mr. Vice-President, let me take you to Head 18: Trinidad Generation Unlimited, \$462 million. What is this thing about? Who is in charge of this? Did the Minister in the Ministry of Finance tell this Parliament who is in charge? They are going to build a power plant to generate power for Alutrint and other private sector organizations on this Union Estate. They are taking \$500 million of our money to go into a 40 per cent equity arrangement with, who? We do not know. I call on the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill, to tell us who is their partner in this thing. Why are we taking taxpayers' money to fund private sector business? We need to get answers.

In the budget statement last year, the Government told this country, through the Minister of Finance that the Government agreed in principle to the development of a 125,000 metric ton per annum aluminium transformation facility. That is Alutrint. They told the entire country that they are going to establish Alutrint and it would produce 125,000 tonnes of primary aluminium products, but they never told us who is going to finance it.

We discovered by accident that it is their friends from China. They love Chinese food, so they are in Beijing. They get a Chinese company, and up to now we do not know what is the loan arrangement and what are the terms and conditions that we are going to be subjected to, but they went to their friends in Beijing, China, to finance the entire Alutrint Smelter Plant. That is what we understand. We could be wrong, but I would like Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith, the mover and shaker of the Prime Minister, behind the Prime Minister, to tell us who is financing Alutrint. We want to know! Is it the Chinese? If it is the Chinese, what are the terms and conditions of this loan?

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Mr. Vice-President, half a billion dollars is going into a power generation plant, and we have to finance it. They have a partner from Venezuela, Sural, and I understand that they are not putting out any money. All they are bringing is technical skills and technical competences, but Trinidad and Tobago would be called upon to put out 100 per cent cash in this particular arrangement or project.

Do you know what is even more alarming? The court is sitting on this matter in October, but the PNM is lawless. They do not care about the courts. This matter of smelter plants is before the courts in this country.

We have information that the Government is about to bring down 1,500 Chinese to begin pre-construction work, and by August they are going to begin construction. It is going to take them about two years to complete the construction of the Alutrint plant down at Union Estate in La Brea.

Do you know what is even more disconcerting? They told this Parliament and the country that it is 125,000 tonnes and we got a map accidentally which dealt with a storm drain that they are about to establish there. What we saw on this map is a second plant. So, instead of going as they told the country with the 125,000 tonnes, we are being told, as a result of this map, they are going to be producing 250,000 tonnes of primary aluminium in this country.

We must be able to tell the country the truth. This is not a secret order. This is not Manning's Government. He does not own Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago is owned by the people. If you are coming for half a billion dollars to assist in getting involved in a power generation plant, is it not logical, honourable and decent for the Government to tell this country that it has lied to the country and they apologize for lying or telling untruth? Mr. Vice-President, do you think that "lying" is a bad word?

Mr. Vice-President: Yes.

Sen. W. Mark: I withdraw the word "lying". They should be honest enough to tell us that they misled us and they have misinformed us, and that the 125,000 tonnes is now 250,000 tonnes. I want the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, who is in charge of that, along with Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith, the mastermind of it, to tell this country in his contribution that it is now 250,000 tonnes. We cannot take this. They are misleading the country. They are not telling the country the truth, and we are being taken for a ride.

Imagine they are importing 1,500 Chinese workers, and we have people killing people in this country because they cannot get work. They have bogus employment here. The PNM has almost redefined "statistical conmanship". What

they have done is manipulated the CSO statistics as it relates to unemployment in this country. This so-called doubling of the GDP is just a revaluation of the assets of this country. They are giving the people the impression that they have doubled GDP. That is "ol' talk". They are mamaguying the country. Foolery! They could fool the people on that side, but people are opening their eyes.

We want to know where the locals are going to be employed. There are shipments expected out of Beijing. The Chinese would be bringing to this country close to four shipments. I have it here—the four shipments and when they are coming. The Chinese are bringing down five shipments. Everything that is needed for Alutrint and the construction of that plant would be coming from China, and these people say they are patriotic. That is why they are attacking the local construction sector. They do not care about their own.

They have cocoa in the sun. We have forensic investigators. I want to warn them that jail is not nice. I want to repeat what the Prime Minister said to us. I want to tell the PNM, including the Prime Minister, because his name is being called also, that jail is not nice. We have forensic investigators and we are investigating them. I want them to know that.

Mr. Vice-President, let me tell you the name of the company. It is China National Machinery and Equipment Import and Export Corporation. They are getting the money from them, but we do not know how much money. Presently, we do not know if it is a billion dollars. All we know is that the Chinese mamaguyed them and gave them \$100 million at 2 per cent for five years, and they give the Chinese the two performing arts academies to build. They get a fellow called Shanghai Construction Group.

2.45 p.m.

I want to tell Sen. Dr. Lenny Saith to pay attention to the Ministry of Education tower. I understand Lockwood and Greene, some of the finest project managers in the world, have served notice in writing to UDeCott and Calder Hart, that by the end of June they are not staying; they are gone. You know why? Shanghai Construction Group is cutting corners. I heard that building, the Prime Minister's residence is a disaster zone; a disaster waiting to happen, and there are many public and health issues at stake there. I have it in writing, but I am waiting on the appropriate time. *[Laughter]* I have it in writing but I am waiting on the appropriate time.

The Chinese along with Calder Hart and this Government are shortchanging the people of this country. They are doing sloppy and shoddy work. They are

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cutting corners and they are putting up what is called curtain walls on that building, and those curtain walls have not been approved by the people who are there to protect our interest; the project managers, the clients who are there protecting our interest. They refuse to deal with them, but we will have more to say about that.

Mr. Vice-President, who is constructing the Alutrint plant? NCC Gitang Construction Corporation Limited; it is here [*Interruption*] but you never told the country that. We had to find out that you, Dr. Lenny Saith and the Government of this country gone behind the backs of the nation and made deals with the Chinese and up to now you have not told the country what are the terms and conditions of your deals. "Ah tell yuh, jail not nice, Doctor," "Jail not nice, Mariano Browne." Listen, you had better go back to Butterfield; you come in the wrong thing, you know. You were working good for your little change and thing, only you are spending a little more than above normal, but you were doing your work. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*]

We call on the Minister in the Ministry of Finance to tell us and to place on the record of Parliament, a copy of the terms of a Turbine Services Agreement; this is in the document. We call on you, the hon. Mariano Browne to table in Parliament a copy of the terms and conditions of the Turbine Services Agreement. I want to tell Minister Martin Joseph, you see those three offshore vessels that you bought for \$1.5 billion from Vosper Thornycroft, I want to let you know—

Sen. Joseph: Mr. Vice-President, would you please tell the hon. Senator that Martin Joseph did not buy any three offshore patrol vessels. [*Laughter*] I cannot afford to buy not even one. [*Laughter*]

Sen. W. Mark: I want to let him know, like I am telling all of them, jail not nice; we are investigating you, Sir.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark.

Sen. W. Mark: I did not say for you, Sir.

Mr. Vice-President: No, no, no. Please refer to the Senator as Minister of National Security.

Sen. W. Mark: I thank you for your guidance, Sir. The hon. Minister of National Security, my former teacher, who I am ashamed of. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Senators: I think he feels the same way about you. [*Laughter*]

Sen. W. Mark: It is mutual; it is mutual; it is mutual. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*] I go to page 7 of the document and I want to ask the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance to tell us what is this Heritage and Stabilisation Fund secretariat about, in which \$4.6 million has been allocated.

I looked at the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund report, which came here recently; I am not happy with the membership of this Stabilisation Fund; I must tell you, but I am not in Government at this time. What I found very interesting, Mr. Vice-President, on page 2 of this report—[*Interruption*] I would not tell you what I have to tell you now, I am waiting on you.

Sen. Browne: I am waiting on you too.

Sen. W. Mark: Yeah, okay. You take your time; you take your time. Let me just indicate something to you, the board under Mr. Samuel Martin stated on page two and I quote:

"Since the appointment of the HSF board much progress has been made in putting in place the administrative and operational infrastructure. On the administrative side a small staff has been recruited to serve as secretariat to the board"—that is the Heritage board—"and office accommodation has been secured and is being prepared."

How did the Ministry of Finance get into this, Sir? I thought we have an Act of Parliament that has vested power in that place they call the Central Bank and they are supposed to be responsible for organizing the secretariat. We have \$4 million of taxpayers' money going towards a secretariat that is lodged and located in the Ministry of Finance. I need answers; I need clarification on this matter.

If the fund is generating interest why can a certain portion of the interest not be used for those administrative purposes? We need some clarification. Are there two secretariats, one in the Ministry of Finance and one at the Central Bank dealing with this matter? I do not know; we need some answers from the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance. Therefore, we are concerned about that.

There is another matter that caught my attention. That is on page 8: Debt Servicing, \$46.3 million. We were told that RBTT was awarded a mandate to issue fixed rate notes, which are bonds, on behalf of Nipdec in the sum of \$286 million, to finance projects under national security construction programme. I know that national security gone Chinese too, but I do not know if this is part of it. No allocation was included in the 2008 estimates to meet the debt servicing commitment, which is due semi-annually. I found this one a bit strange as well,

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quite apart from poor and sloppy budgeting, it is not clear as to how the Ministry of Finance is being called upon to meet these obligations. What are the conditions? What led to this? Why is it that the Ministry of Finance is being called upon to pay the interest on bonds issued by the RBTT on behalf of Nipdec.

Is Nipdec not supposed to be honouring its financial obligations under that arrangement? Why are taxpayers of this country being called upon to pay interest on bonds that you have issued to the national population? And the interest is due; Nipdec cannot pay; so they come to us. You see, we have a bottomless pocket so you are just taking money. This is not proper accountability. Nipdec should be held accountable for this, but Calder Hart is your friend, so you are covering up. "I hear he left the country, Sir? He gone."

Sen. Dr. Saith: "He gone, Panday come back."

Sen. W. Mark: Okay. I hear he is missing, you know, but if I were him, I would leave the country, because he is facing jail.

Sen. Dr. Saith: He and Jack Warner gone. [*Interruption*]

Sen. W. Mark: Not you, you young in this thing, you know Mariano. I just warn you to be careful; do not get your hand into the till otherwise it would be cut off.

Mr. Vice-President, I would like to get from the hon. Minister, is this a precedent that is being established by the Government of this country? And I believe if it is, it is a dangerous precedent. It is Nipdec that should be paying the interest on the fixed bonds and not the taxpayers of this country. This is wrong; it is unacceptable and I look forward to getting answers from the Government on this matter.

We hear about surveillance. What surveillance? I thought we have a radar. Is the radar working, Mr. Minister of National Security?

Sen. Joseph: Yes.

Sen. W. Mark: Why do we want to invest under—on page 9—surveillance of the Chaguaramas Peninsula, \$2 million to start with and the project is going to cost \$5.8 million. What is this thing about? You must explain to the country what this electronic surveillance system is all about, because we know that you are spying on people in the blimp. We know that you listen to all our conversations; that is how you know Rowley was behaving bad.

So, Mr. Vice-President, I want to warn you, do not use your cellphone because they will spy on you too. [Laughter] You see, bmobile is a dangerous commodity to have. Your telephone system is being invaded by this Government. They bought \$70 million worth of spying equipment from Israel and since then that has been lodged somewhere. I would not tell you, I have an idea but, Mr. Vice-President, that is being used to spy on you, me and all of us here, including the Independent Bench. [Laughter] I want to get some clarification from the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance on this matter of the electronic surveillance.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to take you to Head 54 immediately; \$150 million. Now, UTT is another UDeCott in the making. UTT is a cesspool of corruption and you have a “fella” called Prof. Ken Julien, who seems to be a tsar unto himself. I do not have anything personally against Prof. Ken Julien; he is a human being, but I have problems when you misspend; if you waste public funds, I have a problem, and that is where I come in when it comes to our money. Imagine, these people are so boldface; \$2 billion in the last four and a half years or four years; not a financial audited statement in this Parliament; all we are getting from Christine Kangaloo, the hon. Minister is “ol’ talk”. Could you imagine, Mr. Vice-President.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. W. Mark: [Interruption] I heard two of them went, him, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and Hazel. I heard it have three more, but Dr. Saith will tell me.

Mr. Vice-President: I—

Sen. W. Mark: Sorry, Sir. Oh, you are on your legs.

Mr. Vice-President: Before I asked you to refrain from calling—

Sen. W. Mark: Sorry, the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance. [Interruption] “Oh gawd!” Well, one in charge of central— “Hear nah, the Mannings running the country.” One in charge of central government and the other in charge of local government.

Sen. Manning: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order, I will like to quote 35(1). [Crosstalk]

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, please continue.

Sen. W. Mark: I am saying—and I know Mrs. Manning will be a little—these days she is losing her cool, like her husband, losing their cool.

Let me continue. We want to know what is this \$150 million for. We need to get from the Government a detailed breakdown of the sum of \$150 million. Since UTT was established in September 2004, there has been no financial audited accounts submitted to the Parliament by UTT. Could you imagine that an institution has spent over \$2 billion in both recurrent and capital expenditure over a four-year period and this man is an untouchable in this country, and we have the Prime Minister coming in this Parliament and defending this man. This man should be in jail!

3.00 p.m.

You see they know who to play with, you know. If the UNC was in power, you think them “fellas” could play the fool like that? You think Ken Julien could do that? You think Ken Julien could behave like that? Only under Lenny Saith and Patrick Manning he could get away with murder so.

Hon. Senator: And Ish.

Sen. W. Mark: Ish, yes. [*Interruption*] Calder Hart and Uthara Rao, do you know them? Uthara Rao, I see you put Noel Garcia now to take over. Anyway, I want to get some answers on this matter.

Do you know it was the Minister who is not here today, Minister Dick-Forde who said in an interview when she was parading, defending the indefensible and all of them end up in a deep hole—I warned you all, Manning “does set up you all, you know”. Attorney General, I am warning you too, “eh”. Good! [*Laughter*] I see you looked very sad that day, but it is understandable.

Mr. Vice-President, let me continue, the hon. Minister said that UDeCott was not in need of deep change unlike several other agencies. I would have liked her to be here today but she has gone—“duck and run”. I would have liked her to tell us whether UTT is one of those agencies that require deep change. I would have liked to know this. How are you going to allow an institution to receive money and give them more money and no accountability? Is that not theft? Is that not fraud? Is that not wrong?

This UTT is receiving money from this administration, when Prof. Ken Julien was the chairman of the National Energy Skills Centre—he was the chairman—

they received \$45 million for UTT, although UTT was formed in September 2004, and up to now no account. What is UTT doing in cardiovascular services and diabetes services? They want in this statement under the Ministry of Health heading \$59.3 million for cardiovascular and \$9.1 for what; Johns Hopkins Medicine International. What is this about? I thought UTT was supposed to be specializing in certain areas, about four. This is a bogus organization, you know! It is a bogus institution!

I ask the question today, is UTT accredited to the Trinidad and Tobago Accreditation Council? You must tell this country how many international bodies is this institution accredited to? I hear people are getting paper and it is just paper, it is worth nothing, and this Government is spending billions of dollars on a bogus institution. If you see how they treat these people from foreign. All his people are from foreign. He feels money could buy everything—Ken Julien. I want to warn him, jail “ain’t” nice. I want to warn Prof. Ken Julien, jail is not nice.

Mr. Vice-President, if you are lucky to be a lecturer up there at UTT, hear what they are giving you. First of all, you are receiving your money in US dollars; the second thing, you do not go in as Wade Mark, they advise you to form a company called Wade Mark Limited or John Brown Limited and they are therefore paying to a company and not an individual. They are not paying “no” taxes; they are not paying “no” NIB. They are robbing the country, and you come here for what; \$150 million. They are receiving US \$4,000 for housing allowance a month for these foreigners. They get a fully paid and maintained vehicle; they get free first-class travel for themselves and their family; they have a relocation allowance of up to \$150,000; they do not pay income tax and they do not pay NIB. That is the information I have. If I am wrong, correct me.

I am convinced this UTT is another PNM cash cow. It is a conduit for harbouring PNM electioneering slush funds, and that is the next one we are coming for. After we are finished with UDeCott we are coming for UTT. We will not support a red cent going to UTT. Not one cent we will support until they bring to this Parliament proper accounts. How can Minister Dr. Saith sit there and allow this thing to go on? How can the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and our Prime Minister who says he is the beacon of integrity and he is promoting transparency and he is committed to accountability? “Ol’ talk”, Mr. Manning! “Ol’ talk”! And you allow Ken Julien to do what he is doing in this country. “You afraid him?” He is holding secret for you like Calder Hart, Mr. Prime Minister?

Mr. Vice-President, I will leave UTT for the platform. Let me go on to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Yes, deal with me, “Mark”.

Sen. W. Mark: I want to say, you see subsidies, we have been talking about this thing. I have told this Parliament and I told my honourable colleague, we must have a national debate, a nationwide debate on subsidies in this country.

The PNM must take full responsibility for the high level of fuel subsidy in this country. Take full responsibility for it. [*Interruption*] They must take responsibility for it in the sense that they have centralized government operations in this country, and they are building more buildings in Port of Spain in order to get people to travel from where? From Cunupia, from south Trinidad and from Moruga. When you buy a car you must put fuel in it. If you have me coming from Moruga or from San Fernando to Port of Spain, you have to subsidize me. Why does this Government not decentralize its operations and put the offices nearer to people's homes? They are not doing that. So 90 per cent of the workforce in the public service, as an example, all of them are working in Port of Spain. They are constructing more buildings in Port of Spain, more office space in Port of Spain.

We believe that the time has come for this Government to adopt a new strategy; stagger the working hours as an example; decentralize government offices. Petroleum subsidy is not about economics alone, it is about Government being sensible and sensitive to the working class. There must be an alternative mode of transportation in the country, and the Government must take it upon itself to generate alternative sources of energy. That is why I talked about the sugar industry that is now generating ethanol and fuel.

If this Government was serious about—instead of threatening the country to remove the subsidy, come up with creative ideas and measures to deal with the problem, and not just say, well look, the solution must be, remove subsidy. No! Come up with creative ideas, and you must conserve energy. When Dr. Saith was there he did indicate to us in this Parliament that efforts were being made to commence a programme of conservation of energy. You know, hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance what has taken place, what has happened in Barbados and we must learn. We must begin to conserve energy rather than come out with a hatchet and threatening to remove the fuel subsidy. Come up with creative ideas! Therefore, we are not in favour—and we want to put it on record—of removing any subsidy on petroleum commodities in this country.

I want to say a few words in closing on this so-called Green Paper. We got a Green Paper today. I think the green would come blue just now. All this Government is concerned about is perpetuating themselves in power. They are not

concerned about governance, you know. That is why the country is in such a mess, because all the PNM and the Prime Minister is concerned about is the next general election. They are not concerned about the welfare of the nation, so the hon. Hazel Manning—

Hon. Senator: Minister.

Sen. W. Mark: Minister Hazel Manning, who is now in charge of local government, she takes one part of the Government for herself—local—and the “big” man called, Mr. Manning, the hon. Prime Minister, he is in central government, so between them, they are in charge of the country. [*Laughter*] You could imagine that? In another country you think that could happen? Only in Trinidad and Tobago we could take that kind of nonsense.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: Banana Republic.

Sen. W. Mark: The hon. Minister produces a Green Paper. This should be thrown in the waste paper basket. It is a total waste of time, but you know what is the objective? They want to reduce the number of corporations from 14 to 12, and we understand they are targeting Penal/Debe, UNC and another one I understand, Siparia or if not that, Rio Claro/Mayaro. [*Interruption*]

So, what this Government is doing, they are fooling the country. But I am telling you, I want to warn this hon. Minister, you are like your husband, you are provoking the population. You all are provoking the population. This is the worst—

Sen. Dr. Saith: Green Paper.

Sen. W. Mark: Yes—form of governance you could think about in terms of an attempt at local government reform.

Mr. Vice-President, I just want to indicate to you, that we are disappointed completely with what has been presented here today. This Government is a total and utter failure, and I think the sooner the people can get together and remove this evil and scourge called the PNM from our country it is the better that they would be off in the long run.

I thank you very much.

Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, for giving me this opportunity to speak on this Bill; the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2008. I am honoured to lead off the debate from amongst the Independent Benches.

Sen. Dr. Saith: [*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: But I wish to assure you that this is not the effect of any caucus nor have I been advised by any special advisors as to what I should say or not say on this matter. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to assure you that I will challenge any caution which compromises my freedom of association—

Hon. Senator: “Ooh”.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: —as an ordinary citizen, and even more so that will compromise me as an Independent Senator in this honourable Senate. [*Desk thumping*]

Therefore, I will repudiate any caution which is not accompanied by proper and due authority that would stop me from associating accordingly. [*Desk thumping*]

Be that as it may, [*Interruption*] let me say that as I commence the discussion or the debate on this particular Bill, I am reminded of a quotation from a very famous novel, “that it was the best of times and it was the worst of times”. Best of times in the sense that we as a country are benefiting substantially from the largesse of an energy boom. As we do that we have to be very mindful and concerned about some other areas within which we are operating.

I say some other areas, meaning that while we are benefiting from some \$46 billion in revenues, there is great concern amongst our citizens about the crime situation which appears to be getting more and more out of hand. So, as far as crime is concerned, I can say safely—and no pun is intended—that it is the worst of times as far as our country is concerned.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, I think the Government should be commended in being able to present to us at the mid term of this 2008 year, revenues that have far exceeded what would have been expected at the beginning of the year; from \$40 billion to \$46 billion. Of course, \$46 billion would have been the outcome of rising oil and energy prices the world over. When we started this fiscal year, oil prices would have been less than \$100, and the budget would have been premised on something like \$62 per barrel.

I also want to commend the Government for the deposit into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. The hon. Minister mentioned something to the order of \$1,718

million since the beginning of the year. There are some concerns. The storm clouds are gathering, as a wise man would say, over Mayaro, and the winds are blowing westwards.

One of the storm clouds which threaten the economic stability of this nation is, of course, inflation. It is a cancer; so that when we move three steps forward, we are brought back two steps, because of spiralling inflation which affects every single citizen of our country; more so the less fortunate among our citizens. If you were getting \$80 or \$85 per day, six months ago you may have been somewhat comfortable, in that, you could have bought certain items of food; but as I saw this morning, rice has gone up 88 per cent on the world market. We know what the story is about flour. We know what the story is with regard to every other basic staple, whether beans, flour, rice, whatever, or dhal. It is a tremendous concern that we have to address, this matter of inflation.

It is reflected in these revised budgetary figures. When I looked at the numbers, I was concerned that of the \$3.49 billion, some \$700 million of that amount was in the provision for increases in wages and salaries, which is some 20 per cent of the original budgeted revenues of about \$40 billion. This is a major concern, and speaks to the question of inflation. It speaks to the question of wage inflation.

Secondly, of major concern in the revised budgeted figures is an amount of \$1 billion that has been set aside for petroleum subsidies. This puts us in a conundrum that we would have to discuss later. If one were to remove subsidies, it is going to impact inflation in a very significant way. Still, Sen. Mark talks about conservation. We have the challenge of conservation on the one hand, and the impact of the removal of subsidies on inflation, on the other hand.

Let me address this matter of inflation in a bit more detail. In January, headline inflation was 10 per cent year on year. In February, it was 9.4 per cent, and in March, year on year, it was 9.8 per cent. But food inflation was at the level of 20.8 per cent in January, year on year; 18.8 per cent in February, year on year, and 19.7 per cent year on year. Despite the target of bringing inflation down, not only to single digit figures, but in terms of the targets of less than 7 per cent or thereabouts, inflation is headed in the other direction. It is heading to double digit inflation; this cannot be good for the country.

Food inflation is of primary concern, because even though it affects all of us, it mostly affects the least fortunate of our citizens. I have heard stories, as I go around, of persons who have become very worried about their ability to buy foodstuff and support their families. I have heard stories from grocers as to the

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difficulties persons face and the complaints they are receiving with regard to food inflation. It speaks to another question in terms of food inflation, food security. As we know, "Yuh cyar eat de money", as our citizens say, even if you had the money. Now we find ourselves in a situation where countries of the world are placing restrictions on the export of rice; whether it be India, Thailand or any of those countries, restrictions are being placed. Therefore, it argues for us to have a programme of national food security.

I assure you that we may have money in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund or elsewhere, but if we do not move expeditiously to ensure food security, we might find ourselves in trouble.

How are we going to address this matter of food security? We have heard, in this honourable Senate, that over 7,000 parcels of land, two acres each, have been earmarked for those persons who have been dismissed from Caroni. Yet still, my information is that not more than about 1,200 of those parcels have been assigned. This is a situation which has persisted for over four years.

I think it is unfair, first of all, to those citizens who were laid off, to have to wait so long to be properly compensated. A promise is a promise and a promise must be kept. It is unfortunate that we have that situation which arises in the country. I believe that if these lands were made properly available, in a short period of time, market forces on its own, rather than any government initiative beyond the distribution of these lands, would result in a significant expansion in food production.

While we wait for the commendable initiatives about commercial farms, you find that if there is a demand and supply imbalance, you are going to get a quick movement into production.

I appeal to the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, to do what is necessary to ensure that these lands are distributed expeditiously. You would find that you do not have to do much more, that people would produce what is needed in very short order. Market forces work faster than government, I can tell you that.

Food security is a matter of concern that we are going to have to have address. There was an article in the *Sunday Guardian*, where there was a suggestion that we should not only have CEPEP, but we should have "FARMPEP". It was a suggestion that has some merit. Why should we have our citizens cutting grass at every corner, when they could be producing food? That does not mean they would produce food efficiently, but there is no great deal of rocket science to producing food, with some direction.

I appeal again to the authorities and to the Minister in charge that we may find as a measure to deal with national food security, that we seek to redirect some of our workers who are, in fact, underemployed, to move towards the expeditious production on agricultural lands, because we have another 50,000 acres of land available for agriculture, apart from the 14,000 that is assigned to the 7,000 laid-off ex-Caroni workers.

So we should not fiddle while Rome burns, because we may suffer the consequences that we have the money but we cannot access food. I believe it is something we should take on board and move very quickly. We are a blessed country. We are fortunate that we have arable land. As they say, "If you throw anything in the ground it will grow."

It is not like other countries where you drive for miles and you see land that is not arable; anywhere you go in this country—in fact, we have to work so hard just to keep away the weeds from our yards. Let us move as expeditiously as possible, and not get caught up in the numbers game, because most important is food security. Also, once we get that show on the road, we are going to help considerably in redressing the demand/supply situation for food. It would help, if not in bringing food prices down, because we cannot address the matter of food imports directly, but it will help in stabilizing food prices. It is a matter we have to address very, very quickly.

In terms of food inflation, one of the things that has been mentioned, and to which we have to pay cognizance too, is that in Trinidad and Tobago we like to benchmark ourselves in the context of developed nation status and other nations. Our agriculture is 0.6 per cent of our total gross domestic product (GDP). Look at any developed country; not one of them has a gross domestic product (GDP) where agriculture is .6 per cent.

In fact, if you look at the United States, it is .9 per cent. Look at Norway—I know that many of the Members here like to look at Norway, as an oil producing country—agriculture is the second largest, equivalent to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. Norway's agricultural production to gross domestic product (GDP) is over 2 per cent.

Of course, if you look at India and China, those burgeoning countries, India is over 16 per cent and China is over 11 per cent. What is wrong with us? We cannot eat oil, so it makes very good sense—and we have persons who are underemployed and we have arable land—to get on with it to address this matter of inflation and, in particular, the highest area that impacts us, food inflation.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to address some other matters with regard to inflation. The statistics that I have before me show that food production is actually declining. It is something that the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources will have to address as he goes along. I have made some suggestions for him to address that.

3.30 p.m.

We have in our country, 16 per cent of our population who are deemed as poor and our target in Vision 2020, or I think by 2010—I stand to be corrected—is something like 5 per cent, so we have a long way to go. I put the statistics on the table to emphasize how large a part of our population is being affected by the significant rise in food prices and we need to address this situation very quickly.

I want to turn to inflation in the context of the petroleum subsidy. The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries made a contribution several weeks ago in this honourable Senate when he spoke about the impact of reduced subsidy on inflation. I think it is a very difficult matter to address, difficult in the sense that if we were to adjust the subsidies downwards, his expectation of where inflation will be, I suggest, or the impact on the basket of goods would be much more significant than just the cost of gas in a man's tank, because it is going to feed into a number of areas like transport; and who is going to be most affected by that? It is the least privileged of our citizens who have to take taxis and maxi-taxis who are going to find a significant rise in prices.

I cannot say that I have the answer to this matter, but I believe that in the short term it would be in the best interest, unless and until we can get a reasonable handle on inflation, to leave the whole question of the petroleum subsidy where it is at this point in time because what you do not want to do is adjust that subsidy and create a Pandora's box where you do not know what the eventual outcome would be.

Recall, Mr. Vice-President, that at the turn of the century the United States of America was looking at a massive surplus in their fiscal budget which became a tremendous deficit because the wrong expectations led to the wrong forecast and they moved from having a surplus of trillions of dollars in two or three years to a very significant deficit. I just recall this matter because I do not think that we might be calling it right when we adjust these subsidies and look unidimensionally at what the outcome will be. Just a thought for us to consider, because we are in a high inflationary period, and we do not want to exacerbate the situation anymore. I am not suggesting for one moment that this subsidy can

continue ad nauseam, but I am suggesting that in the short term over the next year or two with high inflation, you do not want to "chook" a hornet's nest.

I want to speak to some other matters, Mr. Vice-President, which would have been raised in the budget adjustments. The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, as I said, commendations are due to the Government in terms of the moneys that are being saved and I think by my calculations that the fund ought to be over US \$2 billion and that was targeted for 2010 or something like that, so we are ahead of the curve which is a very good thing. As we think in terms of savings, even in the short to medium term, we have to be very concerned about what we are doing in the burgeoning public sector that is happening around us and developing.

I want to speak to the question of pensions because this is the sting in the tail as we increase the number of employees in the public sector. We do not have a funded position to deal with pensions as we go along, and this will become more and more difficult. I want to believe that we are at the peak of our revenues until such a time that additional production could be generated whether in the energy sector which is 45 per cent of GDP, or in other areas, but the other areas are going to take a very long time to nurture. I think the Government has put on the table the "Magnificent 7", yachting and merchant marine and the music industry and so forth.

There is no substitute for proper returns on investment. If you are going to put out \$5 or \$10 million as the case may be in many of these start-up areas, do not expect that they are going to generate significant income or revenue very quickly. They are going to be, in the initial stages, quite minuscule relative to the overall pot which is heavy weighted to the energy sector. So it is important as we move and seek to diversify the economy that we are very clear that these areas are not going to generate quick benefits for us as we go along. Therefore, I think it is imperative when I look at the budget that we consider a contributory programme as far as our public sector employees are concerned. We need to do it because we cannot wait too long and then find we fall off a precipice in terms of the very significant cost that would constitute wages and salaries to the public sector. So that is a matter I would like the Government to give very serious consideration to in short order as we keep looking to put our house in order in preparation for some tide that will come. It will come, the storm clouds will continue to head westwards and we will be affected and if that is the case, we need to make sure that we put our house in order as far as pensions are concerned.

There are some things that are going to affect us in the remaining part of this year, and I want to talk about them in the context of capital market development. The Government has taken a position that it wishes to build out an international

financial centre on the back of the financial sector being 13 per cent of GDP, or probably the next largest after oil. But there are a number of things that have to be done if we are going to get an international financial centre going. The first is, we must fix the ground floor which is the local capital market and the second is that we must be the strongest regional player.

Many things are happening in the local capital markets that are of concern, but one thing that is going to happen and hit us very quickly, and I will digress to talk about it, is that very soon whether it be June or July, we are going to have part or all of \$13 billion hitting this system with the cash flows coming—it is an external injection—into the system with those cash flows coming as a result of the so-called RBTT amalgamation. As I have said before, \$13 billion represents about one-third of the deposits in this banking system which is about \$44 or \$45 billion and when that happens, I expect that you are going to find a situation where inflation is going up and interest rates are going to go down unless we can find a way to quickly sterilize all these funds, and it will really be difficult to do so within short order.

The Central Bank, with the best will in the world can sterilize maybe \$1—\$3 billion over a six-month period, but it cannot sterilize everything. So, you are going to have this contrarian situation where inflation is at 10 per cent and interest rates are going to come down in the short term. What does that mean? Interest rates coming down means that on the other side there is an increase in the money supply and that is going to feed the whole cycle of increased inflation because you are going to find low interest borrowing and in that context people are going to borrow and it is going to feed an inflationary situation.

That matter has to be addressed and I believe that is really an opportunity for us to address the capital markets. It is not a crisis; if viewed only from the point of money supply it might be a real difficulty, but if viewed on how we can use those funds to expand the local capital markets, I think there are opportunities.

I want to turn my attention in terms of the local capital market to National Enterprises Limited (NEL), this conundrum investment vehicle that makes no sense in our system, except to the architects of NEL. There is need to dismantle NEL and when you do so you are going to get six companies that can be listed either directly on the stock exchange or via special purpose companies because the Government has often said that we have all kinds of shareholders agreements and it does not want them to be violated by listing these shares directly on the market. Put the shares as the only asset of those special purpose companies and you have a virtual depository receipt.

Mr. Vice-President, some 83 per cent of NEL are in the hands of Government either via the Corporation Sole through NGC. We can split that up and we have always been talking about expanding the stock exchange yet we have not taken measures to do that. We talk about problems on the supply side or on the demand side. Here is one tap you can open to expand supply in terms of the local capital market. Now that you have what will be a significant wash of money coming on the demand side of the equation, I think it is something the Government needs to consider as far as the local capital market is concerned.

Another point on this is in terms of stimulating the demand side of the equation which is to get people to invest. It is not only about the money being there, but it is about creating heightened attention for investors. We know that 70 per cent of the stock market comes from institutional investors and we have often complained that individuals are not participating in the local capital markets. Well, they are participating by dint of the various pension funds that are invested on their behalf, but to get them to participate directly I want to suggest that as we go forward, we give consideration as we have given to tax allowances for credit unions, the unit trust, and a number of areas that we give consideration to a tax allowance for individual investors in the stock market.

3.45 p.m.

Barbados does it for their mutual funds, \$10,000, why can we not do it? Now is the time to get investors involved in this area. When you talk about a financial sector being 13 per cent and wanting to expand that whether by dint of an international financial centre or otherwise, charity begins at home. Let us expand the local sector as well; not mutually exclusive, but as well. There is room for it and I reiterate that consideration should be given, as we go into the next national budget, to giving a tax allowance. There are 79,000 persons who, after the \$60,000 allowance, will be eligible to take advantage of that tax allowance. It will help them focus if they get all this money from the sale of the RBTT stock. There will be an opportunity to expand. Apart from National Enterprises Limited (NEL), which is, what we call in Trinidad, the lowest hanging fruit, a term that is being bandied about, there are other areas within the other companies within the Corporation Sole which may be eligible for listing on the stock exchange.

Mr. Vice-President, in terms of the regional markets, it is well established that we are lenders to many Caribbean enterprises and to governments in US dollars. Yet, there is no US dollar platform in Trinidad and Tobago, if somebody were to raise money on the Trinidad and Tobago market via bonds, for trading those bonds. So some of these bonds are registered in the US and other places and the

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benefit to the financial sector goes offshore. The trading benefits are being received by companies offshore, not in Trinidad and Tobago. If you want to talk about building the financial services sector, let us talk about it on a tripartite basis, the local financial sector being the regional player of note and thinking about the international financial sector. So the capital markets are very important in the context of their relative size to GDP and we need to take notice of how we develop this sector.

The next point I would like to touch on is the question of our suggested proposals, via the Green Paper on Investment Policy, for diversification. The Investment Policy Paper spoke, as I said before, about the Magnificent Seven, the various areas we are targeting. I believe that we need to focus on some of the other lower hanging fruit. The manufacturing sector, as a percentage of GDP, has remained relatively stagnant at about 8 per cent and has generated very few new jobs over the last few years. I believe the figure is about 500. I stand to be corrected by the Minister of Trade and Industry if that is not the case.

There is room for growth and for the development of new paradigms in terms of where we go in utilizing energy to build a manufacturing sector, the output of which is not for local consumption necessarily, but may be for export. It is about finding a formula for joint venture with foreign investors who need energy, not for downstream industries but, where energy might be 30 per cent or 40 per cent of the eventual output, for external markets whether in the US or whatever. There are opportunities like that and we can marry them with participation by local investors, putting some of those new areas on to the stock exchange.

I think there is a lot of room, as we discuss this matter of the budgetary adjustments, for a number of policy initiatives that we may need to tweak to generate the best benefits overall for the system. We need to have a very close look at these initiatives. Even though not all of them might pass the screening of the Government, they must not fall through the cracks.

In summary, I would like to suggest that we need to harmonize in order to manage inflation; we need to harmonize fiscal policy with monetary policy. I believe the Governor of the Central Bank has taken the lead and done quite a lot in trying to cool the economy. On the fiscal side, there is need for more discipline to make sure that this cancer of inflation does not overtake us because we may end up with a situation where the Government will say that the operation is successful and the patient dies.

Sen. Cindy Devika Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, for allowing me the opportunity to address this Senate on the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2008, which is required to fund, as I see described, urgent and critical recurrent and capital expenditure up to September 2008; those areas which are deemed to have insufficient or no allocation provided for the period. From my observation of the Bill, a sum of over \$3 billion is being asked for from the Fund. This is, of course, after a budget of over \$40 billion.

This should be of great concern to all citizens, especially when one considers, as both speakers who have gone before me have said, the runaway inflation that is placing our nation on the path of financial ruin. If this allocation is added, it will mean that this Government would have had the largest fiscal package in the history of this country and one has to ask the question: What do we have to show for it? Runaway inflation, as has already been emphasized, by Sen. Ramkhelawan.

I do not have his expertise in this area, but he has explained very carefully and simply the very critical position our country will be in if this issue is not addressed. He tied it in very neatly with the issue that is impacting, not only Trinidad and Tobago, but also many nations worldwide, and that is the matter of food security, linked, of course, to rising inflation in terms of food prices.

In addition to that, massive allocations have been put forward already for building projects, which are apparently tainted with charges of corruption. We have yet to find that out. Right now we have an economy which is in a financial state, hovering perhaps on the brink of collapse. I am not using my own words for this, but I am referring to the former Sen. Mary King, in an article in the *Daily Express*, dated Monday, May 19, titled "PNM economics".

In it she identifies the Government's current policy of investing the windfall that we have, bearing in mind the very high price of oil and gas on the world market, as being a fallacy on the part of the Government. She points out that they are in fact spending on non-productive goods. She cites one Dr. Terrence Farrell, who declared that Trinidad and Tobago should not predicate anything on oil and gas prices staying as they are now. She emphasizes later in the article that if they continue on the course they have embarked upon, when the price of oil and gas does fall, our GDP will collapse and we will return to the state we were in during the early 1980s, at the end of the last oil boom.

Clearly there are those in the country who are not unafraid to point out Government's failing policies and the certain doom they spell for our nation. The unfortunate thing is: Do you know who will suffer the most? Those persons

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already living on or below the poverty line. Sen. Ramkhelawan has already cited some statistics— some 16 per cent of the nation who are poor. These are among our most vulnerable citizens and they are the ones facing severe economic distress. It is in part through the irresponsible actions of the current wasteful Government. Perhaps it should heed all the warnings from those from the Opposition side, those experts in finance and economics elsewhere, and attempt to adjust their policies to pull us back from the edge of ruination.

What we are being asked to pass today is a Bill that requires us to spend more money at a time when everyone is preaching that we should save or utilize what we have more efficiently. We should be concerned with our increased spending and with the fact that we have no poverty alleviation for a large part of our population. Even with the smart card and the other incentives, these are not really addressing the core issue of rising food prices because a pack of rice or flour for a family of five or more is increasing daily. These families will suffer even with assistance from the Government.

In truth, it is merely a surface dressing and poverty is still persistent in this country even if people do not recognize it. It is there if you just take a walk or drive out to any part of the country and look beyond the shadows of wealth that we seem to have; all the increased cellphones and fancy clothes that people may have.

4.00 p.m.

At the end of day, when inflation continues along the path it is on and when oil and fuel prices drop, what will happen when these are taken away from our citizens? We would probably see a serious rise in crime and other anarchic behaviour.

We are also seeing more money being allocated to the Ministry of National Security and crime remains at an all-time high. While our Minister of National Security states that crime is on the decrease and that they are now getting a handle on crime, we have actions/incidents that suggest otherwise. It is evident in the expansion of criminal gangs in the country.

I refer to page 12 of the opinion section of the *Daily Express* of May 19, 2008:

“Port of Spain in the gunshots

It is the defiant expansion in the number of criminal gangs and their memberships after the Minister of National Security suggests that there is a handle on this phenomenon. Then it is the escalation in the numbers of

homicides in the face of other suggestions that the authorities are gaining the upper hand, with new crime suppression methods, hardware and equipment.”

We have also seen a sudden restart in kidnappings in our country. No one here could seriously suggest that when they leave here to go home and reach their homes, they do not feel a very significant level of fear of being targeted by criminals and those who would do anything to get an extra dollar. These are people who will be heartless because that is the kind of environment in which they are brought up, a heartless one.

With all the money being allocated, this is a sad fact today. Clearly, money is not the answer. Is this how we use that money to address the real issues behind rising crime, which is a social issue grappling our nation right now?

There is the breakdown in the family. While schools might have healthy allocations to conduct their business, what social services are there to really assist schools and other educators to improve the other aspects of the children that they are dealing with?

Unfortunately, a teacher's task is not an easy one. He or she is expected to fulfil the requirements of the job and teach an academic curriculum. Of course, part of that curriculum is meeting the moral and spiritual needs of the students. While this might not always be possible, one will know that the majority of teachers do try their best to do so, but working on the ground is not the easiest of tasks. More money, more programmes or other mechanisms must be put in place for schools to effectively meet the needs of those children.

Again, if we can manage to build back the bond of the family which has been lost for many of them, perhaps, that might be a step on the road to salvation for many of the families of our country. However, instead of addressing the real issues affecting our nation head-on, the Government is avoiding it and instead choosing to spend more and more, without paying attention to the calls from other voices to check and restrain its expenditure before it is too late.

Perhaps, the pattern of spending by the Government of the day is probably evidence that the policies that they have and are trying to implement are lacking in vision and serious thought. Perhaps, they might be well advised to reexamine those and its direction of development of the nation, which seems to be emphasizing a heavy allocation in the construction of these pricy buildings, all located in the West of the country and leaving other areas of the nation to suffer from the neglect caused by that.

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Again, what we see is the continued neglect of those areas, particularly, the rural districts which, of course, contain many of our nation's farmers. We also see that the neglect of rural communities is really the neglect of agriculture. Sen. Ramkhelawan was also entreating that the Government do its best to ensure that the farmers of the nation are given an opportunity to improve. Therefore, once they improve their production and are given better conditions under which to operate, perhaps, we might start to see the protection of the food that we have in our nation. We would be able to provide for those in the future. Of course, we have seen that there is a global shortage and we wish to avoid that affecting us at any large degree.

At the end of the day, what we have is a large section of the population living life daily with a feeling of fear. They are not only feeling fear, but they are also asked to see adults who are given responsibilities. One such is the Prime Minister, whose headstrong attitude and persistence in implementing policies will see our nation reeling from the effects of runaway inflation and runaway crime. The only lesson they are gaining from this whole experience is if perhaps, you have a difference of opinion you should be mocked and laughed at. If you suggest that there is a problem and if you are demanding transparency and accountability from the Government and its suspicious business partners, then you should also be viewed as if you are a buzzing mosquito and should be squatted away. It is as if what you are saying is coming out of the air.

While we have so much money in this country, can we honestly say that the young people in particular would be inheriting the stable future that we want for our children? Is it that development only means the construction of high-rise structures, or is it that it means that we create a well developed intelligencer, culture and institutions, one that does not reward mediocrity which, apparently is what is happening when we give the Ministry of National Security more funding at a time when they are failing year after year after year? Is that what it means? Sadly, it is not. The Government is carrying us, apparently, on a trip to financial disaster.

In closing, I wish to restate my position. The Government is currently mismanaging the economy. They are asking for more and more every financial year, since they have been there and they are clearly engaged in inefficient and wasteful policies and practices, which would leave us hanging over a very deep precipice, especially if we continue to have an economy where more than 80 per cent of it is based on the income/revenues we gain from oil and gas, rather than proceeding to diversify our economy and pay more attention to agriculture and

any other area that could sustain us in the future, as was said by Sen. Ramkhelawan earlier. That should be the mission of the Government, sustainable development of human, physical and economic resources.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

Sen. Laurel Lezama: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President, for allowing me the opportunity to intervene in this debate at this exact juncture. I believe it would be a travesty and an injustice if I remain seated here and let the contributions of the two Opposition Senators stand without immediate correction.

I have a message for this population, just like my friend over there, Sen. Wade Mark. He always has messages for the population. I have a message for the population as well. I am here today to expose this Opposition for their antics and to let the population know that this Opposition is opposing a supplementary Bill because they are vindictive. They are bitter because they have been rejected by the population and they are choosing to hold this population to ransom. To reject each Head of expenditure is to deny the citizens different opportunities.

Let me start with the young people. If we go back to Head 54: Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, this Government is striving towards an innovative and trained labour force. That is something you would find in the Vision 2020 document, our belief in what we want.

This Opposition's lack of support of the UTT is reflective of the UNC's policy on education, human development and equality and equal opportunities for all. It was not this Government that placed a school at the top of a rum shop. It is not this Government that decided that every child must advance to secondary school. Whether you can read or not, they were sending you to a secondary school. That is why we have so many criminals in the system right now. That is exactly why. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Senators: Do not give way.

Sen. L. Lezama: No, no, no. I am returning the favour. I am not giving way. "Nah", I am looking at you.

The On-the-Job Training Programme is under Head 18: \$45 million. If you look at our record, you would see that under the OJT programme, we have provided work experience for over 37,000 participants. Do you want to deny more people that opportunity?

Let us look at HYPE. They are asking for \$5 million. HYPE has produced over 5,000 graduates. Those are the same people—what did Sen. Sharma say? Those are the same people who would suffer the most, those below the poverty level. These are the people we are trying to help advance. Go ahead and deny the population the opportunity. *[Interruption]* “You self.” You want to deny the population the opportunity for any form of advancement.

Look at YTEPP, they are asking for \$6.9 million. YTEPP has trained over 30,000 people. At YTEPP, we are putting additional funds to meet the increase in the stipend for all the beneficiaries of the programmes.

Look at NESC, \$10 million. Supplementary funding is required for operational expenses, so that we can have the centres running properly and produce an innovative, charismatic and intelligent population, just like the Senator over there.

4.15 p.m

Mr. Vice-President, COSTAATT is expanding. It is one of the premier education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. We are looking to expand COSTAATT to train more nationals. Are you trying to deny those young persons the opportunity to acquire an associate degree? Is that what you are trying to do?

Let us go to Parliament. Mr. Vice-President, because the Senator is in the Upper House, because Pointe-a-Pierre did not vote for him, I think he is upset. *[Desk thumping]* That is what it is. *[Desk thumping]* The Parliament wants \$15 million to facilitate the revision of the administrative arrangements for the setting up of 41 constituency offices. So, do you want the people to be disenfranchised? You do not want them to have an office where they can go? Is it that you are just upset? Please, let us know. You are taking this matter personally. These are the things that we are asking for. We believe in developing our people and creating an innovative population.

This Government could boast of solid achievements in every single sphere and endeavour of nation development. I had the displeasure of visiting unc.tt.org website and this little page *[Page in hand]* is their entire track record for six years. Is this your six years of performance? The printer did not even want to print it out, because even the printer knows that it is not true. It says, reality check on UNC’s achievements 1995—2001. *[Interruption]* You do not even know, because you all did not do anything. There is nothing here of credit.

I want to draw a reference. This is our Vision 2020 document, *Pathway to the New Trinidad and Tobago*. Sen. Sharma asked what are we doing for social services delivery. Look at this book! This is *A Guide to Social Services Delivery*. I

am sure that it is going to be increased. If you look at this book, it was produced in 2005, and we are now in 2008. I am going to present you with a copy later. I want you to look at all the different programmes that this Government, which believes in its population and which invests in its people and, more so, its young people, has presented to the population.

Mr. Vice-President, chapter 1 deals with children; chapter 2, Community Action for Revival and Empowerment (CARE), Community Safety and Enhancement Programme, National Commission for Self Help; chapter 3 deals with Counselling and Support, Adolescent Mothers Programme, Family Remedial Therapy Programme, Individual and Family Intervention Programme, RapPort; chapter 4 deals with entrepreneurial development; chapter 5, health and wellness. We are not only trying to treat sick persons, but we are also promoting healthy lifestyles. So, you could deny the diabetics and the cardio vascular persons their treatments, if you want.

Chapter 6 deals with older persons; chapter 7 deals with persons with disabilities; chapter 9 deals with education and training; chapter 10 deals with the socially displaced; chapter 11, substance abusers; chapter 12, unemployment relief; and chapter 13, victims of domestic violence. Please, invest in one of these books and understand what this Government is doing and learn to govern Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* They have it already. Clearly, that is why we are here and they are there.

So, I just want the population to know that the Opposition is playing games with their future. It is sabotage and an attempt to deny the people, to disenfranchise them and not to give them an opportunity. We are securing \$3 billion more for the development of our people.

In Tobago, there is an allocation for a library; more work for the Scarborough Library.

The Ministry of Public Administration—full-pay and scholarship study leave for teachers. As we are on teachers, I remember very clearly when a certain leader criminalized all the teachers. He said teachers were criminals. *[Interruption]* I am asking, since there was constant reference about jail is not nice, is that something that is common on that side? *[Laughter]* I am not alluding to anything. *[Desk thumping]*

The previous speaker spoke about teachers having to fulfil their responsibilities, but it is Tuesday afternoon, and there is a CAPE class somewhere in Manzanilla not being taught. *[Desk thumping]* What is going on? Somebody needs to tell me what is going on here.

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I want to tell this esteemed Chamber that citizens have supreme confidence in the strongest economy ever. People know that it is all being done with integrity, transparency and accountability. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark: With Calder Hart and Ken Julien? You are talking about a bunch of criminals.

Sen. L. Lezama: I understand that there is nothing else to be said on the other side. They are not creative. They are full of antics and theatrics. The content is the same thing week after week. So, be creative and try to have some serious input. If you really care about the people, do not come here every week and say the same thing over and over. There are none so blind as those who would not see, and they just would not see.

I endorse the document today and the Government for its prudent management of the economic resources of this country, and the Government with its clear vision, courage and the will to take action will, in fact, make Trinidad and Tobago a developed nation by the year 2020.

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

Sen. Basharat Ali: Mr. Vice-President, I propose to bring back our House to sanity, because I think this debate is too early to get into that kind of counteractions. As everybody knows, I am a number quencher, and I hope to do that in my contribution this afternoon.

Mr. Vice-President, on this Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2008, I looked at the exercise that we have been doing in the nature of a mid-year review. From my idea of budgeting in the corporate world, when you do a mid-year review, you look at what you have done for the first half of the year, and then that guides what you are going to do for the balance of the year and into the following year. This is how I approach this matter. I went back then to what we did in 2007, because that was the basis of the budget estimates for 2008.

I have some numbers here and there are final numbers now, because the public accounts were presented to us not too long ago. I think it was at the end of March we had the public accounts. Let me look at what the revenue was in that area and what the expenditure was for that period, fiscal 2007, and I would then compare it with what the budget estimates were for 2008. So, revenue actuals for 2007, tax revenue, \$34.209 billion; non tax revenue, \$4.272 billion, which gave a total of \$38.481 billion.

Expenditure for the same period; the total recurrent expenditure was \$37.214 billion. The development programme coming from the Consolidated Fund was \$4.105 billion. So, the subtotal for that was \$41.319 billion. So, in fact, we started having a deficit there. The recurrent expenditure is showing a small surplus, but once we take into the account the amount for the development programme, we are going to start getting into a deficit situation, based on these numbers.

The actual expenditure from the Infrastructural Development Fund on development projects was \$3.683 billion. So, the total expenditure for 2007 was already \$45.002 billion which included the Infrastructure Development Fund which closed, according to the books, at a figure of \$2.7 billion. That is after the addition of \$3.9 billion into the fund.

Well, in fact, the actuals and crude oil was \$62 a barrel; natural gas, on the net back basis on Henry Hub was supposed to be \$3.50 per mmbtu. Crude oil production for that year was 126,000 barrels per day and natural gas, 3.9 bcf a day.

The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund which is a very important element of the whole process, at year end was, I believe, US \$1.776 billion. I had to do that number by guess. I could not find the final document.

Let us look now at what we did in our budget estimates for 2008. Tax revenue was \$35.133 billion; non-tax revenue, \$3.894 billion, giving us a total of \$39.027 billion. I think we have heard that figure already today on the estimates where we started.

On the expenditure side, the recurrent expenditure was \$37.906 billion. So, there was a small surplus of \$1.1 billion.

The development programme amounted to \$3.9 billion. So the subtotal for expenditure was \$41.806 billion, once again, over the total income or the total revenue. Sorry, that was really the estimates for expenditure.

The transfer to the Infrastructure Development Fund was estimated at \$4 billion. So, the total expenditure that we are looking at is \$45.806 billion compared to revenue of \$39.027 billion. That is my simplistic way of dealing with it.

As we know, in the budget estimates for 2008, the figure used for crude oil was based on WTI, so a realized value for crude oil locally should be US \$50 a barrel. Natural gas was on Henry Hub net back basis of \$3.55 mmbtu; crude oil production, I believe in the estimates was 142,000 barrels per day; and natural gas production, 4.1 bcf per day. What the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund was going

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to add on to was still a question mark. Today, we heard a figure of \$1.7 billion. I hope that is not what it is going to be at the end of 2008.

So, here we are where we started with our budgeting process this year. I was disappointed that half of the year has gone, and we have heard no firm numbers for all of these things like tax revenue, non-tax revenue, expenditure, except what we are saying now. I am really disappointed that we have not seen those numbers, although we have a big requirement now for spending funds.

Looking at what I am seeing now, just for the first two quarters of this year—we have already gone half year into this fiscal year—and the bench mark crude oil, from my look at it, would have been West Texas Intermediate of \$90 per barrel in the first quarter, and \$97 in the second quarter, compared to what we used which is a realized crude oil value of \$50. In fact, with those numbers, if you are being generous and you take off \$10 you might get what the local crude oil value would be.

With respect to natural gas, there I can only look at the Henry Hub at the end there of \$6.93 for the first quarter and \$8.02 for the second quarter.

Crude oil production was very disappointing. I did not get all the figures, so I have made an assumption of 120,000 barrels a day. That is based on the first quarter of this fiscal year of 115,000 barrels a day. It is very disappointing that when we have such buoyant prices on crude oil, we do not have crude oil to match in terms of production.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is now 4.30 p.m. and I think it is a good time to take the tea break. We will suspend now and resume at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. B. Ali: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. Just to catch up where I stopped at the tea break. I was going to repeat that I would have liked to see the revenue and expenditure numbers for the first and second quarters; that is half of the fiscal year, before I even looked at the proposals that are with us for additional substantial amount of funds in the budget. There was an article in the *Newsday* today on the question of expenditure—I will come back to that—which purported to quote or talked about the Infrastructure Development Fund. I would like the hon. Minister to look at that. It says:

"From previously-allocated funds, she said an extra \$991 million will go to the Infrastructure Development Fund."

So it is almost an additional \$1 billion, if that is so. So, I would like confirmation or verification that this is in fact what has happened because listening to the hon. Minister, I did not hear him say anything to that effect, so I hope he will take notice of it.

I am sticking on this quarter one and quarter two and I am going now to a particular item and that is what deposits have we made to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund (HSF) as required by the law. The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund Act requires you in section 13(1) which says:

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

- (a) exceed the estimated petroleum revenues for that quarter of the financial year 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 deposited to the Fund in accordance with section 14(1);"

And section 14(1) says:

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

It further goes on to say that:

"The deposits referred to in subsection"—which I read—"shall be made no later than the end of the month following the quarter in respect of which the deposit was calculated."

So, for the first quarter of fiscal 2008, we should have had a transfer to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and for the second quarter, which was completed in March, we should have had a transfer by now again to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund in accordance with section 13(2) of the Act.

I would like, once again, to raise the subject of the methodology of calculation of the revenues. I am of the view and a view I have expressed before, that section 13(3), which gives us the way of doing the estimation for revenues is not a viable way of doing it. This business of working on the basis of an 11-year moving average, which is five years before the year in question and five years forward, I think it is not appropriate to say that.

I have asked the question, how do we arrive at that? Are we using external consultants to arrive at that? I think we should be having a much simpler and more transparent formula. We do not know what formula is used so the only thing

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I can assume is when in the budget speech they say that the price of crude oil or the crude oil value used is \$50 per barrel, I am assuming that that is the number for the local crude oil realization, that is the number I think would be what is mentioned here. Then you look at what the actuals are going to be later on in order to determine what is going to go into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

So, I feel quite strongly, particularly in this very volatile period, that we should have a different method. I cannot say what it is going to be, but certainly this 11-year moving average; I know there has been a lot of criticism of it among the communities in Trinidad and Tobago. I hope that we would look at it and if necessary make an amendment to the HSF. The HSF has been in operation for over a year now, so why not look at it again and make the amendment, and certainly we might even start thinking of changing it to quarterly figures, because you may have quite a bit of variation. For example, if I look at the next quarter—I had given the figure of WTI of \$90 for the first quarter of the fiscal year, and \$97 for the second quarter—but looking at the third quarter already after two months it looks like it is about \$110 and climbing. So, we have different figures coming quarter by quarter now in this particular year, going very sharply up. I think we need to really reconsider that because, as I asked before, I do not know how we do it at this stage and to me we have to get it right.

Mr. Vice-President, coming to the Bill before us, I started off by looking at just five items of expenditure where the Heads were to be increased and I chose the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, just over \$1 billion; Ministry of Finance, \$898,103,234—that is the number I have here—Ministry of Works and Transport, \$515,332,869; Ministry of Planning, Housing and Development, \$501,843,965 and Ministry of National Security, \$317,141,000. Those are the ones I wanted to look at and let us start with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, because that is a hot topic here. That figure of \$1,010,624,200 is really basically \$1 billion going to the subsidy on petroleum products and petroleum products, primarily motor gasoline and diesel fuel.

If you were listening when there was a motion on the adjournment you would have realized that the biggest subsidy per unit is going into diesel fuel, because diesel fuel is much higher than gasoline in the market, reason being that diesel fuel is the equivalent of the heating fuel in the temperate climates. Diesel fuel or the equivalent of that is also jet fuel. So the value of that is much higher and more consistently high than motor gasoline. And as I said, the volumes of that have gone up and I do not know whether we can really afford that, although it looks as if we can afford it.

I also had a question on that and that is under subsidy, I do not think that that figure we have now, which comes up \$2.163 billion is in fact the total story, because what is not included is the petroleum production levy, which is a levy top at 4 per cent gross revenue on oil from the producing companies; and do not say it is the producing companies that are really paying for it. We are losing out because that production levy is a deductible cost, so at least we are carrying 50 per cent of the cost of that levy and that becomes a big number too.

Remember in my last calculation I said that we must have about \$2.4 billion a year in subsidy and I think if we are going to go at the rate of crude oil acceleration—that is the only word I can call it—in pricing as we are now, then we are going to be going much higher up. I think we have to start thinking really about where we are going in terms of the product. As I said, there is a big differential already in the unit subsidy for gasoline as against gas oil or diesel fuel and we need to look at that; they have different markets in fact. We have to start somehow to get down to reality.

I am not saying that we should cut off the subsidy one time. I mean it is a big subsidy so there is room for, in fact, going piecemeal at it. That happened in the late 1970s, because the petroleum levy then was very huge and the subsidy accordingly was big, and because the companies were saying, look, this is what is happening and they showed it to us—I was working in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries at the time and they showed it to us—that is why they started to have lower amounts of subsidy even at that time from the period there, and later on came the 3 per cent cap and that was later on into the period when funds were very short.

So, we have to be conscious that is not only a resource which is depleting. We have to be conscious to the fact that every litre of gasoline that we produce and burn means more CO₂ emitted in the atmosphere and we have to be conscious that if we do not use it then we save our resource. We have to get used to it just as we all have to get used to the new domestic electricity rates, because we just could not continue as we were going. Many of us will get a little shock when we see it, because the information that came out was cushioned by giving quite a low number.

If you burn more than 1,000 kilowatt hours per month or per two-month period, you do not know how much it is going to be. I can tell you that many of us will be facing an increase of the order of 40 per cent on our bill. So, if you have a bill of \$1,000 you know what it is going to be, \$1,400; that is the story of it, but it is your choice. If you want to run your air conditioner all the time, go ahead, once

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you can pay for it that is fine, but you have to pay for what you use. And rates in electricity are indeed starting at a lower level. So, it is a question of whether you can afford it. If you want to use it; if you can afford it, go ahead and do it.

We may have to start thinking in the same terms for the motor fuels, but it is much more difficult to control that. When the individual's electricity bill is there it is easy enough, but there are so many ways that one can manipulate the situation from customers right up, when you have any kind of differential system in subsidies. I remember when I first worked in the ministry there was no increase in prices of kerosene. They said kerosene is a poor man's fuel so there was no increase in prices of kerosene. Of course, if you take the higher priced diesel and you mix it with kerosene then you can run your tractors and that is exactly what was happening; people were mixing the fuel and whatnot and going their way.

So it is always a place where you can be innovative and manipulative in getting in that, so we have to be very careful. I think it needs very close attention and as I said, you do not have to do it in one fell swoop when you do it, otherwise we will be faced one day with this huge increase. Everybody else in our Caribbean areas is faced with it, but they have to manage it and we will have to manage it some time or other. People say I am an exponent of removal of subsidy; I am not removing.

5.15 p.m.

Work out the numbers, I have done it before, if you reduce the subsidy work out how much it costs for the man who is driving a car? How much per kilometre does it cost? If you find, for example, that you take a taxi and take three or four average passenger loads, it is not a large number, but with any reduction we have to do that kind of publicity so that everybody in fact becomes sensitized as to why it is being done and making sure that you do not get your eyes gouged out.

So, that is my take on subsidy and I would like the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to bring us up-to-date as to what the level of the petroleum production levy is at this stage because that is an important factor in the whole scenario.

The small item which was within energy and that is for \$10.624 million land purchase by NEC from Petrotrin, I did not see why the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries had to pay for this quite frankly. National Energy Corporation, a subsidiary of National Gas Company—a rich company—is engaged in many areas. I worked in the National Energy Corporation, they have assets in piers and harbours and estates, so why should the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries

take its money and put it towards purchase? I do not know what part of Union Estate it is. Maybe it is down to the jetty where the men put in the berth, I do not know because National Energy Corporation tends to run berths and piers also. So, that is the question I ask, why? They are not short of cash; they always say they have very good accounts. If you look at it you would see them, and I say they are a subsidiary of one of the biggest cash cows in Trinidad—the National Gas Company. A good company, I was a director of that company for a long time.

I go next to the Ministry of Finance which according to my data was \$898,103 million; I think they had a slightly different figure in the data presented by the hon. Minister and we will see the correction. I do not think it is very much, I think it is \$893 million instead of \$898 million, I am not too sure. *[Interruption]* Just about \$5 million more, you see how the ladies think here, okay. And looking at it I wondered why after that big injection into Caribbean Airlines we now have to give them another \$152 million to put into place the—

Sen. Dr. Saith: Tobago Express.

Sen. B. Ali: I know, I see, presuming you are purchasing Tobago Express or you are buying new units or new planes for that service?

Sen. Dr. Saith: We bought Tobago Express.

Sen. B. Ali: You bought Tobago Express, okay. The bigger number for me is the next item, Trinidad Generation Unlimited of \$462,000,673. Now I had never heard of Trinidad Generation Unlimited until I saw this name there, I knew there was another person or another corporate entity going to be involved there. Surprisingly, when I went and googled trinidadgenerationunlimited, I came up with one little item, only one place and it said that Trinidad Generation Unlimited is a company incorporated in Trinidad and it is a subsidiary of AES Corporation. This is from a genuine document; it is from AES Corporation 10K SEC filing on May 23, 2007. Now, I have to say they seem to have a very good track record, they have been in the business from 1981 to now, they are very innovative, but I was very flabbergasted because nobody has ever given any information on either Trinidad Generation Unlimited or on the parent company, I presumed, since they say they are a subsidiary in SEC filing, AES Corporation.

The question that arises is, we have accepted the offer of 10 per cent real equity and 10 per cent carried equity. I am not too sure what the carried equity is, so I presume we have to come up with money for the 10 per cent real equity and the other one is carried so it will be dealt with later. I am not an expert in that, but

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the project itself has never really come to light. I have been looking at these things for a while now and I realize that that power plant is 720 megawatts combined cycle power plant to be installed at Union Estate.

As I said, it is going to be a combined cycle unit. It is a little different from a lot of other combined cycle units in that the condensing part of the turbine will be with air cooling instead of in water, and there is obvious reason for that because the only real water that is close to theirs is sea water. One has to look at the economics of it using the domestic water, fresh water or demineralized water to do it, but we do not know anything of this project. That is all. I know it started off, and I knew about it—

Sen. Browne: Thank you. On page 40 of the budget speech the investment articulated in the 720 megawatt plant, I think at the time the name of the company had not been identified. Trinidad Generation Unlimited is in fact a joint venture. Thank you.

Sen. B. Ali: Thank you, hon. Minister. I am aware of it, that is where I knew it had changed, because that project started with a 420 megawatt plant, single cycle and it went to 720. Once the decision was made that we will go combined cycle for two reasons, that we reduce the Co₂ emissions and we get higher efficiency—the combined cycle unit gives about 40 per cent more power for a given amount of natural gas. That is certainly the way to go, I would always agree with that. I believe the two units which you had put down in Point Lisas they are also in for a conversion and I endorse that completely.

Right now I still do not know who are the parties to this? Trinidad Generation Unlimited, whether the Government will be the shareholder? I mean, Powergen had T&TEC as a shareholder, I do not know whether we have anything in Trinity, maybe not, I do not know?

Hon. Senator: Ask Sen. Mark.

Sen. B. Ali: Ask Sen. Mark, I do not know. [*Laughter*] I am not getting into that. I say I do not know who the ownership of Trinity is, I know who Powergen is. It is 51 per cent T&TEC, I do not know who the 49 per cent is, which was Marantz and now Mitsubishi or something like that.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Mainberi

Sen. B. Ali: Okay, so Mainberi, I know those. This project then is a bit cloudy because of that, the whole Alutrint project. Let me say that I am one of the persons who supported the Alutrint project. In one of the budget contributions I

did it. I said I supported Alutrint and I am against Alcoa and I gave the reasons why. It is part of the *Hansard*, not last year but the year before probably.

Sen. Browne: Clarification? Just to clarify, the power plant which was also spoken about by Sen. Mark, 75 per cent of the output of this plant is to be sold into the national grid. It is to ensure that the power demand and the anticipated power demands are met by the existing plant, and it is anticipated that additional facilities will be required. So, it is a joint venture, the purpose of putting it together is in fact to ensure that the national community is well served in terms of its power demands in the future and the other 25 per cent will be the extra usage for the development of the additional plant. Thank you.

Sen. B. Ali: Thank you, Mr. Minister. I am aware of all of that, what I am asking is, what the arrangements are, how much equity. Is the Government going to go to 40 per cent equity in this as against if you take the carried equity—I know about carried participation, the upstream side—you will pay a certain amount and I presume that is part of the agreement, what you pay. Then there still may be minority ownership by the Government, 40 per cent, I do not know. I am just assuming that because they say 20 plus 20. [*Laughter*] You see it is not a transparent project and I will tell you before you answer any further.

The other part of it is the arrangement for natural gas. There is no doubt about it that Alutrint will have a preferential price for natural gas, because to get the mill rate which is—my friend there knows very well, the former Minister of Energy and Energy Industries will know what the mill rate is. That is an important factor.

Sen. Seetahal SC: What is the mill rate; tell the rest of us, “nah”?

Sen. B. Ali: Mill rate is a kilowatt hour rate that they have to pay and it is quite low—much less than you pay on your bills. That is what we know about, but I am concerned about that arrangement now, whether it is like the Powergen arrangement where the Government or T&TEC—the one who receives the output will just give them the gas—they say give them the gas, but the owner of the power plant is really tolling gas to make electricity from it. That is what Powergen does in fact. Powergen just charges you for all the services that they perform and they say they get the gas free, but it is not get the gas free.

Hon. Senator: Same arrangement.

Sen. B. Ali: That is how it works. I do not know if they are going to sell electricity, are there going to be two gas prices foregoing into this unit or one gas price, because there are two different kinds of customers?

Sen. Dr. Saith: Sir, perhaps I can help the Senator. When we went out to this power plant we got bids from Trinity, Powergen, AES and it is a tolling arrangement. T&TEC would supply the gas, we will pay them a tolling fee and get the power and T&TEC will then decide how they will sell the power to various people, so it is a straight tolling arrangement. The shareholding is 60 per cent, a 20 per cent carried for what it is and 20 per cent investment. The reason the Government is taking that is because it is a tolling arrangement the rate of return is pretty much fixed or guaranteed, the risks are very low.

Sen. B. Ali: Thank you for the information, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister. I have to think about how to address him because I cannot call him by his name; according to the Hon. Vice-President, I cannot call you by your name.

Sen. Seetahal SC: Call him any other name.

Sen. B. Ali: Well, I call him any other time, but that does not—

Sen. Dr. Saith: Just say my friend.

Sen. B. Ali: There is only one final question on that one, what is the total cost of this power plant? Is it straight number there we are using or is that just the 20 per cent equity, so you can work it out I believe if that is 20 per cent equity? You can work out what the cost of the project is, but maybe someone from on that side will give us the real number as to the cost of that. We so often say what the project cost is, and that is a project within a project and if the hon. Minister is willing to give it, I think we would be happy.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Mr. Vice-President, the cost is still to be finalized because the construction cost—the cost of the equipment is fairly low. I think it is going to range between \$400 million and \$500 million at this point in time.

Sen. Seetahal SC: US million or TT million?

Sen. Dr. Saith: Yes, US.

Sen. B. Ali: The million already we are paying that, five times that. It is 20 per cent of that. Thank you, hon. Minister, we will see how that goes. So that answers some of the questions on that and I am glad that I raised the question. I hope everybody else on this side knows what it is all about.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, I had an item here, the Exim Bank's \$36 million debt. I think the hon. Minister did give an explanation. I do not want to lengthen this

debate; we do not have a vote at the end of the day anyway, so I will not ask any further questions. I will leave others to do it.

I go to the Ministry of Works and Transport. I would just like to look at one item, that is, "Other Contracted Services", \$160 million for drainage items, and it is described in the document. I would not read the whole section about that. Basically it is flood mitigation.

I had one question. I remember sometime ago, maybe about a year ago already, NIDCO went out with a lot of tender invitations with respect to all these matters related to rivers and drains, et cetera. I do not know whether this is the same project, because it was in the Infrastructural Development Fund. I see it is coming back into the Consolidated Fund, and that is why it appears here. This project is now in the Development Programme under the Consolidated Fund. There is a note saying that it was previously in the Infrastructure Development Programme. This is why I asked whether it was the same set of projects, because there were little ones and big ones.

Some of the big ones were diversion of rivers and design work on big projects. I think those are still in the other place from the Infrastructure Development Fund. That fund is not very transparent as the Consolidated Fund, because you do not see anything in it. That was why I asked earlier on whether we have, virtually, another \$1 billion going into that fund and what it was going to be used for.

Because of that I had another question, when I raised the question of Nidco. It related to that project called the water taxis. If you look at the draft estimates of the development programme, you would see that under the Infrastructure Development Fund there is a total cost of TT \$78 million. The project is called "Water Taxi from Point Fortin to Port of Spain", and I think that is what we are talking about.

When the information came out on the three used water taxis, that figure was wiped out basically, because it came up to about TT \$72 million. I had said at the time that it must be they were going to come back for funds for that; having not seen it here, I ask today: Is it going to be funded out of the Infrastructure Development Fund? This is a project that comes under that part of the development programme. I would like an answer to that one, because I believe they are already giving a time line when that is going to be in. I saw an advertisement for catering staff for it also, quite recently.

While we are on that, what about the three new water taxis? I do not know where they have reached in the process of finalizing the procurement. I read

where there were about three different bidders who had accepted the invitation, including Austal that is doing the fast patrol boats. I was wondering where we had reached with that, and where the funds were coming from. Will that also be done on the basis of export credit, wherever it may come from? These three new vessels which are destined to be here, in the meanwhile backed up by the three used vessels which are going to be had. I do not know what the time line is for the initiation of that project. I hear so many dates given by our hon. Minister of Works and Transport. Until it starts, I would not know when it is.

Mr. Vice-President, I have one little item here relating to the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment, it is the question of the establishment of the Tucker Valley Demonstration Farm. It is a small amount, \$4 million. Why does the establishment and operation of this demonstration farm come under the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment, when we have the hon. Minister here who is doing all the work to get these things going? It seems to me crazy, if I may say so, that they leave this in a soft Ministry, in fact. I do not know who is going to handle that one. Why is it there at all? Why was it not given to the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources? I would like to know. [*Interruption*]

My colleague said it does not make any sense. You have a demonstration farm being run by planners. It does not make sense to me. The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is looking at me; maybe he will give a reply.

Sen. Piggott: I was not about to intervene at this time, but since you have embraced it so much for so long, I thought that I should rise to clarify that the Chaguaramas Development Authority (CDA) comes under the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment. Therefore, that is why the allocation is put there. The development down there is under the CDA. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources naturally has a major input into the exercise. It demonstrates the teamwork of this Government and how closely the Cabinet works in achieving projects. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to. [*Laughter*]

Sen. B. Ali: My colleague next to me said that I have not expired. I think I am still on my feet. [*Crosstalk*] I am near the end really. I do not have much longer to go.

I want to go back to the one item in that listing, the Ministry of National Security—the hon. Minister is not here—that is for \$317 million. I have something to say which is really not contra to what—I appreciate what this amount of money is. On January 22 this year, when I spoke on the Variation of Appropriation Bill, I asked a question. They called it a saving, but all these sums of money which came up to \$451 million, at the time, came from these same items, a number of these items.

I then said that we were not saving anything, because we were going to come back. Sure enough, that is what has come back here. It is understandable, because it was a deferred cost for all the agreements with respect to wages, salaries, et cetera, which had not been concluded. The explanation given by the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance, at that time, was that the Government did cash accounting. Being a non-accountant, I did not know what it was. That sum represented what was a drawdown on the offshore patrol vessels loan with the United Kingdom (UK).

I took the opportunity the check that out. The Minister would be pleased to know that I have learned something. That loan No. 93 on the external loans is £160,792,450. I presume that comes up to a large number; I would not know. The next column in this said that the amount realized was £36 million, which comes up to just about that amount, TT \$491,216,522. That is where I saw the number. That was saved there and put under the Development Programme, at that time.

That loan agreement, for those who would like to look at it, is one that was done on April 05, just a few days before the hon. Prime Minister addressed us. It is repayable in 20 semi-annual instalments commencing on October 05, 2010, and the final instalment on February 05, 2020. So we have a long way to go with that one.

On the same page, by just looking at it, there is another item, No. 92, that is one which is very much in the air at the moment. It says RMB, \$812 million, National Academy for the Performing Arts Project, that is another project. I would not go into it, but just for the benefit of Members in this House, the amount realized so far is \$174,445 million. That loan agreement—I believe Sen. Mark mentioned, that it was a soft loan payable in 31 semi-annual installments, commencing September 2011, and final installment in September 2026. That figure just about works out, if I do some calculations, to US \$100 million.

Finance Bill
[SEN. ALI]

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

The other one I saw I would like the hon. Minister of Health to talk about it. The other one is Vote No. 95. This is a small loan, compared to all these big numbers. It is US \$29 million, National Oncology Programme. The amount realized to date, to the end of September 2007, is US \$9.664 million or TT \$60.895 million. This is the interesting part; dated October 31, 2005, repayable in 16 semi-annual instalments, commencing on April 30, 2008, and final instalment on October 31, 2015.

I know this project has been in limbo, basically. The hon. Minister said sometime ago that he could not talk about it, but they were in arbitration. Somebody has to talk about it. We have to start paying back this loan and we have not got anything from it yet. I have reservations always on government to government arrangements. This was one of them that I looked at. Maybe the hon. Minister could tell us what is happening with the National Oncology Centre, because this is only part of the project. The other part of the project relates to what is happening here. Ellis Don is the other company; I do not know where they are in terms of the implementation of the programme, whether it is stalled in all these processes or whether we are ever going to have it. Having got to that page and having seen this, I thought to bring it to the attention of the House.

Mr. Vice-President, that is about what I would like to say. There are some items I would like to say we need to look at. Crude oil production is now as critical to us as gas. I see quite a bit of work being done on gas reserves development, but crude oil production and venturing into the deeper horizon is an important factor. We have to look at it, because it seems that for the next eight years or so crude oil prices are going to be way up. If they are way up and we have no crude oil, then we get zero revenue, so the push should be in that direction.

This is the final thing I would like to say. I said all of this here because I like to think that we have to be more transparent. I do not say it as a mantra, "Transparency, accountability and value for money"; I want to make it sound as though we really want to do that: be transparent, be accountable and get value for money.

I was very disturbed when I heard the hon. Minister of Works and Transport say, "Well, that process for the White Paper is no good, because nobody from the state enterprises were on that committee." Who was on that committee? Who appointed that committee? Who agreed to it? That White Paper was tabled just before a budget day, and a time line was given ever since. Recently we have been hearing that. I am very disappointed. I wonder when we will ever get to that stage where we get the legislation to bring into being the public procurement regime.

Thank you.

5.45 p.m.

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Mr. Vice-President, I am very happy to be given the opportunity to take part in this debate especially having you in the Chair on this occasion after last week's flurry of events. This is a lawful event in which we are all taking part. It is a ritual every year; in effect it is a rather useless exercise but it shows the importance of process and as part of our democratic society, it shows how talk is very important. The oral tradition for which this country is so famous is given an opportunity even though no tangible results in the financial sense are expected.

So we as parliamentarians especially, I believe, those who are not on the Government side will have to strive to squeeze out every ounce of benefit that we can possibly get from just talking and talking. So, in a sense, it is therefore not completely useless. We are obliged to put our best foot forward to see how we can help the Government move its policies along notwithstanding that not even one cent will change up or down in the end.

In fact, it is like a retrofit we are doing, all the events have passed, the expenditures have been incurred, the variations have been lawfully incurred and so have the supplemental arrangements. The question when you really think about it is, what are we doing here? It is important that we are here because it is a lawful exercise and it does create a window of opportunity for us to provide some interventions that will help the Government possibly, and so, the country in the end.

When one examines the document from an accounting perspective, or even from fiscal planning, we get the impression that all is not well in the way the ministries plan their business, especially in terms of projecting expenditure and certain tasks that fall precisely under particular ministries. It is not therefore whether we can change a cent up or down, it is having an opportunity to examine whether the political management of this country is on a sound footing or not, or whether there are gaps which can be closed and which we can point out for amelioration in future.

Let me look at some of the larger issues to illustrate or operationalize my concern with respect to political management. Before I do so, I want to express my pleasure with the hon. Minister of Local Government in bringing forward a Green Paper which I had an opportunity to glance through just now. It looks like it does have some benefit to heal the breaches that I will speak of and I wish to commend the Minister for quick diligence even though, notwithstanding Senator,

larger commendation about the partnership now running the country at the central and the local levels. That is good, at the local level it seems to be running better and I stop there.

The Green Paper we have seen so quickly and diligently produced with such precision is well targeted to the particular problems facing local government and especially the municipal corporations. In terms of effective political management, it leaves me to wonder why every Monday morning there are these problems with these vendors on the streets, and more importantly, why is it seemingly a conflict between the Mayor of the City as it were and the central government.

I feel sorry for Mayor Murchison Brown having taken certain decisions in the interest of keeping Port of Spain worthy of calling it a city and to have these protestors coming on the streets, day after day, feeling that they have justification and leaving the distinguished Mayor once again embarrassed in the public mind, compelling the central government, through the Minister involved to intervene and create a programme—a long-range programme I hope, but still it does not look as if the political management aspect of it was properly thought out.

While this is important, it is not to deprive the vendors of the right to earn a living, but I have always said the right to earn a living must be exercised lawfully if you want to have a proper, civilized democracy. It must be done within the law and I have a feeling through the defects in the political management of the country that this message is not sent as loudly and clearly as it should. I do not want to go too far out with this because people may feel I am depriving them of their right to protest, but it is a wrong and strong scenario that we witness repeatedly.

As a law-abiding citizen, I am speaking on behalf of the thousands of law-abiding citizens in this country who are severely inconvenienced by the lawlessness time and time again. We expect the Government to put a proper and lawful stop to this tendency and the situation on Charlotte Street is evidence of what I am talking about.

If it is the case that the vendors are vending illegally, or without proper permission from the city council, then their rights are therefore diminished and the Government should ensure that the public does not get the message that if you are lawless you get the Government's attention, and it has to bend backwards time and time again.

I am afraid, Mr. Vice-President, and I say so with great respect, it seems as if this is the message being sent to the rest of the lawful community, that what you have to do in this country is make a lot of noise, burn up a lot of things, shut down

this place or that place before you get a proper hearing, or have your problems dealt with properly. Now is that evidence of defective political management or not? That is the question I pose because I am aware of the dilemma especially if these protests are so intensely media driven and the media houses do not bother to ask the question on the other side, what are the regulations being used by the Mayor. The media houses do not check up on the laws and regulations that govern the location of protest, they just publish what the protestors say willingly as if that is the truth from heaven.

I do not mind giving the lawless the right to be heard, but I will also ask with respect that the rights of the lawful must also be a parallel condition in such circumstances. We are not having enough of that second condition, so I understand the dilemma. The Government feels embarrassed, it wants to respond, ameliorate and show that it is charitable, but in doing so I think your political management appears defective in that you are sacrificing once again the lawful in the interest of the lawless.

So when you begin to talk about “we have a lawless culture”, these are the elements that nourish that lawlessness because it will not end there. Others have seen how to manipulate the system and how to pressure the authorities to get their way even though their acts are either illegal or lawless. This is not a simple matter; it is a symptom of a deeper problem in the society; dramatized with violence, and murder in the July 1990 Muslimeen uprising. And the picture on the wall of a parliamentarian who was killed in that insurrection should be there to remind us that with respect to illegal vending and squatting—because the Mucurapo incident started as a squatting issue and the city council again was at loggerheads with the central government. I will not call names, I do not think it is necessary, but incrementally they found that those who were not abiding by the law began to get their way and then you had all these things about reasonable expectations; if you occupy land for so many years, which of course, to my mind, attacks the very foundation of jurisprudence.

To say you live in a place for 3—4 years therefore you have accrued certain expectations about ownership, when the correct owner has a legal document to show he or she is the rightful owner. Because you live in a place for a few years, you develop a parallel contention for ownership? All these are issues that we need to examine if you want to have not merely a democratic society, but a civilized democracy. I point out that as one illustration of what I mean that the Government has to be determined to preserve the rule of law in the way it is supposed to be preserved, according to the Constitution, whilst keeping other people's rights, especially the rights of the lawful community intact.

There was another incident, one foot forward, two feet backward. There was some bulldozing in the area of Curepe where there were a lot of protests again and the people felt they had a right to protest because of certain claims to ownership and promises about the recreation ground and so forth. They claimed their crops were destroyed, but one Minister said that was not so, another one said yes, it was so. In the end—and I think that ministry must be commended for bringing a stop to it and saying it will examine the situation, will retrospect and see what can be done in a proper way. The point is, why was this not done in the first place? Why were there people raking, scraping, scrimmaging and fighting the police?

6.00 p.m.

From what I saw, a very damaging consequence of such instances is that you put the citizens against the police, and the police, unjustifiably against the citizens. That is why you have this aggravation of the gap between the police and the citizens. When the police come in such instances and seemingly bully others, to keep law and order on very fragile grounds, because people are not sure what is right and what is wrong, you really disturb the national community and, in this case, the Curepe community. It does not look well. Once again, the political management has to be exercised more thoughtfully.

In public policy or in political management, you do not only plan an action. The practice of politics makes it imperative for you to consider the reaction to the policy, and if you cannot map out what the reaction would be to your action as a policy maker, you therefore create a breach in your governance portfolio.

A more recent example is even more fundamental. I have heard the appeal for transparency in the debate so far and perhaps in another place, especially with respect to the funds being spent, not only here, but in other documents provided to us. One of the key instruments that Parliament has at its disposal to ensure accountability in a transparent way, one instrument that this House of the people has to demand accountability, is through the joint select committee. If there are deficiencies in the joint select committee arrangement, the principle of the joint select committee and what it stands for and what it can do is so powerful that such deficiencies or shortcomings should be properly treated to strengthen it and give it the support it needs to serve the public's expectation of transparency and accountability. In fact, I would say, since I am at that point, that I am still a bit puzzled why there is so much more confidence placed in having a commission of enquiry into the UDeCott matter than having a joint select committee handle the matter. I am not yet saying which is better than the other.

When you think about it carefully, as some of us have been doing, and you remove the myths, that is the fantasies, and you get down to the matter as a feature of public administration and constitutionality, you realize that a commission of enquiry has very little—I use the word "little" guardedly—or no more superior features than a properly constituted joint select committee. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] Well, you will notice how I chose my words.

I remember a report I studied because of the discipline in which I am involved, criminology and teaching anti-drug policies. I studied the Scott Drug Report, which emerged from a very controversial commission of enquiry. There has been no other commission of enquiry that has received so much attention, public drama and media exposure as the events and the commission of enquiry itself. The report is now called the Scott Drug Report.

It was said that Ministers would be arrested; that the police commissioner would be imprisoned; all kinds of things were said until the Government, finding itself in what we locally call "a monkey pants", commissioned Mr. Desmond Allum to examine the document and see the prima facie evidence and what is worthy of being prosecuted. Poor fellow, he spent a lot of time—I am sure he was paid for it; he had to be paid for it—which tells you another feature of commissions of enquiry and their relationship to the taxpayers.

In the end, when Mr. Allum said you could not deal with it in the ordinary court processes and that you had to declare a state of emergency; after all this—I would not say bacchanal and allegations and people's names in the press—some of the names in that report are in Parliament today. I will not say where exactly in Parliament, whether the Upper House or the Lower House, but I know you have a very lively imagination, so I leave that to the rest of things.

Nothing came out of it. So many senior police officers were mentioned in very unfavourable terms;—I am using the word very lightly—lawyers, politicians were severely implicated by the commissioners and today what has happened. I can continue with the story. It is just to show you that in matters of politics and public administration, practicality is a first consideration.

I am not going to talk about the Gafoor Commission. I do not know if we just like speculation; we like these allegations we make for tomorrow's drama and it ends there and that is all. We look for sustainability. We want to know whether the instruments we have available can be used properly to come to the desired conclusion.

When you read in our laws, Chap. 19:01, about commissions of enquiry, you recognize that even that is archaic. If someone behaves badly before the

commission of enquiry—curses the commissioner, does not appear—you cannot drag him before a commission of enquiry. You can only charge him \$2,000, which has to go through a process too. The DPP has to decide whether or not it is worthy. Let us not lose balance. Let us be reasonable and examine both sides. I am still puzzled as to why this feeling of tremendous superiority of a commission of enquiry over a joint select committee.

Let me say once again. If the joint select committee has to do a job like this, it has to be further strengthened through the Standing Orders, as well as the administrative infrastructure, provision of forensic and legal experts and given a time line. Transparency could emerge because I believe it will have, on one side, Government Members and on the other side, Opposition Members. Mr. Ramesh Maharaj SC can bring his evidence and be a part of the joint select committee from the Lower House; bring all the witnesses.

People seem to forget—it appears that way—that this Parliament has certain inherent powers and, not because it is not being used, we should not take a chance and use them—the power to find people in contempt, who violate with contempt the rules of conduct in the Parliament. If you want to talk about the traditions of the Westminster system, Parliament has the inherent power to send people to jail. They can appeal, which is another story.

I drop those hints to suggest that we respect our Parliament because the joint select committee is an extension of representative government, whereas you can say that a commission of enquiry is a feature of colonialism, if you want to make the dichotomy a bit more dramatic.

We have to modernize our Parliament and treat it with greater respect. The instruments of our Parliament must be respected in terms of applying these instruments when there is just cause to do so. It seems that we have abandoned the value and the representative nature of this country's Parliament by making it appear that the joint select committees are a waste of time or such words; very unbecoming in my view.

I can say so because I am an Independent Senator. All those persons who are quibbling about who is an Independent Senator and how he supported the Government, I get the feeling that an Independent Senator is only such in the eyes of some people when you attack the Government, [*Desk thumping*] and you must never support the Government at all; and the day you support the Government, you lose your independence.

Many of us—I will not call names—have criticized the Government and reminded the Opposition of some of the things they did when they were in power. We can do so and, for my part, I will continue to do so because I am an Independent Senator. I hope the vagaries of public opinion, the one or two people who have their own views about certain things very narrowly defined and sometimes maliciously applied will not move the President to do anything he should not do. [*Laughter*]

You know, Mr. Vice-President, it is called a plural society, multi-cultural, small; it is compact. We have more newspapers than any other country in the Caribbean. We have more radio stations and television stations than any other country in the Caribbean for 1.2 million people. Talk shows like peas. The oral tradition is well and alive, healthy, but I am not sure of its productivity.

When you suspect bias, the suspicion or allegation of bias has to be established with certain corroborative, objective factors, either through a bribe or some other concrete factors. You cannot feel because I shook a Minister's hand yesterday, today I am biased for or against him. In this small country, we have to mingle and mix as affable, sociable human beings and I detest the readiness with which people make accusations of bias. I believe, if I might venture off my field, that even some judgments in the courts are misguided, by lowering the bar and saying it is not just bias; it is just apparent bias. [*Desk thumping*] So you just appear to be biased and as a “jumbie” out of nowhere, you are condemned out of the mainstream of administration or due process from some other activity you are obligated to perform. That is what I mean. We have to cure the defects in our political management of the system.

6.15 p.m.

Mr. Gordon Deane, for example, has withdrawn, so you might say that the case is closed. But Mr. Gordon Deane sat with me, after being invited by the then Prime Minister, Mr. Basdeo Panday, on what was called a multi-party commission to look after wider areas of socioeconomic planning. I was invited to that commission, so was Archbishop Pantin. Mr. Gordon Deane used to sit next to me. The Prime Minister then—I do not know what happened after that, but more than that, when you read the Commissions of Enquiry Act, if at all, you wonder who should have been chairman of the commission in the instant case.

All commissioners have to take an oath of office. They have to swear that they would be impartial, fair and true to the cause. Does that not say something that would bind the commissioners to walk the straight and narrow path? If that is not so, then why do we, at every sitting, take the oath of office which we have recited about freeing ourselves from personal interest and unwholesome prejudices? It is

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the assumption that when we sit here as legislators, we should. We should speak in the public interest and with good conscience. Even if we take a side or the other, it must be done in good conscience.

With those remarks, as I have said earlier on, I am puzzled as to why some people feel that there is such greater superiority with a commission of enquiry than in a well-supported and strengthened joint select committee. Because if the Parliament and the legislators present, in good sense, had gone for a joint select committee, they could have asked the Government to reform and upgrade the Standing Orders and make these joint select committees more powerful, relevant and stronger, not only for the instant case, but for future reference. That would have been superb political bargaining. In this sense, I believe an opportunity was lost.

I move on to my second point. I have only two major points to make. Sen. Mark introduced a fundamental point in socioeconomic planning in the modern sense, away from all the Marxism and functionalism. I do not mean him. He raised the question of what is the purpose of all these expenditures, what is the purpose of all the legislation and the policies that we are considering. He wrapped it up in one word. It might sound as romanticism or poetic, but the word captures the essence of the purpose for which we are all here, the “happiness” of your citizens. I would rather the word “comfort”, because a lot of crazy people feel happy. Happiness is a very subjective term, with all kinds of nuances and motivations.

It set me thinking to put down a few notes while he was speaking, because there has been a big conference recently, where thousands of people attended in trying to construct something called gross national happiness. It sounds strange, but so too did gross domestic product sound in its early days. The gross domestic product has now to be matched with gross national happiness. How comfortable are your people if the GDP has doubled in the last five years, as we have been hearing? How comfortable are your people, now that you have liberalized the economy some years ago? How comfortable are your people, now that you have floated the dollar some years ago? Those are the questions.

Mr. Vice-President: We have a Procedural Motion.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Thank you Mr. Vice-President. In accordance with Standing Order 9(8), I beg to move that the Senate continues to sit until the completion of this debate.

Question put and agreed to.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Thank you Mr. Vice-President. I was saying that all the expenditure is here. I have some issues with them, but I do not think it would make much sense to try and correct these and be picky about it. I prefer to raise our conscience, so that we would look beyond the expenditure and not remain as blunted accountants, or a bunch of stolid bookkeepers. We should feel obligated to look after the citizens' comfort.

I have a note here about ticket for the football match. I did not get any ticket from Mr. Jack Warner. I want to make that point. I do not know if anybody from the Independent Benches got. I have a note about ticket, but I would put it aside. I did not get any ticket and I do not know if you got, Mr. Vice-President, but I did not get.

I want to suggest that I would operationalize my concern about the matter of citizens' comfort, because my colleague, Sen. Ali, mentioned value for money and transparency. To my other colleague, Sen. Ramkhelawan, I want to commend you for your contribution and for opening the debate on our side. I think in my case especially, we have learnt quite a few things. Of course, how would I leave out Sen. Laurel Lezama for bringing some spice into the debate?

There is a subject now called Environmental Criminology. There is also Environmental Psychology. Those are new features because of the changes in the environment and the question of global warming, climate change and more particularly, the extent to which the environment could bring you discomfort and physical and mental illness. People like myself who teach and work in universities, prepare certain concepts, do some research and come up with a theory and evidence that the environment in which you live does contribute to your physical and mental health, one way or the other. That is why social class is still an important factor, because of the conditions under which people live. That is why poverty is still an important factor, because of the conditions in which people live. These conditions do have consequence for people's mental and physical health.

If you examine the preamble to our Constitution, you would see that message being echoed in the preamble. The particular case is that workers must work in humane conditions. There was some elaboration on it.

People get high blood pressure, or those with high blood pressure reach the danger zone, when they are faced with very repeated congested situations. Quite a few people get heart attacks when they have to face serious heavy traffic jams everyday. That is documented.

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I want to suggest to the Government, because I do not want to attribute blame in any extensive way so as to detract from the need that we all have to take a closer look at these conditions of life that bring such severe discomfort to our citizens, even though the money is flowing and rising by the barrel everyday. It is becoming so and jurisprudence will take care of that, sometime or the other.

When, for example, WASA digs up the road and leaves big winding tracks of mud and holes for weeks and months, it shows utter disrespect for citizens. It shows that there is a gap in governance and that nobody feels responsible. Nobody is held accountable and the holes and long stretches of mud remain. Everyday drivers are under severe congestion, strain and stress and they have to pass through such dilapidated uncaring conditions. That is why I have some faith in the joint select committees, because we called some of these municipal corporations before us and we produced reports. This is from the San Fernando City Corporation, asking them to expedite the handling of the old cars on the road.

People now have garages extending from their house on to the roads. Big trucks are parked without any kind of lighting signals. Derelict cars are parked one after the other, on streets which are busy and dangerous for citizens. This would give people a heart attack.

The stresses that people feel—since stress aggravates diabetes, no wonder the rate of diabetes is mounting so steadily. It is not only the “sweetie” and chocolates that they eat. It is the stress they are getting and the pressures they are facing by these dilapidated environmental conditions about which the Government must now pay quick and urgent attention.

That is why I commend the Minister for a Green Paper because knowing her as I do, I know she would stick in these municipal corporations eyes. I would not use the “T” word. She should. Give each corporation \$5 million now with a mandate to clear up the streets in their districts.

There is one that bothers me a lot. I would not talk about where I live in Champs Fleurs. There are holes, but it would look selfish for me to mention my own premises. After you leave Sangre Grande and you are heading for Manzanilla, there is half a mile of stretch that WASA has dug. If you see the mess! I am sorry for those drivers. They have to squeeze in the little pitch space that is left, manoeuvring torturously. “If they have a weak heart”, it would be aggravated. If they have a problem of blood pressure, it would be aggravated.

It is an objective fact that if you are under stressful conditions, with a high blood pressure problem, it will be aggravated, not right away, but when you go

home you would find that your heart is fluttering. When you have to do these things, they are not done singly. In the struggle for space, these drivers curse one another. There are fights on the roads because they are trying to get away from potholes and such dilapidated environmental conditions. We have to improve our mode of governance. I am putting my total confidence in the Minister of Local Government to do this on this occasion.

6.30 p.m.

My second point is that you have Vision 2020, but there can be no proper vision without any signs. If you look at the street signs across this country—if you are lost and you want to find out where you want to go—there are little or no street signs on the streets. You have to ask somebody: Where am I? What is that?

In a civilized country, when you go to cities like Buenos Aires, Germany and Hamburg—if you want to be developed, is not the money alone and the GDP. That is the point I am trying to make. These little things that do not excite us—you know, they get excited and they are talking about millions of dollars, and they get excited about a lot of big things—whether it is jet plane or a commissioner of enquiry, all of which have their place—and the little things that bother people and bring them unhappiness and discomfort are the things that I am talking about. It is not just sheer psychological discomfort, but it is physiologically dangerous in terms of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart attacks. We cannot continue so. Let them put up their street signs, and let there be proper traffic signs.

We have a beautiful waiting room and ticket space for people travelling to Tobago from Port of Spain. It is just over the road from the Central Bank Towers. Do you know what you need there? This is what I mean when I talk about details. My view has also been that there has to be some more micromanagement in some of these ministries. The Prime Minister should have a specially assigned super-minister to inspect all these ministries to see whether they are doing the things they are supposed to do properly.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Thank you, Sen. Ali. These things like traffic signs are not hard. Do you know why people are vexed with the Government? They are

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not angry with you—those of them who choose to be angry about the buildings and the Waterfront and so forth—but they get angry about these things that I am talking about. This is the foundation of community policing.

Public disorder has always been and should always remain an important target of community policing. It is disorderliness that worries people. It is the things near to them in their daily lives that worry them, such as what I am talking about.

As I was saying, with respect to that waiting room, I see these passengers, Tobagonians and Trinidadians, scurrying across the road like rats running out of danger, because that is a very busy traffic section of Port of Spain. Now, what do I mean? All you should have done when you built that beautiful space is to put a flyover, so we would live in a civilized way. We would come from a civilized waiting room and cross in a civilized way. Are we waiting, as we usually do in such cases, until somebody gets knocked down and pronounced dead? You are then going to hear about all the commissions and the committees going to inspect and to build.

Even before that, as you head East, where the old railway station used to be—I do not know how many Senators pass there, but the pedestrians have no regard for traffic—even though there is a proper traffic light at the corner of South Quay that tells you to wait, but these pedestrians pass all over you. If you bounce them, the first thing that people are going to say is that the driver is at fault. What do you need there now? You have the structure which is the traffic light—this is behavioural engineering. Structures by themselves do not change behaviour, but you need enforcement of the expectation that arises from those structures, that is put a policeman there for a little while, and at random times to let the law be enforced.

Pedestrians in this country must understand that they are not made out of steel. The courts must also understand that when somebody gets knocked down it is not always the driver's fault, and the matter has to be examined more closely and fairly.

Let me hustle through. I wanted to talk about the garbage on the road and the old cars and, again, this falls under the local government sector. Our beaches are run down with wild stray dogs; Maracas and Mayaro. I held a meeting some months ago. I wrote the Commissioner of Police and told him that we want to develop a community policing programme. That was a time when the crime rate in Mayaro was a little high. There were some shootings and somebody was murdered and locked up in a trunk, and I chose the opportunity to do something for the Mayaro community, and to organize some groups that would help to keep

the beaches clean and so on, but it needs to have official support; government support. So, all the rubbish like the cups and stray dogs and so forth, let the municipal corporations, driven by the energy of the Ministry of Local Government clean up these things. It is sad when you take your family to the beach and there are three or four stray dogs after you. If they bite you, you may get rabies. These are dangerous conditions.

Mr. Vice-President, driving on the shoulders, one might think that it is legal. There are so many people doing it. Even police officers are driving on the shoulders of the road. They try to cut in and out. What I am saying is not only the activity that is illegal, but it is the pressure and stress that it brings on law-abiding citizens. That is my point.

The connection between crime and mental health is clear. Lawlessness and people's mental health is, therefore, clear. The more lawlessness you have in these respects is the more people would be vulnerable to heart attacks and high blood pressure without them even knowing it. It creeps up on you surreptitiously. That is how these diseases, what is called "modern diseases", creep up on you.

Well, I am not going to talk about the Licensing Office. There is no need to talk about the Licensing Office, but before you go down there to renew your licence, you should take two tablets, drink some Ferrol, exercise with your Ab Pro or whatever you have at home, because it is going to be a long stressful haul down there. When you are in the line and you reach the cashier at 11.55 a.m, the cashier closes up the cage and goes. Not everybody could cash. Like the drivers in the police service, there is rule. "I am not a cashier and the cashier is not here." When you reach, they are going to tell you that you have the wrong form, and you have to go back home. Stressful! That is why you see these letters to the editors are so virulent and they attack the Government. That is why I am taking the time and care—with respect, let me assure you with sincerity—to tell the Government what bothers people and what it can do to help with these little things.

I am not going to speak about the passport office. I see my very good friend, Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph is smiling. He knows about it. You need to do something about that. That is a disaster area. I do not know what else you might do. Perhaps, you have done all that you could. When you look at the document you see overtime for police officers and immigration officers, so you have to ask them how come so much overtime is being spent, and the public is so discontented and discomforted. Sen. Mark raised an important point that I took note of it, because this is the way we have to go. Let our people be more comfortable as the GDP rises, let our comfort level also rise.

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When the hon. Minister of Health talked about the cardiovascular unit and so on, maybe he knows that these things are producing all the stresses, so he needs to put in some more cardiovascular units. Not only one, but you are going to need much more than that, because of the stressful conditions under which people live.

I have spoken about the vendors and the squatters, but around all of this, there is something very unpleasant that is happening. When squatters protest in the way that they do—I think you need to revisit the legislation of the judgment regarding squatters. There is a judgment by Justice Lennox Deyalsingh which needs to be revisited. You have to do some work, because it is really affecting the civility of the country. One consequence is that lawful people are suffering, because squatters can take over their land and harass them and do everything that they want to do, and the person with the legal document has to stand by and go to court for long years before he gets back his own property. That is not fair. It might be right in law, but it is not fair.

The other consequence is when you have these protests, how the police come in conflict with the citizens. The police end up getting a bad name, because they are instructed to preserve the law, and the citizens feel that the police should not stop them, because the citizens are fighting a just cause. People are willing to help. I am willing to help. I have said so many times. I can assist a government agency if I want to. It does not mean to say that I am in the Minister's or the politician's back pockets.

My professional expertise, whatever it is or how little it is, I would always make it available to any government that is in power. In fact, a few years ago, the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP) could not get somebody to examine the problem of school violence and delinquency and the coordinator, Mr. Maurice Chin Aleong called me and invited me to submit a proposal, and after some discussions I did do it. It went to the Tenders Board. That has nothing to do with politicians and my independence. It is because of my independence, I could have offered my expertise to the SEMP.

When that report was finished with my research team and myself, it was passed on to the Minister. The Minister did not originate the document. It went through the technical officers, but when she got it, in terms of policy—I remember and those of us who were here in the last Parliament, the Minister came here with pride and said—I could remember the words—that this was the most reliable, comprehensive, penetrating study on school violence and the most scientific study ever done in the country. I did it for the Government, and I am going to do it again for any other government, because that problem with schools is a serious problem. [Desk *thumping*]

I do not think myself or any of my colleagues should stand by and allow a problem in the country to remain unattended when you have the competence to help. It is like a UNC doctor not attending to a PNM candidate, because he is a PNM candidate. How spiteful can we get? How narrow-minded can we get? *[Interruption]* Yes, and vice versa. I am just drawing an analogy.

Do you know that when the UNC came into power, the first year—I have to say it because in this country if you do not blow your trumpet sometimes, nobody does it for you. All you get are these biting and nibbling letters in the press and so on trying to scandalize your reputation and so they force you to defend yourself.

Mr. Yetming was the first Minister of Finance in the UNC government. He invited me to submit a proposal to deal with the prison recidivism problem, and to continue the research because he was so impressed. He told me that the Government has nothing on the table to fight crime, would you help us, and I did help them.

In fact, it was in two seminal studies. In terms of the prisons, it was the first time that the country and the Government knew that there was a 56 per cent recidivism rate in the prisons. They could have worked with it—the age of the prisoners, what kind of sentencing they got and for what offences, and so it began to formulate a policy on sentencing, rehabilitation and skill training. I would do it again as an Independent Senator.

This morning, I heard on CNC 3 with Dr. Clifford, where the callers are saying that many persons in this country are only complaining, but they are not doing anything. I am not one of those. I would criticize, but I would do my duty to my country. The most effective way to serve your country, in my profession, is through the public policy arena—through a ministry or through an agency. I cannot go in a school and do anything by myself. There are very few things I can do if they are not passed through a ministry.

6.45 p.m.

This does not mean to say that any one of us who does such a thing is in the back pockets of this or that Minister. Sometimes the Minister does not know what is going on; it is the technocrats and the Permanent Secretary as head of the public administration of that particular ministry, who carry out and initiate the work and in my case, through the Tenders Committee. I do not want to get too much into this, but if I am provoked, as it seems to be developing, I would have to be more precise in defending myself.

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The other caller in the show this morning, asked—what are people in this country doing about these problems; why are you all blaming the Government? Good question, but I just want to say, that while I criticize; while I complain, I think it is my duty as a professional to help my country wherever I could, because I am an Independent Senator and if that assistance has to go through a particular ministry without any political interference, I have done it before and I will do it again.

Mr. Vice-President, thank you very much.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Prof. Deosaran, just to answer you. Just like you, the Vice-President of the Senate has not received any tickets for the football match, fortunately or unfortunately. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*] Who is the President, here? Go ahead, Senator.

Sen. Wesley George: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President and thank you Sen. Rahman for giving way. Week after week, Tuesday after Tuesday, we on this side, at least I sit and listen—what I have expected to be the contributions on the other side, Members of the Opposition in particular—to some of the instructive comments from intelligent speakers, because I know that there are intelligent people in the Opposition, very intelligent, very seasoned people in the business. However, I must say, I come today; I come Tuesday after Tuesday to hear about a lot of, plenty, many, and a lot of emotive words that I am not too sure what they are supposed to mean; out of context; out of relevance; and in the language of my time, out of timing as well.

So, I had actually decided to take my time, let it go on and just ease myself into the debate, but I feel somewhat compelled to bring some order—

Hon. Senators: Order! [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*]

Sen. W. George: —to try as much as I can to bring some integrity to the debate. [*Desk thumping*] Earlier today, we heard Sen. Mark in his contribution; he made some statements and Sen. Sharma as well, made some statements. I would just like to point them out. Sen. Mark said that few are benefiting—notice the words, "few are benefiting"—from all the wealth. Come “sky bait” at this level and talking about few. Squandermania, reckless spending, all right; pools of poverty in Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Mark: You agree with that.

Sen. W. George: The ultimate government talking about pool—you all going and deal with pools of poverty, right. What kind of budget you all plan to carve out of a pool— How are you all going to feed plenty people? And the only figure

he gave was \$250 billion over a two-year period and on top of that, a shining light, then he just threw mud in and said, they did not do anything to show for that. Nothing to show for that! [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*]

Well, I do not know. I am not too sure, let me help out Sen. Mark just a little. [*Crosstalk*] Let us bring some numbers into this; some facts to this. What have we done with \$250 billion over the past six years? Well, for one, when we came in 2002, unemployment was 10 per cent; at present unemployment is under 5 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] Tertiary level education in 2002, 25,000 students enrolling, today, more than 60,000 young people have access to tertiary level education. Numbers, "eh," not few or plenty. What do you call that? That is what, few? "That is little bit?" Much as a pool? That is a pool? In 2002, 385 houses, that is UNC type of performance; today, 26,000 homes. [*Desk thumping*] Let me put that in another form for you. Under the UNC, you all would have built .17 home per day in your time; that is not even a whole house. [*Laughter*] Today, our rate of building homes is 11 homes per day. [*Desk thumping*] That is what? Few? That is much? That is what, performance beat "ol' talk". [*Desk thumping*] "How ah doing?" I am just bringing some figures; he did not know; he wanted to know.

In addition to that, 2002, you would have required a 10 per cent down payment for a mortgage, today once you are making under \$8,000 a month, you do not have to pay any down payment and there is an interest rate of 2 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] The only place you can find affordable homes offered is by the HDC, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Even if you are making \$12,000 a month, you cannot afford a home, but this Government has seen it fit to provide houses.

As a matter of fact, Sen. Sharma made a wide statement saying that what—I had to write it down—"PNM policies lacking vision". What I want to know is exactly what is UNC's vision for housing? Let me tell what is the UNC vision, if it had a vision. UNC vision for housing was, "Gih dem land; let dem squat; let dem thief current; they doh need plumbing, road, infrastructure; right, just gih dem it." [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Mark: "Thief" is a good word. You all are a bunch of thieves across there.

Sen. W. George: What is that? What do you call you all?

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, Sen. Mark. [*Crosstalk*] I think you should retract that statement.

Sen. Mark: You allow him to say "thief"

Mr. Vice-President: He said it in the context of "they are tiefing current". You are calling Members on that side—

Sen. Mark: "I said PNM, I didn't say no Member."

Mr. Vice-President: You said Members on the other side are thieves. Could you retract that statement? Could you retract that statement?

Sen. Mark: I did not stand on my legs. [*Crosstalk*] I did not make any statement.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark!

Sen. Mark: I cannot withdraw something—

Mr. Vice-President: It is recorded.

Sen. Mark: No, no, no, *Hansard* would not record that.

Mr. Vice-President: Could you withdraw that statement?

Sen. Mark: No, I did not stand on my legs. [*Crosstalk*] I was not speaking; it is crosstalk.

Mr. Vice-President: Could you withdraw the crosstalk, then. [*Laughter*] Sen. Mark, I would like you to withdraw the statement, whether it is crosstalk or whether you were on your feet. Could you please withdraw the statement.

Sen. Mark: So you want me to withdraw that they are thieves?

Mr. Vice-President: Yes.

Sen. Mark: All right, they are not thieves. I withdraw.

Mr. Vice-President: Thank you.

Sen. Mark: Now, you could ask him to withdraw—

Hon. Senators: We do not have to ask him, he will do it. That is how we operate. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. W. George: Mr. Vice-President, the statement was made in the context of, there was no infrastructure put in place, so therefore those persons living in those UNC housing settlements had to resort to getting it by any means. However, I would retract my statement that they were thieves. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senators: Decency, decency, decency.

Sen. Mark: Integrity! [*Laughter*]

Hon. Senators: Integrity!

Sen. W. George: I am here to learn; I am here to learn. You began, where did the money go, \$250 million; nothing to show for it according to Mr. Mark, sorry, Sen. Mark.

Sen. Mark: Sen. Mark for you.

Sen. W. George: King? Should I say king? However, 69,000 new streetlights installed.

Sen. Rahman: Who supplied the poles? [*Laughter*]

Sen. Mark: Who supplied the poles? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. W. George: Let us continue. We do nothing for the poor, not so? We do not care about poor people in Trinidad and Tobago. This Government does not care, according to you all. No facts, no figures; what do you all mean by that? I am not sure. However, public assistance grant in 2002 at UNC, \$320; PNM today, \$650; let me continue. Minimum wage then, \$7 an hour; today, \$10 an hour. [*Desk thumping*] Personal allowances then, \$25,000; today, \$60,000. [*Desk thumping*] Poverty rate then under UNC, 35 per cent, and let me say, figures, PNM today, 17 per cent and dropping [*Desk thumping*] Numbers, figures, facts, studies, information, not emotive language. This is not theatre; this is not the Muppet Show, pull the curtains tonight; no, this is serious business, come with some facts; modern Google reports. We have the information here, I will send one of this for you all. Vision pathway to the future. Senior Citizens Grant then, \$1,000 a month; today, \$1,650. [*Desk thumping*] Where the money went? [*Crosstalk*] That is where it went. Disability grant then, ceiling income, \$3,000—

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, nothing is wrong with the little bantering but you are going on as a running commentary. The Senator is on his feet, could you refrain from the running commentary.

Sen. Mark: "He talking so hard." [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

7.00 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, nothing is wrong with the little bantering but you are going on as a running commentary. The Senator is on his feet could you refrain from the running comments.

Sen. Mark: But you were talking Chinese, anyway. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, I am trying to hear the contribution.

Sen. W. George: The facts annoying you, Senator? Sen. Mark, are the facts annoying you? [*Laughter*]

Disability grant, then, ceiling limit: \$3,600 now, today, \$12,000. That is where the money went. CDAP is where the money went; now serving 500,000 people. [*Desk thumping*] Facts are what should inform this debate. Facts, not emotive language! Sen. Sharma made a statement that the economy will collapse when or if the GDP drops, because, what she is alluding to is, of course, the oil would not be there forever—

Sen. Sharma: Point of clarification. I just want to clarify—I did not say that. I was quoting from the former Sen. Mary King in an article that she wrote in the *Daily Express*.

Hon. Senator: Worst person to quote from. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Sharma: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. W. George: Well, all right. No need to shake it off, Sen. Sharma, I mean nothing is wrong with the statement, it is a valid concern. It is a valid concern. However, we have to put things in a particular context because the other side is of the view that we are wasting and squandering money and Sen. Mark alluded to the fact that we are not subsidizing the poor, we are not doing anything for the poor, we are only focusing on a small few, our friends, subsidizing big businesses and so on. However, they are not seeing the big picture, because we are guided by, again, a vision of developed nation status in the year 2020. Developing a nation holistically.

Sen. Mark: Words.

Sen. W. George: Developing a nation means that all facets must be developed at the same time and all elements of the economy all filter in, intermix, intertwine into each other. Yes, at this point in time our economy is mainly based on oil and gas revenues. However, we are aware, this Government is also aware that it will not always be the case.

Sen. Dr. Charles: But it is increasingly so.

Sen. W. George: No, this will not always be the case. No, it is not so at all. This Government has sought to put measures in place to make a transition—and I will break it down very simple—to convert the oil and gas resources into human resource. There is very significant evidence to show this. One such tool of doing this is UTT, another tool for doing this is free tertiary education which seeks to take the oil and gas reserves, put it into a system that would allow for the people

to be developed. The people would now be value added, go out and contribute to the economy in other ways diversifying the economy, diversifying the economic base of the country over an extended period of time. Not only that, this Government has also expressed its planned intention to go into manufacturing, expand the manufacturing industry, and if I were to throw into the mix there, the whole idea of the smelter plants.

Now, everyone tends to focus on the smelter. However, what very little discussion is put around the economic strategies behind that. There is a \$30 billion per annum aluminium market presently existing in the world today—\$30 billion. I am not sure, and to me that is common sense, we have natural gas, we have a particular resource, does it not make sense to convert some of this resource into a form that could position us to access—

Sen. Mark: Is it \$30 million?

Sen. W. George:—a \$30-plus billion world market? To me that makes good economic sense in the long run. Diversifying the economy. Academy for the Performing Arts, the Film Company, all these are initiatives designed to harness the human capital that we are presently developing in Trinidad and Tobago.

Now there is a lot of talk about Caroni, agriculture and this and that, but really and truly, where are you going to put 40,000 or 50,000 people coming out of university, are you going to put them to cut cane? Does that make sense? I am not going and none of my friends are going to cut cane with a degree or masters. That is where we are heading now. You cannot get a job in Trinidad and Tobago without a masters, you cannot even get an interview without a degree. You want to send them to do what, plant yam? That is UNC's vision.

Sen. Rahman: You have to live and eat, you know. [*Inaudible*] [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Mark: Save it on yourself. I think the man is a disaster.

Sen. W. George: That is your plan for the young people, send them back to the cane? [*Crosstalk*] Wastage and squandermania was the theme and will continue to be the theme for the Opposition. I can stand here and say, well, Sen. Rahman is going to stand and talk about, wastage and squandermania. Sen. Dr. Nanan is going to stand and talk about wastage and squandermania. But let us put what we have before us in context. They say that this Appropriation Bill is an absolute waste of time. Government is just wasting money, well let us see what the Government is wasting

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money on: Pensions and gratuity, that is the document here—the Opposition spread plenty pensions and gratuity, wastage; recurrent expenditure, what does that say:

“The sum of \$23 million was included in the 2008 Estimates to meet the payment of contract gratuities to technical and professional officers. However, a large portion was used to settle outstanding payments for previous years. As at April 30, 2008 the allocation was fully utilized. It is estimated that an additional \$8.7 million would be required to meet obligations to the end of the year.”

According to the Opposition, these payments to these people are a waste of money. What else?

“Relocation of Squatters—\$20, 000,000

provision of an additional sum of \$42,267,560 in 2008 midterm review of the PSIP to meet expenditure to be incurred as a result of the increase from 280 to 699 in the number of squatter households to be relocated;

the inclusion of three additional squatter sites at Mon Kojo, Mon Repos, Maraj Lands, Marabella and M2 Ring Road Golconda; and

for the payment of compensation to squatters for the value of their properties

The sum of \$20 million is required.”

Waste! Wastage of expenditure, according to the Opposition, those are not worth spending on. A waste of Government, of the people's money according—

Sen. Mark: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. W. George: Well, that is what you all said. Wastage, not so? Wastage! I am just reading out what wastage looks like:

“Telephones: Due to the thrust in the computerization of primary schools it is imperative that Internet access should also be made available to students. Additional funds are required for Internet charges—\$2,250,000.”

They are not worth it, according to the UNC alternative government.

Cardiovascular services, the number one cause of death in Trinidad and Tobago, heart disease. Cardiovascular services, not worth it. Squandermania, does not make sense, no sense investing in that. Diabetes services initiative, \$9 million. We are ranking in the top five or something like that per capita in the world for diabetes, but the \$9,140,000 we are asking to invest in a programme to curb this

does not make sense and it is wasting public funds. Useless spending, according to the UNC government, they are not worth it. What are you spending on them for? What are you spending on that for? No, give handouts to people. Scholarships: full pay study leave for teacher,—did Sen. Sharma not stand and say that it is tough for teachers, do you know how much tools and support are given to teachers or something like that—\$36 million for scholarships for teachers, full pay leave. According to you all, that is a waste of funds. Not so? A waste of public funds!

Additional scholarships based on A level programme: Increased funding is needed to meet outstanding scholarship expenses for tuition fees,—

Hon. Senator: You cannot read. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. W. George:—personal maintenance, books allowances, special equipment and warm clothing. A total of 240 scholarships were awarded in October 2007 requiring an additional \$26, 041,000. According to the Opposition, they are not worth it. Squandermania! Wastage of funds on our scholars. We are wasting funds on them. What are you spending money behind them for? Why, not so?

Sen. Mark: Summarize.

Sen. W. George: You hold on. [*Crosstalk*] We are going through. You held this document up and saying, squandermania, wastage of funds. [*Sen. W. George holds up document*] I am simply itemizing what we are wasting the money on.

Sen. Manning: That is how you sound, that is how you look. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Mark: But he is off. [*Sen. Mark motions a sign to show that the Senator is mad*] [*Laughter*]

Sen. Browne: Look in the mirror, Wade. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. W. George: Mr. Vice-President, these sums are really to continue to improve the lives of our citizens at the end of the day—

Sen. Mark: Mariano, I do not appreciate that, you are like David Rudder. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Browne: Look in the mirror and see what you see.

Sen. W. George:—especially development of our young people. [*Crosstalk*] Really, one has to wonder what is the real objective; what is the real motive behind the Opposition's contribution when they say “squandermania”? [*Crosstalk*] When they stand here and use all these emotive words, make these non-factual statements about our Government's investment in the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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One has to really wonder what is their real motive. I can speak to the motive of those on this side. Our motive is to ensure that each citizen of Trinidad and Tobago can attain the highest standard of living this country can afford in the shortest space of time. In so doing, I stand to support this Bill that will allow us to continue to do so.

Mr. Vice-President: Just let me take the opportunity, hon. Senators, to congratulate Sen. George on his maiden speech. [*Desk thumping*]

7.15 p.m.

Sen. Mohammed Faisal Rahman: Mr. Vice-President, I rise to add my piece to this Bill. I always like also to add my own congratulations to Senators making their maiden speeches, even when they have been so totally misfocused and misunderstanding of what has occurred. [*Crosstalk*]

I would like to explain to the good ladies and gentlemen on the other side, that nobody here has ever said—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Vice-President: Senators on the other side.

Sen. M. F. Rahman: I beg your pardon, Sir, Senators on both sides. [*Laughter*]

Nobody here has suggested that it was a waste of funds when it was properly spent. This pertains to our good Sen. Lezama as well, and Sen. Prof. Deosaran also made the point; perhaps, you were not paying attention. Discussing this Finance Bill, since it is a money Bill, we cannot do a thing about it. You know that; it is a fait accompli; it is a waste of time to discuss this. Sen. Prof. Deosaran made the point that in these circumstances we have to squeeze every ounce of benefit that we could get out of this discussion. You may find that in normal circumstances much of what is said today would have been deemed irrelevant, but it is relevant to the circumstances of this Bill.

Your contribution, Sen. Wesley George and Sen. Lezama's contribution, as passionate as they were, were totally misplaced. I am so sorry to tell you. [*Laughter*] I will take the road of Sen. Prof. Deosaran. While tying it into this Bill, even though we can do nothing about the allocations, I would attempt to show that this Bill itself demonstrates the inability of the Government to plan, to budget, to manage, to prioritize, and even to foresee recurrent expenditure.

Recurrent expenditure, by definition, is something that recurs annually. Yet you find that although it is something you are supposed to be familiar with, we often repeatedly have to be faced with supplementing recurrent expenditure. Does

the Government know its left hand from its right? Does it understand anything? This Bill also has to be examined in the context of the Government's perception of money. This is my particular concern, because here we have the Government returning for what appears to be important funding, when, having been awash in money, they were incapable of budgeting properly, and then we hear the amazing claim that, "We get so much ah money extra, what yuh expect we to do; we have to spend it." These boots are meant for walking; this money is meant for spending.

No, no, no no; when you become possessed of a windfall, you do not blow it. You have children and grandchildren, further generations to come in this nation. You have to provide in a better way. Am I making sense, Sen. George? I am so sorry for those who do not understand the simple—

It is symptomatic of the Government, represented by one of its Ministers in the Ministry of Finance, that he cannot understand frugality and savings. Is it not amazing that the voice raising that says he cannot understand, is our good friend, Sen. the Hon. Browne's. To tell you the truth, I am not surprised, because it is this goodly Senator who said that we have the money so we could spend it and buy a jet. This is the disgraceful situation that we are faced with here to contend with.

We have to get up here, be faced with a Bill that we cannot do even squat about, and be reconciled to the atrocities that are being foisted upon the nation by the extravagance and blind spending of this Government.

This Government has taken the vision of one gentleman and is running with it like mad. Even a new crop, a new Cabinet, has become brainwashed into acceptance. I do not know if this is from self-service that they so blindly support everything that comes. But then our young brother, the Senator, who has just gone I do not know where—I suggested that we put speakers in the washroom, but they have not been done. I hope he could hear what is being said.

We have a situation where we have a mindset that we can do anything we want, because the money is there. We have a situation where there is a lack of responsibility. There is no fiscal responsibility. In those circumstances, there is no discharge of fiduciary trust. Whatever comes into the national coffers, the national purse, is there for the spending.

We have a very bad situation here. We are developing a heritage fund, but at every turn we are matching it with a growing national debt. At the end of the day, the balance sheet is going to be almost zero. What are we going to do at the end of the day?

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There is a story in the Holy Bible about a young man who asked his father for his share of the inheritance. The father loves him and so he gives it to him. Then he takes that share and goes and spends it in a hedonistic way: in pleasures and worldly things. After it is all spent, he returns to the father. The father re-embraces him and gives him more. The story is about the prodigal son.

The Lord God gave this nation a lot of blessings. He has given us natural resources, but they are finite. This Government is behaving in a prodigal way with the wealth of the nation. When you are spending the wealth of the nation in concrete and steel buildings and you are disregarding the street children and criminality that is growing, you are thinking you are doing good, but the fabric of the society is crumbling.

We are not here merely to oppose; we are not here merely to criticize. We have to show that we know what we are talking about, if we are to be accepted in the national community as a bona fide alternative government. It is self-serving for us to be responsible. We have to be responsible when we criticize you.

When we have young persons getting up and charging into us with all sorts of wild accusations, you may have misunderstood. We are talking about a Bill that we can do nothing about. I am trying to address the mindset of the Government to the national patrimony. Do you know that in Alaska every citizen, even the newest born baby, at a certain date, gets a cheque as its part of the national patrimony from the money made from the exploration and usage of the oil resources which the country has?

Here we look upon the citizens as parasites upon the Government. We look upon the citizens as if they are freeloading on what rightfully belongs to the Government side, because they want to buy jets; they want to build palaces; they want to put up fancy towers, and, "These people are bothering us for proper pensions; they are bothering us for proper roads."

Sen. Prof. Deosaran was trying very hard to make a very important point. This is a point that I have been trying to develop myself for a very long time. [Laughter] We have been placed in a pressure pot by this Government. The lid has been closed and the pressure is building. And you want to know why diabetes is increasing in incidence; you want to know why we have criminality; you want to know why we have murder, mayhem, rape, domestic violence and suicides.

Mr. Vice-President, we have to understand that the people simply are crumbling; we cannot cope with the pressures. If the Government does not address these aspects of the national society, no amount of fancy buildings would

save you from the storm when it hits. It is going to be something awful. Hungry men are angry men. Until we could look into the social genesis of these problems, we are going to be multiplying them. This is something that Sen. Prof. Deosaran has highlighted here. I am happy that a prior UNC government saw the wisdom of inviting him to develop those aspects of the society. Does the present administration pay heed to these things? Does it pay heed to these little things that would ease the pressures of the people? The Government is going along with its vision and development.

We are not saying that everything the Government does is wrong. Sen. Dr. Charles always says that even the PNM has to do some things right; it follows. We got a nice packet of seeds this afternoon; thank you very much whoever sent it; I might start my kitchen garden. If I took that packet of seeds and throw it in the yard, some of it might grow. It is not the right way to plant seeds, but some of it would catch; some of it would grow. When you have this tremendous amount of money flowing through the country, some of it would end up doing good.

But this country is being crucified. Do you know why? We have money flowing through like water and we have blood flowing in the same way. Do you know the biblical analogy, the biblical reference to blood and water flowing out of the body? This country is being crucified.

Upon our nation which has been blessed with so many good resources and blessings by Almighty God, there has been sent upon us plagues of poverty, crime and neglect. One wonders whether we have not been saddled with our own Pharaoh that this has come about, at this particular time. What has caused these plagues to descend upon the land? The Pharaoh did not listen to the cry of Moses and let the people free. The calls to pay heed to the needs of the people here in Trinidad and Tobago are not being heeded.

7.30 p.m.

We have people who have been contributing to their individual pension funds expecting to augment the old age pension they had expected to get and when they arrive at the age of retirement, they are told that such and such is reduced because there is a ceiling of \$2,500. So it is a disincentive to contribute to your own pension and to provide for yourself.

When we say that you are increasing the premiums of the NIS contributions, and we say that the Government is borrowing from the National Insurance Board (NIB), we are told vehemently no, it is not so. The NIB only buys Government bonds like everybody else but you know what? The Government floats bonds to

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get money to fund its projects and when the NIB takes a whopping amount of money and puts it to the Government, it is in fact funding the Government.

Even in this attempt at—well it is not an attempt, it is a fait accompli—of debt servicing \$46 billion, RBTT was awarded a mandate to issue fixed rate notes on behalf of the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (Nipdec) in the sum of \$286,252,764 to finance projects under the Ministry of National Security construction programme. What does that mean?

It means that when the National Insurance Board buys those fixed rate notes they are helping to finance it. We are not saying it is wrong, or a bad thing to do, but when you benefit from the national insurance investment and cause them to have a drop in their own returns and you say the public employer and employee have to make up the shortfall for what the Government did, I ask: Why can the Government in conscience not contribute a little to that same National Insurance Scheme? They are not going to feel it.

This very voluminous document [*holds up document*] tells us about patronage, extravagance, dissipation and all of the other words the young Senator did not like to hear being thrown at the Government, profligate spending; this tells us about patronage on a grand scale. This is the answer to one of the questions that Sen. Mark had raised and there is scandal in these pages which I would not go into. This tells us that the Government spends and comes back and reallocates for itself and comes here for us to ratify and we cannot say anything about it. This is where we are. This is what we are here to do today and these are the ounces of light we are trying to shed upon this matter and the entire aspect of Government finance. We tend to get red herrings in explanations.

Sen. Browne: Sen. Rahman, on a point of order.

Sen. M. F. Rahman: Did you say on a point of order, Sir?

Sen. Browne: On a point of clarification.

Sen. M. F. Rahman: No, no I am sorry; I am not giving way for clarification. I am very sorry, Sir, I must deny you. Your clarifications obfuscate, they do not clarify. To be fair to you, Sir, I have enjoyed your interpolations from time to time, but—[*Interruption*] Of course, I got to be wrong, I cannot be making sense. What I am saying cannot be correct, it is a lot of made-up stories; as my friend Sen. George was saying, we are talking nonsense. Just as how he thought we are saying that they are spending in a bad way, we are talking nonsense because we are not making sense.

Mr. Vice-President, this Government came here today and brought this allocation and when Sen. Browne was reading from this Heads of expenditure and amount of increase, I was not able to keep track of some of what he was reading out and then I realized I was looking at another sheet which was passed to me very officially. Actually I got two. In the second one I got a note that said: "Please be advised that this Bill replaces the one that was previously circulated." Within a few days, the Ministry of Finance has reallocated its reallocations and reviewed its figures in very serious ways and when he was reading he read from the prior one and I was totally confused because I got a prior one, then a corrected one, and today I got a copy of the corrected one again saying that this is the corrected one, and then I was presented with the prior one.

Let me make the point that the prior one gives Heads of expenditure to be increased to a total of \$4.166 billion; this one is \$3.90 billion. Since we cannot do anything about it, we will go with whichever one the Government chooses to go with, but it does seem that we are going with the \$4.166 billion one. I do not know how we had that mixed up, but if this is symptomatic of how the Government really budgets or looks after finance, just grabs and pulls and shuffles—they are playing shuffleboard with finance I suppose, or pulling it out of a hat—then we are in more serious trouble than I had imagined. This is not a professional way for the Ministry of Finance to present figures for ratification because at the end of the day, if we are inclined to vote in favour of the Bill, we would not know which one we are saying yes to. There is a bit of shambles in that by itself.

It is very clear that the Government is very poor at budgeting, it cannot budget from one week to the next, it cannot forecast from one week to the next, it is changing its figures overnight. You will describe that as expenditure by "vaps" and when I say so, I am reminded of the \$500 million that is never mentioned but is floating around somewhere. I rather suspect that it was very carefully premeditated and made to appear to be a Caribbean Airlines initiative, either way. It is either premeditated, stupidity, or expenditure by "vaps" because \$500 million which the Government had—according to the Minister in the Ministry of Finance we have the money and we can spend it, and we will buy the jet and things like that.

The point I am making here is that we have fiscal irresponsibility. The Government does not understand about prioritizing; yes, you have done quite a few things along the way, but you must look into those things that you have not been doing that we are going at some length to tell you to look at. It is necessary to look in the areas that Sen. Prof. Deosaran has mentioned, and to look in the direction of the areas that we are trying to highlight.

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You have to look after your street children with all the successes. It is said that Rome was not built in a day, but it was burnt in a night and you can spend years developing your buildings and prettying up your place, and at the end of day when 2010 comes—because we are working in 20-year intervals; 1970, 1990, the next “red letter year” is 2010 which is just two years from now. If the food pressures, the shortages pressures and the poverty levels are not eased, if we do not look after these things and are intent upon looking after the buildings that are going up in Port of Spain, come 2010, I will take a few months vacation out of this country because I would not want to be around when the stuff hits the fan. It is going to be tough.

Talking about those tall buildings, one of the questions that has been asked the Minister of National Security by Sen. Mark was what has the fire service done to prepare to handle fires and what sort of equipment they have brought into these buildings, and we were treated to a long list of inbuilt, predesigned, preinstalled equipment that are self-contained in the buildings that the Government has constructed. When Sen. Mark asked about the equipment that the fire service has acquired, the Minister of National Security was terribly affronted because he felt—but you know something, nothing in the building has been provided by the fire service except it has a share in the building and they own those fire-fighting sprinkler systems and so forth.

When it was suggested that they examine the possibility of a heliport and helicopters taking people from the top of the building, the hon. Minister of National Security said that is something worth looking at. I think it went in his ear and came out the other one. The fact of the matter is that suggestions, observations and questions from this side are not taken on, sometimes we are given the assurance that yes—[*Interruption*] Well, we are not seeing anything emanating from the suggestions made from this side. Sometimes there is so much laughter that comes from that side when we make a serious point that it is almost as if you want to ridicule the good that comes out of this side, when, in reality, you should understand that we are in one Senate and are trying to help each other.

I do not know if I am coming across as insincere, wicked, and a total anti-Government UNC man. Maybe I am coming across like that because your perspective is skewed. My first concern is for the people of this country and that coincides with the concern of my party, hence I am on this side. Had I been recognized by the Government and I were there, Mr. Vice-President, I would have resigned because there is too much that is going on under the present administration that the neophytes and the pristine new hearts that have entered the

arena of politics seem to have tuned out of and they are only concerned with talking about the prudent Government—which we have shown again and again is far from prudent; the caring Government, far from caring; and the Independent Senator supports the view when he made his point.

I am waiting for the day when more Members will do like Dr. Rowley and say enough is enough, we cannot put up with this anymore, you can keep your government, elect somebody else from the other side to lead your party, but stop supporting the leader, right or wrong.

The leader comes with a plan in his back pocket to go the way of the commission of enquiry, he allows a lady whom I admire very much to put up a solid defence of the joint select committee. I was in front of the television watching the contribution and I really felt for the good Minister and I know I cannot expect any change from the other side in the present circumstances. Everybody is looking out for himself and then the Prime Minister announces that now I can see where the commission of enquiry is a justified way to go and still we have people wondering why the commission of enquiry is the better way to go.

7.45 p.m.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran mentioned that you need to reformulate the joint select committee. The joint select committee has the potential of being more effective, but not at the present time, as it is formulated and constituted and, worst of all, appointed with an equal number of Government Members on one side and Independents and Opposition on the other. That is gridlock; not only gridlock, but twisting of arms. Because the next thing you know, the Independents Senators on the joint select committee will receive a memo telling them which way to move and what they can say. I do not know from whom that originated, but the person sending the note is the one who will be embarrassed.

Our Prime Minister knows very well that with the forensic capability of the commission of enquiry, even when the report is prepared, completed and compiled, as the Scott Drug Report, it may end up being not as effective as we had hoped. But public opinion and public pressure will force the Government to move in a particular direction. No commission of enquiry that turns up fraud and corruption in the mega projects will find that the DPP or the Integrity Commission will stay silent. The train of events would have been ignited and you will find a consequence to the commission of enquiry.

When Commissioner Mustill and his tribunal sat, do you think that the Government could have proceeded other than with what the Mustill Report

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indicated? With the force of public opinion and the free press, even though the Government had then threatened to stop advertising in the press, the press could not go against the tide of justice and truth.

Even with the limitations of the commission of enquiry, our Prime Minister knows, in his heart and conscience, that that is the way to go. Fate seems to be on the side of our country. The very seemingly biased appointee has decided that he cannot accept the appointment. One wonders if he was ever consulted in the first place because the night the Prime Minister gave the announcement claiming to have the mandate of his Government to do it, there would have been very little time for him to have discussed it with the gentleman. However, let us take the gentleman at his word and say he did discuss with the appointee the question of his taking the job.

I believe that the karma of this country is for our benefit. Somebody above has taken a hand and now the Prime Minister is looking at bringing in a head to the commissioners to look into this enquiry. Three cheers and thank God! As has been said elsewhere, the Government is continuously provoking the people. When Sen. Prof. Deosaran mentioned that people were doing things to confront the Government and the police, I was very glad that he pointed out that it is the duty of the Government in the first place to foresee these circumstances and to circumvent them by proper governance.

What has come out here today is that there is no proper governance. Yes, there is a lot of money. You are putting up buildings and doing some of the things that Sen. George reiterated and all the nice areas in which they are spending, but this tells you that a lot of the money that goes to the ministries will find itself in the wrong pockets and that patronage is still alive and well in this country. There was a protest at Dorata Street, Laventille, PNM territory. I heard a gentleman, Jamal Shabaaz, complaining that year after year they have been supporting this Government—he is not the only one I heard say it from the heart of Laventille—and this is how they treat them.

There is something called the Stockholm Syndrome. I believe that our Prime Minister is a wise and intelligent man. The Stockholm Syndrome says that if you violate people under your control enough, they will begin to sympathize with you and to defend you. It is a known syndrome. People who have been kidnapped end up thanking and praising their kidnappers and speaking well of them. I believe with all sincerity that the abused and battered people of this country, especially in the strongholds of the PNM, are suffering from a form of Stockholm Syndrome. They are now sympathetic to the Government and, even though they are being

deprived and abused and shown every unkindness, they still support the Government. They are PNM until they die. That is a mental situation because they cannot escape it.

When we criticize this Bill today, it is not to take the Government to task for the good it contains, but to bewail the fact that all our pleadings and tears will not wash out one single plan of the Government to move the country forward to its own vision of 2020. This country has been committed to materialism in a flagrant way and we are losing our soul. I must say that the Prime Minister was very astute. He has brought people into finance who share his view of how to employ money in governance, and while they articulate words that are good—whenever I hear the Prime Minister talk about the rights of people and what is good for them, I wonder if I am hearing right and if it is the same man who implements such programmes that go so totally against the interests of the people. It is almost as if he has a Jekyll and Hyde personality. Dr. Jekyll wants good for the people and speaks so well when in front of the people. However, when he hides away in his chamber, another directive comes out. We find a most peculiar support is given to people who are universally perceived as being well placed to rampage with corruption in the mega projects entrusted to them.

We have an ongoing situation. There is another thing that the Prime Minister has done. Instead of making this commission of enquiry focus on the concerns of the national community with regard to UDeCott and its excesses, our Prime Minister, for reasons that are very clear to those who do not like what he is doing, has brought under the umbrella, all sorts of varied, digressive objectives to be able to arrive at a universal truth for this whole nation that will make the commission of enquiry sit for about five years and become totally irrelevant in the scheme of things.

If the Prime Minister—I am saying this here today because I have been assured that cognizance is taken of what we say—really would like to recover some of his lost ground—he has been losing ground badly; he may not perceive it; maybe he has an elevator to raise him as fast as the ground is being pulled from under his feet. He has been losing ground within his own party.

I should not have to do an examination of the party malaise, but it is public knowledge and the voices of dissent are being heard. Everybody knows what is going on in the party; it is public knowledge. We have a valley and a row and one rowing in the valley and it is a lot of trouble. But the political scientists and commentators who write are shoring up the hopes of the present administration by down-playing the effectiveness of any challenge.

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Let us come back to what I was recommending. If the Prime Minister does not recognize what I have just said about the threat to his position and to his party, he is in for trouble. If he pays some regard, then he has the biggest solution to the majority of his current problems. It is to come clean with the commission of enquiry. Appoint a properly constituted commission of enquiry to investigate and either vindicate the innocent or condemn the guilty. Put that commission of enquiry on a strong footing, with a credible tribunal, with proper focuses and proper support; with the forensic expertise required. Let the joint select committee that he so loves look into the local contractor matters and reconstitute it if he wants. However, if he wants to regain ground and have people say he really intended to do right, let him pay cognizance to a valid, properly constituted and effective commission of enquiry and he will find that we will have the ground taken from under our feet, unless the commission of enquiry really unearths the scandal that everybody believes is there. Even Dr. Rowley has promised to resign from politics and go forever, if there is no corruption. If there is no corruption, the whole country will laugh at us.

It is a win-win situation for the Prime Minister. All he has to do is go the route the whole country is calling for, appoint the commission of enquiry in the proper way and he will even have the press and everybody off his back for the next year while the commission of enquiry functions. Then we will see where the chips fall. He will either have been exonerated as a Prime Minister and be free to do almost anything he wants—Who can oppose him after that?—or he may find himself having to account for his lack of foresight and having placed too much trust in men. Place not your trust in princes. It is the placing of his trust in men, even despite the history of the PNM and the UNC and the history of politicians all over the world, that you will find that there is corruption here and there. Try to contain it. If he goes that route and appoints a proper commission of enquiry, he has a wonderful chance to step out of the morass and perhaps get that executive presidency he so much desires. Hopefully, if he is exonerated, he will be a good executive president.

Let me see if I have anything left after all of that. I know it is very hard. The truth shall set you free. This is very stimulating, Mr. Vice-President. One of the things I am always asked by my friends is: How are you enjoying it in the Senate?

8.00 p.m.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. M. F. Rahman: Much obliged to all concerned. I do appreciate the opportunity. I did not think that I would have spoken for so long. I have several points that I had left out. If you notice, for the last 45 minutes, I was speaking without reference to my notes. When I get warmed on a subject and the ideas start to flow, they come. When you are a little lukewarm you have to refer to your notes. There were some things that I did not attend to and I would like to do so now.

One of the very fundamental concerns of the Government these days, was raised by Sen. Ramkhelawan. He quoted a figure, but I do not know how correct that was. He stated that quite a few billion dollars would come into the Trinidad and Tobago economy. He spoke very shortly of the banking system and the sale of RBTT to the Royal Bank of Canada. The concern is that this is going to heat up the economy and that it would cause problems. The Government is thinking of ways. I am sure they are working overtime to figure out a nice plan to soak up this liquidity.

In my scripture—If you have noticed, I have quoted a lot of Christian scriptures today. Permit me to quote from my own: In my book, God says: “Why do you say that which you do not do.” and “Odious it is in the sight of God that you say that which you do not do.”

Here is the Government concerned about RBTT funds coming into Trinidad and Tobago and yet we have a Minister, not anyone present here, saying: “We get all this money and what do you expect us to do? We have to spend it.” [*Interruption*] The Minister of Works and Transport, Hon. Colm Imbert, very openly, in the other place, said: “We get all this money. What do you expect us to do? You want us to put all and save it?” No, no that is ridiculous. We have to spend. It is almost as if, upon hearing and seeing money, the Government Minister starts to salivate: How can we spend this? How can we spend this? It is a very comical thing. Oh my goodness gracious me.

Here we have a very competent Governor of the Central Bank, Mr. Ewart Williams, who has been talking to the wind. The Government is on a binge. Its extravagance is affecting the economy. It is spending too much too fast.

Just imagine, we want to attain a vision, so we give our people stopgap/ “make-wuk” employment to bring down the figure of unemployment to 5 per cent as claimed. I do not know how true that is, but we are bringing thousands of

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foreign workers to do the job that our labourers and people could have done, if we had decided not to be so filled with vaunting ambitions to alter the skyline in a given time.

Mr. Ewart Williams has been saying again and again that the Government should review its spending. The Government wants everybody to review their spending, but the Government is not concerned about what it does with its own spending.

We have a \$3.9 billion/\$4 billion, whichever figure is correct—I would have to call both—supplementary appropriation, because the Government finds: “Look, we have to find a way to spend this blinking money. We have too much money.” Oh Lord, it is almost like a comedy or cartoon, money, money, money. He goes crazy. He wants to know what to do. Goodness, gracious me. It is really very funny when you think about it. They are not paying attention to the fallout of this obsession with spending. It is a very serious situation. If the Governor of the Central Bank does not know what he is talking about, my God, I do not know who we would listen to.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Dookeran.

Sen. M. F. Rahman: I would not listen to him either. It is interesting that the Government has money for everything. It does not care about the inflation that its own spending is causing, and yet they view subsidies as a crime. Subsidies? Nah, nah, nah, cut out the subsidies. The funny thing is that they have said that the price of oil is a two-edged sword; the more the price of oil goes up, the bigger the subsidy we have to pay.

I would like somebody to explain to me what they could possibly hope to achieve by pulling that kind of stunt. When the price of oil goes up, the Government makes more money. The price of oil goes up and the Government makes more money. We are not doing like Alaska and giving everybody a little share. When we make all this money, we say on the world benchmark for oil and gasoline, gasoline should be a lot more in Trinidad: “All yuh people getting away with too much. We have to pay weself back some of the money that we have made.” Oh Lord, it is so convoluted. I do not expect anybody to follow this because it is not “followable”. It is a mantra to be able to justify the idea that subsidies are a bad thing; we have to get rid of them. We have been told at one stage that subsidies for petroleum have to go.

Recently, we have been hearing—“we have not made a decision. On the last day, in the other place, I was very pleased to hear Minister Imbert say that the

price of fuel going up will affect everything and that the cost of living will go up. I do not know if this good cooperation that exists in the Cabinet, does not filter around and is shared with all the Members of the Cabinet. We heard one Minister say: “ Nah, nah if we remove the subsidies it will not affect anything substantially. The cost of living will not go up.” Minister Imbert, if you check the *Hansard* on the last occasion, acknowledged very clearly that fuel price going up will “catspradle” a whole lot of things and that there is going to be a domino effect.

We on this side are repeatedly being charged with all sorts of awful things, but it is our duty to show up the errors in the ways of the Government. When we “gallery” and get on here, we do so either to our benefit or to our loss. If we present a spectacle of ourselves, you should be happy, because the people would laugh at us. The fact of the matter is that the concern on the Government’s side arises from the efficiency and the pointedness of the contributions of this side.

I am happy to say publicly that the Independent Senators that we have, can truly be called independent. My kudos and congratulations to all of you, because we have stopped a terrible train in its tracks. It is not the first time that the Government has been made to stop in its track.

In recent times there was the one about the commission of enquiry. There is some uncertainty in the minds of some, as to the greater benefit of a commission of enquiry yet, out of an abundance of caution, they have decided to exercise their independence and make it clear. The Prime Minister got the message very clearly: I cannot rely on the Independents to man this joint select committee.

That was not the only one. Better sense prevailed in the question of the reduction of the joint select committees. I must pay a direct acknowledgment to Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith and Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries for their exercise of judgment, when it was made clear to us that the Government will not pursue the reduction. It was not only from the force of argument on the Opposition side, even though, thank God, all of us contributed very meaningfully on that matter; it was the resolve of the Independents as well. This is not to suggest any linkage between the Independents and ourselves. It just so happens that their thinking coincided with ours. Do you know why? It is because the thinking was correct. There is the saying that wise men think alike. I know the corollary to that—hold on—but wise men think alike and I do not think anybody would dare to call anyone on the Independent side, fool.

On this occasion, I think that we were all thinking along the correct lines and this is why there was a commonality of thought and purpose when the objection

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was made to the concept of reducing the joint select committees. Of course, there have been other instances like the Caribbean Airlines fiasco. I want to state very clearly that if the Government makes a mistake and tries to reestablish its right to fund another executive jet, it is going to tip the scale again. I know the Government is thinking that they still have it in their plans. We have been told that they have not given up the idea. I want to sound a note of warning and this is very serious. "We eh taking dat so." I am talking on behalf of the country. You cannot display this sort of fiscal irresponsibility and come and claim a divine right to preside over the dissipation of the patrimony of this country.

When we spend the money of the country foolishly and extravagantly, we would have frittered away the monetized resource that God gave us on the earth. We might as well go back to flaring gas and keeping the oil wells shut, because the money that we earn from the resources that were given, belongs to the people and it is for the benefit of the people.

Every time you spend a dollar in concrete and steel that is unnecessary. Former Sen. Mary King, whom you on that side do not like very much said: "You are putting that money into non-productive sectors. You are not regenerating the wealth and that is not a good thing." Every time you spend a dollar in concrete and steel to put up a building that was not necessary with such a grandiose design and skill, you are reducing your capacity to buy necessities at a later stage down the line.

None of what I am saying is technical, mysterious, highfalutin or highly intellectual. We are talking simple common sense. That is my approach to most of the matters. You have to look at the ultimate good of the people. You have to be concerned, not with what makes the Government and nation look good in the eyes of the nations of the world, but with what is good for your people, from your newborn to your very old. In this country, we are destroying the young and allowing them to fall through the cracks and go down the drains. We are abusing our older people and depriving them.

I would not look at my notes anymore, lest I see something else to be raised. I know that would cause a lot of consternation on the other side, but they would find solace in the fact that my time has ended.

I thank you.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is now 8.14 p.m. We would take the dinner break and we will resume at 9. o'clock. The sitting is now suspended.

8.14 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

9.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. Dana Seetahal SC: Mr. Vice-President, I have five points to make. It may not be in five minutes, but it would not be much longer than that. The first is under Head 21, the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment, the establishment of the Tucker Valley farms.

Mr. Vice-President, it was announced in the last budget that the Government would establish about 10 100-acre farms. I am sure Senators on the Government Bench would remember that. It was said in the budget speech that we would have “rolling hills in the country and tall buildings in the city”, which I thought was very poetic. I would have thought, in the same vein, in the last budget, we would have had this financial provision. So, if you are envisaging rolling hills and, at least, 10 100-acre farms, I would imagine that this should have been there in the Budget. I find it very shortsighted of the Government to only now move to establish one of these super farms.

My other concern in relation to that is that farmers in this country, especially small farmers, for too long have been deprived of proper roads. I think I raised this matter a couple months ago, and I pointed out that roads in the area where I have a little piece of land—nothing like a 100-acre farm, but a little 19 acres or so—the roads are horrible. That is in the cocoa, citrus and bananas areas; traditional crops that grow together as many of us would know. You cannot move within the area because of the poor roads. Vehicles get damaged and you cannot get to sell your produce.

As an aside, the Cocoa and Coffee Board is not functioning as it should. I do not know if the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is aware of this. We used to be able to sell cocoa to the Cocoa and Coffee Board. Wet cocoa, for those who do not know what wet cocoa is, it is the one you have not danced on—the one that you have not put out in the sun to dry—and now it is very difficult to do that.

Connected to that is that I saw \$8.6 million for the farms. I was told that by the end of this year, 50 per cent would be in operation, so that means that it is 4.3. However, these farms, one would imagine would be provided with adequate labour and water. Do you know that in most of Tamana you do not have running water? I am using that as one example, because I know about it. So, if you want small farmers to prosper, why can we not have running water?

In 2000, you would remember we had the slogan “water for all” by 2000, and this was under the UNC government, and now we have this talk of “water for almost all” by this year. I wrote to the Government and asked that if there is going to be water

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for all, why can we not have it? I received a letter from Mr. Hanoomansingh—he was something in WASA—which told me something about self-help projects and so forth.

You are in a village where people are struggling to sell their oranges and so forth—people’s oranges are also being stolen—and they are trying to make ends meet. Do you know how they make ends meet? It is by having a 10 days. So, imagine farmers with any dignity, having to make a 10 days. So, you are going to be “self-helping” and trying to get water! People live far apart, 15—20 acres, so it is ridiculous.

So, while the super farms are going to have all of these things—water, labour—the small farmers would not and they would be at a disadvantage. I want the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to look into that matter. You are depriving these people of earning a dignified livelihood from agriculture and really prospering.

They are going to have these super farms, and I have no doubt if they can work to provide food for the economy, it will be a great idea. I want to thank the Minister for these seeds and my colleague Sen. Annisette who gave me his packet of seeds. So, I am going to grow two sets on both sides to see which one is more effective and which one produces better. The point is that this is a good thing. People can do that in their backyard garden and they can do it with a small piece of land. To me, this is more effective and would be of longer value than those super farms in improving agriculture in this country.

The next point is Head 22, Ministry of National Security. At page 11, I noted that there is under what is called “contract employment”—payments to contract officers employed as police support officers, victim and witness support officers and crime analysts and investigator assistants.

Mr. Vice-President, for a very long time we have been talking about victim and witness support officers. I am glad to see that there is provision in the budget for that, and also for police support officers—I wonder whether the Minister of National Security, through the Minister in the Ministry of Finance can tell us whether this means that those officers would be provided for traumatized officers. That is the police support officers.

There have been recommendations for officers who have been shot at and who have had to do shooting and have fallen by the wayside. They are victims of different things. We have some police officers here who are on duty and who can tell us about that. So, therefore, they would probably know of the need for police support officers. Are we speaking of those? Are the witness and support officers functioning? We really need to have them.

If we are to make a dent on what is happening with witnesses who are reluctant to come forward—I think a lot of witnesses who are reluctant to come forward, especially in terms of murders, are persons who are connected to crime itself. When there are gang shootings and gang killings, 10 to 1, those persons are involved with the gangs. I would like to know more about the victim and witness support officers. It is a small item in the Bill. To me, it is one of the more important things, and only \$5 million for all of this, including crime analysts and investigator assistants. I know what investigator assistants are, but I would like to know whether they are under the guise of police officers or civilian investigators.

Moving on to my third point, this is on page 21, and it is under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. I see a provision for additional funding of \$150 million to meet increased cost of staff, salaries, facility operations, maintenance, overseas travel negotiations and so on of UTT.

Now, I have no problem at all with any government asking for expenditure for a tertiary institution, in particular, a university created by the State. I believe that tertiary education should be available to all those who are qualified, and it is for the Government to make that provision. However, my information is that the qualification for admission to UTT is being relaxed to the extent that persons who do not have five O levels are being allowed entry into that university if they are provided the remedial classes.

Now, a university is a different thing from an institution like COSTAATT that is offering halfway programmes—associates. It is different from other institutions. A university, one expects that if it has to maintain standards, persons who are being admitted to that university must meet certain standards. If you want to provide tertiary education and maintain that more persons are being offered this, then you need to lift the standard elsewhere, but not reduce admission standards at the university to the extent that UTT appears to be doing it. That is not to say that if persons have their five O levels that they cannot go to UTT. If they seem likely to be able to meet the standard, offer them a year to meet A level standard, and then depending on what they are going to do, they may be able to move on to a degree.

Mr. Vice-President, if it is that what is happening now is a further reduction—I am told from very good sources, persons who are employed at UTT and by one who is a campus coordinator—that is the current plan. I would like to have a response on that. If that is so, it would be a sad thing. You cannot force this on persons who are not qualified for tertiary education.

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In the same way, I believe that the Government was making a point when in the debate, the Senator, who is not a Minister, was saying that some time ago, when the UNC decided there would be secondary education for all, they were not considering whether people had reached that level, and they just opened up the field, so to speak, and it was not done properly.

In the same way that you are talking about education for all, people who do not meet the standard—it is like saying that you want a police officer and anybody who come you are going to make them one. No, you must have qualifications. The qualifications to be a police officer are high, it might be higher than the standard that you are asking for people going to UTT. So, it would be ridiculous if we were to allow that to happen.

My fourth point is under Head 54, and I am dealing particularly with OJT. I see that there is a provision for \$45 million. Now, I have no doubt that the OJT programme serves a useful purpose in this country, as does HYPE and many other programmes. However, my problem is that if this is suggesting that we have no unemployment problem in this country, it is misleading. I am going to tell you why it is misleading.

Somebody said here, I think it was Sen. Wesley George, that you cannot get a job without a masters. That means that there is a recognition that if you have a bachelor's degree you cannot get a job. Now, if we had full unemployment, would that make sense? It means that if you had a bachelor's degree, you should be able to get a job. So, there is a contradiction. People are underemployed. You have a masters, but you can only get a job as an OJT, and OJT is not a real job. It goes on for two six-month sessions and then you go out in the world and you have to try and make do. I can tell you that.

I have a niece who got a government scholarship and the scholarship was to do veterinary science. She is a vet now. Although she was supposed to be placed because she was on a scholarship, she could not be placed because there were no jobs. So, she went and worked as an OJT for two sessions. Imagine after studying for five years and having met the high standard—you do not get admitted to do veterinary sciences just like that—she has to do something other than that. She is finished with OJT. She was paid \$4,000 a month and then it went to \$5,000. That is what she was paid. Is that not underemployment? Yet the figures are going to show that we have full employment.

I am not sitting here and just jumping up to criticize the Government and to say that you are talking nonsense and that we do not have full employment. Sen. George was right when he said that you cannot get a job if you do not have a

masters. That is an implicit recognition that it is difficult for persons who have qualified at a university and who have training otherwise in the real fields to get proper jobs. There are a lot of “jobs” like OJT, MuST, HYPE and all kinds of things where you would get a stipend which is a small payment. Those are not real jobs. Those are not persons who have been given proper employment.

I can also tell you that a lot of persons who are graduating this year as lawyers would be going into different government departments as OJTs. Sometimes it lasts for a period of a year or two. There are persons presently in the Solicitor General’s Department who have been employed over a year as paralegals. They are lawyers and they cannot get jobs unless they go out into the world and get into private practice, and they would never be self-employed. OJT is not full employment, it is underemployment. You have that throughout the service.

The Government may say that it has the OJT, and are helping people to get training, and that is good if you are calling it “training”. It is training so that you could be prepared for a job eventually. And some people may get taken on permanently. When you use those figures as statistics showing that people have full employment, it is wrong. It gives the wrong impression. It is a kind of laid-back job, because if people stay in these paralegal jobs and as OJTs there is no real push for the institution to create new jobs.

Do you know that there are persons who are Clerk I and Clerk II—and in interviewing some people recently I realized it—and are acting as Administrative Officers and so on, because for some reason there is a dead public service in some way, that is there is no creation of posts. I dare say plenty people in the Parliament here do not have the jobs that they should have. So, as a result, you have a ricochet effect down. So, this is something that we seriously need to look at and concern ourselves with.

9.15 p.m.

This OJT and all of those HYPE and MuST which are programmes in their own right, have something good about it and can benefit people but should not be used instead of the jobs.

My final point is this. This is not just a Supplemental Appropriation Bill, it is appropriation and variation and on the last page of this, page 24, there is a reference; this is the document we were given, the variation of the appropriation. And by the way there is an "o" left out, so it is not "apprrpriation" it is "appropriation". There are a lot of typos in this document, Minister in the Ministry of Finance, through you, Mr. Vice-President, and there is a big typo in terms of the figures.

Sen. Dr. Saith: An OJT typed it.

Sen. D. Seetahal SC: We were given a document, which was to substitute—as my colleague made clear—the figures, and it did not substitute the colleague’s. Do not blame it on the public servants. The person who is ultimately responsible is the Minister of Finance, as he knows and having been in the private sector, I know he will know that and take full responsibility. [*Desk thumping*]

But having made that point though, if we are varying the allocations we need to understand clearly what we are doing. It states here, and the Minister stated himself, that this reflects the reassignment of ministerial responsibilities. So, when we talk about, for example, a movement of \$175 million from the Ministry of Public Administration, to the Ministry of Information, we recognize that it is no longer the Ministry of Public Administration and Information, so that is fine. You talk about the Ministry of Public Utilities, \$387 million, and there is movement consequentially to the Ministry of Works and Transport, \$252 million. I imagine that has something to do with URP and CEPEP.

There are a couple of other things; we talk about Housing to Planning and Development. Although if it is the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment now, it should be called that in the Head of expenditure; but that is another issue. One thing that is missing however, there is an increase of \$117,937,000 in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources; there is nothing to tell us what it represents. I would love if it represents some expenditure for small farmers, but the Minister of Finance said nothing about it and as far as I know there is no renaming of that ministry; no reassignment of that ministry. So when the time comes I wish you will tell us; \$117.9 million, and if it has not been spent yet, what is it going to be spent on; I would like to know.

Finally, no one has mentioned it yet, but somewhere I am sure in this entire presentation that we have here, we could fit in what I want to ask; maybe it is under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. There have been recent thefts of copper in this country. As I said, it is not under any Heads there, but no doubt this is a mini budget so it could fit under anything.

I would like to know if anyone can tell me on the Government side or anyone, perhaps the Minister of National Security, what is the attraction? Why suddenly do we have this? We do not make copper in Trinidad and Tobago. Do they sell it? Do they make bracelets with it? What is the big thing? I have been doing some work on a building and I was told you have to protect your copper. I have never heard in my life about having to be told I have to put burglar proofing over

your air condition and your this and that to protect your copper. I think the wider community would like to know because it sounds very weird that all of a sudden we have people stealing copper to the extent that every week you have Movie Towne closing down and this one and that one—the other day it was St. Vincent Street. What is the deal with this copper all of a sudden? Enlighten me.

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President.

Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight: I thank you, Mr. Vice-President. First of all, let me too, join Sen. Seetahal SC in thanking the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources for our little goody bags. [*Desk thumping*]

I rise at this hour not to abuse people's patience but to share a few thoughts, particularly in view of the fact that I think within the civil service right now they would be engaging in the budget process for 2008/2009. I am pained to note that it appears that the availability of resources is encouraging the entrenchment of some undesirable practices.

Throughout this document, there is mention in most of the ministries of funds being required, and I recall the Minister in introducing the Bill, saying that this is meant to deal with urgent and critical expenditure. Now I agree that a lot of this is urgent and critical, but I can see in very few places, except for items of expenditure for Tobago where they require funds because their work has been accelerated and therefore they need appropriations to proceed with the jobs.

I would like to congratulate the administration in Tobago, because this is a very unusual request in my experience. Now, usually it is that funds have not been provided. We have this in the Office of the Prime Minister; in the Ministry of Finance and recurring at regular intervals. I recall that budgeting is a process and in order to do estimates there is supposed to be a programme of work or a plan for the period that the estimates are supposed to cover.

I cannot understand how any right-thinking public servant can produce estimates that would not include “outstanding payments”. We have an example of this from the Ministry of Education, and throughout the document.

If you have “outstanding payments”, it is a debt and it is the first call on your resources. In many instances where I see “no funds”, I assume they were really requiring additional funds. because I am convinced that there is no way the Ministry of National Security will vire funds at the end of a budget period because the money was not required for increased salaries, and allowances and not make any arrangements for those funds in the coming year. So, I assume this is just a mistake in the compilation of the document.

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Apart from the fact that there are areas of such omissions, I move to the next link in the process of budgeting, that is the analysis of the estimates that would result in the budget figures that are appropriated. It seems as though the experience that I had more than 10 years ago is still happening today. You find people request allocations, estimates of \$78,000 for a particular project, but they are allocated \$25 million. Now, I wish to suggest, Mr. Vice-President, through you, to the appropriate government officers, that these practices must stop. It must be recognized that when a budget is agreed upon, this is the money that you are expected to live within for the year.

There were times when there would have been no thought of anything but variation because there was no additional money to get from any place. God forbid those times may come again. Why are we perpetuating these bad habits? It is either that a programme or a project is accepted to be executed or it is not. But where is the sense in agreeing on an IT project that costs \$78 million and within six months, you have to come and request the additional \$58 million because you were only given a sum that was patently not enough? Your budget analysts must understand what is required when they go to discuss appropriations with the various ministries.

Mr. Vice-President, I looked particularly at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which still happens to be close to my heart, because I spent a lot of my life there, and I see that they are getting additional appropriations for things that I know some people will consider exotic: overseas travel for Heads of Missions and families.

I want to say to this Senate and to the public at large, that according to the Foreign Service Regulations, every foreign service officer who is transferred abroad is entitled to a return passage once every three years. And I know from personal experience that for decades now, foreign service officers have not been able to get their travel grants because money was not available. This is a commitment; if you cannot honour this commitment change the regulation with the agreement of the officers. But when I come here and I note that a request is being made for \$1.2 million, specifically for Heads of Missions, who come home once a year and I see nothing here for the officers who are supposed to come home once every three years, I wonder who is caring about whom and why is it that no appropriation is made for them.

I also notice that there is a lot of money for repairing buildings and chanceries. The only question I would ask here is, do these buildings and chanceries belong to us? Because I know we have a habit of renting places and

spending more money than the cost of the place in repairing it just to make it habitable. Now, I am totally in favour of officers working in comfortable, sanitary conditions, but if we are going to be repairing and refurbishing buildings, make sure that those buildings are ours.

I note that heads of missions have to be accommodated in hotels while repairs are being undertaken.

9.30 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, I hope that this is not an absolutely correct representation of the situation, because what sense does it make to establish a mission, send a Head of Mission, who in many cases may not be—I think in terms of Cuba, Costa Rica and Uganda, these would probably be either civil servants or probably foreign service officers who may be able to cope. But I hope this is not a practice to send a Head of Mission to oversee repairs to a mission and work out of a hotel in the meanwhile. What sort of picture are we trying to establish out there? Does this project us as sane people? No. I think something has gone wrong in the last 10 years if this is what is going on over there.

Let me say that I am happy to see that certain of the residences that I know are being looked after. I see there is an allocation of \$2 million for the Consul General's residence in New York. The original allocation was \$3 million. Mr. Vice-President, I would like to suggest that when last I saw this place, which must have been about 15 years ago, at that point it needed about US \$1 million worth of refurbishment; 15 years on, 15 winters on, do not be surprised if you have to come back to ask for a little more money for that.

Now, there is another thing that has bothered me and it is the fact that there are regulations that employers are supposed to, shall we say, honour, and one of them is the payments to the NIB for employees. I notice with great concern that particularly in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government, in some of the corporations, money is being appropriated to pay “interests and penalties” to the NIB. Is this an example that we would want the private sector to follow? Is this how we plan to increase the income of the NIB? I wish to suggest that this is totally, absolutely unacceptable.

When estimates are being prepared the officers may not be aware of impending increases in the NIB, but this does not say anything about paying increases. There are some ministries where it is stated that the appropriation requested is for the purpose of paying increased dues. This is interests and penalties! Not good enough! What if an officer who retires turns up at the NIB to

get their rightful moneys to find that, hello, you are in arrears? No. And whereas an officer may be at fault, there is someone who is supposed to be supervising. Nothing leaves the ministry before it goes to the permanent secretary who has a duty to ensure that certain things are done. And then it hits the Minister, I cannot understand how a Minister could bring something like this without a word of explanation, because it must jump out at you that you are being lawless. [*Desk thumping*] You are literally overseeing infringement of the law. I hope that with this new budget cycle these things are corrected.

It is not the first time since I have been here—and I have only been here a couple meetings—that I have had to make some of these very comments, comments on how estimates are not properly prepared, and it is not a new occurrence, it has been going on for years. There are things that we must stop. We must change! We must do better!

Now, I would like to state, however, that I do not quite agree with some of my colleagues who took issue with the subsidy for gasoline. I will tell you why. It is the only subsidy that is universally recognized in this country as an attempt on the part of the Government to share the oil revenues with the country. [*Desk thumping*] Now, all of us agree that it is a tax on the economy, but so is free education, so is CDAP, and I assure you that even though the benefits of both of these are more far reaching, if you ask any man or woman in the street: “So what do you get out of the petro dollars?” The first thing that would come to mind is gasoline. Do you know why? Everybody has cable, and you see on cable, people rioting, people protesting, in First World countries; today, BBC in England, truck drivers. When I saw it I thought it was the priority bus route. [*Laughter*] Wall to wall cars, buses, trucks, they are protesting gasoline prices, because a pound is now what? Almost \$12, and it is £2-plus a gallon for gasoline there. So, people here are aware, regardless of what they might tell you from time to time, they are aware that this is a subsidy and this is something they understand almost as a right.

Saying that, now I was fairly good at maths and when I multiplied 190 by 12, I did not come up with the figure that we have here, so I am giving the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries my word that when he comes for the next supplementary for this he has my support.

Now, there is another thing that I wondered about, I understand the need for us in Trinidad and Tobago to do everything in our power to support Caricom, but when I note that a special window is being opened under the Caricom Petroleum Fund for the OECs, I ask myself: Are we not inviting the sort of invidious

problems that we already face by flaunting this petroleum in people's faces? Why do I say that? Not because I do not think that we should do it, but there is something called the Regional Development Fund in Caricom. The hon. Minister of Health is not here today, but he would have been able to correct me. [*Minister indicates he is in another seat*]

Oh, he is disappearing. [*Laughter*] You see, Mr. Vice-President, he is trying to fool me. [*Laughter*] Now, if there is a Regional Development Fund, why must we create a window in a Petroleum Fund for infrastructure that should be covered under the Development Fund? This is a bad precedent. I am not saying, do not appropriate the money, I am saying put it in the regional fund and let them access it through those mechanisms.

I also note that another one of my pet projects, the National Steel Symphony has taken advantage of the laxity in budgeting and revised its budget. Even though I personally do not find the G pan any sweeter than the old one, I will not object to this, but please, I would wish the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs to decide how much money the symphony needs for the year and request that amount. I would plead with the Ministry of Finance to humour the steel pan lovers and give them the amount that they need.

With those few comments, in view of the hour. I thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, for the opportunity to contribute to this Bill before us, the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2008.

Two Senators who spoke this afternoon, Sen. Mark and Sen. Prof. Deosaran, have identified “level of comfort and happiness” as important indicators of developed country status. They have identified this level of comfort and happiness in the population as important, if not more important than the traditional economic indicators. Really, what comfort is it for ordinary people, members of this society to know that we have \$10 billion in our Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, to know that we are rated A+ by Standard and Poor’s, to know that our GDP has “doubled”, as they like to say and so on? What comfort is that to any ordinary citizen when you also know that you are at risk of being murdered, literally, in your beds as you sleep in the night in Trinidad and Tobago. This has happened; a couple of days ago, a young couple was murdered in their beds with their children in the house and so on. So, where is the comfort? Where is the happiness?

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9.45 p.m.

These economic figures do not bring happiness and comfort to a population; that is what this Government has to understand. One of the major questions that Sen. Mark asked when he made his contribution was: What does our country have to show for an expenditure of over \$250 billion? A mind-boggling amount when you consider that we are a small country of 1.2 million people.

Sen. George went through the whole Bill before us and itemized, as the PNM likes to do, all the things they have spent money on. The mistake he made was that he left out the “comfort factor”. All the moneys that were spent have not brought the happiness and comfort that our people crave. Where is the comfort in the health sector, for example? I was listening to a radio programme recently when a lady called in one morning. She was literally crying blood, because she related to the host that her 19-year-old expired in her arms at the San Fernando General Hospital, while she was there begging for a doctor, for somebody to help her daughter who was suffering from asthma. That young girl died in her mother's arms. The mother was totally traumatized. Where is the comfort and happiness?

Yet have spent billions on health care in this country. Health has gotten a sizeable portion of the budget every year. Where is the comfort in education? Where is the happiness in education, when mothers in this country know that they send their children to school, and while they are at work or at home doing chores, they could get a call to say that their son has been stabbed and died, a 15-year-old child? You do not expect that. He was not in a Carnival fete; he was not in Soca Monarch; he was in his uniform on the way to school and was stabbed and killed.

That is where we have reached in the education system; where all this violence is spilling over into the schools, because the communities have been left to the control of gangs, drug barons and drug lords. It spills over naturally into the schools. We said that so many times, so many years ago. They have sowed the wind and we are reaping the whirlwind today. Where is the comfort when you go to the grocery and mothers are bawling like 40 Tarzans? Somebody told me the other day that she was in a grocery when she heard somebody bawl out loudly, as if in pain. When she looked around, it was coming from a woman who literally was traumatized at the fact that she could not afford to buy anything to carry home for her family. Persons are actually and literally bawling out in the supermarkets in pain.

Where is the comfort in the Government's handling of crime? We have reached the stage where we are literally terrorized every morning. When we have to send our children and grandchildren to school, we do not know if we would see them again.

This issue of pointing out and extolling the amount of money that was spent means nothing to ordinary people. It might mean something to the class that you have bolstered and the class that you have transferred a lot of wealth to, through all kinds of nefarious means. It might mean a lot to the bogus companies that have been set up overnight to milk the Treasury, but it means nothing to ordinary people.

When Sen. George spoke about “then and now”, with all the theatrics he brought to complete his contribution, if he were honest and had brought some integrity into it, he would have made the point that we did what we did when oil was \$9 and \$10 a barrel. Oil has reached a high of \$135 a barrel this week. If he had brought some integrity to his contribution, he would have also mentioned that little fact.

We transformed this economy to the point where we were described as the economic tigers of the Caribbean. When Sen. George mentioned that they brought the unemployment rate from 10 to 5 per cent, Sen. Seetahal SC dealt very comprehensively with that bogus figure and the underemployment it implies. I would not even bother to go into that.

If he had brought some integrity into his contribution, he would have said that we met an unemployment rate of 16 per cent when we came into office in 1995. In the time that we were there we were able to bring that unemployment rate down to 10 per cent; and we were moving very rapidly to bring it into single digits. When you talk about integrity, come straight; do not give us half the story.

We were able to keep inflation at an average of 4 per cent. Where is the benefit of that? The benefit of that is in the comfort factor, again, because you had a very low inflation rate. Mr. Vice-President, 4 per cent is still high. When the European countries talk about inflation, they do not like to talk about more than 2 per cent. They consider more than 2 per cent a very high rate of inflation. We were able, given all the constraints, to keep it at an average of 4 per cent.

The benefit of that was the comfort factor; persons on fixed incomes, pensioners and so on, felt comfortable. They did not see their meagre income eroded every time they went to the grocery, having to buy less and less food, and having to cut back on their budgets. The issue of having to take care of young children was made more comfortable. We ensured their happiness and comfort by keeping the cost of living at a reasonable level. Prices did not rise in terms of food; persons were able to live comfortably and with a degree of happiness. That is what the whole thing is about. If you are not doing that, you are not doing

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anything. All the big buildings and mega projects do not mean anything to ordinary people, if we are afraid, terrorized or if we cannot buy food and if we have no hope for a better life in this country.

The UNC achieved this astounding development in a short time, because we had to go right back to square one, with oil at \$9 and \$10 a barrel. We had developed the infrastructure in this country. We had to go back to square one and do all the things that they neglected to do, over 30 years before, including having all the money of an oil boom, which passed through the country like a dose of salts.

We had to start from scratch to build bridges, roads, access roads for farmers, to introduce rural transport for ordinary people to get around. We had to revamp the health care system and start to really provide health care for the population of this country.

The UNC had a vision even then, to prepare young persons for jobs for which we knew, as we went along developing the economy, they would be able to develop themselves, to take up these higher paying jobs in the industrial sector. That is why the UNC, very early in our first term, established the National Skills Training Centre. We established the Technology Centre, because even then we had the vision that you had to train young people to be able to take up better jobs and higher paying jobs.

As opposed to this elitist Government, presiding over an elitist educational system for over 50 years, where you discard thousands of children on to the streets, when they are 11 and 12 years old, and you take away any hope of a proper future for them, and a proper standard of living, any comfort or happiness in their lives, we are proud of our track record.

In contrast to what we did, in terms of setting up the institutions to train our young people, so that they could come into higher paying jobs, this Government is telling the population that we have to develop this country. They are saying that, but what they are actually telling the population is, "We have to develop this country in spite of the people, without the people; we are going to develop the country and leave the people behind." This is what is happening.

We have embarked on a so-called development programme that has nothing to do with the comfort, happiness and employment of people here in Trinidad. The Prime Minister makes no bones about it. He is very clear about it and he has nothing to apologize for, as far as he is concerned. That is what development is about: To bring in 1,500 Chinese in La Brea to build Alutrint. All those young persons who were expecting jobs are going to be sadly disappointed, because everything is coming in ready made.

We have a situation in this country where Sen. Lezama and Sen. George, instead of extolling the virtues of a dying organization, they should be horrified that in this country you have mothers who are collecting CXC certificates posthumously, for their dead 16-year-old sons. This is what the hon. Senators should be concerned about, because they are young people, and their future is in this country too.

You cannot sit and extol the virtues of an organization that is presiding over the death of all your peers. We have a situation where young men in this country are writing CXC exams nursing stab wounds. What kind of society do we live in? The young people should sit up and take notice; this is their country; this is their future.

On this side we are saying that it is hypocrisy on the part of this Government to say to the people of this country, of La Brea, Sobo or Vessigny Village or Square Deal, that development means Alutrint. Alutrint will bring development to the communities. They are railroading hundreds of residents out of their houses and little properties that they have built up with their sweat, blood and tears over the years. They have their little gardens, their subsistence agriculture, and so on. They have a life and a lifestyle. They are railroading these residents out of their communities and houses, and putting them in little dolly houses that the Housing Development Corporation (HDC) say are houses.

When they price the HDC houses, and they price the houses that the residents actually live in at present, there is a price difference, you have to pay a mortgage. You have to pay the difference. A lot of these people are pensioners; they are no longer working; they are subsisting on pensioners' incomes, little farming and so on. How is that development? How have they developed? How do you justify that as development to the people of La Brea and Square Deal?

It is wicked and cynical to talk to the young people about development and jobs. You boasted that it was your 50th anniversary last year. You totally ignored the rural areas for decades. This Government never placed one single technical or vocational institute in the rural areas. In fact, when we came and brought the revolution in education, we started to put secondary schools in all the different rural districts, they said that we were building schools for "douens" and parrots. That is the level of disrespect they have for the rural communities.

They never cared about the young people in La Brea. They were left to rot in La Brea. They were left to leave school at 10 and 11 years and be at the mercy of the drug lords. Now that you want to take their homes, lands and their community

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to bring in your foreign accomplices here, to impose a dirty industry on the people of La Brea, you tell them that this will bring development. What development would it bring?

How do you classify development, when you want to impose a dirty industry in the middle of their communities that is going to emit tonnes of toxic gases every year, the hydrogen fluorides and the cyanides that would affect these people? How is that development?

10.00 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, you know what they are telling them? The big development selling point is that Alutrint will have sport clubs and give some football gear. The level of disrespect that this Government has for ordinary people is unimaginable, unfathomable.

This Government has abandoned any form or semblance of planning, it has refused to bring the National Physical Development Plan to Parliament in spite of promising to do so in its post-Caroni (1975) Limited Comprehensive and Integrated Development Plan which was in 2005 and said by 2006 it would bring the National Physical Development Plan to encompass all the things it plans to do—like the change of land use in this country—and up to now it has not brought it.

Do you know that they plan to develop the south-west peninsula through NEC? So NEC is now the big “sawatee” in development in this country, it has superseded the Town and Country Planning Division, the Minister and everybody because they have documents saying that NEC has a master plan for the development of the south-west peninsula.

Mr. Vice-President, they talk about development and I want to know how cutting down hundreds of hectares of forest is development. I want to know how destroying the flora and fauna which are found only in that part of the country is development. When you destroy the Vessigny Dam, pollute the Vessigny River and destroy the Vessigny Beach, how is that development? Somebody needs to explain that to me.

When you mutilate and destroy hundreds of acres of mangrove which contribute to the spawning ground of the fisheries industry in the south-west peninsula, when you jeopardize the livelihood of hundreds of fishermen in the south-west peninsula, when you create social chaos and unemployment and you exacerbate homelessness and poverty, when you increase the risk to the population, how is that development?

Mr. Vice-President, I have a newspaper report from the *Trinidad Guardian* Tuesday, May 20, 2008 and it outlines the problems. The headline says: “Spawning grounds facing extinction” and it says:

“One of the few remaining spawning grounds for the mullet will be destroyed, if the National Energy Corporation (NEC) continues to construct the proposed port extension and the Essar Steel Mill.”

This was said by Dr. Wayne Kublalsingh during an interview. It says:

“The abundance of mullet, particularly in the first six months of the year, the relative ease of capture and the closeness of the mullet to the shore make this fish very affordable.”

So what they are doing here is in effect, jeopardizing the food security of the population who depend on relatively cheap source of fish because as you know, fish has become almost a delicacy in this country, it is very expensive.

“President of the Claxton Bay Fishermen’s Association, Kishore Boodram, said fishermen supplied thousands of pounds of mullet to Venezuela...and local exporters.

Boodram said he alone supplied 230,000 pounds of mullet to a Seafood Export Company between January, 2006, and March, 2008, and that a small company in the Claxton Bay fishing facility made salt fish from mullet.”

Look at the sort of industry, enterprise and earnings of foreign exchange that you are going to wantonly destroy and say that is development. We in this country understand that that is not sustainable development; that is really under-development. Walter Rodney wrote a book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*; our story is, “How the PNM administration is underdeveloping Trinidad and Tobago”.

Mr. Vice-President, another selling point they gave to these young people in La Brea is that they will get jobs and it is very far from the truth. They are misleading the young people of La Brea because while they are telling them they will get jobs, 1,500 Chinese workers are on their way to work on that project, and we are not even going to get spin-off industries from that project in the area because everything is coming in ready-made in containers.

For example, a newsletter by the anti-smelter group has indicated to us that the ships from China for Alutrinit include in their packing list—which is available at the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), anybody can go and look at it—everything for the project. Workers’ camps fully equipped, cement, gravel,

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steel construction machinery, fittings, instruments and smelter equipment. So there are not going to be any spin-offs, and local contractors and suppliers are not going to benefit from that project because everything is coming straight from China, and this is development. How can this be development when the young people are not going to get any jobs? They are not trained for it.

Mr. Vice-President, the EIA said that the young men of La Brea, because of the educational policies of this Government, are not trained and would not be able to access any of the jobs in this so-called development project. The philosophy then of this Government is that it is hell-bent on so-called “developing” this country without the participation of or benefit to the majority of our people.

I quote the *Daily Express* of Thursday, May 01, 2008 and it is headlined: “The Prime Minister warns soaring food prices could bring instability”. Surprise, surprise! In 2008, the Prime Minister has now found out that and I will come to that point later on. What the Prime Minister has said with respect to development is that the “partnership between the Government and the private sector must rise to the occasion if the nation is to surmount the challenges that are before us”.

Mr. Vice-President, I do not have the exact quote that I want, where Mr. Manning said in the development process when he brings in the Chinese companies they will come with everything and, therefore, it will not affect inflation in the domestic market. That was the point he was making. That the domestic market would not be affected because there would be no pull and demand and, therefore, the level of inflation will not be affected. So this is the philosophy of this Government which leaves its people completely out of the development process which is perpetrating a crisis of social chaos, loss of hope, comfort and happiness among the population in this country.

Mr. Vice-President, we have a situation where food prices are escalating as Senators mentioned this afternoon, the contribution of agriculture to GDP is half of 1 per cent and this Government has a certain approach to the development of agriculture and in the article I quoted a minute ago, Mr. Manning is quoted as saying that the rising cost of food was a problem for all citizens and he said that the “consumer must exercise greater discipline and discretion”. He also said that the Government had already established 7,000 new farms from the lands of the former Caroni (1975) Limited where food production has started and we are in the process of establishing 17 large megafarms of no less than 100 acres each and we are inviting the participation of the “private sector”.

I want to know what the Government's definition of the private sector is, because over the years we have had farmers in this country producing food under the most difficult circumstances. We have had local small farmers being the backbone of agriculture production in this country and all of a sudden we are hearing about the private sector and the small farmers who had been the backbone of agricultural production in this country in all the areas, North, South, East and West who have produced all the fruits and vegetables that we consume, are they not from the private sector? So what is this talk about "private sector" all of a sudden when we are talking about the development of agriculture?

Sen. Piggott: Thanks, Madam Senator, for giving way, but I have been on the record as Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources as saying that the small farmer has given yeoman service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and, indeed, they are the backbone of the agricultural sector of Trinidad and Tobago and they have formed the core of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago over the years and I salute them.

I have said that in Arima, Plum Mitan, Sangre Grande and I have said it in this Parliament. So I want to make it abundantly clear and reiterate that the small farmer has continued to put food on the table and support this country's agricultural thrust. What the commercial farmers are going to be doing is supplementing that.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Mr. Vice-President, everybody knows talk is cheap. I can give you an example; all the talk you talk about small farmers being the backbone, so your saying their being the backbone does not make any difference I agree with. The fact is they are the backbone.

For example, in Chatham this Government was planning—until the people stood up and they backed off a bit, we have no confidence that the status quo would stay—to cut down thousands of acres of land in Chatham to put a smelter plant together with Alcoa. There are hundreds of farmers in Chatham who have been on those lands eking out an existence with agricultural production, but they were never supplied with water, the infrastructure they need, like the access roads, they never got lights or the infrastructure they need to really produce food. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources was always there, but what is even worse is that now the ministry is moving to terminate the leases of those farmers who unfortunately, when their leases run out, the Ministry is not going to renew them and they are repossessing those lands and expropriating the farmers so that they could have the lands available for smelter industries and so forth, and maybe the megafarms; the big international conglomerates which would come in and set up these huge farms and export food out of this country.

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Mr. Vice-President, I was making the point that the Prime Minister himself said that the Government has already established 7,000 new farms from the lands of former Caroni (1975) Limited where food production has started and is in the process of establishing 17 large farms no less than 100 acres. This Government has already stated that it has invited international and regional tender for these megafarms, this Government is on record as saying that it will be providing the infrastructure for them and I think Sen. Seetahal SC made the point, why can they not provide the support services and security of tenure? Many farmers in this country are being bulldozed daily by the HDC and threatened to be bulldozed.

10.15 p.m.

Farmers are on the run in Wallerfield. In La Horquetta, there are a number of farmers there who have been farming on private lands. The Government bought the lands behind their backs and now they are threatening to bulldoze acres of vegetables and so on. Ramgoolie Trace is a perfect example of where they have bulldozed farmers. There is also the Spring Village situation where the HDC is bulldozing farmers.

They are talking about small farmers being the backbone, but they are just fooling people. In practice, they are breaking the backbone of food production and food security. Talking the talk does not cut it; they have to walk the walk. I notice that this Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is totally marginalized. I do not see him anywhere on the horizon in terms of what will happen in agriculture in this county.

The Prime Minister said that he will do in agriculture what he has done with energy. It is a very scary scenario when there is a situation like we have read in the *Guardian*, South Bureau, on May 26, 2008, “Garcia to chair ADB, Namdevco and EMBDC”. That is the death knell of small agriculture in this country and it is heralding the advent of huge multinational companies, which will come into this country, set up shop, possibly with genetically modified seeds, and export food from this country.

This administration is sending mixed signals. One minute it is saying that they are establishing megafarms to improve the food security of this country, but clearly, if this is a private commercial enterprise—although it is spending our money to set up all the infrastructure—it cannot tell the people what to do with their food. How will it work? If you invite them in and give them a lease and all the infrastructure, they will produce food and do what they want with it. Food prices are skyrocketing on the international market and they will sell where they

will get the best price for their investment. The Government cannot tell them what to do with it. Therefore, these so-called megafarms are not the solution for the food security of this country, but for the big boys who want to produce food in a situation where they are under very little control; where they have all the infrastructure set up for them by a compliant government; where they will get cheap labour because all the small farmers have been run off the land and they will be forced to work on these megafarms for what they offer. That will be the scenario. They can dismiss it now, but time will tell what will happen in this country.

Sen. Mark has made a remark that there are those of us who can hear the hoof beats of the horses in the distance. We do not have to sit and wait for anybody to bring it to our attention. We can see what will be the outcome of this scenario. Therefore, this headline, "Garcia to chair ADB, Namdevco and EMBDC" is another piece of the puzzle. What will happen is that there will be one man in charge of three important agencies. He will be the person who will give you the developed lands because they have promised these people, "the private sector" that the lands will be fully developed, and EMBDC is in charge of that. So, there is one person who will deal with the development of the infrastructure of these lands. The same person will determine and subsidize loans to develop the projects and the same person, as head of Namdevco, will help with technical assistance, marketing and all the things that Namdevco has been set up to do.

So it is a one-stop shop, but not for the small farmers who have been bulldozed everyday by the HDC and the same Noel Garcia, and who have been labouring on the land and producing food against all odds to feed the people of this country. Why did you not set this up for the small farmers? Why suddenly for private enterprise? Our small farmers are private enterprise. They have been involved in the export of hundreds of tonnes of vegetables because they are good at what they do. They love the land and produce a tremendous amount of food, but nobody gave them this offer.

All these years, they have neglected farmers; the farmers of Chatham have been totally neglected. Why have they not given them this offer, set up the infrastructure, given them the loans and help them to develop the lands at Chatham? They never did that. They are doing it for the multinationals; their international partners, who will come. We are going forward to the past. We are going right back to a colonial situation where foreigners will own lots of our land. They will fence huge acres of land and we will not have access to those lands and foods. We may not even have access to the areas. Praedial larceny is a serious

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issue in this country and there will be people patrolling the grounds possibly with all kinds of security arrangements and so on. We are going forward into the past. This is a neo-colonial administration. They are making no bones about it and are putting everything in place.

When you look at a situation like this: when somebody known, whose hostility to the farming community is well-known, who has threatened farmers in every part of this country, who has bulldozed farmers' lands in every part of this country, this is the person they will put to be the head of the EMBDC? This is not for the people of this country. This is the other piece of the puzzle because the foreigners will not want to come here and run around to get things done. They will go to one man and he will "organize" them.

So, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, I do not think has a leg to stand on in this situation. They are so cynical and callous that, in order to mask what they are doing, so that we lose sight of the fact that this administration is jeopardizing the food security and future of this country by giving away our best agricultural lands to foreign entrepreneurs, they are giving people seeds. People will feel now that this Government cares about this country and that it cares about food production.

I was surprised the first time I saw the seed-giving ceremony. It was in a carnival-like atmosphere in City Gate. Do you know who was giving out the seeds? The Minister of Legal Affairs, Peter Taylor. I do not know why the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is standing here to defend anything. He was totally marginalized. How did the Minister of Legal Affairs reach in this seeds business, I do not know. I would have thought that the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources would have been giving out the seeds. What happened afterwards is that the Minister then jumped on a truck a few weeks later also and was giving out seeds. So he decided to get in on the action.

They are not fooling anybody. It does not make sense. How is it that on May 09, there were people of HDC mowing down farmers' crops? Let me tell you the sequence of events. On Friday, May 09, 2008: Mr. Norris Deonarine from the National Foodcrop Farmers Association, with his hand on his head bawling like 40 Tarzans because they bulldozed the crop in Spring Village.

Let me deal with that one time. People are talking about lawlessness. In this article on Friday, May 09, 2008, where the headline is "Bulldozer digs up crops: Farmer in tears". Mr. Jagdeo said, after mentioning that they had lost \$3,000 in crops and that they were concerned about losing their ochro, pepper and dasheen

still surviving on the five-acre parcel of land, that farmers had nowhere to go; nothing to do; that this was the only source of living that he had, and this Minister stands here and talks about farmers being the backbone and they care about farmers.

Mr. Jagdeo, the farmer, said that they were told by the HDC that they were grading the land to build houses. HDC Communications Manager said that the corporation was not clearing any land in that area. The right hand does not know what the left hand is doing in the HDC.

Mr. Deonarine said that the farmers had applied for the land, which has the highest grade soil for farming, more than a decade ago, but were never regularized. People are trying. People have applied for the land. It should be kept in agricultural production. Look at the price of food. The Prime Minister and his pack of clones opposite are always repeating the story of the food problem being an international one. Let us reason as adults. If they knew that the price of food was up on the international market; if they knew that farmers were planting corn for biofuel, which we signalled here a year ago in this Parliament when we brought a matter on the adjournment; if they knew that people in Singapore and Thailand were no longer selling their rice and were keeping it for local consumption; they knew all these things and they are still going around bulldozing farmers' lands? They are contributing to the problem. Why is that so difficult to comprehend? Why do they feel they can fool people by telling all these Nancy stories?

What they should do then is not take Caroni lands and mutilate it and give it to their friends and family for industrial use. They should conserve the lands, give farmers the infrastructural support they need—7,000 farmers they severed from Caroni (1975) Limited five years ago and up to now Rudy Indarsingh is saying, I want to quote him from May 01, he said that to date no Caroni (1975) Limited worker had gotten any portion of Caroni (1975) Limited lands. He told the *Express* that he was yet to see the 7,000 small farms to which the Prime Minister referred. This is a con job; propaganda.

I heard a calypso by Gypsy last night. He made a relevant point. He said that politicians in this country feel they can run the country on propaganda alone. You cannot. You have to produce tangible results.

Mr. Vice-President: The hon. Senator's speaking time 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: So, Mr. Vice-President, it is a dictatorial move to take someone who is hostile to the development of agriculture, has a track record, a history of intimidating and threatening farmers and bulldozing their lands and put that person in charge of major institutions to develop farming in this country. I hope that the people of this country are looking at this very seriously and understand what is going on.

10.30 p.m.

When we would have reached the point where we will have to line up with a little bowl for some rice and flour, I hope the people would remember this moment. We have allowed a travesty to continue in this country. This is where we have reached. We started out with farmers with their hands on their heads bawling.

We have reached the point where the Minister of Legal Affairs is giving out seeds. The next picture would be citizens lining up with bowls for rice and flour. This is what is going to happen. As sure as day follows night, that is what would be happening in this country.

The core philosophy of this Government is to exclude the farmers and the workers from development. They are talking about this country being a developed country, but what is your definition of development? What could be your definition of development, when all your processes are driven from outside? You are bringing in workers and materials from outside. We are not saying that trade is not part of our life. But you have to fast-track development to the point where you undercut the food security and job security of your citizens, in favour of putting up buildings and big megaprojects—which is not really diversifying the economy and not bringing added wealth to the country and not going to generate wealth in this country—then you are on a very wrong road and on a very bad path. The problem with that is when you are able to jump on your private jet and fly out of this country, we would have to stay here and take whatever comes.

At this particular time, I want to look at the heading in this Bill before us, in terms of the current transfers and subsidies for Caroni (1975) Limited, \$80 million. This has to do with another important sector of our agricultural community, the cane farmers. It is stated that:

“In September 2007, Cabinet accepted the final agreement concluded between the Ministerial Committee responsible for the reconstruction of Caroni (1975) Limited and the five cane farmer groups, which involved the payment of \$80 million to 3,424 farmers for direct and indirect transitional support. Funds were not provided in the 2002 estimates to meet this commitment, however,

because of the urgency, resources were transferred, from the allocation provided, to meet debt servicing payments.”

This paragraph is full of contempt, negligence, neglect, shortsightedness and lack of vision. In the first place, how could you come to us at this time? Other Senators have said it this afternoon that you have known that since 2003, you have shut down the sugarcane industry. You have 7,000 ex-sugar workers waiting on lands and another 7,000 farmers who have been thrown out on the breadline because they no longer have a livelihood, because they produced cane for Caroni (1975) Limited and you are telling us boldly and brazenly in this document, that you did not put it in the estimates. You know that you have to deal with these people and you promised to give them funding to come out of the industry. You said that you did not put it in the estimates. Why are you so cruel, callous and uncaring of the “backbone” of, according to the Minister, the people in this country?

Sen. Browne: Point of clarification, please. The \$2 million refers to payments made to cane farmers in respect of the crops for 2006/2007. This was anticipated as part of the arrangements made for Caroni (1975) Limited. These were extra payments which were made after VSEP payments and everything else was made. It was a position which recognized the position of the farmers who indicated that they already had cane in the ground and that they would lose the opportunity to reap it. Therefore, the crops for 2006 were paid for. The crops for 2007 were paid for. That is what it represents. That was not budgeted.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Mr. Vice-President, I could never understand what this Minister of Finance is saying. We are not talking about payment for crops. This is payment to farmers; for direct and indirect transitional support. This is what we are talking about.

Hon. Senators: That is what it means.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: It means that people can have a—you are talking about payment for crops. I am not talking about the payment they got for the crops that they had. Anyway, the point is that you closed down the industry in 2003 and nobody sat down and planned or said: “We are closing down the industry. We are going to give the sugar workers a settlement and we have to do something with the cane farmers.” Nobody envisaged that they had to do something with the cane farmers. Nobody has put it in the budget. You are telling us now that you never provided for it. You can jump high, you can jump low, you

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cannot get away from the fact that it spells of total neglect, with respect to any planning. You have not planned. You are not planning or thinking about the farmers and you do not care.

The other issue involved in this is that they mentioned 3,420 farmers. There were over 7,000 farmers involved. Do you know what they did? They established an arbitrary cut-off date and said that the farmers who were not still planting canes after the cut-off date, would not be eligible for any transitional payments. With that arbitrary move, they eliminated over 2,000 farmers from getting any moneys.

I went to the villages and spoke to some of those farmers. They were crying blood. I was talking to a young woman who was—[*Interruption*] They do not understand what is going on. I was speaking to a young woman and her husband who had invested thousands of dollars in that industry, growing crops for Caroni (1975) Limited. They have a loan with the ADB. They have mortgaged their house to take that loan. They were part of those farmers who were cut off from getting any compensation. They were left with all these loans to pay and their children to take care of. They were left with no compensation. “Dey bawling oh God!” and sounding very bored across there. It is people’s lives we are talking about here. When I speak about crying blood, they are literally crying blood. They left over 2,000 farmers without any means of livelihood and all their debts to be paid because of this arbitrary cut-off date.

Do you know why the farmers were not planting after a cut-off date? They were in a position of uncertainty. At a certain point, nobody knew if they were coming or going. It was difficult to access funds, because nobody knew what was going to happen. The farmers were in a total state of uncertainty for a very long time, and because they did not plant canes in the period of uncertainty during the period 2005/2006, they were left out of the final payments.

This is why the farmers have had to demonstrate, beg and plead with this Government to give them the funds that the European Union had provided to the countries that have come out of sugar and also to deal with the issue of the transitional period for farmers who were in the cane farming industry. This is a *Guardian* article of February 28, 2008. I want to quote some of it:

“Cane farmers are calling on the Government to reopen negotiations for their compensation after the European Union yesterday confirmed that €1 million was allotted to Trinidad and Tobago cane workers between 2007 and 2010, after the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited.”

This Government refused to access the European Union's package. They missed a date when they had to make an application. The farmers are left out in the rain. This is the "caring" Government that always extols the virtue of the small farmers, people who produce food and people who have contributed so much to this country. That is a lot of talk. They farmers are then left with only debts, tears and regrets. They have children to feed and families to take care of. Thousands of them have been literally left out in the rain by this administration.

I would like to—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Browne: Sit down.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:—make a quick reference to the Green Fund which was mentioned in this document. You can always tell when we are hitting the nail on the head; they get very jumpy and rude across there.

Under Head 25: National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme, \$22 million. It says that the additional amount is required to fund the programme to September 30, 2008 and that this is necessary because the planned operationalization of the Green Fund will now be finalized to meet this expenditure, which was originally planned to finance from the fund resources.

We on this side would like to find out this evening what is the problem with operationalizing the Green Fund. This document, the *National Action Programme to Combat Land Degradation in Trinidad and Tobago 2006-2020* says that the Green Fund was established in 2000, to

“encourage communities and organizations to undertake remediation, reforestation and beautification projects.”

In this document, they promised that:

“The Fund, which is supported by a compulsory contribution from business enterprises, is an important source of funding for future community-based initiatives and the MPUE is committed to operationalising it in 2006”.

We are now in 2008, and they have come with a document supplementing an Appropriation Bill to tell us that the operationalization of the Green Fund has not yet been finalized. We want to find out what the problem is. Why is the Government not dealing with the issue of the Green Fund, which we established in 2000? It is not like we do not have problems. We have serious problems with respect to deforestation in this country. This document tells us what is happening in terms of deforestation.

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“There has been extensive deforestation in critical watersheds (Northwest Trinidad and Courland Tobago), associated with building construction (site clearance and preparation), squatting, annual forest fires, logging, the practice of slash and burn agriculture, quarrying, oil and gas exploitation. Recent rapid urban and industrial development suggests that the rate of deforestation and forest fragmentation may have increased within the last five years. Deforestation significantly lowers water table and causes silting of watercourses, increased flooding and reduced perennial stream flow. Deforestation also reduces natural vegetation thus reducing available habitat and threatening the existence of certain flora and fauna.”

Mr. Vice-President: Senator, wind up.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: This is a serious thing. But they have been pussyfooting with these moneys for years.

The incompetence—we are appalled by the incompetence of the Government. They should explain this neglect to the national community

10.45 p.m.

Sen. Annette Nicholson-Alfred: Mr. Vice-President, thank you. In the essence of time, I have decided to forego the major part of my introduction. In short, it says, I would appreciate if our working documents—I mean especially the people from Tobago—are given to us in time to prepare for matters to be debated. It was a bit difficult this weekend. I am not blaming anybody, but we need to get our documents in time so that we can prepare ourselves.

Mr. Vice-President, when I was younger, I would go to my dad during the month seeking financial help, and he would wonder what kind of budgeting I did, then he would say to me, pay more attention to your planning, so that you would not have to come running to me during the month to ask for more money.

There is need for better planning so that the Government would not have to come back to the House for supplementation and variation of the appropriation for any year.

I do agree with my colleague, Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight that the budget analysts may be at times asleep. I also agree that requests, in some instances, are unavoidable. With so many requests coming at the same time—things that should have been in the budget—it is quite clear, as I said before, the planners did not do their homework well.

There is an African adage which, when interpreted, says a parson christens his child first, and during this late evening, I wish to christen my child, Tobago, first. With regard to the Government's development programme, I see \$1 million for the construction of a new administrative building for the Central Administration Services, Tobago. I do agree that this is a necessity, but I fear that the actual amount of money requested to finish the project would be more than what was estimated. Maybe, we may have to ask another time for an increase in funding.

The relocation of the Meteorological Services Division is very important to Tobago and its development. I am surprised to hear that work, including the access road and fencing of the area, was completed in 2007 and there were no funds included for that project in 2008. Where were the planners? Were they sleeping? The Government is now asking for \$700 million for the said project.

I believe that even a layman could have seen that that amount was insufficient, especially as we are dealing with an airport that should be of international standards. Mr. Vice-President, \$700 million was allocated for the construction of a site office, the conducting of soil tests and the completion of engineering designs. Mr. Vice-President, through you, I would ask the Minister to think the sum over again.

Now, nearer home, the Shaw Park Regional Recreation Ground and Cultural Complex, a place where I lived—as a cultural officer, there is where I spent a lot of my time doing productions and so forth. That was thrown down about three years ago. I heard that construction is progressing at a fast rate and, as a result, \$20 million is sought to advance construction. I am wondering whether this is the same Shaw Park that I know, or whether it is the same one that I visit from time to time with the hope that, at least, before I close my eyes, I will be able to attend a function there. I chuckled loudly on reading that last line.

We have been clamouring in Tobago for some time for a place to hold our Carnival shows; to stage the opening and closing of our Heritage shows; to do our most outstanding performances for which we are really famous, et cetera. I heard that \$40 million was allocated for the Performing Arts Centre in South and \$60 million for the one in North, and we are still hanging on to a little \$20 million. I do not know how far that is going to take us.

Mr. Vice-President, if the Government thinks that \$20 million could give us a completed structure, then it should be given to us. Give us the money now and make sure that it is sufficient. The deadline for that structure has long gone.

In Tobago, we have some grave concerns. We are seeking some of the \$317 million sought by the Ministry of National Security. What consideration has been

given to the state of police stations in Tobago? Most of them are deplorable and are in need of immediate repairs. Our policemen and policewomen are humans too. There is an acute shortage of policemen in Tobago.

The Government should not allow paradise to be lost. Trinidad, her big sister, is steeped in crime and criminal activities. Help us to wet our house as our sister's is on fire. I do hope that some of the money from the Ministry of National Security would be expended on Tobago to ensure it remains the capital of paradise. Remember, prevention is better than cure.

Mr. Speaker, I see where the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries is seeking the largest sum of money—over \$1 billion through the supplementation and variation. I suppose this is because that ministry brings in the major amount of money into our country.

I am interested in knowing whether within this whopping set of dollars, arrangements are being made to compensate our fishermen and other fisherfolk who do fish processing. Their livelihood is being destroyed by the drilling for oil and gas which is being undertaken by Petro-Canada off Charlotteville. In that case, it is not diversification. It is trading our fishing industry and our coral reefs for gas and oil. I am not arguing the trade-off, because I am not sure which one would be more financially sound. However, it is hoped that the Government would do like countries such as Norway, and use some of the money to handsomely compensate the fishermen and the fish processors in Tobago so that they can begin a new way of life. This would be necessary soon or almost immediately.

Yesterday, I was in Charlotteville—and for those who do not know, that is my home. I do not live there anymore, but I do visit regularly—and complaints were coming. I, myself, was asking about fishing, and they told me that things are very slow now. So, if we are making a trade-off, we have to ensure that these people are compensated in a way so they could start some new way of life.

I would like to know whether, with respect to infrastructure, the Minister of Finance has included funding for a feasibility study to be done to remedy the state of the condemned so-called hospital at Signal Hill. We are aware that the structure that is there cannot withstand earthquakes or hurricanes, this has come from the horse's mouth. That is a sad state of affairs.

A model hospital for Tobago is urgent. For over seven years, Tobagonians have been waiting for a new hospital. For too long, we in Tobago have been made to walk behind. We need something of value now. We need a hospital now.

Remember, the country is Trinidad and Tobago, not Trinidad then Tobago. Tobagonians have been made to suffer much too long for a state-of-the-art hospital. We are just tired of having to be airlifted or having to travel to Trinidad for simple medical reasons. During flights or other means of travel to Trinidad for medical help, many things can happen; irreparable injury or death could occur.

We must also bear in mind that Tobago depends largely on tourism and when tourists become ill or they are injured, we are unable to take care of them adequately. I am not talking about the confusion up at Signal Hill, but the one at Fort King George. It remains a 19th Century Health office. That is what it is now.

Mr. Vice-President, has the Government set aside some of the money sought under this Bill that is before us to deal with the marine matter that has come up again between Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados? Once more, Barbados has taken us to the United Nations. I am sure that you are aware of that. It took retired Justice Lucky to inform us about that and to urge the country to move with haste to ensure that our 120 miles of waters are not given to Barbados. I did not hear anything from the Government pertaining to that matter. To us in Tobago, and I am sure in Trinidad, that matter is of great importance.

Have we employed marine lawyers to fight this case? How much of the supplementation and variation funds have been set aside for this? Barbados wants our flying fish and our natural gas. I need not say how important they are to not only Tobago, but the country of Trinidad and Tobago. Are we preparing ourselves for battle?

Mr. Vice-President, it is felt that the funding sought in the Bill is already passed. I am hoping that the funding would be used in good stead and it would not be whittled away. Some of what we have gained through good fortune, I hope will be saved for a rainy day.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you.

Sen. Helen Drayton: Mr. Vice-President, I join the debate on the Finance (Supplementation and Variation) of Appropriation Bill and the wide ranging discussions that have taken place. I have a few observations which I hope would be useful to the Government in the execution of its mandate. I wish to just very briefly ponder on that word "mandate".

11.00 p.m.

I wish to assure you that we have done no caucusing; we have had no dialogue or discussions whatsoever. Sen. Prof. Deosaran referred to, among other things,

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the lawlessness, the indiscipline and his role as an Independent Senator. I am very, very concerned and disappointed with respect—and this in the context of discipline—to the very loose remarks which are continuously being made by elected officials. Loose remarks about bringing down the Government and in other quarters reference to the social events of 1970 in the same breath.

It is time that it is accepted that the election is over. [*Desk thumping*] An election that was very keenly contested under a democratic constitution, and of the citizens who voted, the majority voted for a party to form a government and that government has a mandate. [*Desk thumping*] Now, given the environment with the overheated situation of crime, it is very irresponsible, misguided and reckless that elected officials will be making such a statement with youths running around shooting each other.

The year 1970 was 38 years ago; 1970 and 2008 are totally different in terms of the value system. Let us hope that good sense will prevail and that leaders across the divide will set the appropriate example for our children and the youth. [*Desk thumping*]

I would say one word on vending according to my notes. As I said before, there was no discussion whatsoever; for every vendor on Charlotte Street that blocks a business that has been legitimately established, you have to weigh that against the five or the six jobs in that legitimate business that would be lost should they shut down and leave Charlotte Street.

I now refer to this specific Bill. Huge sums of money are being spent on tertiary level education and training, scholarships for teachers, doctors through UWI, UTT and COSTAATT and of course, the general public through GATE. All this I think is very excellent as it is an undeniable fact that education is one of the first, if not the first requisite for development. And of course, it is also a requisite for a change in the mindset with respect to what is required for developed country status, especially as it relates to accountability, exemplary behaviour of leaders, discipline and productivity.

Now, when I reviewed this Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, I was motivated to review the report of the Auditor General for 2007. As I have said before and as that report has testified, it is evident that there are very serious issues with respect to the management—notwithstanding all the training that is going on—and the quality of resources in the public sector. I do not think it is a matter of quantity but rather expertise and competence in the management across the spectrum of disciplines, and of course, there are many issues with respect to the bureaucracy.

For instance in the health sector, from what I understand, it is plagued with a shortage of nurses and doctors. With millions being spent, is the Government investing billions in education and health with a net result of a migration of critical skills? I think it has got to give very serious consideration and ensure that it has put in the infrastructure, the mechanisms, so that the persons who are benefiting from scholarships and from free tertiary education, that those skills, those competencies—and I think Sen. Seetahal SC alluded to that—are aligned with the needs of the country, especially the public service given the huge projects under the development programme, so that these skills are what are needed now and what will be needed in the future.

In the context of the health sector, in this very Senate it was stated that approximately \$80 million was spent by the public health sector to transfer patients to private hospitals. The Government should take note because there is a message in that. Apart from the millions that have been spent, a lot of the talent in the private health sector came from the public health sector. So the question that needs to be posed is why do you have certain levels of performance in the private system, based on observation, based on the empirical evidence, from what families and relatives say. Why are you not exacting the same type of service in the public sector?

This points to another situation, and it goes right back to the serious situation in the public service. I have no doubt, as I have said earlier on, that there are issues with respect to the competencies, the performance level, performance management, performance expectations. So is it the systems? Is it the processes? Is it legislation? It is not something that I think is beyond the control or the abilities of the Government to take on board. As I said, I think that the Government should review those programmes.

In another forum I recall that the Government mentioned the implementation—and I think this is what is in their 2020 plan—the implementation of technology to deal with the achievement of efficiencies. But I think it needs to take note that technology, yes, has a major impact on the delivery through the enhancement of systems and processes. It does not necessarily replace people; it does not necessarily replace bodies; what it does in fact, is to throw up a need, a demand for a different type of skill and a different type of competence. So, you will always need nurses—you will always need the contact professions and the contact skills—the teachers, the nurses, the psychologists, the counsellors, the police and professions as such. So that it really has to examine its education programme and make sure that it is aligned to the needs.

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Mr. Vice-President, another observation, based on the very appropriation Bill that is before us, is the parallel system of operations that the Government is obviously forced to operate, because of the very inefficiencies in the public service. Apart from the fact that such a system creates major issues with respect to accountability and transparency, it is in itself very costly and also very unsustainable.

Now, the Government has currently under its management approximately 42 plus the other 4 billion—46 billion; and of course, the issue of a lack of proper financial systems and controls are of serious concern. It has to deal with the public service, no doubt it is a contentious and very difficult challenge and in reviewing the Auditor General's Report for 2007, there are numerous counts of those inefficiencies and lack of internal auditors and other controls, and a few will be cited for the sole purpose of encouraging the Government to take measures to become more efficient. There are glaring situations—and Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight has pointed out some of them in this very appropriation Bill—and I hope that in bringing similar documents forward we certainly would see a different quality of reporting and the Government will achieve a better degree of planning.

Just to give an example—and this is a quote—in the Ministry of Public Administration and Information, “the approved programme of work for the internal audit did not include significant areas, such as the development programme expenditure and expenditure incurred under Infrastructure Development Fund.” Under the Ministry of National Security, the Auditor General’s Report states that as at the date of the report, which is April 29, 2008, “information requested for the purpose of conducting a review of internal control systems surrounding the acquisition, distribution and maintenance of motor vehicles was still outstanding.” There are several other situations cited such as the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, “the audit scrutiny of the ministry's books and records reveal very little evidence of internal audit examination.”

So, Mr. Vice-President, I think that the Government should realize that any responsible person operating in the interest of the public, certainly will not have a comfort level with supplements and variations of budget when billions are being spent and the oversight is not robust but it is rather blunted because of the lack of internal audits, the risk management capabilities and other systems of control.

I, too, wondered about the electronic surveillance for the Chaguaramas peninsula and the offshore islands and why it was under housing and not national security and of course, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources gave his response. And through you, Mr. President, I do hope that the partnership

and teamwork that I hear a few of you well boasting about—the Minister of Public Utilities and the Minister of Works and Transport I also heard you and that they both would take notice of the need for partnership and teamwork.

I now refer briefly to the Tobago House of Assembly and the additional \$50 million and the situation is not acceptable at all. In my research, it would seem that the last administrative report laid in this Senate from the Tobago House of Assembly was for 1995 laid in 1997.

11.15 p.m.

The Tobago House of Assembly has billions of dollars under its control and the last report of the Auditor General for the Tobago House of Assembly was 2005, I think it was 2005—which was laid in April 2008.

Sen. Mark: No, 2003.

Sen. H. Drayton: Oh, 2003, worse yet. So, with the whole system of accountability and transparency, there is no way even an efficient parliamentary committee can make any meaningful input if the accounts for institutions of governance are years late. That was said, I think, only last week in another debate. It was also stated by Sen. Seetahal SC, “that is breaching the law”—the highest law in the land which is the Constitution with impunity. So, you see on the one hand we cannot talk about discipline and we cannot talk about good governance if government institutions are breaching our laws. The Constitution is quite clear that the accounts are to be laid annually.

Finally, I will close by commenting on the subsidy for the sale of petroleum products and I think I might be a bit contentious here, I am inclined to disagree with all my colleagues thus far. I am certainly very—how should I say—encouraged by what Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight said, that it is one way for the average citizen to share in the fruits or the windfall from our energy sector. The reality of the situation is with the increasing cost of all the factors of production, marketing and distribution, it is totally unsustainable and it is not long before the Government would have to do something about that. The thing is what should it do and how soon it should do it.

The same way that there is a COLA that would assist a worker in maintaining the cost of living in the face of inflation, there ought to be some mechanism that will cushion, just cushion, incrementally, the impact of an increasing subsidy. There is one school of thought and I think that as citizens we have to be reasonable. We are spoiled to a great extent. Let us put the crime aside, let us put that aside for the time being, there is free education, there is free health care, there is free

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transportation, there is free tertiary education and free medicines. And, really and truly should there be a subsidy on gas for persons who would own two gas-guzzling cars, would have two or three homes, could enjoy luxurious vacations and could quite comfortably deal with all the lovely trimmings of life?

So, I think we have to get real and we have to be reasonable. One is not saying that 100 per cent of the subsidy should be removed, but at least the Government ought to look at some sort of mechanism and a mechanism that will not have a spiralling effect. There is one mechanism, and the solution would lie in what personal income level that it would choose to target, where those who cannot afford it—such as retirees on a fixed income—would not be affected; and it would not, as I said, affect inflation. So, there are answers, there are solutions and it is coming up with the right formula.

I thank you.

Sen. Dr. Carson Charles: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. Sen. Nicholson-Alfred made a plea for the people of Tobago and once upon a time, years ago, when the people of Tobago wanted attention and respect, I think they knew what to do, I think they did it and they might have to do it again because I do not think they would get a hospital very soon.

I am an optimist, I always remind my colleagues in this Senate, so I am among a now ever decreasing number of people in this country today who actually think that the PNM might be able to achieve something. That number is decreasing every day in spite of the number of persons who may support the political party of the PNM and voted them in the election. The reality is that the number of persons who actually expect delivery, or change or anything new in spite of whatever windfall, that number who actually expect is actually decreasing and the Government should concern itself about that. I know it is easy to dismiss what we say here as sour grapes or perhaps think we are just hostile, we do not like the Government and so on. It is easy to dismiss some of the things that are said, perhaps because they are said with a certain degree of passion and that passion I see is met equally by passion from the other side, but that really is not the point at all. The point really is not all the exchange of passion.

In fact, by the way, the Prime Minister has been very successful in bringing into the frontline and into the Parliament a lot of young passionate people in his party. That is a good thing he has done for his party, I guess, for its future, its longevity, but passion alone does not really cut it. You have to look at the reality, what is really happening around you. What is really happening around? In 2001/2002, I think the budget was about \$16 billion—that is the budget that the

PNM had to work with—and we looked on over the years at the budget figure increasing from \$16 billion to the 20s and then the 30s and now the 40s. It is 2008 now, and in these few years I do not think wages and salaries have doubled, I do not think that the delivery of services has doubled.

It was possible to run the country on \$20 billion a few years ago, now \$40 billion would not do, we have to add four more. I guess this year later in October we will have to have a—budgets do not go down, right? So, after this—what is it, \$46 billion now? I guess in October it will be, maybe \$50 billion or so, looking forward to adding another five or so next year, midterm review, taking it up to \$50 billion—\$55 billion and so on. That is where we are headed. We are headed there because I suppose the money is around, so we are headed there. It is something that seems irreversible. You keep on spending more and more money, especially on recurrent. These things are recurrent figures, so you keep on increasing the recurrent budget every year for all kinds of “great” reasons.

I used to be a public servant, I used to deal with some of these things. I know a lot of the officers, well meaning and so on, but when the time comes they have to write down stuff so they write down stuff that actually seems to provide some logical explanation as to why you have to increase some of these figures. So you always have good reasons why you need \$2 million here, \$200 million there or \$2 billion somewhere else, so they are always good-sounding reasons. They might not always have anything to do with the facts on the ground as you also heard from Sen. Nicholson-Alfred, just look at some little examples and you would see that some of the things written here do not have much to do with the reality.

So, we can always find reasons for increasing the figures, and in an environment in which it appears that money is no big deal, people will always just call for more money for whatever they want to do. I think it is a burden on the PNM—I sympathize with your situation—to know that every time you come to office there is this tremendous weight, this lethargy that comes on to the nation; the whole place simply relaxes and people who were prepared to work hard—The country had another rhythm to it, you know, just a few years ago when the UNC was in power. Just a few years ago when the UNC was in power there was a different rhythm and the moment your party comes to power the rhythm changes and there is a relaxation. Because people do not really think that it is necessary to work so hard, to drive themselves so much; they think the big mama is here and she will take care of them. That is the change that takes place in the country, that

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overcomes the country. I do not know how you are going to implement anything in that environment. So, these figures never have any meaning because they have no relationship to the reality in the country.

You could throw as much money as you want after every problem; the reality is that you cannot solve them. Nothing changes! The public service is the same as it was. It cannot deliver the goods! The ministries that are supposed to be performing—I hope that the new Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment can maintain the pace that the old Minister of Housing had, because that is one of the few areas in which there was any actual movement, through the normal public service I am talking about now; not in the energy sector. In the energy sector that is a whole different world. That is driven from outside and our citizens play their role, but that is driven from outside and that runs on its own programme.

If in fact the energy sector used to operate like all the rest of Trinidad operates; if the oil sector operated the way that we run Trinidad on a daily basis, we could not be in the energy business; we could not be in any international competitive business if we ran that sector the way we run the rest of the country, so that is a whole different ball game outside there. I could even sympathize with the Prime Minister for putting on blinkers and only seeing the energy sector, because, perhaps it is the easiest thing to do, but the rest of the country is on a different rhythm. But, notwithstanding that, the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment was able to deliver—I mean they used a lot of the houses, of course, for voter padding and so on, or placed people to live in the right places—for votes; but nonetheless, that aside—a lot of houses, and outside of the housing sector I do not think you were able to deliver very much.

I am talking about the delivery ministries that actually build things and do things and so on like that. There are other social programmes in place, et cetera; I have no argument about these social programmes. You can have any number of social programmes you can afford and so on to help people, benefits in the health sector and benefits in welfare, et cetera. That is great! But is that really the major challenge facing the Government? Is that the challenge that the country has to really face today in the year 2008? I do not think so. I do not think that is our major challenge. Is the major challenge to compare what the situation was with the UNC in 2001 to what it is now; is that really the major challenge? All of the energy, enthusiasm, the passion and so on that was directed in that particular direction, is that really relevant? I do not think so! I think what is relevant is what

you do with the challenge that you now have to face. The country expects you to use the tremendous, unprecedented oil windfall, energy windfall that we have today, for once, to actually transform the country.

We do not think that we may have another chance, not in our lifetime, of transforming the country, because the kind of resources it takes to leap into the big leagues and to call yourself whatever you want to call yourself—you say developed country; kind of simplistic way of seeing things—but nonetheless I would not even argue that this evening. It is too late now to argue about the terminology used in developed society status and all of that, only 12 years to go and so on. It is kind of pathetic, really, to be repeating these things that we could pass an exam. You think it is an exam we have to write! In 12 years' time we write an exam and after we pass, somebody gives us a good grade, puts a stamp, gives us a certificate and says, you are now a developed country? You think that is how it works?

11.30 p.m.

That is how it sounds when you talk about developed country status in 2020, in 12 years time. It sounds like you are preparing for an exam that you are going to write, get your document stamped and get your certificate in your hand, and you would say, "I am now a developed country, you know". You go around to the world and say, "We are now a developed country." Do you think that is how it works? I do not know any country that has become developed, so to speak, by doing that.

To be a developed country we have to have tall buildings, and so we build tall buildings. To be a developed country, we have to have low unemployment, 5 per cent. There was actually a committee which sat with some persons—and I do not like to call names—that was looking at ways and means to recommend to the Prime Minister what to do to create full employment. I think he had set two years as his timetable. The only answer that came out that made any sense was CEPEP.

They already had CEPEP running; the only thing that made sense was to continue and expand on more and more CEPEP. I wish Sen. Seetahal SC was here. I had an answer for her concerning her niece. Her niece needs to graduate from the On-the-Job-Training (OJT) programme to CEPEP, because that is what it is all about. Her niece is not the only person who has a degree from the University of the West Indies, a degree which is fully recognized still, and cannot get a job except in OJT.

I know many persons personally; I am not going to embarrass them by calling their names or saying who they are. They would feel embarrassed if I were to

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even hint at who they were. I know many people in that situation, who after collecting their degrees they could not get jobs, except a stint or two with OJT. They could graduate to CEPEP; that is what it is all about.

Why is that? It is because we have this simplistic way of seeing things. You want to have 5 per cent unemployment, so you engage in superficial nonsense. "To create 5 per cent unemployment we are going to create a whole set of things and call them jobs; so the numbers will show that we now have 5 per cent." What is that? Just like the buildings, "We are going to create a lot of tall buildings around the place." They have no particular function or relationship to anything at all. Are you really trying to build over the city of Port of Spain? I could praise the Prime Minister if he was trying to build a modern capital city.

If you want to build a modern capital city, well, build one, but you are not building one. You are building a lot of tall buildings in total isolation. Right next to the tall buildings, one block away, the roads are all rotted; the sidewalks are in the same condition. The slightest rain and it is still going to flood in Port of Spain; persons would still be hopping and skipping through water in the capital city with the tall buildings. You are not even building a city; it is all superficial and make-believe. That is the problem I have. You cannot be doing this with \$46 billion; you cannot be engaging in make-believe.

We are not going to have a whole lot of chances like this one, so you have to take yourselves more seriously. That is my plea to the Government: Take yourselves more seriously. I am sure the Prime Minister could be congratulated for all kinds of things. He has been in Parliament for 35 years; that is a long time. I am sure he has a lot of skills and competencies. He was there when it was himself and two other MPs battling out. He did well for himself. I would mention, by the way, 1970; I do not think any politicians were behind that one. They were frustrated youth of the PNM; they were betrayed though, at the end of the day, by their party, which never transformed the country really.

Mr. Vice-President, 1990—I do not know which politicians we are talking about now. Are we going to point fingers at the politicians of 1990? If persons want to point fingers at politicians, we have to be careful. I do not want to spend my time here this evening pointing fingers at the ones who were involved in making Abu Bakr feel braver and braver every day, even beyond 1990. We have to be careful getting into that whole area of who is to blame for what, when it comes to destabilization. I myself hope that we never have a 1970 or 1990 in the country again, even with the PNM in power. I do not see how it improved

anything; how it saved our skins or improved our lot. I do not see what it added, quite frankly, so I hope we never have one again. We are on your side with that. I do not think anybody here wants to see anyone mash up the place.

I just want to caution you that what you are doing is very dangerous, because you are fuelling discontent in the face of plenty, in the face of a tremendous windfall. People are not seeing that you are concerned with them or their cause, as convinced as you are that you are doing the right things. That is the most dangerous situation to be in; when you are so convinced that you are doing the right thing.

Lots of persons have found themselves in great difficulty because of that; they were absolutely convinced that they were doing the right thing. The more you are convinced that you are doing the right thing, the more you could be blinded by that self-confidence and not see the reality. It is our job to show you the reality; look outside and show you what is really happening. See that there are two countries here. There is one group of persons who are quite impressed with what you are doing. They love the tall buildings; they love the fancy new hotels; it feels like developed country status to them. They love the palace; they think that a developed country should have a palace. Many of the poorest countries of the world have palaces. Palaces have been built in some of the most oppressive times in human history.

It has nothing to do with development, but some people love palaces. Some people would encourage your Prime Minister to get a private jet, because that feels like he is important now. If you are dealing with the superficial, then you go in the direction from tall buildings to fake employment figures; all the things that make it look as though we are trying to really become developed. You get the palace, you get the jet and all the trappings, and you really fool yourself into thinking that you are going in the right direction.

While some people are very impressed with that, look out the window and you would also see that there is a very large frustrated community in the country. That is why I said surely the Prime Minister could be praised for many things, but not for providing the leadership required in this time; what is demanded now by the country.

Do not compare yourself to any other government, because no other government has been given this windfall that you have. When I was a member of a government, many years ago, we could not imagine having moneys at our fingertips that you could call for, and just say, "I want this and that." We could not imagine that was going to happen even in our lifetime. You are the only one that has been blessed with this during your time, so you have a special duty. All

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we could do, in our time here now, is to assist in pointing the way and showing you what you are missing. On behalf of all of us, on behalf of the entire nation, it is important that you see what you are missing, and you see that when you come and ask for \$4 billion.

We do not even know what context to debate this matter in, because we look at the basic situation, the fundamentals, and they are all off; they are all wrong. You are missing the most important point. You are not trying to transform the country. You are not preparing us for the time when we are not going to have all this money. You are not investing in the people. The most fundamental investment in the people is to make them part of this vision, make them part of what you are doing.

You can see that the youths are frustrated; not the ones who are buying into this philosophy. Some young persons are buying into it, many of them in the Parliament; that is great, fantastic; but that has nothing to do with the youths in the country at large. The youths in the country at large are totally frustrated; they are not buying into this. They are not interested in this.

Do you think that it is the Opposition's responsibility to motivate them and harness their energies? That is the Government's duty. Who do you think would do it, the private sector? Where do you see other leaders that would do it? It is the Government's duty to bring those people into the picture. Make them feel they are part of some great new vision.

Many, many years ago, your party had that capability, but you maybe lost it in the same 1970s. You used to have it in the 1960s for sure, the time in which I grew up. Many of us who grew up in that time, even though I do not remember supporting your party anytime during my lifetime, nonetheless, it certainly inspired substantial sections of the country to buy into a particular vision. That is the leadership you require now.

Do not make fake and false things. You cannot motivate people with that. You cannot fool the young people with that. While you are counting their numbers as employment, they know the difference; that is why they cannot wait to go away; they want to leave the country and find a better future elsewhere. Every time one of them gets a degree or some kind of qualification, they want to leave the country. They do not want to stay here and help you build the country. If you cannot get the most academically intelligent ones, the most highly trained ones, to want to be part of building this country, what are we going to say about the ones who are not so fortunate?

You knocked the UNC about letting persons go into secondary school without being able to read and write; you are missing the point altogether. That was one of the most fantastic achievements of the UNC. I was not part of the government at the time, but I think it was one of the most fantastic achievements, to say as a policy matter, "Every child will go to secondary school and you will not be a failure at 11; you will not be a failure at 12; you will not be deemed and considered a failure." It was then the duty of those at the secondary level to provide the remedial, when they came into secondary school, those who did not have it. Those at the primary level, freed now of the need to spend all their time trying to get persons to pass exams, would now have the time to devote to actually educating them. All their time was spent trying to pass the exams, and they had no time with primary school. They could not devote time in primary school towards trying to really educate children: to teach them how to live in the world, how to have respect for others. They could only spend their time dealing with the most gifted, trying to get as many passes as they could to go into secondary school, or trying to get into the prestige schools.

The best teachers could go into the SEA classes to get the most gifted ones into the best secondary schools. No time could be spent teaching children how to live; which is what school is about. So when you send the children who get under 30 per cent back to primary school, what do you think happens? Do you really think anybody has the opportunity and time to spend giving them any attention in primary school? In which class would you put persons who have reached puberty? The same class they came out of? Do you think they would actually spend time trying to get them to catch up in primary school? It is a wasted and frustrating year. You missed the entire point.

That was a fantastic thing, because it meant that you were telling your young people, "You are not a failure; we are not going to leave you behind; we are not going to forget you; everyone is important, and we are going to carry all of you into secondary school." The duty then in secondary school was to make sure and teach, and in primary school, to make sure that you had fewer and fewer persons who could not read.

You are missing the people; you are leaving the people out. The whole philosophy that says it is okay to fail so many thousands, is one that says it is okay to leave people out. That is why they call you elitist, because it is a philosophy that says it is all right to focus on the minority and forget the majority. I do not think it is because the PNM is wicked. I do not think it is because there is

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something evil about you. I would not say that; that is not the case at all. I am sure that you are trying your best, but I think you are missing an important point: you are constantly leaving out the people.

Even the same philosophy which says that subsidies are bad is a kind of theoretical construct; it is an economic philosophy that subsidies are bad. [*Crosstalk*] "We cannot subsidize anything; it is bad; it causes distortions." Is that what you are saying, Minister in the Ministry of Finance? Europe will fight to the last man to maintain their agricultural subsidies; not to mention the US, the very champion of anti-subsidy economics, will fight like hell to keep their subsidies on the agricultural community; in the very US which says it is bad, that it is causing distortions. So we do not want to see subsidies; in principle it is bad, we say; I do not understand that.

The world was not invented by economists. Business was not invented by economists. They are simply trying to understand it. They cannot create a philosophy that we have to live by, which says by definition subsidies are bad. What is wrong with subsidizing your people? You have to plan for the future.

If you know you would not, then you have to gradually reduce it so there would not be a great shock down the road; that makes sense if you say that is the reason. Not, I do not think I can afford it in 10 years' time, so instead of having to shock you in 10 years time, we are taking all of it off. Instead, I am going to gradually take it off now so by that time you can handle it. If you have a plan that says that, I can buy into that plan, but do not tell me you are taking it off because subsidies are bad, because that is rubbish. Subsidies are what you can afford when you can afford it. It says that you can afford it, then you can do it, and if you know you cannot afford it in the future, prepare your people for living without it.

11.45 p.m.

Your entire make-work scheme which you are calling employment is itself a subsidy, it is totally unsustainable and you are presiding over the greatest expansion of the dependency syndrome in the country's history. They have been dependent for as long as we have been here, it is part of our own history. The dependency on the Government and on everybody else is part of our history; it is your challenge to tackle that. Surely you can see that point. [*Crosstalk*]

I was talking about the dependency syndrome from which the country suffers and people suffer from all spheres of living not only in CEPEP and URP, people suffer from dependency in business and all; all over the place people suffer from

dependency. That is part of our way of living in this country, depending on the government for all kinds of things, but you are expanding the dependency syndrome, your whole make-work scheme is part of promoting that dependency, your massive CEPEP is on dependency.

If you succeeded in cleaning a piece of ground, I say congratulations, but not if you sent 20 men to clean it when one man could have done it. If you are going to send 20 men and waste time cleaning it, then go and clean some agricultural land somewhere, clean some drains, provide irrigation, or go and build access roads somewhere.

I am not proceeding with any notes this evening although I have lots of them, if I follow them I may talk for two or three hours so I would not follow my notes, but I will tell you some of the things that are on my mind because these are things that concern me.

I once had to preside over a make-work scheme as Minister of Works and I tell you that you cannot get rid of them just like that because you have endless poor people who are depending on this for a daily living. If you are to have the make-work scheme, you have to use it for something purposeful. We started something called Estate Rehabilitation Programme in Chaguaramas where we put gardeners from Laventille on buses and sent them down. The “fellas” were so proud to be involved and I still meet guys who tell me how they loved the Estate Rehabilitation Programme after so many donkey’s years. That is how proud they were of that. They went into Cunaripo and people thought they were going to terrorize the neighbourhood but the “fellas” were well behaved.

Living and growing up with stone and concrete, what do you expect in terms of a man’s way of living? When you expose them to green things, growing things, to a softer environment, you produce a different human being. Surely this is something not I alone know, it is something that everybody who—well, you have a really well-educated team, you have some young professionals so you all understand this but you are not focusing on it, you are not focusing on how to change anything or how to care for the people who are in your charge.

You teach how to take care of plants. They were excited about learning how to grow things and we had farms all over the place. Private people trusted us so much that they gave us their lands on 5-10-and 20-year leases. People do not want to give Government their lands, but they trusted us and gave us lands so we could put guys who were wasting their time in 10-days programme doing nonsense to spend their time on the farms rehabilitating estates and Chaguaramas is where they went.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: “Dey giving dem seeds, no land.”

Sen. Dr. C. Charles: When they came into office, they shut down every estate; people were stealing produce from the estates, taking them to town and selling and that went on for months, they raided the people’s lands.

They gave people back the land without a document, they said come and take back your land, that is how they treated it. They got back the land in all kinds of conditions. We took the land and we had a responsibility to do certain things with it. They gave back the land in a half-way developed condition, we tracted their cocoa and coffee crops that they had before and we started planting the lands, but the PNM gave them back their lands just so.

So do not think I have any particular brief for ex-Minister Dr. Rowley, who was the agriculture minister, I hope this agriculture Minister is not like that. This is recent history if you want to compare history. We had similar challenges, but we did not have the money. The challenge of how to transform this country has been here for a long time. Do you think you can develop agriculture overnight? You start trying to develop and you cannot find seeds, and planting material. Do you think little packs of seeds can make an actual impact? It is a great idea; you are sensitizing people to it and I am all for that, but I am talking about the other aspect of it, I am not talking about the PR part. That is great, I support that, you are much better at the PR than I ever was. I am talking now about substance; please add the substance to the PR. Do not think I am against you with the PR because that is important in politics.

The substance is if you want to find planting material to plant cassava you cannot get enough. You cannot find planting material in a country overnight, agriculture takes time to develop; it will take many years before you can reach the scale that you need to have to make an impact on the economy, so every year you waste is one we cannot get back.

We cannot suddenly decide in the year 2015 or sometime down the road, we have five years to go towards this and oil and gas are running out. But the Ryder Scott Report said that we have until about then, but I have not heard any response to the report since it was published. “Fellas” figure because there was election we do not have to talk about Ryder Scott anymore, but I have not heard any response, except for the fact which was pointed out by Sen. Ali of how poorly we were doing with respect to the production of crude oil, and that is bad. You have to be doing much better than that in terms of exploration of both oil and gas.

The national community cannot keep on reminding you and asking questions about these issues because there are so many things happening every day that nobody can even remember Ryder Scott in the country today to ask what was done about it. That report said we were having how many years of gas and I am sure the Prime Minister said: “As Prime Minister, I give you the assurance that we have enough gas.” I am sure he said that, but we do not take that seriously, that is posturing, as “Prime Minister” means nothing. What did you really do about it? People cannot even remember to ask you the question, so I am asking you: What did you do about it? Have you been having any success with exploration?

You need to have your proven reserves increased substantially, what do our proven reserves say in terms of gas? Is that not important, especially since we cannot suddenly decide in 2015 that we are going to agriculture? It is not the kind of thing you can simply decide in one or two years. You cannot bring in foreign investors and say, here are the lands and you are going to have an agricultural revolution in two years. It does not work that way in agriculture; it takes a long time to build it up.

It is easy to destroy, a bulldozer will destroy it, but it takes a long time to build, but human civilization is built on agricultural success. If you are trying to find a way to build this country into what you call a developed country—meaning a serious country as opposed to a “Banana Republic”—then that is one of the foundations you have to attend to.

Mr. Vice-President, the PNM has to try to take itself more seriously and especially the people. Take them into your confidence if you want to make anything of this tremendous windfall that you have. If you want us to take this request for more money seriously, you have to take the people more seriously. You just cannot open a university because there was some feeling that certain people cannot get into the real university. Is that what happened? Not enough people got into the real university, or only certain people in the country were getting into the real university, or having the right grades to get in, and the others who you think should get in could not get in because they could not make the right grades and you thought the solution to that was to create a second-rate university to put them in. I am serious because that is what happened, you created a second-rate university to get people in to get degrees because they are not making the grades to get in the other one.

If that is what happened, it is really poor. I hope that is not what you did because you cannot tell me you actually created something that is going to remain second rate, because right now the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) is

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second rate. [*Interruption*] Yes, it is simplistic and that is what I accuse you of, being simplistic. I accuse the PNM of being simplistic; I do not accuse you of any greater sin. I can say many other things but I do not accuse you of any greater sin, and simplicity is great in some cases but when you are dealing with what we have before us, I do not think it is going to help.

I do not even think we can say put aside the billion, do not spend it and somehow we can use it in 10 or 20 years. It does not work that way so it is still your call, you have to use it. You must put aside some, but I believe the more important thing is what you do with what you use, not how much you put aside. The amount you actually use, how you invest it, and if you are going to invest it in people, you have to raise their level of performance. You cannot invest it in people at the second-rate level, so you have to do something about UTT because it appears to be second rate to me because I have heard nothing about accreditation.

I have heard no one come forward and say we are dealing with the accreditation issue. That is important and I hope the Government does not really get its hands on the University of the West Indies (UWI) because I have a degree from there and if it does, and UWI goes down the drain, all of us who have degrees from UWI become of less and less value over time when the university starts to go down. That is what happens, so do something about it.

What about all the other programmes? What about the technical education field? Do you think that MuST and HYPE really provide serious technical education? I know quite a number of persons who have been to them, people I used to help out by giving them a drop and so forth, and after they go through the first cycle with some paper and cannot do anything with it, there is no place to go, it is a dead end. I am not accusing you of not trying, but I am accusing you of self-praise in a situation in which you really have not even begun. So these programmes could not be meant to be anything but stopgaps, but you have had that for enough years now so it is time to go past them.

Do you want suggestions for your technical schools? What about the technical schools? Why are you not expanding serious technical education like we used to at John S. Donaldson Technical Institute and at the San Fernando Technical Institute? We do not even have people who are fully qualified in welding in this country. For a person to start an industry in South, you have to import welders, you cannot even get serious technically qualified and competent welders. In other words, you are preparing a country for developed country status so you cannot prepare them for half-rate things; you have to take it to a much higher level in terms of technical competence.

You have the blueprint, because before you used to have the oil companies run apprenticeship programmes; that is direct and straightforward. They already have the track record of doing it so tell them to run it again. That programme trained a massive cadre of people in the technical trades to a high level of competence. Do not get carried away with your programme that you have created with all those fancy names; all the acronyms sound nice but do not get carried away with the PR, do not leave it there; get real.

Tell the companies to get back into the apprentice programme so we can have really qualified technical people. You cannot build a country without people who are qualified in the technical fields; a country is not only run by people with university degrees. When a person comes out with a university degree in a technical field like engineering he/she knows nothing and is totally dependent on the technical people around them.

For your entire life as a professional, you will still never learn the things that they know, you will know what you know and together you are a team, but you will never learn what they know in their areas. That is why many of the so-called developed countries do not even place any emphasis on university degrees when they are talking about fields like engineering. Even in the United States of America that is secondary; your qualifications, training and experience in the technical field are what matter.

12.00 midnight

In Germany, you still have to learn bricklaying and how to plaster a wall before you call yourself a civil engineer. You want to build a developed country? Think of it in real terms. What does it take to make a developed country? It takes people who manufacture things that the world wants to buy. So we have to produce people with the level of training, competence and motivation to produce things that people want to buy, and almost anything you produce, if you have the marketing potential, people will want to buy, but it has to be first quality.

I pity the PNM because it is a tremendous burden for them to get the country to develop. Once PNM comes to power, everybody goes to sleep. It is just back to lazing. That is the reality. I do not know how you will change that. It is good and bad for you. Your party benefits because people just love it. At the same time, it is a burden. How do you get anything done?

When I was speaking the other day, I said that the Ministry of National Security was suffering from incompetence in information management. They have no idea what to do with information. However, the Ministry that is really the

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poorest of them all, the worst in terms of performance, is the Ministry of Works and Transport. It is in another world altogether. They cannot build anything. You know how many highways are supposed to have been built?

I was a consultant many years ago on a project to do with the Princes Town Highway. I do not know how long I was working on the one for the East-West Corridor. I see that the interchange has finally started, at least a part of it. The other part of it was going through the port. They have put up tall buildings where the road was supposed to pass. We were making sure there was a bypass to Wrightson Road. Wrightson Road may not be able to take all that traffic in the future, going through Port of Spain, so you needed a bypass. We will have to go through the sea now. That is coordination for you!

The San Fernando/Princes Town Highway cannot go anywhere. We did these studies years ago. I am talking about 2005. The Minister cannot get anything done. The highway to Point Fortin was supposed to be ahead of us. The consultant on that was Trintoplan. A very important consultancy company in this country. They were way ahead. I think they were the ones with that contract, but we hear nothing about it. The Minister cannot say a time frame for the highways to Point Fortin and Princes Town; when we are going to have any highways.

The Prime Minister has made statements over and over about highways to be built all over the place, but the Ministry of Works and Transport cannot build any. There is total incompetence in that area. I do not know why they are giving them more money. To use money, you have to do something. That is why we have traffic problems that we cannot even begin to solve.

Mr. Vice-President: The hon. Senator's speaking time 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. C. Charles: Mr. Vice-President, I honestly did not plan to put you all through this. Forty-five minutes go quickly. I do not see any reason to make you suffer late in the evening, but these are my opinions about the situations we face.

I was saying that the Minister of Works and Transport needs to be attended to by the Prime Minister if he is going to build anything that UDeCott will not build. I can understand why he has to use UDeCott to build anything because he has no Minister of Works and Transport to build things for him. I suppose when Calder Hart has gone through, he has to get someone else: I see Garcia being set up.

Now he is the head of everything—one man heading everything. That is the solution to your problem? You put one man in charge of everything and you think that would solve the problem.

I understand why you want an action man—to get things done. An action man is a great man to have. Usually an action man breaks all the rules. That is dangerous, but that is how he gets things done, especially in an administration which cannot get anybody to work. An action man has to come out of the blue, break all the rules and get things done. The Prime Minister has a whole programme of things he intends to achieve. He will develop the country without the people. In order to do that, he has to forget the people and bring in an action man.

Action men have worked in the past. I am an engineer. *[Interruption]* I have never had a nickname in my life. Madam Attorney General, you are tempting me. As an engineer, I had my concerns when the action man, the then Carlos John, paved all over the country. I said: As an engineer, where is the foundation for the roads? I am also a politician and I realized afterwards what a fantastic achievement it was. If he had not paved the roads then, to this day all those rural communities would still have no roads. With all the windfalls we have had, it is still those paved roads all over the country that are still there. *[Interruption]* We paved roads that were not paved before; unless you do not know rural Trinidad.

I am making the point that with all the money you had, you have not improved all the agricultural access roads; not only that, but roads in rural communities. If you want people to be in agriculture, they have to enjoy rural living. You cannot enjoy rural living if there are no services.

So many years later, we have to praise the man who did that paving work so long ago because that was all that was done in those communities after all those years. With all the billions of dollars that you have spent, you have not improved any of them. *[Interruption]* An action man will break the rules, but he must know which ones to break.

I do not know which rule Calder Hart broke. *[Interruption]* I would like politicians to tell me when they do not break any rule. I am being sympathetic over and above the call of duty. I am being sympathetic to the Prime Minister. He is really just not up to the job. His vision is a superficial one. That is my problem. Get real! You cannot develop the country without the country, and the country is the people who live here. Stop trying to develop the country without the people. Focus on the people! Build the people and you build the country! Build the expertise and the skill! *[Interruption]* Not UTT. That is building an institution

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that cannot even give people certificates yet. First of all, you have to make the people a part of something.

You have a nice Green Paper here. I do not have time for it this evening because my time is almost out. It is part of the expenditure of money. Do you want me to go into all the local government bodies that are here and all the money they ask for and how much money you gave them and tell you about discrimination against this one and that one and so on? I am being nice to you. I am saying that you have a nice Green Paper. I want to point out one flaw in it. I will not be harsh on the Minister, but at page 9, "The Way Forward", Cabinet approval of roles and responsibilities:

Develop proposals and seek Cabinet's approval for new local government structure;

Produce final White Paper for new local government structure;

Produce final White Paper for Cabinet's approval;

Draft legislation and policy document for Cabinet's approval;

Draft Bill for approval by legislative review committee and Cabinet;

Draft Bill regarding new local government legislation and obtain Parliament's approval;

Proclamation of information on legislation for Parliament approval.

No people are involved in that. The way forward has nothing to do with people. At no point are there people playing any role. Nobody is going to the local government bodies or even talking to them in this way forward. The way forward has to do with Cabinet and Parliament. That is the way forward? I do not think that is the way forward.

I want to encourage the Government to be real. Praise yourselves, but please do not stop there. Look at what is happening with the people in the country. Realize that the majority of people are under real pressure and do not feel a part of anything you are doing. They may vote for you because of habit or for whatever reason. Forget that! That still has nothing to do with the fact that the majority of people still are not a part of what you are doing and that they are suffering. Stop trying to build a country that has nothing to do with them, and try to build what we are supposed to be a part of. Attend to the concerns of the people. If you do that, with the money at your disposal, you may actually have some success.

Just for what it is worth to the Government, please take these things seriously. Thank you very much.

Sen. Linus Rogers: Mr. Vice-President, I rise to join this debate because earlier one of the Senators made a comment about loose remarks. I feel compelled to say something about that.

Lots of things have been said about the youths and, if I am not mistaken, someone raised a comment about people with O levels going into the university without A levels. I ask myself what is wrong with that. It made me think that unless you have A levels you cannot get a university degree. [*Interruption*] I did not hear “without five”. If that is the case, I stand corrected. I want to make sure we do not send a message to the youths of this country that you must have A levels to get a university degree. I can point to a number of people who have O levels and went straight to university and have senior positions all over this country. In some respects, O levels have been used as a mechanism to handle what was the limited number of opportunities in the university system, a system which has been expanded. You will recognize that in an expanded system more and more people will be able to go. I do not want us to send the wrong messages to youth.

Sen. Dr. Charles, just now, raised the question of the apprenticeship programmes that existed at some—

Sen. Prof. Deosaran: I heard this remark made time and again and I am grateful for the opportunity to clarify. The statement that people with O levels enter university means that in the case of the University of the West Indies, there is something called a pre-university programme.

12.15 a.m.

They give you an opportunity, with an extra year, admitting you conditionally, with an O level configuration. It is the same thing now with the University of Trinidad and Tobago. The impression must not be created that because you have O levels, you go straight into the university programme. O levels are used as a pre-university programme to prepare you to reach the A level stage, as it were, and then you enter into the mainstream degree programme in both universities.

Sen. L. Rogers: Thank you. I also want to indicate that if you were to leave Trinidad and go to the American system, you would go through a four-year programme, whether you have O levels or A levels. You have a choice of applying for advance credits. That is an option that you have. Even with O levels, you have the option of sitting an exam and, based upon the results, you can also get advance credits. I do not want us to send the wrong message to the youths. That is all I am trying to do.

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I want to go back to the issue of the apprenticeship programme. Let us remember, it was the vision and foresight of a prior PNM administration, recognizing what was happening in the country, that put in place a programme of apprenticeship throughout Trinidad and Tobago. That is what led the foundation for us to have the skilled craftsmen, which gave us Amoco, T&TEC, WASA and Texaco in those days. Those skilled craftsmen allowed our industrial sector to develop. If I am not mistaken, during the period 1991—1995, it was a PNM administration that was again, rebuilding that programme, a programme that was subsequently taken down by the UNC administration. It was again a PNM administration, recognizing that there was going to be a need for skilled craftsmen in Trinidad and Tobago, that put back a programme to ensure that we have trained craftsmen in the country, whenever the need came. Again, remember that the initial programme was taken down by a UNC administration.

I heard Sen. Dr. Charles speak to the issue of engineers. I happen to be one of them. I want to correct him, respectfully. Certainly, in the American system, when you come out of university, basically they date-stamp you with the technology that you have in your brain and they keep measuring you from there. If you came out in 1975, you are date-stamped in 1975. Certainly, the expectation is and was, I am not sure that it has changed, that when you come out it was expected that you would have come out with new information to add to the field. You would have built upon what would have been before you, not that you would not have benefited from all those who have gone before. You would have benefited from them, but you would have added to the field and would have continued to do so.

I now go to a comment made by Sen. Mark. Mr. Vice-President, I think it would be remiss of me if I do not comment on this. If I am not mistaken he said: “bmobile is bad, it spying on you.” I think that is very, very loose talk because we have a population of just 1 million people and we are certainly approaching two million cellphones in this country. He is saying this about an organization that is not in this Senate to defend itself—spying on people. As far as I am aware, that is quite incorrect. What he is doing is, in my view, basically bringing an organization into an action that I know to be false and the organization is not in the Senate to defend itself. I consider that to be very, very loose talk, something that should not, in my view, be allowed.

Sen. Mark: “Wha he talking ‘bout?”

Sen. L. Rogers: It made me wonder whether he has shares in the other organization. [*Interruption*] Yes, Senator, you made the comment in your contribution that *bmobile* is bad and that they are spying on you. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Vice-President: Two people cannot be on their feet at the same time.

Sen. Rahman: I am hoping that he would give way. Sen. Mark seems to be a little uncertain of what you are trying to get at. He did not say what you are saying. He said, with the existence of *bmobile*, the blimps and such things, they can access what you are saying because of the technology. He was not suggesting that *bmobile* was the culprit in the issue.

Sen. L. Rogers: If I may recall what I heard, you said: “*bmobile* is bad, dey spying on you.” You also said: “with the blimp, dey could even hear all that you are saying.” You made two statements, one was on the blimp and one on *bmobile*. It is false and I need to correct it.

Sen. Mark: I would go to my notes. You cannot quote me, because you have no notes before you, so withdraw.

Sen. L. Rogers: I said that based upon what I recall.

Sen. Mark: Withdraw!

Sen. L. Rogers: No, I do not have to withdraw.

Sen. Mark: Unless you have the evidence, you cannot speak or surmise.

Sen. L. Rogers: Sen. Mark, I am taking it from the notes I took when you were speaking.

Sen. Mark: I would bring my notes to refute what you have said.

Sen. L. Rogers: I want him to be careful of the loose talk and the impact it can have, in terms of us.

I am sorry Sen. Seetahal SC is not here because she asked a question concerning copper. I will take a minute and share some information on that. The issue is that copper, from the period 2004 to now, went from \$6.67 per pound to something like \$22.61 per pound. What is driving this is that there has been a significant reduction in the output from mines in South and Central America and Africa. In addition, there has been increased consumption in China, while we also had a decrease, in terms of the refining of copper in China. At the same time, there was a high increase in international demand for copper for consumer items. This has given rise to a large trade, in terms of salvage copper.

How is that copper being accumulated? That copper is being accumulated by persons stealing either telephone cables, transformers, motors or underground power cables. There was a power outage in the Movie Towne area, which was caused by, based upon investigations, persons stealing T&TEC’s copper. We have also had an outage in downtown Port of Spain, within the last month, which was

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also caused by the theft of copper. As these organizations like T&TEC and TSTT take steps to mitigate against copper theft, air condition units are now becoming prime targets for copper thieves. Right now, it is estimated that we have lost, as a country, over \$150 million to \$200 million worth of damage done from copper theft, based on what is happening with T&TEC, Petrotrin and TSTT. It is at crisis proportion where DOMA, based on an article in the *Newsday* of May 24, is asking for a ban on the exportation of copper. It is that bad.

I just thought I might share that information because, in terms of her construction, Sen. Seetahal SC brought up the issue. She said that she is not sure why she was asked to do it, but I thought I would share that information, so that not only Sen. Seetahal SC, but the population at large would know what is happening and why in the telephone industry, there are areas where the lines have been out for an extended period of time. This is because vandals have stolen the copper. TSTT would put back up the cables and within one or two weeks, they would be removed.

This was in the Beetham area where we complained about the black smoke which resulted from the burning of the insulation to get the copper.

Sen. Rahman: What are you doing to stop that matter?

Sen. Browne: There is an investigation being conducted by the Custom and Excise Division.

Sen. L. Rogers: I have shared with you what the issue is. I am aware that the organizations that I have mentioned have been working with the Ministry responsible, to address the issue of how to handle salvage of copper, such that it is not a problem as it is working out to be.

I thank you.

Sen. Michael Annisette: Mr. Vice-President, hon. Senators, I rise to make my contribution in this debate, simply because I was energized and made wise by events over the last week. It has taught me that even when you are vilified of your right to express yourself and stand up jealously for what you believe in, you must take consolation in the lives of people like Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Walter Rodney and all the other greats that have passed through. It has also taught me that you must learn to listen, even to those with hopeless causes and nefarious agendas, but you must continue to say what you believe in, without fear or favour, ill will or malice, even though what you say and believe in do not meet with popular approval. You must stay strong and be independent and not compromise the truth.

I say this against the background in this debate, because we are talking about finances. I think that finance is what drives an economy and it is important that we put some historical facts together, in order to understand what is happening in our society.

While I was listening to most of the Senators, I saw some contradiction in what was being said, because if we want to build a society, set standards, and if we are talking about sustainable development, there is the question of imbuing in people's mind and in our culture that we can stand on our own and that we are not dependent on other people; our culture and how we do things, must reflect our history and antecedents. It is important. Therefore, when people talk about sustainability, and the Caribbean Court of Justice and people refuse to support it, I see it as a contradiction, because in one breath you are talking about having to bring the people in and in another, you are supporting another jurisdiction.

When I looked at some of the appropriations, I think that the Government must take cognizance of the fact that we have to begin to link funding with some kind of results. We cannot continue, as a society and as a people, to do things the same way over and over and expect to get different results. Some of the issues were pointed out by some of the Senators. I paid particular attention. How do you justify coming to this august body and talking about NIS penalties going back to 1999 and no one is held accountable? The rationale and the reasons are not put on the table so that we would avoid making those fundamental mistakes in the future. I think that it is important for Trinidad and Tobago. We must learn from our mistakes. As an emerging democracy, and a new society that is developing, we would have our problems.

12.30 a.m.

I want to talk about the education system. I was taken aback when Senators made the statement that UTT is not necessary, and I wondered in what context. Given the fact that what is happening in the world; given the fact that the University of the West Indies has outgrown itself; and given the fact that because of the population of Trinidad and Tobago there is need for a university, the UTT is serving a useful purpose that I can speak about, because I am involved. In the context of the offshore industry where we represent workers, most of the graduates that are coming out from the UTT are grabbed by international companies in the offshore sector. We have to begin to understand that.

I am happy because I will be attending my daughter's graduation on Friday coming in the United States of America. When she left here, she was not too good

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in Mathematics as far as I am concerned. What was revealing is that she was able to go into the American system and excel to the extent that her grades are at a high level. So, while we condemn our system of education, we do not pay attention to the benefits of our education system, because the intention is always to criticize and not to look at the end result of what is happening.

I know, as a matter of fact, that the great masses of our country pray every day that Trinidad and Tobago would be a moral, humane and caring society so that when it matures it would progressively guarantee the happiness of all citizens. I say that in the context of the infancy of our brand new society. We have the possibilities to act in ways that would force the foreseeable future and to infuse values in our very being as a people.

I want to quote a part of a proverb that I think should be guiding what we do in this august body and it says: "Withhold not from them to whom it is due when it is in the power of thy hands to do". There are some things that have been expressed and I share some of the views. I do not support the view that to go down the road to subsidy is a bad thing is something in our society that we have to be careful about.

When I look at what is happening with the sub-prime rates and what is happening in the United States of America and all over the world—the question about the market forces, and how they work has been thrown through the window. I am seeing the Federal Government and even central banks intervening in order to stem the tide. As a people, as a country and as a Government, that should tell us something. I am warning the Government that we have to be careful that we do not blindly take up a philosophy of economics that speaks to a particular kind of philosophy, and which has no real bearing and historical root in terms of our culture and how we do business. We have to be careful.

Our solution has to be home-grown. Our solution has to take into consideration the realities of Trinidad and Tobago as opposed to the realities of other societies. Yes, we may learn from them, but in learning from them we must always take into consideration what is our history and what our realities are.

One of my colleagues talked about inflation and he attempted to tie inflation with wages, and it got me worried. I am worried because I cannot understand that in a society that has all this money, we continue to pay workers \$9 an hour. We continue to do it in the context of the question of rising food prices. The Minister made a correct statement, that the days for cheap food are over. If he is saying so, what is happening with wages? If persons with fixed income and low income

wages do not move up to meet that reality, what you are telling me and the workers is that work makes no sense. If I am working and my wages cannot do the things that I am supposed to do, you are telling me do not work, and the question of productivity and the question of competitiveness go through the window.

If we are in a global market, the question of competitiveness and productivity are critical and important if we have to survive. It is in this context that I am saying what is required in Trinidad and Tobago and even in the Caribbean is a revolution that is psychological in nature, and that revolution has to be in terms of our work attitudes, our social norms, our behaviours and our outlook. I think it is important, and we need to look at it.

If we are serious about bringing the people into the system—I do not know of any system, and I have studied all the systems and I have read from the Paris Commune right up—where everybody in the society can build consensus. That is impossible. If we do not begin as a society, as a people and as a government to say that productivity, profit and wages must have a true relationship, then we are going to have all the kinds of problems that we have in the society. If we do not understand the reason for the social problems that we have in our country, we will continue to have the social problems.

Some Members spoke in the context of “we” versus “us”. The error was made on both sides, and we have to get away from that. We have to be nationalist in our thinking, and we have to put Trinidad and Tobago first. That has to be our priority. It cannot be that everything that is happening is caused by the Government. Yes, the Government has certain responsibilities, but we cannot exclude ourselves from what is happening in the society if we are serious about taking this beloved country Trinidad and Tobago forward.

From where I sit, I am making a plea to Senators on both sides and, more particularly, to the Government—I am going to give an example of something that has me disturbed. We continue to ask the Government to look at the energy sector and the maritime offshore sectors. We continue to say to the Government that the time has come when Government’s policies must be reflective of local content in the offshore and maritime sectors, but we cannot continue in our society where we have offshore maritime foreigners coming in and working to the detriment of the local seafarers and offshore workers. That is what we are talking about. That is not what is called sustainable development.

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While there is talk about the Chinese workers, I have made the statement and I would continue to make the statement that we have to be honest with ourselves, and we must not use things conveniently. Everybody knows—if we want to be honest—that because of the astronomical growth in the construction industry in Trinidad and Tobago, the labour force in Trinidad and Tobago, as it relates to the construction labour force, cannot meet the demands that are required and, as a consequence, we are seeing what is happening, not only in Trinidad, but in most countries where this kind of development is going on.

Recently, I was in the Bahamas and there are over 10,000 foreign workers working there. That is how a society operates. As a society progresses, certain things become obsolete. We have to understand that. I am going to make it clear here today and I am going to be the first one to stand up against the Government if I know and I believe that workers are coming in here to work, when we have the labour to do that particular job. If we do not have the labour and we want to develop, then we need to do what is being done. I always make the point that if the United States of America, England and even Panama—when they were building the canal they took that particular route, because they wanted it to be developed.

I want to tell the hon. Minister that history has shown that the question of government's involvement with respect to the question of subsidies is what drives most of the economies to the point where they have reached to a certain developmental level, and that they could do away with subsidies. [*Desk thumping*]

Having said that, if we read and we understand what is happening in the world—as we know the WTO discussions have broken down, because of the same subsidy that we are talking about. Certain developed countries do not want to give up subsidies, because there are unfair practices and they make farming communities like Brazil, India and other countries suffer. That is an economic reality. So, while they are telling you to give it up, they are practising what they are asking you to give up. We have to learn from that because if we do not learn we are going to make the same mistakes.

I am making a plea for pensioners; workers who are on fixed income and workers who are on low income, for the Government to do something now in order to help them. [*Desk thumping*] We cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the realities that are happening with food prices. I paid \$113 for a pack of milk, and if you are working for \$9 an hour, work out how many hours you have to work in order to purchase a pack of milk in Trinidad and Tobago, and then you will understand the

kind of economic pressure that they have to face. I am saying we must reconsider the question and put measures in place to deal with this group of people. We have to learn about what is happening in other countries.

In conclusion, I want to say that when we look at the Bill, some things make sense and others do not. The point I am trying to make is that we have to change our modus operandi and demonstrate in this forum which is the highest forum. We have the question of standards and the question of accountability, but how we do business must be demonstrated at this forum if we are serious about taking Trinidad and Tobago to another level.

12.45 a.m.

We cannot come here and talk about it and then in our work do not demonstrate the kind of benchmark and standards that are necessary to take us to that vision where we want to go. I have explicit confidence in the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are bright; we are gifted; we are innovative and nobody is going to get me down that slippery slope and doomsday. We will survive as a people; we will survive as a country, because we are gifted and I know that if we are given the tools to work, we can work.

Therefore, I am asking the Government to take on board some of the points that I have raised, because I think it is fundamental. I am speaking in the context from the man on the street, whom I relate to and talk to everyday. You must take into consideration some of those things that I am saying.

Finally, the question of the gas subsidy; we have to be very careful with that because that has all kinds of implications. I want to finally say, for those who talk about wages; they must understand that an economy works in a particular way. An economy is about people. An economy is about the confidence of people in your country. If you have confidence in your economy it is going to grow. Your economy speaks to productivity; your economy speaks to proper wages. If you have proper wages people are going to buy goods. If people buy goods, people will produce more. If people produce more you will get more work, and that is how an economy operates. The question of how we diversify the economy; how we look at the offshore as opposed to the onshore economy is critical to Trinidad and Tobago if we are serious about moving forward.

I thank you.

Sen. Joel Primus: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. A very special good morning to our hon. Senators. It is indeed a pleasure to be given the opportunity to address the Senate this morning. I am indeed humbled by this

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opportunity and I would like to take this opportunity to speak in support of the Supplementation and Variation of the Appropriation Act, 2008 as laid in the Senate earlier on this afternoon.

As a young person I am very pleased to be here and I have been here for a couple Tuesdays now. I have had the opportunity to sit, listen and follow all of the contributions, once I am here Tuesday after Tuesday. Whilst I must say that I, in fact, value every contribution made in the Senate and I respect all of those contributions even though I may not necessarily agree with them, this morning I want to commend Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran and Sen. Helen Drayton for what I think were in fact very sober and commendable contributions last evening to the debate on this Bill. [*Desk thumping*]

I say so because clearly out of their contributions they went to a great length to demonstrate responsibility in their contributions and they were very different and showed a level of leadership that young persons in all aspects and sectors of our society are looking for from our leaders. I want to say on the question of leaders that we are all leaders here this morning. More importantly, everyone within our country, from the smallest to the highest; from the parent at the home, straight across the board, it is my respectful view that everyone has some form of leadership capabilities. Even the same groupings of young persons that some of our Opposition Senators allude to emanating anti-social behaviour, the issues of crime and the challenge that is facing our country, they are in fact influenced by someone who possesses some level of leadership qualities, even if it is negative.

The question to us is, how are we going to harness the good qualities and the right leadership capabilities to help develop our country. My concern is that one of the fundamental issues, really and truly, has been the question of bad parenting, which has given rise to some of these social ills. And I heard our Senators on the Opposition side, from time to time, allude to a number of things, even going to the point of using emotive language to instil fear. If someone outside of Trinidad and Tobago is listening, they will really think that we are on the brink of destruction and there is no peace and there is no place that can be called home.

For me, as a young person, that is very disappointing because when I listened to our Opposition colleagues who, in my view, constitute part of the governance process of our country, speak like this, it leaves me reason for concern, because the level of fear and emotive language goes to the extent where a Senator could be listening to the radio, but say that they are hearing the parent crying blood and tears. I am listening to the radio you know, but I am hearing the mother crying

blood and tears. And that is the level of emotionalism and responsibility that is being placed in the *Hansard* record here in the debate of this Parliament.

I want to say that unlike the Senators on the other side, who constitute part of the Opposition team, as well as their strategists; whatever little clique or grouping that constitutes part of their strategy that seeks to say to this national community that there is no hope for Trinidad and Tobago; it is our view that once we have people in our country such as the Independent Senators, Sen. Prof. Deosaran and all the others, as well as the People's National Movement Government and citizens in this country committed to the development of this country, we will never see this country go to the point of destruction as they have said and as they continue to be saying from time to time in this Senate. I am committing myself in here, out of here, wherever I go as a young person in this country, to do whatever is within my power and my limited reach to make a contribution to ensure that this place that I call home is the best place on earth, because I am not going anywhere. [*Desk thumping*]

Therefore, this morning, I call on the Opposition Senators to show a level of responsibility and really contribute in a significant way, in making prudent recommendations to the Government on measures which can improve the process of the governance of this country. We speak about the social ills, and we condemn many of the programmes—HYPE and MuST—but as a result of the challenge that we face in our country with regard to parenting, every one of those programmes are in fact programmes that are now constituted in such a way that they deal with self-esteem issues; defining masculine issues; health and family life education, which are a number of critical areas that our young people and other persons at different levels of our society are faced with.

All of those training programmes not only deal with skills but they deal with the overall development of the individual. When we condemn those programmes to the extent that we want to score cheap political points and we continue to politic with the sole objective of making political points, I call on the Opposition Senators to demonstrate a greater level of responsibility, if that is within their capacity to so do.

I am also saying that on this side, we in the PNM—and the PNM has always produced leaders that are of the highest quality and our Prime Minister, the hon. Patrick Manning is such a leader. I am asking the Senators on the Opposition side to consider—and it was said earlier this evening in the debate that there is a level of irresponsibility that is demonstrated on that side, that speaks and gives rise to issues and areas such as civil disobedience; shouting it from the roof top and

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waiting for somebody to get on; to march around the Parliament; to shut down Parliament and all those sorts of emotive things. I am calling upon our Senators, as a young person, to be responsible in this regard.

When you meet with those same vendors, as we have seen, because of bad behaviour in this same Senate, and we say, listen, out of this Senate for not demonstrating leadership by example and you go to incite and encourage the same vendors to continue to break the law, as Sen. Prof. Deosaran said, you are only giving rise to more antisocial behaviour in other sectors of this society. I am calling for a greater level of responsibility on the part of the Opposition Senators and the UNC Alliance administration of which Sen. Dr. Carson Charles is a part.

I do not want to dwell too much on the whole question of the Opposition Senators and their responsibility because obviously from time to time, it is quite clear that they are working very hard for their salaries and the only focus on earning their salaries is at the expense of the population and our pleas here may really and truly fall on deaf ears. [*Crosstalk*]

Therefore, I will focus our attention on the question of a PNM Government's role to ensure the equitable distribution of the national wealth to the national community. The oil and gas resources that we speak about, I want to say that I have seen over the last six years a clear demonstration on the part of the PNM Government to tackle key issues in three sectors of the society at all levels and by so doing, this \$3 billion that we have been speaking about all afternoon into the wee hours of this morning is another measure geared at distributing the national wealth to the population.

May I turn our attention very quickly to two key areas. Under Head 39, the Ministry of Public Utilities on the National Social Improvement Programme; there is an allocation there. I want to clarify and to put another perspective in the domain of this Senate, because over and over we are hearing about tall buildings, tall buildings and tall buildings. I want to clear the record this morning on the misrepresentation in terms of the reality as to what this Government has been doing, in terms of the development of the infrastructure of this country.

We could talk about tall buildings and we could condemn from the Performing Arts Academy go right back, but none can deny that these are critical infrastructures that are required for the overall development and moving of this country forward. So, they are required; they are in fact a necessity for the development of this country.

Whilst the Government is building those big buildings—as you all like to say—the Government is also spending money in the local communities

throughout Trinidad and Tobago to develop the local infrastructure in communities. Nobody is talking about that; they are only saying we are building tall buildings, but the Government is in fact developing holistically whole catchment block communities from Mayaro to Point Fortin, in the entire Central Trinidad, the entire North-West and East-West Corridors of this country and in Tobago, the Government is working systematically to develop the local infrastructure of communities. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

I will tell you what this Government is not doing. Somebody has been saying that this Government is about propaganda. If this PNM Government is really about propaganda, then this whole country would know that you all are, in fact, speaking untruth. Because we would have done as the UNC would have done for the last five years when they were in power, and every minute when you turn on the television you would have seen a Government programme, to try to convince the population that you all did in five years what the PNM could not do in 30 years. When that was not in fact, true.

I am saying if you travel across this country you would see the most unprecedented level of development in terms of road, drain, footpath, recreation facility, housing, across the board. Take a travel! Take a travel, there are several special purpose state enterprises, whose sole responsibility is in fact to develop the local infrastructure. So, whilst you are only speaking about tall buildings, what you all are not telling the population is that the Government is doing this, but the Government is also taking care of the basic infrastructure across the land; be patient, your community will be next.

That is responsible leadership as part of the governance process of this country. What I would have expected a responsible Opposition to do is say, listen, what we can do is, we can seek ways to improve the quality of the output. We can seek ways to do this thing better and more efficient, and that is not coming out. I am disappointed as a young person and I am saying let us demonstrate the quality of leadership that young persons in this country will be able to emanate in time to come. [*Desk thumping*]

1.00 a.m.

Sen. Dr. Charles: Will you give way? I thank the hon. Senator for giving way. I just had two questions to ask him. One was whether he can identify any road that the Government actually built in the past five years and the other was, if he thought in terms of leadership that giving contracts for things like CEPEP, things like painting buildings and so on to known gang leaders might have something to do with the crime wave that we cannot get away from now?

Sen. J. Primus: Senator, I want to say to you that I am not aware—

Hon. Senator: Do not get sidetracked, do not get sidetracked.

Sen. J. Primus: No, I am not being sidetracked—of those facts and if that is a fact then you have a responsibility to treat with that fact in such a way, which is to be responsible and report it to the police again. But I am not aware that the Government is giving away contracts to gang leaders.

I want to continue this morning and to say to you, Senator, that you do not cross the Caroni Bridge, clearly, because you would have seen an expansion into a third lane, you would have seen an expansion taking place from Grand Bazaar. Clearly, you do not go further up East because there is an expansion of the highway going up further East. I can tell you of several roads that are being constructed across South. There are several roads that are being constructed in South and in the rural local communities that have been neglected; the Government is in fact treating with road infrastructure and development. Probably you could join our Minister in the Ministry of Finance to take a tour of such facilities and roads where you can see a demonstration of where the projects are in fact taking place. I am encouraging you to do that. If it is you are saying that you are not aware of such, I am encouraging you to join our Minister and go on a tour and see a demonstration of Government's activities in these communities.

We are speaking about contractors and so forth. One would recall that during the tenure of the UNC administration in government a certain contractor who is now fighting extradition to the US would have benefited in excess of hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts in just 21 months of UNC's governance. I am saying to us this morning, the talk about cliques and all of those things is very disappointing, because when one looks at the demonstration of the PNM's management of the country, instead of giving one man hundreds of millions of dollars of contract, those same contracts that are in fact being criticized, those same moneys that are being allocated to these special purpose state enterprises, Government has made a policy that says, contracts which are one million dollars and under must go to small and local community contractors. [*Desk thumping*]

I can speak in one sector of over 167 contractors in one sector alone, of those 160-plus contracts, 140-plus have been first time and new contractors. So, whereas in a previous incarnation you all would have given hundreds of millions to one man, this Government is giving hundreds of millions to several hundreds of persons. [*Desk thumping*] That is the equitable distribution of the national wealth to the people of this country [*Desk thumping*] and that speaks to responsible

governance. We have also gone one step further, the very Nedco that you all have condemned, that same structure is working and it is providing an avenue and an opportunity for those persons to access funding for the development of their business. And when we speak about the diversification of the economy, this is also a sector in which the Government is developing the small business and the micro enterprises.

I am saying to us today in this small contribution that if we really and truly settle down ourselves, as Sen. Helen Drayton said and focus on the governance of this country, together as a people, being objective, being fair and critical in our analysis and recommendation, this country has far to go. But we cannot expect that of you all, because the intent in the mind is how can I get back in government because my obsession is, plenty money. I am saying that that is the call and that is what I am hearing from you all when I sit here and listen, and I have been listening for sometime. It is all about plenty money, and it is the talk that makes me wonder, well, what is really the problem? Is it that because we are here and you all are there and you all cannot have control over the money that is the obsession? These are some of the questions that I have been asking myself seriously, because really and truly I am here as part of this process because I am committed to my country, and I believe that the People's National Movement is the best place, the best organization and the best forum to contribute to the development of this nation.

I am saying to us if we look at one final Head, Head 21: Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment, squatter relocation, this Government is embarked upon a policy which is trying to do this, stop the continuous illegal squatting, but not only stop squatting, not break down people's homes, but while we put a clamp on squatting, we ensure that there is another opportunity for those persons to move from a situation where their standard of living is below what is acceptable as a developing country and there is a place that they can call home.

Because in these squatting homes there are children, and when the Government will move them from such a setting to a proper home facility where they can flush a toilet, they can turn on a light switch and they can have access to electricity, running water and have basic infrastructure to access their homes, it means that their quality of livelihood, their education, their whole pride and hope and the way they see themselves will improve and over the next few years all of those things will contribute to the reduction in some of the social ills. Not only that, it will give those very said children an opportunity to study in an environment that is acceptable. And I am saying that this is in fact one of the ways in which this Government is ensuring that it governs this country in a proper manner.

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So in closing this morning, I just want to say that whether I am here or if I am not here, whether I am given an opportunity to come back here, I always look on. I look on at what happens in here, I look on at how you all behave outside of here, and the same way I am looking—and you think that only “we” interested in this, that is not the case. There are many likeminded young persons all over this country, and I disagree with you when you want to paint our young persons as being limited. That is not the case! Our young people are in fact very much committed to this country, but it is the kind of behaviour and examples that are emanating in the body politic that is disappointing and distracting them.

So, therefore, we in the PNM will continue to commit, we will continue to work under a leadership that is working, under a leadership that has been showing example and statesmanship to this country on the way you conduct yourself as a leader and what is expected of you, we will work together with this leader and we will do whatever it has to take to ensure that we create a better future for our children to come.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Primus, I would just like to congratulate you on your maiden speech. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Gail Merhair: Mr. Vice-President, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to say a few words on the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2008.

First of all, I think we need to improve proper accountability with the budgeting process before us. I think efficient budgeting practices would mean access to proper planning and it would make our proper planning process a lot easier. I would like to refer to the Auditor General's report of the public accounts, and in particular, to Appendix VIII, cases of overpayment and recoveries. In going through this appendix I noticed that in a lot of areas moneys were overpaid and it was never recovered. I would perhaps like to find out why, if not at this point in time but probably when the budget is presented. It is necessary, I think, that we know exactly why was money overpaid, and in some cases, let us take for example in the Ministry of National Security, under Defence Force: \$1,227 billion were overpaid, but the amount recovered was only \$329—

Hon. Senator: It was not \$1 billion.

Sen. G. Merhair: Yes, \$1,227,026.69.

Sen. Seetahal SC: One million.

Sen. G. Merhair: Okay. And in other areas of Appendix VIII continued, under the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Utilities, the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, there are a lot of overpayments, and in terms of the recoveries we find that there is a big difference between the two.

Secondly, in Appendix IX(1), there seems to be cases of theft and losses of more than \$5,000. In the case of the Ministry of Education, I noticed that it was stated at the bottom in a note that there were losses of buildings because of properties destroyed by fire, and I am just wondering here, were these properties covered by insurance, and if so, when would the matter be settled. In Appendix IX(2) there is another set of cases of theft and losses of less than \$5,000, and this amounts to \$114,091. It would seem in terms of accounting, the questions here need to be answered.

Now, on another point, I would not normally support the removal of the gas subsidy and I think that that seems to be a common trend in many of the contributions here this afternoon. But doing some research, it is more than factual that the oil prices would likely reach more than US \$200 per barrel in the not too distant future, and it would make good economic sense to review our current policy. How long can our economy sustain paying this gas subsidy, one might ask? In some businesses—over the weekend I had the pleasure of learning that businesses bringing or importing goods into Trinidad and Tobago now have to pay an energy surcharge on containers being imported and that amounts to close to US \$1,200.

I have two documents here before me and at this hour of the morning I would not burden my colleagues with reading most of it. However, I would read the conclusion, and this is a World Bank Group report: “Financial and Private Sector Development”, August 2006, and, basically, the report goes on to make a case for the removal of oil and gas subsidy, and it went on to say:

“...of 38 developing countries...January 2004—May 2006, 14 countries suspended market-based pricing...”

It goes on to say:

“...12 others...had already controlled prices...23 countries reduced taxes on petroleum products to help offset the higher costs.”

But I will just read the conclusion which is just a few lines and perhaps you can indulge me:

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“Fuel price subsidies help the poor, but at a large cost to society and to governments. Governments should look for opportunities to move away from fuel price subsidies as rapidly as possible and replace them with targeted assistance to the poor. Preparatory work to identify beneficiaries and design efficient ways to deliver assistance should be given high priority, especially since high oil prices are likely to continue in the coming years.”

I have another report on hand from the “IMFSurvey Magazine”, March 20, 2008. This article is entitled: “Managing Surging Oil Prices in the Developing World”, and the last paragraph said in conclusion:

“Countries that don’t let the market operate by passing on to consumers the full cost of oil price hikes risk incurring large fiscal costs (through higher generalized subsidies and forgone petroleum revenues). But well-targeted safety nets can mitigate the impact of higher petroleum prices on the poor, while ensuring a sustainable fiscal position.”

1.15 a.m.

We see from going through a number of Heads, moneys were given to Head 21 under the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment for the establishment of a Tucker Valley Farm and also surveillance of the Chaguaramas peninsula. Under Head 22, the Ministry of National Security, we see the fire service getting \$93 million. Under the same Head we see the Immigration Department getting funding, and contract employment of \$5 million under the Police Service Support Unit. It is rather enlightening to see that moneys are being given to crime analysts and investigating assistants.

Under Head 43 on page 19, we see moneys given to contracted services for the Drainage Division. We also see moneys being given to the Public Transport Service Corporation to acquire new buses. I could go on and on with what has been given. I take another slant, as my other Independent Senators have, really and truly, exhausted all the accountability and transparency for the evening.

It is my hope that by looking at all these appropriations being given, we as a society, and I certainly, would be expecting more from the Government when they present their fiscal presentation for 2008/2009. With all these additional appropriations, I expect to see a better health care system.

Mr. Vice-President, my colleague, Sen. Nicholson-Alfred, spoke about the Tobago hospital. A couple weeks ago, I was at the West Shore Medical Private Hospital, and I witnessed a lady who came from Tobago who had to fly in her

18-year-old daughter to get intensive care treatment. The daughter was transferred to the Mount Hope medical facility and, of course, there was no proper ICU care there, so she had to be taken to West Shore Medical. The young lady eventually passed away. I was at the facility when she passed away, and it was not a nice place to be, because I had a death in my family as well a few weeks earlier. Not having money for proper ICU health care in Trinidad and Tobago is a crying shame to the citizens of this country. I felt for that lady from Tobago who had to sleep in the waiting room of West Shore while her daughter was being treated. I am looking forward to seeing a hospital in Tobago. I am looking forward to seeing people in Trinidad and Tobago being given better health care services. I am looking forward to seeing some people not being depressed by flooding.

If we are to remove the gas subsidy, and I suspect that we might have to, I hope that it is targeted and gradual. I also hope that people would enjoy the petro dollars of Trinidad and Tobago and, at least, they would be able to say that money was spent for them to receive better health care.

I am very glad that some of my colleagues on the other end articulated the point that they were working as a team. Perhaps, they could take the message to the hon. Minister of Works and Transport that since 2005, in my previous incarnation as President of the San Juan Business Association, we have been pleading with the Minister to do something about the flooding that, not only the banks, but also the businesses experience in Barataria. I hope my colleagues could, in fact, help me with this situation, because I know not only in the Barataria area, but in a lot of other areas, people have a lot of problems with flooding; not only businesses, but ordinary citizens as well, whether it be farmlands and so forth.

We expect to see some better roads. I expect to see a more efficient public transportation system with the acquisition of buses. With those moneys going to the Ministry of National Security, it is my hope that I would see a higher detection rate in the next couple of months and an increase in the apprehension rate of perpetrators who terrorize the innocent citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hopefully when the next budget is presented, I would see greater accountability in terms of the budgeting process. Perhaps, at that point in time, the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources would assist us in giving some innovative and creative methods to deal with a comprehensive agricultural policy that is long awaited.

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Mr. Vice-President, I am looking forward, after the appropriation to all these various areas, to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago experiencing some of the petro dollars at work.

I thank you.

Sen. Dr. Adesh Nanan: Mr. Vice-President, I rise to make my contribution on this Bill. As I do so, I survey the landscape at this particular point in time in the debate. What does the landscape reveal? A 27-year-old businessman shot and killed in Felicity; an 8-year-old girl missing and now found murdered.

I listened to contributions from the Government Senators, and with particular interest to Sen. Primus who made references and said that the Opposition forms part of the governance structure. The UNC-A is the alternative government. In my contribution, in addition to criticizing, I will give some recommendations, because as the alternative government we have to demonstrate to the population why we should be there and you should be here.

I start with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, because today we were given seeds and a pamphlet reading, "Grow what you eat and eat what you grow". I did not see the Minister signing this particular pamphlet; he probably never even saw the pamphlet that was being circulated.

We heard in this debate something with respect to the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources needs to clear the air with respect to the Central Experiment Station, the research division of his Ministry. The staff in that particular unit is over 300. It is rumoured that UTT would be taking on the functions of the Central Experiment Station.

What is the role of this particular research division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources? The Minister stood up to make a clarification and mentioned that he sees the farmers as the backbone in terms of agricultural growth. How can the Minister make a statement like that, when the main supporting unit for farmers in Trinidad and Tobago, is really this experiment station? This experiment station gives out free advice to these farmers. If they want to do soil tests, this particular research division does it free of charge. They would give advice that if the soil is too acid you may need to use lime. In fact, they can actually plot the acreage to say what would be the production levels. It is a major plank in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and for the support of farmers.

It was rumoured that this particular unit was going to be subsumed in UTT, which would be related to teaching. Do not forget that the Quarantine Unit, in terms of the plant protection laws, resides with this particular unit. This unit also gives advice on recommendations to farmers on the selection of fertilizers, how to plow the land, the irrigation system required and the nutrient value that they need to put in place. We are dealing with agriculture and food production.

Sen. Ramkhelawan spoke about food security. I have to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. Clearly, there is no food security plan. In fact, a view is being expressed that the Minister is being marginalized, because that main driving unit in the Ministry is being taken away and placed in the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Is there any planning?

In this debate we have heard of poor planning generally. In terms of this particular unit and its functions, what would happen to the 300 staff members who have done so much work in that particular division? You would remember with the mealy bug situation, it was this unit that was responsible for dealing with the infestation in Trinidad and Tobago. It has a history in terms of its function, so to have this particular unit moved and emasculated from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources—I call upon the Minister to clear the air with respect to this particular unit at Centeno. If we are talking about a food security plan, this particular unit must remain in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

That Ministry now has the responsibility for the National Reforestation Programme. It was formerly under the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. We see an allocation for the National Reforestation and Watershed Management. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources needs to take control of his Ministry. A unit has been set up that would take hard working individuals from the Forestry Division and second them to this particular unit, and pay them a higher salary. The Forestry Division was handling the National Reforestation and Watershed Management Programme, but somebody saw it fit—I would not call names—to form a new unit, pay higher salaries and get their friends and family into this particular unit.

Sen. Primus spoke about the governance structure and his passion for Trinidad and Tobago. How can you be so passionate for Trinidad and Tobago when you know clearly what is happening with friends and family in the various ministries? With the National Reforestation and Watershed Management Programme, it could take place. It was being run in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, so the Minister needs to take charge.

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We heard from Sen. Dr. Kernahan of the role and responsibility of reforestation and its importance. When I am dealing with that programme, it brings me to an area of concern with respect to the degradation of our vegetation as a whole. What is happening with our quarry policy? We are seeing illegal quarrying taking place all over the country with the removal of vegetation.

In fact, as part of the policy of the UNC government, any quarry operator who intended to leave the site, must return the site to how it was before, in terms of the vegetation that was there.

1.30 a.m.

We are seeing in terms of illegal quarrying complaints on a daily basis of the pollution of our rivers and silting of our watercourses, so when we are dealing with the National Reforestation and Watershed Management, we also have to deal with what is happening with the existing vegetation.

We have heard of bulldozers in Union and hundreds of hectares being bulldozed and there was a report that the bee-keepers in that particular area were up in arms because there were a lot of bee-keepers in Union, that La Brea area and of course, by the destruction of the vegetation, that is a whole industry that collapsed under the PNM administration. That is the caring and nurturing PNM.

In this debate, we heard about the Secondary School Education Plan, Sen. Lezama made reference to a particular situation in terms of a location of a school, but I also want to put that in perspective in terms of the universal secondary education and I want to clear a statement made in this Senate as well as in the other place with respect to the On-the-Job Training programme or the National Apprenticeship System.

Mr. Vice-President, as the former Minister of Education, at that time, the National Apprenticeship System was being run through the Ministry of Education and an audit was done on my watch and it was discovered that of a \$21 million allocation, almost three-quarters of that went into administrative costs, so we are talking about close to \$12 million—\$14 million in administrative costs, and that is why that programme had to be re-evaluated in terms of its success. So it was not that the UNC stopped the programme.

When the United National Congress government came into office from 1995—2001 that particular programme was run by the PNM administration but all that was done in terms of the evaluation and success of the programme was that the beneficiaries were not the particular apprentices in the programme but more

the administration of the programme. That was the reason. It is not that the UNC shut down the programme because they did not want it to take place. At the same time, we were running the retraining for displaced workers programme throughout the country through the Ministry of Education, so you cannot say that we were not in favour of training, that is a misnomer in this House as well as the other. I hope that has cleared up that matter.

I will now go back to the issue with respect to the location of the school and the situation with universal secondary education. I want to ask the Government about A level colleges because it has been in their document a few years and none has been constructed. Have you seen any construction of A level colleges in this country?

When we came into office in 1995, there was a programme of the post primary centres undertaken by the PNM, this was run because there were no places for secondary school students. We continued with the construction exercise and re-evaluated that particular programme because we saw the benefits, but could not get teachers because of a situation developing with respect to TTUTA and a confrontation with contract arrangements for these teachers.

We decided that we would utilize the World Bank with that particular loan which was part of the Universal Secondary Education Loan Programme, and the Government decided to utilize another loan, the IADB to build secondary schools throughout the country. We heard from Sen. Dr. Kernahan that it was said the Matura High School and the Blanchisseuse High School, some of the schools we built were for parrots and “douens”. We have seen the benefits of these high schools. We also built schools in the Manzanilla area, so in terms of the benefits the student population has benefited immensely from the education thrust under the vision of the political leader and then Prime Minister, the hon. Basdeo Panday.

So when you single out one area of the location of a school, that is trying to score political points. You need to look at the bigger picture and the benefits of the higher education thrust at that particular time. It was done not with a budget of \$42 billion but, if I recall, the budget at the ministry at that time was \$1.6 billion or even less and out of that, 75 per cent was for salaries and wages. So we had very little in terms of a Public Sector Investment Programme to the education thrust.

This document speaks about an allocation of telephones for Internet in primary schools and again under the former Minister of Education, we have seen many primary schools in this country that have built computer laboratories on their own with the help of their community and fund-raising events and for almost two years have not seen one computer in those labs in spite of documents coming

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budget after budget stating computers are being placed in primary schools on a phased basis. If you do a check in primary schools you would still see there are no computers in some of them.

So the Minister of Education in terms of computerization of the primary schools has totally failed in that regard. Having this allocation, I do not know what benefits it will have in terms of Internet access because many schools do not have computers. We know we do not have much control in saying yea or nay in this money Bill, but it gives us an opportunity.

I have dealt with the education situation and some of the concerns raised in terms of the particular location of children. The other issue I want to deal with is the Ministry of Health because there is an allocation here with respect to the diabetes services initiative of just over \$9.1 million. We say that the Johns Hopkins Medical Institute is involved—yes it was a great programme but we have to ask the question because the institute is a private one, business oriented and is not doing us any favour. In terms of diabetes and its management, why can our local providers not do a job like that? Why do we have to go to Johns Hopkins Medical Institute for a model of care for diabetes services?

What is the diabetes service all about? There are different angles with respect to diabetes management. You have a situation where there is a tertiary stage of diabetes where you have diabetic retinopathy which is blindness. Because of the diabetes in this country—in fact, in many of our hospitals many of the patients go to remove a toe or a limb because of poor management at the primary health care facility, or in the environment in the home and many of the cases are due to ulcers.

So there are different levels of a diabetic service initiative that can be provided. You first need to have the population's statistics, and we have heard from Sen. Prof. Deosaran in terms of the possible causes of the stress factors. Diabetes, in fact, goes even further out of the realm of diabetes because it is a chronic disease, so it goes into chronic disease management and we have to ask the question: Does the Government have a programme for that, because we have to identify in the population the risk factor for chronic disease. When you are doing so you will get that information from patients coming to the various health centres so you can build up a database in terms of your population dynamics, you can identify the persons having this chronic disease, or those who have the risk factors for it and at that point you will make the difference.

Mr. Vice-President, it is much cheaper to deal with this particular area; in fact, in our country, there were many diabetic camps where you could interact with

other diabetics. Many of the problems we have here are due to non-compliance because when a young person is diagnosed with diabetes there is a situation where, because of non-compliance they go quickly into the advanced stages of diabetes. What has been found in peer counselling and these diabetic camps is that there is an opportunity where you can manage the patient at that level just by interaction within the home environment and the groups.

The non-governmental organizations also have to play a role in chronic disease management. You have that situation where you can manage at that level especially the young diabetic who needs to understand why it is necessary to take insulin—if he is doing so—because he can end up at the other end of the spectrum where he has to be admitted to the hospital. You have that environment where you can create a diabetic control centre.

In fact, what this particular model can be utilized for is to move from the medical scenario to the community management of these chronic diseases. You also have to factor in the admittance of the diabetic to the hospital and you may not have the facilities for this particular treatment. As I said before, the analysis is internationally recognized for the testing of glucose. You do a blood test for the glucose molecule attached to the haemoglobin—and the red blood cells lifespan, if I recall, is 120 days—so you can do a three-month analysis to really track the diabetic to see how he is doing; whether the sugar level is high or low and you can manage accordingly. The patient also has the opportunity to use the testing strips on his or her own as well as the glucometers, so there are different avenues.

1.45 a.m.

Once the diabetic situation has gone into a different stage, you have that area in which you have to go into a hospital. You have the aspect of diabetic retinopathy, which is the blindness aspect. To have intervention, you must have a good ophthalmology centre to deal with diabetes. You must also have a vascular surgeon. Many times you can do an intervention here and do a bypass, when you can do vascular surgery and shunt the blood vessels and you do not have to cut off the toe or the limb. That is a possibility there, but you must have the facility in the hospital.

Now, in Jamaica, they have set up diabetic centres. It is private, but it can be introduced in a hospital. A diabetic centre would have the various personnel, which would be a dietitian, a podiatrist, an endocrinologist heading the centre and the ophthalmology support areas. Of major importance, and we see it on a daily basis in terms of the South West Regional Health Authority, is the situation with dialysis.

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Time and again we see that patients who require dialysis have to be turned back from various hospitals because of a breakdown in the dialysis machines and things like that. This is a very important area for the diabetic patients who need that support. Once there is end stage renal failure, you have to do a test. Once the test shows the creatine levels going up, you use the estimated granular filtration rate and that will tell you if that patient needs to go into dialysis. You need that back-up support.

I want to make reference to the hospital environment. If you are dealing with diseases like diabetes, you need to consider also the hospital environment. Almost every week we read of patients not having beds—I do not know what is the Government's 100-day plan; it must be past the 100 days now—but they need to look at other models with respect to hospital environment.

If they look at some of the models available, they will see that they can set up an admissions unit. When the patients come into the hospital now, they have to be seen by whoever is on accident and emergency detail. They are shunted, based on their situation, to the various wards. An admissions unit will, within 48 hours of the patient being admitted—you can also do a statistical analysis for three months to see how many patients are passing through the hospital at that time. That will tell you if there is enough bed space in the admissions unit. You can have 60 beds within that particular unit. We saw allocations in terms of other ministries, so the Minister of Health can go to Cabinet and say he wants more money because he wants to start an admissions unit at the hospital where there will be more beds. In less than 48 hours the patients will be transferred.

What happens now, when the patients are transferred to the various wards is that they are spread throughout the hospital, so the consultants have to find them wherever they are. This will be a streamlined approach. Within 48 hours these patients will be admitted, based on their illness. In terms of the admissions unit, it cannot be just beds but beds and toilet facilities in case the patient comes in with diarrhoea.

What is important for the admissions unit is that there is a team so that, when the patient comes in, that team of doctors will do the analysis. Let us say there is an accident and patients are coming in, there will be a team of doctors to do the analysis. You will have the blood test taken and the consultant will decide if that particular patient will be warded immediately or sent to the theatre. You will always have that back up. It is not that you are going there and you are not sure to meet one doctor doing rounds.

Another important area is that the Government should be able to buy a consultant's time. If a consultant is at home on call, a house officer on duty can call the consultant and get advice on a particular patient; the doctor can log in his time for the particular call and that advice will be readily available to him or her in that particular situation. The patient will then be sent to that particular ward where the consultant makes his rounds.

It sounds simple, but it is a way to avoid the large scramble for beds and poor patient management. Once it is streamlined in terms of the management of patients, you can provide much better care. Of course, we, the UNC-Alliance, are the alternative government, so we are giving you the solutions to your problems, free of charge. That is an area of hospital management for diabetes and chronic diseases.

The other area I want to deal with—and Sen. Nicholson-Alfred spoke about a situation in Tobago, and I am very passionate about Tobago. As the former Minister for Tourism at that time, there was an upsurge in crime in Tobago, especially in that Back Bay area. That is an isolated beach. There was an incident and immediately we worked with Inspector Denoon. We put canine patrols in place; marine patrols were proposed; helicopter patrols at least once a day. We actually nipped that in the bud in terms of crime in Tobago.

When Sen. Nicholson-Alfred talked about your neighbour's house being on fire, in terms of Tobago, I appeal to the Minister of National Security—I do not know if that will help because there are calls for him to resign in six days—I do not know if he will be out of office in six days, but it is a possibility.

Not only were there canine, marine and helicopter patrols, but the police worked alongside the hotel operators, who had private security. The police had a problem with transportation at the time. The hotel operators would donate cars to the police and there would be that partnership between the private and public sector in terms of the hotel operators and the police. It worked quite well.

I do not know what happened under the PNM administration. Maybe all the dogs have been removed from the island or they never reached. I do not know if they shelved the idea of the marine patrol and the mounted branch. We were going to put horses to patrol these beaches. Again, those are ideas that you can use when you are managing the situation in Tobago in terms of the possible upsurge of crime.

The allocation also speaks to the Meteorological Services Division. We heard Sen. Nicholson-Alfred on the situation with that particular building. It reminds me of a question that I asked in this Senate on the Doppler radar in the central range.

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When I asked that question, it was based on the information that, as Minister of the Environment, in 2001, the Forestry Division had allocated the land; a survey was done and a fence actually placed around the parcel of land earmarked for that radar. A Minister, answering that particular question, came into this Senate and said that the project was started in 2004. We have a situation where that project started in 2001 and for some reason went into abeyance and was restarted in 2004.

I sympathize with the Senator in terms of that Meteorological Services Division. Tobago is in an unfortunate position because the radar is not functional. As Minister of the Environment at the time, they could not get any spare parts for that radar because it was now obsolete.

This proposal in terms of the radar system for the Chaguaramas area and the islands off Chaguaramas, there are many questions that must be asked. How did the Ministry of National Security come up with a proposal like that? Was it an arrangement between the Government and some provider and will there be cutbacks? We have already been told about a radar located at the San Fernando Hill that surveys our coastline and now we see an allocation for equipment for the Chaguaramas peninsula.

As I am dealing with Chaguaramas and that farm at Tucker Valley, in terms of the allocation to that project, we need teamwork. I am under the impression that the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is not working in tandem with the Minister of Housing, Planning and the Environment. Under the Minister of Tourism, in 2000, there was a distinction between Tidco and the CDA. Although we are marketing the same destination of Trinidad and Tobago, there is that isolation between the CDA and Tidco. They would be marketing, separately, the Convention Centre and the ecotourism potential in the CDA and Tidco will be doing its own marketing. There will be two separate marketing: one marketing the Chaguaramas area and the other the country.

We have to ask the question: Is the isolation still taking place? We did not merge them, but we ensured that the CDA and Tidco worked together on this particular tourism thrust.

2.00 a.m.

It happened at the Gasparee Caves, which is a tourist attraction, and we recognize that Gasparee Caves was not being marketed properly by the CDA. We had to ask Tidco to intervene, in terms of marketing the peninsula as a tourist attraction. It worked very well, in terms of marketing for the whole country including the Chaguaramas Peninsula.

I am not sure if that linkage still exists, but I want to urge the Government with respect to the Chaguaramas Peninsula. I am sure you are aware of the panoramic view from the hills and also of the Diego Martin Valley, in terms of the scenic outlook from that particular area. It is a great location for shipbuilding, as I have said before, in terms of the atmosphere.

The boat-building industry, under the UNC, was poised to take off. I think it has been shelved under the PNM administration, although there is lip service, in terms of that being one of the pillars in the sector.

Sen. Lezama made reference to Sen. Sharma and the class of CAPE students in Manzanilla. I asked the Senator to give way at that point because—*[Interruption]*. Okay, you called no names. Those are the same students the Senator made reference to; those who are now traumatized because of the fiasco in the Ministry of Education. We heard of where the buck stops. Where? It stops with the Minister of Education. It has to stop somewhere. It is because of the former Minister of Education's, now Minister of Local Government, proposal to introduce CAPE throughout Trinidad and Tobago. They expanded it from a pilot and made it compulsory. That is why we have this fiasco in Trinidad and Tobago, where over 4,000 students are now suffering at the CAPE level and several thousands suffering at the CXC level. They are not sure, based on the leak, whether they have to rewrite the CXC O level exam, or whether they would continue as normal.

We saw the Government being forced by the CXC to take a different position. One minute the Minister is saying: "We do not know how widespread the leak is and people would not have to rewrite the exam." Suddenly, over the weekend, the Minister addressed the nation and said: "Yes, the papers would have to be rewritten." I am not sure if the Minister would come tomorrow or the next day and say: "CXC has carte blanche, across the board, said that Trinidad and Tobago students would have to rewrite the examination." We are in a situation where the Minister of Education should take all the blame.

You cannot hide like the Minister of National Security, who is hiding behind the Commissioner of Police. You cannot hide. When you took office, you took an oath of office. We heard about the oath of office and there has to be someone who would take responsibility.

The other area I want to deal with, Mr. Vice-President, on the allocation, comes from the allocation for the National Additional Scholarships based on the Advance Level Examination. There is an increased funding of \$26 million. It is linked to the situation with the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the

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comment by Sen. Dana Seetahal SC, with respect to the watering down at the University of Trinidad and Tobago. It has been reported—you have not heard what I am going to say, so what I am pointing to is not repetition—that there are reports. [*Interruption*] I am aware of it. [*Interruption*] I have been told.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: I thank all the Senators for extending my time. I would leave that matter about the University of Trinidad and Tobago for a next time.

Sen. Mohammed: Amen.

Sen. Joseph: Your own side is saying amen.

Sen. Mohammed: For you.

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: I want to go to the Trinidad Generation Unlimited's allocation. The only question I really have on that particular allocation is that we heard about 20 per cent equity in this company. The question we have, in terms of the directorship of this particular company is if we have 20 per cent equity in Trinidad Generation Unlimited, are there any local directors? The Minister must answer that question with respect of their equity and the composition of the company, in terms of the directorship.

We heard of this particular power plant, the combined cycle and the advantages of a combined cycle power plant from Sen. Ali. We have to ask the question, in terms of InnCogen and the power generating capacity of InnCogen. When that particular matter was raised, a lot of statements were made by the then Opposition, in terms of the power generating plant and the sole selective tenderer's position taken. We heard about the tendering procedure, but we are still in the dark, with respect to this particular power plant. We heard of power generation, but how much power do we really need, in terms of the Government's projection, because we are dealing with Vision 2020? How much of this will be required in the national grid, based on the various projections, in terms of the ethylene complex and the new plants that are proposed like the iron-carbide plant? What is the price arrangement? Is this particular company getting preferential treatment, because they are backing up the Alutrint Smelter Complex? Again, we

want to make it quite clear that we are against smelters. The UNC would not build any smelters in Trinidad and Tobago. I would be speaking for five minutes, but I could go on for another five minutes if you want me to. We have to ask that question.

As I wind up, I do hope that the allocation of \$4 million, plus the additional \$8.6 million for the commercial demonstration farm in Chaguaramas would really bear fruit. It would be the first opportunity we have for that particular technical sharing of technical knowledge. Hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the Central Experiment Station should be a major player in this particular farm. They should have been a major player in the distribution of seeds, if they are not.

I thank you.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne): Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I take the opportunity, before I wind up, to congratulate the country and Members of this honourable Senate on the celebration of the 163rd Anniversary of the arrival of the East Indians to this country. Happy Arrival Day.

There were several comments made during the course of the debate, to which I must respond. A number of comments dealt with the question of the budgeting cycle and its accuracy or inaccuracy and the fact that we may be condoning the breaking of some of the laws.

I want to make the point that the budget actually starts in March or April, and the various estimates started to gather around that point and they are harmonized, discussed and sorted out before the budget is presented by September. At that point, it is based upon a number of estimates, our best estimates, of what we expect to take place. At any one point in time, the Government would be in the course of negotiations with several unions on several fronts. I think at the last count we had approximately 23 or 24 agreements, which are up for discussion. On that basis, then there would be a number of assumptions that would remain, in terms of the completion of those agreements, in the course of the current year.

As you are aware, at the end of the appropriation, the allocations essentially revert to zero. If it is assumed that those discussions/negotiations would have come to an end in the current financial year, before the next budget cycle, then you do not make a provision for it, very simple. Hence, the reason for an appropriation for the fire service, prison service, police service, WASA, Port of Spain Corporation and San Fernando Corporation, of approximately \$723 million.

Those negotiations did not come to us during our budget preparation. It was assumed that could have been completed by September 2007. They were not, as a result of which provisions had to be made on a supplementary appropriation at this point in time.

Another point was made with regard to the payment of NIS. I think we debated earlier on in February/March, the issue of the NIS and its contribution rates. The contribution rates were increased as a result of the 7th Actuarial Report which was completed in 2005 and would have been presented to the NIB post-September 2007. In fact, I think the Bill was passed in September 2007, as part of the budget speech at that time. When the estimates were being done, those increased contribution rates would not have been taken into consideration, as a result of which there is a requirement that the supplemental take that into consideration. That explains those points.

A question was asked with regard to the \$4 million which is being expended, the vote to the Ministry of Finance, with respect to the administration of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

2.15 a.m.

The rules of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund allow withdrawals for the following:

“...where the petroleum revenues collected in any financial year fall below the estimated petroleum revenues for that financial year...withdrawals may be made from the Fund as follows, whichever is the lesser amount:

- (a) either sixty per cent of the amount of the shortfall of petroleum revenues...
- (b) twenty-five per cent of the balance standing to the credit of the Fund...”

It does not allow for the expenses in the management of the fund to come from the revenue of that fund, as a result of which there has to be a supplementary approval to take care of the expenses that are related to the fund. That is very simple.

Now, a number of points were raised. Sen. Mark said in very brief terms, but a very good one, that the budget should really be for the greatest benefit for the greatest number, and wondered whether this particular budget did that, because it had no people in it. I think that Sen. Dr. Carson Charles made that same point. I wonder if they were listening to what we said. Perhaps, I may have to go back a little to the themes of our budgets: One People, One Nation; “Leaving No One Behind”; Vision 2020: People...Our Priority, Charting the Course to 2020,

Empowering People; Vision 2020: Ensuring Our Future Prosperity, Addressing Our Basic Needs; Charting the Course Empowering Our People, Moving Onward; Determined to Reach Our Goal—people at the Centre of it all. His point was that we should subsidize food; we should spend the money in a fashion which comes into the pocket of the public, in a fashion in which they could see and in which they could feel, but there are different ways in delivering subsidies. So, as part and parcel of the effort to control inflation, import duties on 41 items were waived.

In addition, tax allowances for every individual amounts to \$60,000. In other words, as long as your income is below \$60,000, you do not pay taxes. That takes into consideration one of the points that Sen. Michael Annisette made with regard to the lower income groupings. The lower income groupings have tax relief.

In addition, the minimum wage of \$10 is not the minimum wage that is paid, generally. In fact, at the moment, as we speak, there are a number of companies which have been complaining that they have to pay productivity bonuses to get people to come out to work. So, the minimum wage of \$10 is not the minimum wage that is being paid.

Now, Sen. Dr. Carson Charles asked the question about whether we are afraid of subsidies. He said that he read and examined our budgets and so forth. Every year we publish the *Review of the Economy* and it clearly sets out what the gross domestic product looks like; how the expenses and the expenditure profile of the Government are spent. So, for example, wages and salaries in 2002 accounted for approximately 30 per cent of all expenditure. In 2007, it is estimated to account for 16 per cent and approximately the same number in the course of 2008. He did not look a little lower down.

We do have a line item which is called “Subsidies and Transfers”. We may not spend subsidies directly in the sense of subsidizing at the producers gates—food prices—but we do spend subsidies and transfers in a number of critical and core areas, and those subsidies and transfers are very much part of our programmes.

We do believe that instead of giving a man a fish, we should teach him how to fish. We should give him the capacity to increase his income potential and that is shown in the level of our expenditure on education, transfers in terms of old age pension, social assistance disability grants, transfers to state enterprises and, of course, transfers to the University of the West Indies and the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Included also is the school feeding programme and a number of other areas.

In other words, the focus on this side has always been, from the beginning, on education, and we have continued that. We have continued by ensuring that no one is left behind. In the real sense of the term, we are ensuring that the level of education from nursery to tertiary is improved at all levels. That is how we carry out our subsidy process. That is a critical part of our subsidy programme in the form of transfers, and that is why we have GATE, HYPE, MuST, YAPA and so forth. We do not necessarily rehabilitate the estates, but we do ensure that a particular part of that money goes toward people and ensuring that they are involved in programmes which assist in agriculture. I am going to speak specifically to agriculture as well.

It is not that we dislike subsidies. We do believe that subsidies should be done in a form that would help and create opportunities in this economy. Nothing succeeds like success and also nothing happens—

On the other side, they would have us believe that the windfall of oil and gas just dropped on our laps. Sen. Dr. Kernahan made the point that they had to struggle when the price of oil was \$8 and \$9 a barrel. I think she got her history mixed up. The last time oil was \$8 or \$9 a barrel was during the period 1986—1990. So, I would expect Sen. Dr. Carson Charles to say—

Sen. Mark: You are wrong. That was in 1999. Go to your record.

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: That was for one year, but not for the entire period. The key part of our programme has been investing in the energy sector and making a number of critical decisions which go back a long time and which are responsible for the revenues that we have today. This is a gas economy and a critical decision was made to invest in monetizing our gas resources and, in particular, LNG. This is a decision which was taken as far back as 1992 from which we are now benefiting. So, it did not just happen. It was as a result of a calculated investment decision.

When we talk of the private sector, the private sector must follow if it does not lead. There was a complaint in terms of the employment statistics being mixed up. All economies pass through transitional points. Over the last six years, the economy has grown and approximately 14,000 new jobs are created every year. There is going to be a change and a shift in the structure of the economy and, perhaps, the education process has not run apace.

In the United States of America as well, you do have the situation of graduate unemployment. That is so. We do have a more rapid expansion in the middle and lower levels, but people have the skills, people have the education and people

have been given the opportunity. They must also make an investment in their future in helping to expand and to create and grow this economy.

I am looking at the number of sole proprietors in Trinidad and Tobago. As a percentage of the total economy, the Central Statistical Office reports that the total number of sole proprietors/self-employed persons amounts to 8,709 persons as at the end of 2007; approximately 1 per cent of the 615,000 persons that are employed. This figure consists of business establishments with 0 to 1 employee. This figure does not include business establishments that are not registered such as taxi drivers, doubles vendors, some own account construction workers such as masons, carpenters and welders. This is exactly the area in which this economy has expanded a number of employment opportunities. So, 4.5 per cent is not a joke; it is not a fake; but it is real.

Now, a number of points have been made with regard to agriculture, and the fact that we are not serious in terms of its development, and we have not lived up to our promises. During the period 1975—2002, the total financial support to Caroni (1975) Limited in the form of subventions amounted to \$4.8 billion. I am not going to count the total cost of closing down Caroni (1975) Limited at this stage of the game, but let us just look at what has happened in the case of Caroni (1975) Limited.

As part of the agreement and the package, it was agreed that approximately 7,500 persons at Caroni (1975) Limited would be given two acres of land. Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan said that he was informed that only approximately 1,200 persons have gotten leases at this stage. Well, what is the truth?

As at May 15, 2008, there were 2,536 offers of agricultural leases made to those beneficiaries at the following sites: Orange Grove, 102; La Gloria, 305; Caroni, 195; Waterloo, 322; La Fortune, 525; Jerningham, 228; Cedar Hill, 553; and Felicity, 304. We expect by June 30, 2008 to add another 3,200 to that 2,536 leases. In addition, an argument was made that the price at which these leases were being offered was too expensive. I cannot remember what the number was.

It has been agreed that the annual rent on small to medium parcels of State agricultural lands for under one hectare would amount to \$200 a year. One hectare is 2.2 acres. For the 7,700 people it is \$200 a year. That is the annual rent.

In terms of one to two hectares, the annual rent is \$400; two to five hectares, \$700; and five to 10 hectares, \$1,000. That is what they are paying for agricultural rent. So, it cannot be that we are making it difficult.

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What is the position in terms of people who have been farming on Caroni (1975) Limited lands? As at December 31, 2007, there were approximately 773 farmers cultivating crops on approximately 306 acres, and these are farmers without leases—sweet potato, 67 acres; cassava, 36 acres; eddoes, 20 acres; pineapples, 85 acres; pumpkin, 50 acres; hot peppers, 25 acres; tomatoes, 14 acres; and mixed vegetable crops, 44 acres.

I am not going to deal with the other agricultural matters, but let me put it this way. The Government is well on its way to meeting its commitments and, certainly, in terms of meeting its contribution towards improving the agricultural sector. May I also add, while I am making that point that much has been said about the decline in agriculture. The biggest number in agricultural numbers over the last couple of years has been one number, Caroni (1975) Limited. If you take that out, then the numbers would fall.

Where has agriculture been in this country before? What did we cultivate? We cultivated, for example, citrus, cocoa, coffee, copra and sugarcane. It was always the small farmer that carried food crop production.

What else did we do for Caroni (1975) Limited? It was said that we are vicious and spiteful and we did not like Caroni (1975) Limited. Well, what is the cost of VSEP thus far? The back-pay was paid; \$97.8 million; VSEP, \$741 million; training and retraining, \$16.5 million; pension payments for 2002—2007, \$439 million. The pension plan was in a deficit and the Government has made good that deficit, \$360 million.

We have spent a fair amount of money in terms of developing those agricultural sites. How much have we spent? We have spent \$600 million to date and, of course, the exit cost for the farmers. They have complained about their crops, and guess what we did? We paid them not only for the first crop, but for the ratoon as well.

2.30 a.m.

Other matters of cane farmers; where are we with that. It turns out that we are in the course of regularizing approximately 6,000 farmers, who either had tenancies or who were squatters. We do have a difficulty because there have been other new squatters who have joined the game, and what we have done is to go through the process of identifying who the eligible farmers are; determining the appropriate acreages; verifying the physical locations and doing the survey work. That is in progress as we speak.

Sen. Mark: What about the European Union facility?

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: Everything that the European Union facility is about, is about what we have already spent. To date, we have spent approximately \$3 billion on this process. The European moneys were meant to assist and facilitate the transition exercise. It was not money for farmers; it was money to assist the transition. The Government has already spent \$3 billion in that process. *[Interruption]* A statement will be made by the Minister dealing with exactly what we will be doing, moving forward.

Sen. Mark: Could you give us some clarification on the Trinidad Generation Unlimited?

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: Yes, Sir. It is included in the budget speech. So, it is not a surprise; it did not just happen. The Government is going to be a 40 per cent shareholder—not 20 per cent—in Trinidad Generation Unlimited. It is proposed that 75 per cent of the 720 megawatts, which will be generated by that particular plant, will be sold into the national grid.

Sen. Dr. Lenny Saith stood and answered Sen. Basharat Ali very clearly. The transaction is a tooling transaction; it will be very similar to the existing arrangements as we stand. And of the total generation capacity, only 25 per cent will be used for industrial purposes; the other 75 per cent will go into the national grid. Very well organized; very well done, and the numbers will come to you; you will see them.

Sen. Mark: What about Alutrint; who is financing that? Is it the Chinese?

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: All in good time. One of the other points made with regard to inflation. Central Bank has clearly identified that inflation is an issue and the Government has also indicated that it is serious about maintaining and reducing the level of inflation. We have actually set a target. But as we speak we are aware, and as you are, that the biggest number in that increase in headline inflation to 10 per cent has been food prices and has been to a large extent, imported food prices.

We have answered that; the debate is well said in that regard; that will start to come down. Those numbers and the numbers on the international commodity prices in certain areas have started to mitigate. We also understand that there are changes that are going to take place as a result of the RBTT transaction and certain things are being put into position to mop up liquidity. The Government is concerned, as is the Central Bank, and the Central Bank has sent a clear signal;

has already taken steps at the beginning to treat with those matters. We expect that the level of inflation will be moderated and will be contained and the necessary decisions to make that happen are in process. [*Interruption*] It was already well said; it was already said.

The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). We have made the point, clearly said, that our purpose is to move this country forward and that certain new skills have to be put into position. That is clearly demonstrated by the changes in the policy. I think the comment had been made that no new schools were built, but there have been conversions of de-shifted schools, which have been converted to seven-year schools; that is where the additional capacity has come from, even though no new secondary schools have been built. Certain comments had been made with regard to UTT and I think I should point that out to this honourable Senate.

I think it had been said already by the hon. Christine Kangaloo in a motion on the adjournment in the Senate, that the University of Trinidad and Tobago has established partnerships with the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, Johns Hopkins University—as set out in the budget—Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in Canada; the University of Texas, Austin, United States; the Danish Technical University, Denmark; the South Hampton Institute and Maritime Centre, United Kingdom—somebody said that it was a bogus institution not giving good certificates.

We have all of these alliances because the Government had said that the University of Trinidad and Tobago must adhere to principles of excellence. That is what the university is using as it develops all of its programmes—on principles of excellence.

Sen. Mark: Accreditation; is there accreditation?

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: Clearly, that is the reason we have these relationships with these foreign universities—for that purpose. It has also done a number of things with regard to the National Engineering Technicians Diploma; it offers the Bachelor of Engineering, the Bachelor of Science in Petroleum Technology—oh, and by the way it is located, not necessarily in a rural area, but close to the industrial heartland. And it was put in that particular location so that there would be internships and movements in and out of the sector, so it will be practical in terms of its training methodologies. [*Interruption*] I think I have dealt with that, Sen. Mark.

So, Mr. Vice-President, we have dealt with the key matters that needed to be treated with in our budget. The supplementary process is very much part and parcel of the budget process. The budget estimates are made a substantial period of time before the end of the financial year, so there would be matters which would be overlooked; that is the reason we are here.

On the basis of the comments which we have answered to, Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

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

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, June 03, 2008 at 1.30 p.m., where we would revert to Private Members' day, which was intended to be today, but was rescheduled based on considerations for the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill. We will debate the Motion by Sen. Mark, which I think is the Motion under consideration; Motion No. 1.

Indian Arrival Day Greetings

Sen. Wade Mark: Mr. Vice-President, before we take the adjournment if you would allow me. I just want to join my colleague, the hon. Sen. Mariano Browne because we would not be here until after May 30. So, we would like to join with the national community in extending warmest Indian Arrival Day greetings to all Indo-Trinidadians, as they collectively celebrate 163 years of their arrival in this country on Friday, May 30, 2008.

Now, as a people we continue to strive for unity, solidarity and an end to discrimination in all its forms. The citizens of Indo-Trinidad and Tobago decent have made a tremendous contribution to this country's economic, social, cultural

Indian Arrival Day
[SEN. MARK]

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and psychological development. Therefore, we on this side of the Senate join with our colleagues on the other side in extending warmest Indian Arrival Day greetings to the Indo-Trinidad and Tobago community in particular, and the entire population in general.

We say happy Indian Arrival Day. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 2.42 a.m.