

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, December 01, 2009***SENATE***Tuesday, December 01, 2009*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne and Sen. Lyndira Oudit who are both out of the country.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

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

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MR. NOEL GAYLE

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

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, NOEL GAYLE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 1st December, 2009 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Mariano Browne.

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 November, 2009.”

Senators' Appointment
[MR. PRESIDENT]

Tuesday, December 01, 2009

“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. SEUKERAN TAMBIE

WHEREAS Senator Lyndira Oudit is incapable of performing her duties as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, SEUKERAN TAMBIE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Lyndira Oudit.

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 1st day of
December, 2009.”

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senators Noel Gayle and Seukeran Tambie took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the non-receipt from certain entities as at October 30, 2009 of financial statements for the financial year 2008 and prior financial years/periods. [*The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the statement of recovery of expenses of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ended December 31, 2008. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
3. Annual report of the Public Service Commission for the year 2008. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS**Local Government Bill
(Presentation)**

The Minister of Health (Sen. The Hon. Jerry Narace): Mr. President, I have the honour to lay on the Table the following report as listed on the Order Paper in my name: The second interim report of the Joint Select Committee on the Local Government Bill, 2009.

**Data Protection Bill
Electronic Transactions Bill
(Presentation)**

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Thank you, Mr. President. I have the honour to lay on the Table the following report as listed on the Order Paper in the name of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources: The second interim report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Data Protection Bill, 2009 and the Electronic Transactions Bill, 2009.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**National Academies of Performing Arts
(Details of)**

40. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment:

With respect to the construction of the National Academies of Performing Arts in Port of Spain and San Fernando, could the Minister provide the Senate with:

- (a) a detailed status report on the construction of the National Academies of Performing Arts;
- (b) the original estimated cost of construction of the National Academies;
- (c) the initial projected completion dates for both Academies;
- (d) the current estimated cost and new projected cost of the construction of the Academies; and
- (e) the new projected completion dates for the National Academies?

The Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Emily Dick-Forde): Before I answer the question I would like to state that I have examined the *Hansard* of a fortnight ago when the Senate last met and it would appear that at best there is a misunderstanding of what had been asked.

The answer to the question which I am about to give which is set out in the Order Paper involved a far more comprehensive response in respect of the National Academy for the Performing Arts than the contract price that was stated by the hon. Prime Minister.

The answer to part (a) of the question: The status of the construction of the National Academies for the Performing Arts is as follows: The Port of Spain academy is now complete and the San Fernando academy is still under construction. In terms of its components, approximately 100 per cent of the piles have been installed for the classroom facility with up to roof level five-chord; block work on all floors is 100 per cent complete, construction of the retaining wall is approximately 85 per cent complete.

The response to part (b) of the question: The original estimated cost of construction of the national academies are: Port of Spain academy, US \$60, million; San Fernando academy, US \$40 million. These facilities are being financed under a government to government concessionary loan with the Government of the People's Republic of China to support the establishment of the National Academies for the Performing Arts. The loan is for a period of 20 years, at an interest rate of 2 per cent with a five-year moratorium.

The answer to part (c) of the question: The original projected dates were: Port of Spain academy, December 07, 2008; San Fernando academy, November 08, 2008.

The answer to part (d): The construction costs remain fixed at Port of Spain academy US \$60 million; San Fernando academy, US \$40 million; with the fit out for both academies amounting to US \$30 million. There were unanticipated associated costs to acquire and prepare the sites for construction: At the Port of Spain academy, demolition and grading of the old tennis courts on the Port of Spain academy site at a cost of \$3.4 million; relocation of the tennis courts to the new King George V sports facility, St. Clair at a cost of \$17,772,013. It was imperative to relocate the tennis courts since the parcel of land on which they stood formed part of the area specifications for the academy site.

The new sporting facilities at St. Clair include seven tennis courts, one being of international game standard, one netball court and one basketball court. The main building at the facility houses changing rooms, showers, toilets, offices and a cafeteria.

With respect to the San Fernando academy, the unanticipated associated cost, the relocation of a sewer line, \$8,411,971—so that is the relocation of a sewer line and associated works—the construction of a retaining wall, \$8,250,000; billboard demolition \$20,000.

The answer to part (e): The new projected completion date for the San Fernando National Academy for the Performing Arts is the end of September 2010. Thank you.

Sen. Mark: Mr. President, through you, could the hon. Minister indicate to us, what were some of the factors that may have contributed to this delay in the completion of the South National Academy for the Performing Arts? What were some of the factors that may have been responsible for the delay that we now have a new projected deadline for completion?

Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde: The information I have is that extension of time was required due to the removal of the main San Fernando sewer line. That was one of the main explanations given from the developer for the delay for the San Fernando academy.

Sen. Mark: Through you, again, the hon. Minister spoke about some tennis court that was constructed on the site of the Princess Building Ground, could the—

Sen. Narace: No, no, that is wrong. She did not say the Princess Building Ground.

Sen. Mark: Okay, could the hon. Minister indicate, Sir, through you, what was the actual cost of the tennis court that was constructed at King George V Park, I think she mentioned?

Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde: It was given, if the Senator had listened he would have heard. I am reading again what I read just now into the *Hansard*. The demolition and grading of the old tennis court on the Port of Spain academy site at a cost of \$3.4 million, and I said just now, again, the relocation of the tennis court to the new King George V sports facility, St. Clair at a cost of \$17,772,013. The information was given in the answer.

Sen. Mark: One final question, Mr. President. Could the hon. Minister indicate to this honourable Senate why it took her so long to bring this answer to this Parliament having regard to what—

Mr. President: Senator, that is not a supplemental question. I would just like to say at this point, Minister, because of the serious nature of this question I have been looking at the progress of your answer since the last sitting and I am aware and I understand very well a very serious effort was made to produce this answer to the Senate this afternoon, and I understand also that a very serious effort was made to short-circuit the approval process so that it could get here for this afternoon, and on behalf of the Senate I would just like to thank the Minister. [Desk thumping]

1.45 p.m.

**Fifth Summit of the Americas
(Removal of Homeless Persons for)**

145. Sen. Dr. Sharon-ann Gopaul-McNicol asked the hon. Minister of Social Development:

With respect to the hosting of the 5th Summit of the Americas and the removal of homeless persons off the street, could the Minister inform the Senate of:

- (i) The number of homeless persons removed from the street;
- (ii) The cost of removing these homeless persons off the street; and
- (iii) The number of homeless persons who have since returned to the streets at the conclusion of the Summit on April 19, 2009?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. President, the question is not ready. In enquiring as to why it is not— [Interruption] Sorry. What did I say, the question?

Sen. Mark: Yes, the question.

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: Oh, sorry. The answer to the question is not yet ready, and the reason for that— [Interruption]

Sen. Mark: So what?

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: So what? But the reason for this is because there are other agencies that are involved. It is not only the Ministry of Social Development as you have asked there and the request for information is not yet forthcoming, and therefore, the answer cannot be formulated. This is the case on this one.

And while I am on my feet, Mr. President, as it relates to the other question, the years are 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, that also requires a little bit more time for its compilation. I am hopeful that we should be able to have this available in two weeks time.

Question, by leave, deferred.

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Dr. Sharon-ann Gopaul-McNicol:

**Disabled Persons
(Details of Funds Allocated)**

146. Could the hon. Minister of Social Development provide the Senate with the details of funds allocated to each category of disabled persons for fiscal years 2006—2007; 2007—2008 and 2008—2009?

Question, by leave, deferred.

**International Organization for Migration
(Benefits of Funding and Training)**

184. Sen. Wade Mark on behalf of Sen. Lyndira Oudit asked the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Could the Minister indicate to the Senate, how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposes to benefit from the funding and training to be made available to this country through the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as a consequence of becoming a member in June, 2009

**International Organization for Migration
(Details of Resources)**

185. Sen. Wade Mark on behalf of Sen. Lyndira Oudit asked the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs:

With respect to membership in the International Organization for Migration (IOM), could the Minister indicate to the Senate the measures presently in place to detect, gather evidence, collate data on and to counter human trafficking in Trinidad and Tobago?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Again, Mr. President, questions 184 and 185, we require an additional week on this. The Minister of Foreign Affairs did indicate that it was in a position I think to go to the Parliamentary Review Committee, but it was not done at this time.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

**Enquiry into Landate
(Findings from)**

188. Sen. Michael Annisette asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Would the Minister please inform this honourable Senate of its findings from its own enquiry into the Landate matter?

The Minister of Health (Sen. The Hon. Jerry Narace): Mr. President, we are in the process of completing the answer for that question. It is a lot of work, and we would like a two-week deferral and we should have it by then.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Enquiry into the Scarborough Hospital and Landate
(Findings of)**

189. Sen. Michael Annisette asked the hon. Attorney General:

Would the Attorney General please inform this honourable Senate of what action the Government intends to take on:

- (i) the findings of the Commission of Enquiry into the Scarborough Hospital; and
- (ii) the findings of its own investigation into the matter which included Landate?

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie SC): Mr. President, the answer to this question is complicated and involved, and it would require some detailed research. It is not yet ready. I need another three to four weeks.

Question, by leave, deferred.

Sen. Mark: Oh gooo! By that time the Parliament is going to be prorogued. I am telling you that will be another year.

**CARONI (1975) LIMITED
(DISBURSEMENT OF EUROPEAN UNION FUNDS)**

Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan: Thank you. Mr. President, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Caroni (1975) Limited

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Whereas the Government of Trinidad and Tobago closed Caroni (1975) Limited (the Company) in or around 2003;

And whereas the cane farmers, one of the major stakeholders of the industry, were adversely affected by the closure of the Company;

And whereas the European Union recognizing the severe impact the closure of the sugar industry would have on the stakeholders of the ACP countries, made grant funds available to those countries to cushion the impact of the closure of the industry;

And whereas Trinidad and Tobago was one of the countries which stood to benefit from the grant funds from the European Union mentioned above;

And whereas the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has not accessed the available funds from the European Union for the benefit of the cane farmers;

Be it resolved that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago take immediate steps to access the funds from the European Union and disburse same to the former cane farmers of Caroni (1975) Limited;

And be it further resolved that the Government consult with, and keep the cane farmers informed at regular intervals on the progress being made with respect to the drawdown of the said funds from the European Union.

Mr. President, this Motion arises because of the fact that Trinidad and Tobago is one of the sugar protocol countries with access to grant funding from the European Union, because of the WTO's refusal to allow a system of preferential sugar prices for ACP countries in the European market.

Mr. President, the Minister of Finance in her statement in the other place on June 06, 2008, gave a comprehensive account of the Government's position on this matter, and therefore, I will draw very much from the Minister's position on that occasion, on June 06, 2008.

In this document, the Minister's statement, the Minister of Finance was quoted as saying and I quote:

"The grant funding being made available by the European Commission would assist, though moderately, in offsetting the substantial and committed expenditure undertaken by the Government of...Trinidad and Tobago in...restructuring... the sugar industry."

Mr. President, history has shown that this Government's intent was never to restructure the sugar industry as the Minister has said, because any sensible person would know that restructuring would imply measures to ensure greater

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efficiency; greater profitability for all stakeholders in the context of new strategies and new technologies with respect to the use of the sugar cane plant, in terms of new products and other uses of the sugar cane plant, which other countries all over the world, given the same scenario, have exploited and have undertaken to the benefit of their stakeholders, to their cane farmers and sugar workers.

This administration apparently was determined to shut down Caroni (1975) Limited, and they used the opportunity and the excuse that they must shut down Caroni (1975) Limited, because, as the Minister said in her statement, this company was a drain on the economy to the tune of \$200 million annually, and that the production price of sugar in Trinidad is uneconomical.

Mr. President, due to this Government's political myopia, they refused to see that Caroni (1975) Limited is a company that has made tremendous contributions to our labour intensive economy. I want to quote from an article by Stephen Kangal, August 20, 2007, and published on August 20, 2007 in "Politics", "Caroni was never a drain on the Treasury". The facts which this author quoted with respect to the importance of Caroni (1975) Limited to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, are as follows and I quote:

- "It kept 10,000 rural sugar workers and 15,000 cane farmers in gainful and productive employment...
- A rural community of over 300,000 was dependent on the operations of the industry for their economic survival.
- The foreign exchange earned by the industry from export sales was US \$175 annually.
- Recreation grounds and drainage systems were maintained by Caroni Ltd. at no cost to the Government.
- Aerial spraying of canes kept the mosquito infestation at bay and protected farmers' plantations also from the frog hopper infestation.
- Government annually took lands from Caroni Ltd that was valued more than their annual subvention of \$200. So that Caroni was no drain on the Treasury. Government paid for electricity, water and telephones from three State Enterprises, but not for the lands taken from Caroni Ltd. Caroni was a freeco—a feeding trough for land for Government."

And finally, he quoted the fact that:

- "The success of our rum industry was based on Caroni to the extent that Angostura is today now planting sugar in Barbados on 17,000 acres to get molasses and sugar for their profitable rum and ethanol industry."

Mr. President, this is the basis for the proposal that Caroni (1975) Limited was never a drain on the economy. In fact, in a proposal submitted by an email on Caroni to the *Guardian* on August 24, 2009, it says here:

"The cost of producing sugar was artificially inflated because the company was paying for other things not related to sugar production and added it to the cost of producing sugar. Here is a list of a just few:

1. Paving of roads;
2. Maintaining savannahs and parks;
3. Upkeeping of golf courses;
4. Maintaining manager houses—phone, electricity, maintenance work;
5. Hiring of doctors and nurses and dispensing drugs and medication;
6. Housing for its employees."

So all of these are areas in which Caroni (1975) Limited contributed to this economy and contributed to the country, and therefore, it is unfair and it is untrue to say that our high cost of production of sugar was based solely on the issues of sugar production. It was based on all these other issues, the amount of money that Caroni (1975) Limited spent in the economy. So the two excuses that the Government has made about shutting down Caroni are patently false, based on what we have just said.

Mr. President, this administration is politically suicidal, and therefore, they have no vision for sustainable development in Trinidad and Tobago. They have no vision for ensuring the integrity of this industry which has made such tremendous contributions, and which also has tremendous potential to increase agricultural contribution to GDP. This administration has no understanding of the need to engage the experience and the knowledge of the cane farmers and the sugar workers, to increase the level of technological development and research in this country.

They have no understanding of the tremendous potential which this industry has for engaging our young scientists, our young researchers and so on, in new areas of applied research, working hand in hand with our farmers and our sugar workers who have all that knowledge of the practical application of sugar cane

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production. So clearly, this administration is not interested in restructuring as they said, because restructuring would imply all those things: using new technologies, using the human resource that you have, using applied technology, using applied research and so on, establishing institutions that will give you the basis for economic diversification and expansion of the industry, regardless of the fact that we can no longer export to the European Union.

At the very least, Mr. President, we should have been thinking about being self-sufficient in the production of sugar for our domestic and industrial use here. But no, this Government is intent on destroying Caroni (1975) Limited; intent on destroying the pools of human potential of knowledge and experience that we have acquired over 150 years; intent on destroying the basis for any hope of sustainable development, environmentally-friendly development; energy efficient development in Trinidad and Tobago.

Some of the benefits that clearly other countries have exploited and have developed in order to turn their sugar industries around and make it more relevant, make it more sustainable, and make it a bastion of support for the hundreds and thousands of persons who would have been affected by the WTO ruling, some of these are also elaborated on by the author, Stephen Kangal in the article that I quoted. It says here:

- "Farmers can get more than \$300.00 per tonne of cane instead of the \$210 that they now receive to be diverted for ethanol production.
- Ethanol consumption as an automobile bio-fuel is on the rise in Western countries and prices are on the rise and not subject to price fluctuations.
- Bagasse can produce fine printing paper, cellulose, et cetera.
- The rum made directly from the cane juice is superior and of a higher quality than that from distilled molasses."

2.00 p.m.

- "Sugar is not the main product earner of the sugar cane industry any..."—more in many countries, but yet nobody has totally demolished their sugar cane industries.
- "The cane tops can support a thriving dairy and livestock industry.
- The possibilities of sugar cane industries is enormous, given our abundance of arable, undulating terrain."

These are the facts, and any government worth its salt, understanding the need for economic diversification, understanding the need for new strategies, new technologies, understanding the need to harness and keep that pool of experienced and very knowledgeable group of cane farmers and sugar workers in this country, would have understood that and acted differently. But this Government has its own agenda and they have acted against the national interest in this matter.

The Minister of Finance in her argument said that the European grant funding is in the form of sector budget support and does not accrue to any group of individuals, and she quoted the financing agreement between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the European Commission. This is what the Minister said, and I quote:

"The National Adaptation Strategy is a sector policy document which is incorporated in a wider national development policy and Vision 2020 and which is based on the Government's policy to disengage from the sugar industry and to end subsidies by the end of 2007."

Mr. President, only in Trinidad and Tobago because of the blatant political manipulation and polarization of our society by this administration, this PNM party over the last 40 or 50 years, can we have the spectre of a Minister of Finance articulating policy affecting the lives of thousands of citizens, demolishing the livelihood of thousands more in the support services; only in this type of society can we have a Minister articulating policy in such a negative retrograde language.

Only in this society which they have practically destroyed, for all intents and purposes, given their history of political manipulation and divide and rule can we have a Minister adopting such arrogant and intransigent policy positions that meant the pauperization of thousands and the demolition of the important subsector of the agricultural sector, and the further deterioration of the national economy.

We have reached the stage now where we are net importers of sugar for domestic and industrial use. This is evidenced by the fact of an article in the *Guardian* on August 23, 2009. The headline is:

"Caroni ghosts haunts T&T"

It is an article by Yvonne Baboolal which shows the adverse effects of Government policy on our industry here:

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"The ghost of Caroni 1975 Ltd, the former sugar company which was shut down by the Government in 2007, has come back to haunt T&T, displaced cane farmers are saying...

'It's frightening,' Greg Laughlin, President of the T&T Manufacturers Association, told the *Sunday Guardian* last Thursday. 'Between January 2009 to the present time, the price of refined sugar has been going up drastically.' Laughlin said the latest figures (for August 17 to 21) gave the price of sugar as TT \$5,134 per metric ton, a 50 per cent increase from the previous price."

He went on to say that this would impact negatively on the cost of processed products to the consumers.

There is a quote by a representative of the trade union industry here which says that we consume over 75,000 tonnes of sugar locally every year. If you are talking about a \$3,800 increase in the price of sugar, multiply that by 75,000 and you would come up with more than \$260,000 in foreign exchange. This was Mr. Seukeran Tambie quoting the impact of the shutdown of the sugar industry on the price of sugar and the cost we now have to pay in foreign exchange for sugar.

So where are the positives in this policy that the Government has enunciated? Where is the vision for turning lemon into lemonade, for truly restructuring the industry for maintaining, at least, self-sufficiency in our domestic needs? Where is the vision to use the sugar cane plant as a renewable source of energy, to use this industry to increase employment and increase sustainable employment? Where has disengaging from the sugar industry and decreasing subsidies by 2007, as the Minister said, gotten us?

We can see one effect of this policy is that crime and criminal activity has escalated in Central. Residents and business people there are under siege, practically. Kidnappings and murders and robberies and so on, are a direct result of the decimation of the sugar dependent areas of our country, which were dealt with so harshly over the last six years.

Maybe that was why the Minister in the Ministry of National Security on November 07, 2009, made the statement that there were ongoing discussions with stakeholders with respect to a prison complex on Caroni land. Maybe that is why the Minister had to make that kind of statement, because they understood what they have done to the hundreds of communities which were formerly dependent on all the production activity that went on, in and around sugar.

The Minister of Finance, without even so much as a blush, admitted in the other place on June 06, 2008, that, and I quote:

"...the restructuring of the sugar industry began in earnest in 2003 with the disengagement of the Government and Caroni (1975) Limited from the cultivation of sugarcane. The disengagement became complete with the exit of the Government in 2007 from the manufacturing of sugar, leaving that activity in the hands of the private sector...the assets of the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited to the Sugarcane Farmers Cooperative Society Limited is at an advanced stage of the completion."

Mr. President, the Minister of Finance apparently does not seem to realize that we are in 2009. Six years later and this so-called sale is not yet complete.

The Minister seems also not to be aware that millions of dollars of Caroni's assets were stolen, carted away, misappropriated, vandalized, left to rot after 2003. Very much of the lands themselves were left idle with tremendous invasions of froghoppers and drains left uncleared, to the detriment of the private cane farmers.

In fact, when the newspapers broke the story of the tremendous pilferage taking place after the abandonment of Caroni (1975) Limited, a senior official in the Government said, at that time, that a few million dollars were neither here nor there in the scheme of things, with respect to Caroni (1975) Limited.

So when the Minister of Finance and this administration make a big point about the fact that this so-called reconstruction of the sugar cane industry has met, "the highest standards of transparency and accountability in an environment of collaborative and consultative arrangement", clearly we beg to differ, because in the real world we know what that means.

The Minister could say these things to people who do not know, but we know what that means. We know this means that they use divide and rule tactics. They use promises and these photo opportunities with plenty of hugging and kissing of babies and shaking hands. The Minister actually said in her contribution that the Caroni workers were very satisfied with the deal they got, because she went down there and they had photo opportunities and they were glad to shake her hand, and so on.

The workers at that time probably did not understand this administration and did not understand the Minister of Finance as we have always understood her and understood the mechanism of this administration. But we know this consultation

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and collaborative arrangement. What happened at the end of the day? The Government used their big stick and their state power to get what they wanted. And what did they want? They wanted to grab Caroni land. That whole thing was just a big land grab, like in the early days of the development of the United States, when people just used to go out there and grab land from the original peoples, the Indians and so on. It was a naked land grab for friends and families.

I want to know where the Minister was two years ago when the Sugar Cane Cooperative made proposals to buy the Ste. Madeleine factory. They had a collaborative arrangement with a French company. In 2009, the Minister is still talking about the sale nearing completion. Does the Minister and this administration not realize that the delay of years of accomplishing anything which would give the sugar workers some sort of economic base on which to rebuild their lives, has serious implications for what is happening socially, political and economically in those communities? So is that a big joke, that something could take two and three years to come to fruition, still ongoing and it has no implications for people's lives?

Does the Minister not realize that this is a life and death issue, when you do not have an income and when the little money you would have gotten from VSEP would have finished; you still have your mortgage to pay; you still have to pay for equipment; you still have to pay for all kinds of things, your families to support, and nothing is happening six years later? As I would show later on, there are still thousands of workers out there who have had no real economic support to fall back on after the abrupt and cruel closure of the company and their livelihood.

Mr. President, the Minister purports that the grant funds would have accrued to the national budget, based on the agreement with the European Union. She elaborated that these funds, based on the agreement would go directly to the national budget and the sums to be disbursed would be as follows from the European Union: In 2008, TT \$59.6 million; 2009, \$99.9 million; 2010, \$106.32 million and 2001, \$148.70 million.

The Minister said that moneys would be channelled directly to the Ministry of Finance, based on the progress in the implementation of the objectives of the so-called restructuring. What was interesting was that the Minister defined the performance indicators in order to access the disbursement of these grants from the European Union to the Ministry of Finance. It was very interesting and instructive, because we will see where all these so-called performance indicators were an abject failure. They were a hoax. They do not exist, some of them, therefore, a great hoax is being perpetrated on the sugar workers, the cane farmers and the people of this country.

Hear what the performance indicators are that the Minister said would justify the disbursement of funds from the European Union to the Ministry of Finance:

- "(i) to promote economic diversification of the sugar-dependent areas; and
- (ii) to address broader impacts generated by the adaptation process related to the social, environmental, community and area-based issues."

So, one, they had to justify receiving these grants on two things: That they would use the grants to promote economic diversification of sugar-dependent areas and they use these grants to address the whole trauma, dislocation and all the problems related to the loss of livelihood and the loss of jobs and their social, environmental and community impact.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. President, it seems that this administration, from what we have seen, has a very different definition of economic diversification than all rational persons, because this is an important headstone of the whole concept that you must promote economic diversification if you are going to justify taking this fund into the national budget. It is said that it is a sector based policy and it has a right to be in the national budget, and the moneys would be used to promote economic diversification and to address the problems of poverty, dislocation and loss of income that the workers would have endured.

Mr. President, I am not an economist but pure instinct would dictate to me that economic diversification implies establishing new points of economic activity that would contribute to the income of stakeholders and the GDP of the country. That is basic common sense and appreciation of what economic diversification would mean, but this is what the Minister of Finance cited as actions taken by the Government to achieve economic diversification in sugar-dependent areas and to address the issues of the negative impact on the social life of the community and environment. So this is the Minister of Finance justifying the use of moneys by Government for economic diversification.

There were five things they said they did to justify the economic diversification.

The first step is termination benefits and enhancements amounting to \$741.5 million to 9,000 daily-and monthly-paid workers. So the Minister is saying that their first step in economic diversification and supporting the communities in this traumatic period was to lay off all the workers cold turkey, no transition period and keep them waiting for years for promised benefits like the land.

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I would show in a concrete manner at the end of my presentation where workers are still waiting for these benefits. So step one is a cynical hoax perpetrated on the sugar workers and cane farmers.

Step two, the Government proposed as its economic diversification creation of a pool of appropriately trained human resources of approximately 3,400 former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited who were trained at a cost of \$16.5 million in areas of their choice; academic, technical or vocational skills to allow them to take advantage of the demand for high value skills in the expanding manufacturing and industrial activities in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, do you know what the problem is here? I feel the problem is that this administration forgets it is actually talking to people who are living in Trinidad and Tobago who know what is going on. It has the idea that it can get carried away and thinks it is writing some report to some commission thousands of miles away in Europe so these people would not know what it is talking about. But we are here, we see what is going on and we go to these communities. How could the Minister of Finance stand in the other place and say things like this?

We know that the labour force in the sugar industry is comprised mainly of persons who are middle aged and over and the 2004 agricultural census showed that most of the agricultural labour force is over 50 years and, therefore, the so-called training of middle aged persons who were involved in the practical aspects of agriculture all their life, the Minister is telling us that in courses of a few weeks or months they will equip these persons to acquire high value skills for manufacturing and industrial activities. Is the Minister serious? She did not even blush; straight face.

Mr. President, what high value manufacturing and industrial activities the Minister is talking about, Alutrint smelter? Step two is a wicked hoax.

Mr. President, step three of what the Minister is proposing in her economic diversification and help for these communities said it provided alternative employment generating alternatives in the agricultural sector through a mandate by the Government to the Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited to develop 17 estates at the cost of approximately \$498.1 million to accommodate 7,248 former employees and 30 sub estates on a phased basis. By December 2008, offers of leases would be made to all former employees and leases offered at an annual price of \$2,000 per hectare.

Mr. President, the former workers of Caroni (1975) Limited are still waiting on these lands, their VSEP money has dwindled away, they are living in poverty

and penury, unable to pay their bills and send their children to school, they have been thrown into a state of total economic disarray because the Minister is trying to establish economic diversification in the sugar-dependent areas. This is a mamaguy hoax.

Mr. President, the fourth step they said they will take to support the sugar-dependent areas will be to provide alternative employment generating alternatives in the industrial sector through a mandate by the Government to Evolving Technologies Limited to establish approximately 10 industrial estates throughout Trinidad and Tobago, including three on lands formerly owned by Caroni (1975) Limited.

Mr. President, the last we heard of Evolving Technologies which is the word on the ground is that it has gone bust; there is no more money there to do anything; that is a non-performing entity and nothing is happening in that area; it is laying off people and so forth. This eTeck was supposed to provide alternative employment generating alternatives in the industrial sector for former workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. So people are still waiting on that; that is a pie in the sky hoax.

Mr. President, the Minister went on to say that these estates in Caroni (1975) Limited, together with a steel mill is to be established also with lands formerly owned by Caroni (1975) Limited, are creating substantial employment opportunities. Now that is a shameless hoax because first of all, there is no steel mill; that has gone with the wind and it is shameless because 500 acres of the lands promised to the former workers of Caroni (1975) Limited were actually taken from them and now promised to Essar Steel.

Of course, Essar Steel has fled in disarray and they understand that this Government will not be able to make good on the promises it would have made for their million-dollar profits and they have gone. The steel mill project has crashed and, therefore, that step four promise has also gone with the wind.

The Minister has outlined five steps of economic diversification to support the sugar industry. In step five she talked about housing infrastructure development of 30 residential estates at the cost of \$592.2 million to over 5,000 eligible persons. That is a wicked, cruel and shameless hoax because workers have been waiting for over six years with no income, no economic diversification and so forth.

I am not talking through my hat, Mr. President, I have before me a letter written to the hon. Prime Minister; the heading is: Former Sugar Workers and Cane Farmers. This was sent to the hon. Prime Minister on November 17, 2009

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by the MP for Tabaquite, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj. This letter would substantiate all I have said about the hoax that has been inflicted on the former workers of Caroni (1975) Limited.

"I wish to draw your attention to the following injustices which are being done to former sugar workers and cane farmers:

LAND

Former sugar workers are not being given the deeds for their one lot of residential land and two acres of agricultural lands. The High Court declared that they are entitled in law to those lands. The lands designated by the government as agricultural lands for the former workers do not have the necessary infrastructure for the purpose of agriculture. Six (6) years have elapsed since the promise was made by the government for the workers to get these agricultural lands. This was their alternative source of income which they were to have in order for them to pay their mortgage loans for their homes, most of which are mortgaged to the Sugar Industry and Labour Welfare Committee. The government ought to write off these loans since former sugar workers were denied for six (6) years their right to get any alternative source of income from the agricultural land. The sugar workers were in any event expected to pay those loans from their incomes earned from the land. There is another problem which former sugar workers are having, some of them before VSEP had leases of lands of Caroni which they used for agriculture. Some of those leases expired and the government is not keeping the promise made to renew the leases. This is causing them to lose their means of livelihood. The occupiers are being asked to pay much higher sums as premiums for using the land. I am told that the same injustice is being done in respect of lands which were leased to them for residential purposes.

PENSIONS

The former sugar workers as a condition of the Voluntary Separation Employment Programme (VSEP) were promised by the government that it put into the Pension Funds any deficit in order to give to them the pensions which were due to them. The government has not done this. I trust the government intends to carry out its promise. We would like the government to state a timeframe for such payment but if it does not intend to make up the deficit as promised it must say so. Further, if it intends to pay less than what was supposed to be paid it must also say so. The workers pension is now a mere \$650.00 per month."

Can you imagine somebody trying to live on \$650 per month, Mr. President?

"If government injects the deficit in the Pension Fund as promised the workers can get at least \$2000.00 per month. You would recall that the government and Caroni took out the monies from the Pension Fund of the workers to pay for everyday expenses of the Company."

This is what these workers are subjected to today, Mr. President.

EUROPEAN UNION GRANT

The European Union gave a grant of approximately \$350 million in support of the National Adaptation and Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago. The monies are to be accessed in tranches. Those monies are to be used for the benefit of former sugar workers and cane farmers following their dislocation in the industry. The government is contending that those monies are not to be given to the former sugar workers and cane farmers but instead are to be kept by the government to be used for their benefit."

Which is what I outlined in the five steps which they said they took for the benefit of the cane farmers and sugar workers and I clearly showed it was a total hoax.

"We would like you to give us any information to show that the government used the funds which it received so far for the benefit of former sugar workers and cane farmers since their dislocation from the sugar industry."

Mr. President, this was sent by the Member for Tabaquite. As we have seen, none of the steps outlined by the Minister of Finance constitute economic diversification as rational human beings understand it today.

Sen. Enill: Thank you, Senator, for giving way. Senator, you made a statement which I would like you to help me understand. You said that Essar Steel has fled. The last communication I had did not say that, so I just want that to be clear.

What has happened is that they have not yet gotten approval from the EMA and are waiting on an approval so that I could give them a gas price. That is the current status. We are in discussion with them, and the EMA's approval, that is the problem.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Mr. President, thank you. The Minister has just outlined to the national community that this Government is very recalcitrant, it is insisting on destroying our environment, it is insisting on giving away our gas.

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Essar Steel is obviously negotiating for a better deal from this Government and playing hardball with the Government and they will get through apparently because the Government is still insisting that it gives 500 acres of Caroni (1975) Limited lands to these people.

So the Minister has just emphasized my point that this Government—

Mr. President: Senator, at the risk of misleading this Senate, from what the Minister said, I did not draw that conclusion. Perhaps you can help me, how you managed to draw that conclusion from what the Minister said. I do not see the nexus here at all and I think it is strange that you should draw that conclusion from what he said. I do not think that is right.

2.30 p.m.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: The Minister said to the national community that they are still in negotiation with Essar Steel. The deal has not gone through. Obviously, Essar Steel is playing hardball because the Minister has admitted that they are negotiating a gas price. We can pick sense from nonsense. Negotiations mean that I want the lowest price that I can get. [*Desk thumping*] This Government is recalcitrant because it insists in giving 500 acres of land which it had promised former Caroni workers to Essar Steel. That is their intention if they get through with their plan.

I have outlined and shown that none of the steps outlined by the Minister of Finance has constituted any sort of economic diversification. Where are the new jobs? Where is the new technology? Where are the new products from sugar cane? Where are the new efforts to deal with not just sugar, but other products that other countries are manufacturing out of the sugar cane plant? Where is the effort to deal with renewable sources of energy which the sugar cane plant can provide, ethanol which a country like Brazil is very much into?

The sugar cane plant is not just about sugar. We should have kept a minimum of production for our domestic use. We have seen that because of the scenario, internationally, prices have gone up astronomically and we have to pay a tremendous amount of money in foreign exchange for sugar that we have to import. What kind of policy is that? What kind of government with any kind of sustainable development in mind would do such a thing? [*Desk thumping*]

The five steps that the Government has taken have led to massive pauperization and the decimation of whole communities in the central sugar-based areas, based on the abrupt and heartless loss of jobs and productive activity in

those areas. In the absence of any well-thought-out and well-planned or well-strategized attention to research and development and a new paradigm shift and new industries that can come out of the sugar cane crop, they have ditched all that and are determined to give away 500 acres to Essar Steel as the Minister emphasized here this afternoon.

The Minister of Finance in her presentation in the other place was quoted as saying that the total cost to taxpayers for closing Caroni (1975) Limited and restructuring of the sugar industry is \$7.7 billion of which \$82 million was paid to cane farmers. Based on that admission, I would make the following point. This Government through the Minister of Finance has admitted to the wanton and profligate waste of \$7.7 billion plus \$330 million from the European Union Grant Fund which they have used to destroy the sugar industry; 30,000 sugar workers; the livelihood of 7,000 cane farmers; the livelihood of 300,000 persons indirectly; to execute entire communities and lay waste 7,000 acres of valuable agricultural land to foreign multinationals. They spent \$7 billion to convert our country from a sugar-producing country to a sugar-importing country; to import higher costs on manufacturers and consumers; generate massive unemployment in the central area; fuel the escalation of crime and criminal activity and grab valuable agricultural land for private uses.

In closing, I say that only in a country polarized, pulverized and demoralized into patricidal politics, could such a reckless and wanton act of betrayal go unpunished, but not for long.

I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Wade Mark: Mr. President, I beg to second the Motion and reserve my right to speak.

**WELCOME
(SEN. PROF. RAMESH DEOSARAN)**

Mr. President: Before I call on you, allow me to express a welcome to Sen. Prof. Deosaran who by God's grace is still here with us. It was quite a scare last week at the reception at the President's House and we were all very concerned when I got the news on Friday evening. Senator, it is a great pleasure to see you back and faring well, hale and hearty. [*Desk thumping*] Welcome back.

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Mr. President, I too must express my appreciation and gratitude to the distinguished Minister of Health for rushing to my aid expeditiously. It was a dizzy spell due to the heat, a victim of climate

Welcome

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change, I imagine. [*Laughter*] I have never seen so many friends gather around me in my moment of need. I thank you all very much, the Government, Opposition and Independent. That is true unity. [*Desk thumping*]

**EUROPEAN UNION FUNDS
(DISBURSEMENT TO CARONI (1975) LIMITED)**

Question proposed.

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Karen Nunez-Tesheira): Mr. President, I listened with some level of interest to the contribution of the hon. Senator. What puzzled me as I was listening is that I wondered what the debate was about, because it seemed that the Senator spent an inordinate amount of time not referring to the subject of the debate, which I believe was a motion filed by the hon. Senator. I say this because significant parts of the contribution were on economic diversification; what we should do is get into ethanol production, not understanding that if you are doing that, you are talking about economies of scale. You have to understand that you need to have the kind of land space to make such an industry a viable one as is the case of Brazil.

Going down that path I wondered what the debate was about. I had to refer constantly to the Motion in order to address what I believe was the subject of the Motion. As I understood it, the hon. Senator made a statement which was that one of the major stakeholders of the industry was adversely affected by the closure of the company. Essentially, that closure inflicted tremendous adverse impact on those persons in the industry.

The second statement which troubles me—and as such I would speak to it and in my respectful view was filled with inaccuracies and I put it politely—was that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had been given those grant funding from the European Union for the benefit specifically of the cane farmers and we must take immediate steps to disburse that money to the cane farmers. It seemed to contradict part of the Motion filed by the Senator. This was in the third paragraph in which the hon. Senator seemed to acknowledge that it was not a disbursement of funds to cane farmers, but a disbursement to the country. It was stated in the Motion which says:

“And whereas the European Union recognizing the severe impact the closure of the sugar industry would have on the stakeholders of the ACP countries, made grant funds available to those countries to cushion the impact of the closure of the industry;”

That is a correct statement. With all due respect, hon. Senator, there seems to be some confusion in your mind as to the purpose for which that fund was made available. There is a contradiction.

Having said so, let me start with one of the first statements which was that the adverse impact of the closure of the company on the sugar cane industry, in particular the sugar cane farmers, and the figures and statements made to give the impression somehow, that the sugar industry was, had and could make a significant contribution to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago as an important sector in the economy and had been doing so, could do so and would do so. Nothing could be further from the truth. I know that the hon. Senator knows different from that.

I am going to refer to the facts. This speaks to the compassion this Government has to the cane farmers. We all understand that for the cane farmers it was not just a job or employment opportunity that they went to work. It was a way of life. It was something that generations of cane farmers, who had come here as indentured labourers, persons in Caroni remained within those estates. It had become a way of life. It is part and parcel of who they were. The Government understood that. It was not a question of pure economics. If we had taken a pure economic approach to the sugar industry, it would not have lasted. It would have been closed down 30 years ago.

The first decision that was made in 1975, when Caroni (1975) Limited was formed, one of the considerations in keeping alive the industry, and essentially employing thousands of people in an industry in which mechanization—which was an option to create economies of scale and make it profitable with economic diversification. It is not always about a dollar figure. There were other considerations. Because it would have meant the dislocation of thousands of people, the Government made the decision not to introduce mechanization because it understood the severe social dislocation it would mean to those persons.

How long does one continue? One year, two years, three years? No. Three decades, 30 years of consistent losses from an industry that ostensibly, understand this, is intended to contribute to the revenue generation, to the GDP of your country. Understand that is the objective. Like the oil industry, there are different sectors in the economy. The understanding is that there is an industry called the sugar industry. The intention is that at the end of the day, it would contribute to the GDP, the revenue of your country, in the same way the oil sector does.

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The money that comes out of the oil sector, to those persons working in the oil sector, does it belong to those persons? They are employees of that sector but the revenues and profits generated from that sector belong to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. In the same way you talk about the sugar industry, the sugar industry ostensibly, was intended to generate revenue, contribute to the GDP and employ persons. It was the income, so to speak, the revenue of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The reality is that it was nothing like that. When we look at one of the reasons—this was before we looked at the question of the Lomé Convention, Cotonou Agreement and the decision of the European Union to discontinue that arrangement. Let us look at the reasons sugar was not profitable and doing what it was intended to do. Employment? Yes. But contribute to the GDP as a sector of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

One reason was the cost of production per tonne. I looked at the comparative indicators. When you look at other Caribbean countries, the cost of production per tonne was \$537; in Africa, \$340 and East Pacific US, \$266. Do you know what it was in Trinidad and Tobago? US \$679 per tonne. That is the reality. We looked at the yield per acre. You look at the cost of production and then the yield per acre. When we looked at the yield per acre what are the facts? We looked at Africa, 82 tonnes per hectare and the ACP countries, 73 tonnes per hectare. What was the case in Trinidad and Tobago? 52 tonnes per hectare. That was the yield. Those are some of the harsh realities.

The fact of the matter is that the hon. Senator accuses this Government of profligate spending, waste, being heartless and all the other statements that were an indulgence in hyperbole. I listened here and it was so caustic and bitter, but that is the way of the Senator and I must respect that is the way.

2.45 p.m.

Let me just put the record straight. That idea that the Government does not care and is heartless—twice this administration, in two different periods, bailed out Caroni (1975) Limited; not to the tune of \$100 or \$100 million, but it was to the tune of, in both instances, over \$2 billion.

When was one of those opportunities? One was in 1990 when we bailed them out to the tune of \$2.2 billion. Do you know when the next time was? It was 2001. I need not tell you the administration that preceded this administration prior to 2001. Again, this Government turned around in 2001 and bailed out Caroni (1975) Limited to the tune of \$2.2 billion. I do not know what happened in that period; if there was no wanton spending.

I listened to the hon. Senator using catch phrases like "political manipulation", "divide and rule", using certain coded language. I wonder, during 1995 to the end of 2000, what was going on in Caroni (1975) Limited. How could they have accrued losses of over \$2.3 billion, if they were managing the economic fortunes of the sugar industry? It is this Government, not once, but twice, which came to the rescue of Caroni (1975) Limited.

I want to put on the record that it is not true to paint this Government as heartless, without compassion and without care for the Caroni (1975) Limited workers. This is a difficult thing perhaps to accept, but it is not one year; it is 30 years of persistent loss in an industry, so then, when do you make the hard decision—and I have to say, the courageous decision? It takes courage to do it; to realize that to continue that charade, you are not doing anyone any good, least of all the Caroni (1975) Limited workers.

I want to note what really put the icing on the cake or concretized the circumstances was the decision on November 24, 2005, by the European Union, to discontinue the protocol arrangement that had been implemented under the Lomé Convention and continued under the Cotonou Agreement. Essentially, it was to give preferential access and terms and conditions to African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries; all countries that were former colonies of European countries.

This Sugar Protocol, as it was called, allowed many of these countries—I have a copy of it and I can quote Article 1, which says:

“The [European] Community undertakes for an indefinite period to purchase and import, at guaranteed prices, specific quantities of cane sugar, raw or white, which originate in the ACP States and which these States undertake to deliver to it.”

This was a very good agreement in the sense that it gave the ACP countries, in which Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St. Kitts and Mauritius were included, good terms and conditions and high guaranteed prices for their sugar.

The decision was first mooted in 2005 and eventually implemented to discontinue this arrangement and, as a consequence of it, you felt the impact. The impact was significant and very sharp for many of the countries. We look just within the Caribbean, at our Caribbean neighbours. They were severely impacted by that decision. I have a quotation with a press release which came from the ACP countries and they stated:

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“It is impossible to overstate the devastating impact the price cuts and timescale proposed by the Commission will have on ACP countries...

Under these conditions the sugar industries in many countries will be simply unable to survive, while in other producing countries the so-called reform will inevitably lead to severe cutbacks with disastrous socio-economic consequences,”

Mr. President, the writing was on the wall. They gave an example of a country, I think it is Swaziland. They said that it was one of the lowest cost producers in the world of sugar, but the loss to them of income from sugar represented 21 per cent of their country's export earnings. This was a very serious decision, with very serious impact for all ACP countries, including Trinidad and Tobago.

Let us look at the reality. The fact was that when the European Union decided to give grant funding—you may not have to pay it back, but they attached conditionalities to it. When the European Union decided to give grant funding to former sugar-producing ACP countries, they did it on the basis that in those countries the sugar industry represented a significant contribution to their GDP; was a significant sector of the economy; was a significant revenue earner to the economy and, therefore, the loss of that preferential treatment would crush a significant sector of the industry with all its implications for the economy of that country.

For Trinidad and Tobago, that was not the case. As I indicated to you, sugar was no longer king. It had stopped being king many years ago. It was a loss-making industry, but this was the basis and rationale of the grant funding and Trinidad and Tobago, being one of those countries, was also the recipient of that grant funding.

It was done on the basis of budget sector support, which is why the statement of the hon. Senator when she said that the impact was to deal with the closure of the industry and impact on the country, is correct. The rationale was that when you close a sector that was supposed to be contributing to the revenue of your country, it has implications for your GDP and your economy and, therefore, they are giving that level of budget support.

Mr. President, this is the sector budget support and if there is any doubt—the hon. Senator seems to have forgotten that her own Motion was saying that the European Union had given the money and it was to be given to the cane farmers; that you have to account to the cane farmers, and give it to them specifically. What the hon. Senator said is correct. That money that is being received by way

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of grant funding goes into the Consolidated Fund for Trinidad and Tobago. If there is any doubt that it is budget sector support and not support for persons, but a sector in a country's economy, it is clearly stated in the Financing Agreement. I quote:

The National Sugar Adaptation Strategy is a sector policy document which is incorporated in a wider national development policy and Vision 2020 and which is based on the Government's policy to disengage from the sugar industry and to end subsidies by the end of 2007.

This is a quote from the Financing Agreement between the European Commission and Trinidad and Tobago.

Further, the Minister Councillor and Chargé d'Affaires also made a statement, and I quote from it, to emphasize the point that it was budget sector support. He said:

We would like to remind you that the multi-annual programme would be implemented by sector budget support. In fact, the accompanying measures for sugar protocol countries is a policy-based instrument, meaning that on the basis of progress made in implementation, the European Union assistance would be channelled directly to the Ministry of Finance.

The programme is in line with the Cabinet agreement in December 2002 to restructure the sugar industry. Actions taken by the Government to transform the sugar industry and support the sugar workers and farmers will also be taken into consideration when assessing progress made in the implementation of the protocol.

In that regard, I want to say that it is to give budget support to a particular sector and not individuals as indicated in the Motion. It was curious to hear because the greater part of the Senator's presentation was about economic diversification and what we would do with sugar, the impression being that many people wanted to stay in the sugar industry. It was curious that, for most persons in the sugar industry, according to the Senator, the vast majority are older persons.

The hon. Senator made the point: What are we talking about retraining these persons? These persons are old. It tells you, therefore, that if that were a sector which younger persons found viable—it is only a few years ago that it was closed down—it is clear that many of the young people and the less older people were not interested or attracted to the industry and continuing in sugar production.

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If I am to be guided by the fact that at the time the closure occurred most of the payments were being made to the older persons, it is an indication that even among the former Caroni workers themselves, there was recognition that that was not the way to go for the younger generation. There was another way. That is the reality.

The fact is that industries come and industries go. You do not hold on to something because you have done it for 20, 30 or 40 years. Look at it realistically. It does not make sense. If it does not make sense, then make the decision you have to make in terms of moving forward. There is going to be heartache. No decision that you make does not have its trauma and negative, but at the end of the day you have to take the big picture.

In the context of the big picture, if you have to take your indication from the persons in the industry, the younger people have recognized that their future does not lie in sugar, but perhaps in the educational opportunities this Government has made for every single Trinidadian and Tobagonian. Perhaps that is what they have understood.

This Government is committed to education and that cannot be questioned. *[Interruption]* This is what I heard on the last occasion: URP and CEPEP. I had to remind the other side that they have to put URP and CEPEP in context. It is a social programme. Understand the demographics of those persons in those programmes. Those persons either have no education or have a challenge. I know that because I know the CEPEP workers. Many of them, especially the women, come from a background; most of them are single mothers, young women who do not have educational skills training. The point is that you have to put URP and CEPEP as what it is. To a large extent, it has a large social component, rather than having these young persons on the street, you give them an opportunity to have some dignity.

The sugar industry is supposed, ostensibly, to be a revenue earner, a sector in your economy, the purpose of which, while it may do social good, is to create employment and generate revenue. That is an essential difference when you are comparing apples and pears. It is not the same thing. It is like comparing a social programme with the oil industry or the financial services sector.

Having said that, what has the Government done? I started by saying that the Government very well understood. In fact, I do not think that there is precedent in Trinidad and Tobago; no other example of a closing of an industry in the economy of Trinidad and Tobago and, I dare say, in many countries, where the Government did not simply talk about VSEP.

We understood the impact of what the closure would make to persons in that industry. One of the things the Government did, and this is important, was to start the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited way before the first time the European Union considered seriously, and put on the table, the decision to discontinue the preferential treatment, grant funding, to all these countries. That was in 2005.

3.00 p.m.

In fact, because this Government has vision and compassion, it started since 2002, and there is a Cabinet Minute to that effect. It started in earnest in 2003. When you look at the conditions attached to getting the grant funding, as I would indicate at the end of my contribution, you will see, as I said, it is a grant funding and you do not have to pay it back, but there are conditions under which to make the disbursement.

In fact, I have a letter from the European Commission acknowledging that we had already started—by the efforts of the Government—since 2003 to actually put into effect many of the conditions attached to the funding. So, we did not have to wait for the European Union to tell us how to do it, we started years ahead of them. In fact, not only have we been coming up to scratch, but we have met the conditions for disbursements.

Mr. President, the hon. Senator made mention of the amount of money the Government put into the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, and so much of that had to do with giving persons another way of life. If it was VSEP, that would have been a different thing, but it was not just VSEP, but understanding what this would mean. It was over \$7.7 billion, and when you add up the total amount of the European Union funding it is about \$400 million. That is what it is. What is that when compared to \$7.7 billion that this Government has put into Caroni (1975) Limited?

Now, Mr. President, I heard the hon. Senator talk about the \$650 pension, but she must go back and do her own research and see that there are some workers—I do not know who their representative was and I do not know who is the head of the union—getting as little as \$150 a month. That is from union representation. I would not speak about union representation, but the Senator has the audacity to come here and complain about the \$650.

Mr. President, the Senator did not speak about the land; the Senator did not speak about the fact that the Government made available residential lots, agricultural lots and training. I want to pay particular attention to the training, because one of the things that need to be stressed is the point about the people. At

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the end of the day, it is about the people. That is what the Government understands. At the end of the day, if we are taking Trinidad and Tobago to developed nation status and a tertiary economy, we have to invest in the most important resource, the people; the human resource, the intellectual capacity. [Desk thumping] No one can question this Government's commitment to that. [Desk thumping] Not even them.

I am sure that there are very few people in this room who cannot say that they know someone going to COSTAATT, MuST, Tech/Voc, UWI, UTT and USC. Every one of us knows someone who is benefiting from the Government's commitment to training, education and enhancing our people and, most recently, with the opening of the National Academy for the Performing Arts. So, this Government makes a place at the table for everyone. Not everyone is going to be a doctor or a lawyer. There are singers, dancers and musicians and this Government is committed to the intellectual development of every single person in Trinidad and Tobago. That is what this Government is about. It is no less apparent in the measures that this Government took in relation to the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited. Mr. President, I want to talk about the training programmes.

In fact, let me just say here that the programme of training effectively ended in December 2007. At that date, 2,411 former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited had availed themselves of a wide range of training programmes including agricultural, technical, vocational and academic at 19 institutions which provided training in more than 20 subject matters. If you disaggregate it, 536 daily-paid and 22 monthly-paid employees participated in a wide range of agricultural programmes; 1,291 daily-paid and 562 monthly-paid employees participated in technical/vocational and academic programmes.

Mr. President, you know, giving the figures and statistics is fine, but sometimes it is good to put the person behind it. I have some pictures here and persons who gave testimonies as to how this has changed their lives. And they talk about this Government being heartless and having no compassion! Let us hear the reality.

Gregory Sealy, he worked at Woodford Lodge as a chargehand welder when he accepted VSEP. He then participated in a training programme at UTT, and hear what he says:

“I am proud of my new capabilities.”

He is presently employed as a pipefitting fabricating instructor with the National Energy Skills Centre. Well, I would not give his rate of pay, but it is substantially different. In fact, what he is making in a day at the National Energy

Skills Centre is about two or three times more than what he was working for in the sugar industry. I do not know if he is a person that no matter how it is a loss-producing industry, and no matter what it means to him and his family, we must persist on it.

Mr. President, Naipaul Sharma from Coconut Drive says:

I now have the opportunity to repair air-condition units and refrigerators on my own. On weekends I do private jobs and earn extra money.

He did a course in air-conditioning, refrigerating and advanced computer repairs.

I have another gentleman, Narace Singh—there are examples upon examples of persons whose lives have been changed among those thousands. It was over 2,000 persons who received training and whose lives have been changed, because of the decision that the Government had made, not just to close down the sugar industry, but to give them the opportunity to transition out and to give themselves the appropriate skills in a new paradigm. Mr. President, it was not just about training, and I would give you examples here.

Mr. President, there are 30 residential estates with water, roads, drainage, sewage disposal and electricity being implemented at the cost of over \$592 million. I heard the hon. Senator say that we are giving it away to friends and family, I do not know. What I have here is 5,062 former Caroni (1975) Limited workers have been offered leases at highly subsidized prices. I think it takes about \$100,000 to develop, and they will be given those leases at \$20,000—\$30,000 per lot. That is the former Caroni (1975) Limited workers and they got first choice. Similarly, in agriculture, there are 17 agricultural estates being developed at the cost of \$598 million, and that is to accommodate 7,240 former employees. So, Mr. President, it is land; residential and agricultural lands.

I want to mention also that there is counselling. Many of the former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited were offered counselling by the Government in order to assist them in the transition. So, I found it very difficult to sit and listen to the hon. Senator paint the Government in this way, that we appeared to be heartless and uncaring. I think the Government showed, not only its compassion, not only its caring, but its courage to do what had to be done in order to bring to an end an industry that simply was not making sense on any level for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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In fact, I have a quotation here where they are expending a significant amount of money on counselling and retraining. There were 3,000 employees who participated in eight graduation ceremonies. So, that speaks to the people. It is the people we are talking about. I found it very difficult to listen to the hon. Senator when she made those statements.

Mr. President, an annuity scheme was also implemented. Actually, I was present at the signing. I know that Mr. Indarsingh, the President of the Sugar Workers Union—I had the pleasure of taking a photo opportunity with Mr. Indarsingh and he was very pleased with what the Government had said. He was very pleased and very happy to be part of this whole process.

Sometimes I wonder of whom they are speaking. I wonder, therefore, what is behind this. What is really behind this? Is it really the care and concern for the Caroni (1975) Limited workers or is it the Freudian slip? You know, sometimes people give messages, subliminal messages, and you must listen to what they say. Is it the divide and rule? You see, because that is what they strive on. One has to wonder whether what we are really pining after is the loss of what one believes is one's political base. The Senator made a lot of heavy weather about political manipulation and that was much the focus of her contribution.

It seems to me that many of the concerns—if what the hon. Senator is trying to articulate in this august Chamber is that the Caroni (1975) Limited workers—you would always have disgruntled people. You would never please everyone. That is not going to happen in anybody's lifetime. That is Utopia. You would always have persons who would never be pleased with whatever you do. If, in fact, what the hon. Senator wants this country of Trinidad and Tobago to believe is that what the Government did was a wrong decision, I beg to differ.

There are thousands and thousands of former Caroni (1975) Limited workers who, today, will thank the Government for its caring and its compassion—giving them another opportunity to get new skills; giving them land. That is the aspiration of most persons, to own land and to be able to build their own home. That is the aspiration—for giving them all of those opportunities. I beg to differ that I do not believe that the hon. Senator would find much support for the kinds of statements that were uttered in this Chamber.

Mr. President, I want to end my contribution by making the point, as I had also mentioned in my contribution, that this Government did not wait for the European Union to say to us, well, we will give you grant funding, which we are not saying that we are not happy about. It is certainly something that we are very

happy that they have given this grant to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. What I want to stress on, in particular, is that by the time the European Union had given the grant funding, this Government had already started implementing much of what the grant funding was intended to be used for.

I am looking for a letter which was written by the European Commission to me. I am not going to read it all, but I would read the salient points. It was written on May 08, 2008, and I am going to read this paragraph. It was written by—I cannot pronounce the name. It is a Greek name, I believe, “Christopoulos”. The relevant part says:

We acknowledge that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has started this restructuring process before the European Union's decision to support countries that have signed the sugar protocol. This support aims at helping those countries to adapt to the new situation which needs to bring trade agreements between the European Union and sugar protocol countries in line with WTO commitment and reflect the reformed European Union agricultural policy.

The programme is in line with the Cabinet agreement in December, 2000 to restructure the sugar industry. Actions already taken by the Government to transform the sugar industry and support the sugar workers and farmers since the closure of Caroni Limited will also be taken into consideration when assessing progress in the implementation of the multi-annual programme—

Sorry, it is called the Accompanying Measures for Sugar Protocol Programme.

Mr. President, if one had any doubt that we had started doing that, I have here the latest position with regard to the status and disbursement, and \$2.2 million euros were disbursed as a first tranche in August, 2009. The second tranche is to be disbursed, I believe, at the beginning of 2010 of 3.6 million euros, but the important fact is being disbursed on the basis that we have complied with the performance indicators which were a condition of disbursement.

There are five performance indicators and two macroeconomic indicators. I would not go into all of them but, certainly, they speak to the indicators for the multi-annual programme to be established. They acknowledged that it was done in 2009. The incentive package for the management of the impact of the national adaption strategy on sugar farmers approved by the Government, they acknowledged that the Government had already started that process. In fact, they have given support to four cane farming groups to give them support as an exit strategy in the form of \$83 million as transitional support for a period of 2.5 years to assist them in transiting out of sugar cane production.

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3.15 p.m.

Mr. President, I would not go through all of the details. What I will say to this honourable Senate is that this Government has clearly taken the proactive step in understanding that the closure and exiting of sugarcane production, as a State initiative, was not in the interest of any of the parties concerned. The Government made that decision ahead of the European Union so that by the time the European Union made the decision to discontinue the preferential agreement that it had given to ACP countries we were well ahead of the game, so much so, that they acknowledged that and so much so, that the disbursements had been made primarily because this Government has implemented that strategy.

I have been invited to this Senate to make a contribution on a Motion which, at sometimes, I felt that we were perhaps losing our way in terms of what the Motion intended to address and I hope that in my contribution I made it very clear that the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited was a difficult decision. It was a difficult decision. I think when one looks at all of the facts, it was the best and most courageous decision for the Government to undertake.

Finally, the European Union grant funding was made for the country, to provide the country with budget support because of the loss of an industry. It was not made to the particular group of persons but, in any event, even if one were to argue that, I dare say that the \$7.7 billion—that is putting it in a dollar term, but it is significant—which the Senator said was a waste of money. That is what the Senator said, it was a waste of money. So, the Government wasted its money on retraining the former Caroni workers; the Government has wasted its money in providing the former Caroni workers with leases; the Government has wasted its money in providing the former Caroni workers with residential and agricultural land and the Government has wasted its money on enhanced pensions. That is what the Senator said, the Government wasted \$7.7 billion on the former Caroni workers. That is what the Senator said but we do not think so. We know we did the right thing and we did not have to have the European Union to tell this Government what was the right thing to do. We did it.

I just want to end by saying that I believe that the Government—if the argument is that the cane farmers should benefit from economic support—the \$7.7 billion which, according to the Senator, was prolific spending, wanton and

all of the other adjectives, we beg to differ. We believe the money has been well spent. We believe that the Government has shown its commitment and its compassion to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and to the cane farmers of this country—people who have given their blood, sweat and tears to the development of this country and it is something that there is no question this Government recognizes.

We understand the importance both from a social perspective and, may I say on behalf of the Government, it is our privilege to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago; it is our privilege to have been able to change the lives of so many of our people and we believe that the opportunities as we move forward, as we move into another level of our economic and social development; we believe that the Government and history, if not now, will show that the decision of this Government was the right decision.

I thank you.

Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight: I thank you, Mr. President. This is the first opportunity that I have had since I have joined this Senate to speak on a debate on something that I feel a little comfortable that I know a bit about.

This is because thanks to the Government I spent roughly eight years being involved in the implementation of Lomé 1 to 3 and some of the preparatory work for Lomé 4. That will explain how I interpret the EU provision of this Motion.

This Motion seems to me to touch on two essential areas. One: The treatment of—it says—the Caroni cane farmers and two, a perceived entitlement to benefits from the European Union.

Now, I have heard from both sides of the Senate compassion for employees who are retrenched. I want to make the point that any employee who is forced to consider VSEP before retirement age has an equal entitlement to compassion and the best possible advantages to re-establishing a life for himself or herself and his or her family. Caroni (1975) Limited is not the first or the only Government enterprise that has met this fate. In varying ways, I think it was in 1993 and 1997 WASA was downsized, people were offered VSEP and their VSEP packages are well-known. It more or less, as is normal, consisted for monthly employees of the benefits that accrue to them under the Pensions Act and pensions regulations and they were given an enhancement—I think it was some 20 per cent in those days. PTSC suffered the same fate. Theirs was an enhancement of X per cent; Tourism Development; Industrial Development; MDC—

Sen. Dr. Saith: Port.

Sen. C. Baptiste-Mc Knight: Thanks for helping—NIB; Government Post Office; TTPost and the list goes on. You had the health care workers of the Ministry of Health. None of these, you might say, suffered the same displacement that the Caroni workers suffered. I do not believe that.

Let us look more recently, BWIA, they suffered the same fate as Caroni (1975) Limited. It was shut down. What happened? The employees were given terminal benefits in accordance with their collective agreements plus an enhancement, but they were additionally allowed to maintain their health, life insurance and medical plan benefits until the end of 2007.

Librarians in the government service—when the NALIS Act was passed, they were offered the choice of moving from the public service into NALIS—opting for employment in other areas of the service—or thank you very kindly, go home. There was no mention and there still is no provision for any form of VSEP or terminal benefit.

Now, I have a problem with sitting here and hearing people's heart bleed for some people who are terminated without reference to others. So I would make the plea now that for everybody who has to be terminated from government employment from now on, Caroni severance is the benchmark. Because, we have heard the hon. Minister reiterate, not for the first time, all of the benefits that Caroni workers got that nobody else has ever been given. [*Desk thumping*]

I am not saying that they are not entitled to it. What I am saying is that every other Trinidadian or Tobagonian who has served the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is also entitled to like treatment. But the hon. Minister forgot one thing when she spoke about the retraining and retooling. I know for a fact that on account of misinformation or, I do not know what, it was not a very popular benefit. So, you know what the caring Government did? They instituted a programme called “People on the move” to go from place to place to explain the benefits to the people in order for them to get the 2,000-odd that the Minister was boasting about. Has that been done for anybody else?

Now that concerns the Caroni workers. We talked about the housing, “oh” boy. It is only lately that HDC housing is getting the kind of infrastructure that is put down in Central on all of these 30 housing estates; state of the art; definitely 2020 ready. I like that, because this means that we are moving with the times and we are giving our people the best. But, in addition to that, workers who were enjoying company housing are given the option of buying those houses at discounted prices of 1 per cent for every year of service up to a maximum of 20

per cent. Now, this is the package that was given to the Government employees, but the private cane farmers who are clients or business associates, not employees, they also get severance benefits, and somebody is coming here to imply in this Motion that these citizens are hard done by. Mr. President, fair is fair and that is not fair. [*Interruption*]

Now, let me move on to what I know about. The Preamble to this Motion talks about the EU benefit and I suspect there is a bit of confusion between the sugar regime of the common agricultural policy of the European Union and the sugar protocol which is part of the ACP/EU agreements from Lomé in 1975 right up to Cotonou in 2000. This sugar protocol is a stand-alone agreement that is just included in the various Lomé agreements. It is not part of Lomé or Cotonou.

3.30 p.m.

In fact, the EU sugar regime and the ACP sugar protocol are siblings; they have the same parentage, but they have different personalities. What happens is, they dress them in the same clothes and they are joined at the hip pocket. What do I mean by that? They get the same pocket money. The amount that is paid to the European sugar beet farmer is the identical amount that is paid per tonne to the sugar protocol exporter. So that, whenever there is a variation in the price paid to the beet farmer, that same variation carries over to the sugar farmer. That is a very important thing to understand, because, since the WTO as a result of complaints handed down adverse rulings affecting subsidies in the European market, the EU has found it necessary to reform their sugar regime.

Now, this is something that they had resisted over the years. Other aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) had been reformed, but the sugar regime remained. But with the WTO insisting that they come into compliance, and therefore do something about the subsidies, they had to reform their sugar regime. The result was that to bring it into line with the rest of the agricultural policy, it meant removing the subsidies from the product and the price, and they compensated for this by making “direct decoupled payments” they called them, to their producers.

Now, once they knew that this had to be done and they dragged their feet until late 2005 to make these decisions, eventually, by January/February 2006, they were ready to institute the policy. But they were aware of the grave and dramatic dislocation this would mean to the sugar protocol countries, so there were stakeholder negotiations. As a part of those negotiations, the ACP countries requested consideration to be given to them to have the same sort of payment

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regime for their suppliers. So that just as the European Union farmers would be allowed payment for non-cultivation of sugar, they would be allowed this and also payment for sugar that was produced specifically for energy purposes, the Europeans would have none of it. It is not that the ACP did not try to get direct payment to farmers, it is that it was rejected. It is important to know that when we are going to talk about EU money being meant for the benefit of the farmers. Just not possible. I am fully aware that all of this has been touted all along, simply because people did not understand. This is why I think it is my duty to come here and explain it.

Sen. Manning: You are twisting the story.

Sen. C. Baptiste-McKnight: Not, it is not twisting the story. It is not something that is easy to understand. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, if we need the details, I refer you to European Regulation 266/2006. This is the regulation, and let me be precise. It is "the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing accompanying measures for sugar protocol countries affected by the reform of the EU sugar regime". That is the name of the document. This document states, quite clearly, exactly what these accompanying measures would be.

First of all, in the preamble, it says that this is the solution that is established, that would allow for additional sources of funding. That is funding outside of the EDF, which is the normal funding mechanism for the Cotonou Agreement. This funding is to provide financial and technical assistance, including budget support where appropriate.

Now, at Article 2, it says its purpose is to enable them to adapt to the new market conditions which must include and I quote:

"...upgrading the competitiveness of their sugar cane sector, developing alternative economic activities, and coping with the help of adequate resources, with the serious broader social environmental and economic consequences of a reduction in the contribution...the sugar sector (makes) to their economies."

Now, Article 3(1) goes on to identify who would be eligible for this assistance, and it is the sugar protocol countries of which Trinidad and Tobago happens to be one. Now, in order to access this funding, Article 3(3) says:

"... requests shall be based on a comprehensive multiannual adaptation strategy... The multiannual strategy may include measures in the process of being implemented and also current and future financial impacts of social plans already implemented..."

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Now, Mr. President, this ought to make it very clear that there is no element of retroactivity in payments under this rubric. Payments occasioned by the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited were made between 2003, and this date. Certain of the payments. The actual disbursements to Caroni workers and cane farmers were made then. So that there is no manner of interpreting this facility that was introduced in 2006 as being able to refer to payments that were actually made in 2003, 2004, 2005.

Additionally, from 1975 with the first Lomé to present, the relationship between the European Union and the ACP countries has always been a government to government agreement. They deal either with governments, or with agencies and entities designated by those governments, or agencies with which they have programmes or project arrangements as a result of regional or national programming. The only cases I know of individual disbursement to ACP nationals, is where there is a travel grant or a scholarship and the appropriate office will make the payment "on behalf of".

Mr. President, for the reasons I have tried to adduce, I feel quite satisfied in my mind that Government has been not fair, but magnanimous to the sugar workers. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Thank you.

Sen. C. Baptiste-Mc Knight: Government has been more than magnanimous to the private cane farmers, to whom, let us face it, they have no obligation other than what they have to all citizens. Similarly, they have been less than magnanimous to the librarians, but—rap your desk for that too. [*Interruption*] You talk for the dockers. It is my hope that the benefits that have been extended to the Caroni workers, as I said before, will become the benchmark for people who are to be retrenched.

In closing, I wish to add that I am personally satisfied that there is no EU funding that is due to any entity in Trinidad and Tobago, except the Ministry of Finance, and I feel sure that between now and 2012, which is the time frame for disbursement of this \$400 million, both parties will make proper arrangements so that the moneys would be disbursed properly.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Seukeran Tambie: Thank you, Mr. President. Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to you for giving me this opportunity today, to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and by extension, the cane farmers, their families

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and their workers. Let me also publically thank the Opposition Leader for seeing the value in asking me to come here today as an Independent Senator.

Sen. Joseph: Independent? *[Laughter]*

Sen. S. Tambie: As a temporary Senator. Sorry, as an Opposition Senator. *[Desk thumping]*

The Motion on the Order Paper moved by Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan is highly relevant to the debate that we are facing here today. Having heard discussions from the hon. Minister of Finance discussing the issues and so on, I believe now that there is gross misunderstanding as to what the issues are facing the sugar cane farmers, but let me put the record straight. The cane farmers are not sugar workers. The sugar cane workers are not sugar workers. Therein lies the difference. Hence probably why the Minister of Finance went off on a tangent and making this lengthy discourse on what they did for Caroni and the sugar workers, and the \$7 billion that was spent and so on.

3.45 p.m.

I will restrict my discussion on issues relating to cane farmers, the sugar cane workers, their families and, of course, the effect the closure of the sugar industry has brought upon these people.

There were 6,000 cane farmers in Trinidad and Tobago in 2003. I want to make it clear that the decision was taken by this caring Government to close the sugar industry in 2003. There are over 3,000 sugar cane workers, which made us 9,000, equivalent to the sugar workers, 9,000 of them. We were private cane farmers and produced 60 per cent of the canes that were sold to Caroni (1975) Limited. Close to 80 per cent of the cane farmers farmed their own private lands.

Mr. President: Senator, please forgive me for interrupting. It is not usual for the Presiding Officer to do so on a person's maiden speech; but when you say "we", are you saying that you are informally a cane farmer and, therefore, are you speaking in your interest here? If you are, you should say so.

Sen. S. Tambie: Mr. President, I am Mr. Seukeran Tambie, General Secretary of the Cane Producers Association. I speak as a representative of the cane farmers of Trinidad and Tobago and I am also a cane farmer. *[Desk thumping]* I have been involved in the whole issue of the transformation of the sugar industry over the last 40 years.

Mr. President, the cane farmers of Trinidad and Tobago were bonded by what you call the Production of Cane Act, Chap. 64:01; through that we had a contract with the Government, through Caroni (1975) Limited. We sold our canes and we were paid.

Under this system, there was a system in which it was organized where the farmers were protected. They harvested their canes in an orderly manner and they were looked after. The scales, according to the Production of Cane Act, were run by Caroni (1975) Limited.

I heard the Minister of Finance talk about an agreement that was signed by four groups. The Minister said that \$18 million was paid to the cane farmers and, of course, she spoke about the issue of the European grant funding. I will deal with that in a short while.

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

I want to state it absolutely clear that this is highly relevant to the issue I am going to discuss here today. In 2003, when the sugar workers were sent home, the administrative structure in Caroni was dismantled and the cane farmers were left on their own. I will deal with the issues of selling their canes to Caroni.

Most of these scales were distributed to cane farmers, and therein lay the problem. I believe that there was a system put in place to frustrate the cane farmers, to drive them out of the sugar industry, and in the words of Sen. Dr. Saith himself, by 2007 he thought all the farmers would have left. I am sure he remembers that. Therein lay the problem; there was so much disruption within the sugar industry. The cane farmer found it difficult to survive under those conditions. Let me just point out some things here. It has relevance to the issue of the payment to which the Minister was talking about.

The cane farmers, in fact, were given the running of scales. They were purchasing their own canes; they were purchasing their friends' and families' canes. They had their own ticket book. As a result, many of the farmers found it absolutely difficult to continue surviving in the sugar industry.

By 2007, when we started discussions with the head of the ministerial committee, Sen. Dr. Saith, in respect of the issue of payment to cane farmers—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Vice-President: Sorry to disturb you again, but we refer to Ministers by their portfolio, so hon. Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Dr. Lenny Saith.

Sen. S. Tambie: Mr. Vice-President, what transpired then was that many of the cane farmers prospered under those arrangements and there was so much

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disruption by 2005 and 2006, 3,000 farmers were driven out of the sugar industry. They were forced out of the sugar industry.

I want to come back to the issue of the formula that was used to pay that \$80 million. A formula was used to qualify those farmers who were selling canes in 2006 and 2007. Three thousand of those farmers fell by the wayside. Even though they were selling cane for 40 years until 2005, they did not benefit.

I wrote to the hon. Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister informing him of the issues that must be addressed when we were in discussion. I told him, "Listen, we must be given the opportunity to explain our issues and to ensure that our issues were discussed at length." Of course, we all know that is history.

While 3,000 farmers got nothing out of this payment—I am hoping that this House would listen—3,000 farmers got absolutely nothing from the payment by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for services rendered to the State for 40 years. You see here the information on the payments. [*Sen. Tambie displays document*]

Farmers qualified in 2007. One farmer never sold cane in his life, selling 3,000 canes in 2007. He was qualified for payment. Farmers selling in 2006 qualified; thousands of tonnes of cane to their names. They qualified for payment, while the other 3,000 got absolutely nothing. I made it absolutely clear that would be unfair for the cane farmers of Trinidad and Tobago. That was not right.

More importantly—I will not call names—there were farmers whose production went up during that period of time. Do you know why? Because they were given their own scales to run. They were doing their own tickets and purchasing their cane in the night. There was absolute chaos within the industry, of course, if you were not affiliated to the cane farmer running the scale, you had no choice but to abandon your cane and leave. One farmer selling 1,000 tonnes of cane for a period of time, sold 10,000 tonnes of cane. I would not call the names here today; 10,000 tonnes of cane.

Do you know something, Mr. Vice-President? Those are the same people who signed this agreement to accept \$80 million. Worse than that, the formula that was used, having qualified the farmers in 2006 and 2007, you paid them for cane sold in three, four, five and six, but the "fella" who selling cane for 40 years until 2005 got nothing; 3,000 farmers. I made it absolutely clear that was wrong; it should not have happened, and I so informed the hon. Minister that something was wrong. Of course, you see they went on to pay this money. That is another issue on the side, but the mere \$18 million was paid to the cane farmers.

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

The issue of the sugar workers getting \$7 billion—9,000 cane farmers—let me tell this honourable House today—cultivating over 22,000 acres of private lands, had their own infrastructure; over \$1 billion in capital infrastructure just went to waste during this period of time. I said that it was unfair.

More than that, I was surprised when he talked about comparing the sugar workers and the issue of the cane farmers. You hear the Minister of Finance with her lengthy discourse on how much the Government has given to the sugar workers and how much billions of dollars spent on training. Cane farmers got \$80 million in transitional support for two and a half years and nothing else; nothing else. The wrong ones got paid too. That could not have been fair.

Sen. Dr. Dick-Forde: There was infighting.

Sen. S. Tambie: You may say it was infighting.

Sen. Dr. Dick-Forde: That is what it sounds like to me.

Sen. S. Tambie: In executing this agreement by the other four groups—and the Minister said, "Mr. Tambie has a small group of farmers", let me get permission to come around this Red House and you would see the kind of support that this association has, and you could see it right here.

Hon. Senator: Misinformation.

Sen. S. Tambie: This is not misinformation. In fact, in my car I have 2,500 membership forms.

Sen. Mark: Do not let them distract you.

Sen. S. Tambie: One group that has five members, and he told the hon. Minister in the Office of Prime Minister—five members, direct delivery. This is what he said: "Government fooled the farmers into signing the agreement." That is not misinformation, "Government fool dem." There was an article in the *Daily Express* of Tuesday 22 November, 2008. Another group—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Mark: "Doh worry with dem; address de Chair."

Sen. Dr. Gopaul-McNicol: That is their strategy, to distract.

Sen. S. Tambie: There was a group that was looking to get the mill, and everybody knows that, the Sugarcane Farmers Cooperative Society. Do you know what he said? He said that they accepted the \$80 million compensation, because the Government, in fact, promised them the mill.

Hon. Senators: Humph!

Sen. S. Tambie: Mr. President, I am on the outside now, a small group according to the Minister, saying that this thing is wrong, that something is wrong.

Then, of course, there is Mr. Raffique Shah. I have great respect for him. On the issue of compensation, Government had no obligation to pay the cane farmers, but yet they signed that agreement for \$80 million.

More importantly, the issue of the payment of the \$80 million to the cane farmers had been wrapped up with the whole issue of the European Union grant funding, and the Minister said it; \$80 million was paid as compensation to the cane farmers of Trinidad and Tobago.

During that period of time, when the whole discussion was taking place, I wrote to the hon. Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister indicating to him that something was going wrong. Let me quote, lest I be misquoted in this House. In his response to me, soon after paying the cane farmers that \$80 million, the Minister wrote to me.

"The issue of the European Union (EU) funding was only relevant in the context of my commitment to provide you with the appropriate information...

I wish now to confirm at this point in time the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the European Union have not established facility under which the European Union would provide funding for the benefit of cane farmers."

That was the Chairman of the ministerial committee indicating that they were not ready; acknowledging that there was money for the benefit—and in case this House believes that a cheque would come to the farmers, we know exactly how it would be done.

But having acknowledged that, we can now move on. The issue of the European Union grant funding—I am surprised to hear the Minister of Finance talk about "sector budget support". I want you to understand that we have been in discussions since 2004 with the European Union and the Ministry of Finance on this issue, and do you know something? A report was done.

[Member displays document]

The report was entitled: "Forthcoming Changes in EU Sugar Options for an Effective Competitiveness Package for Trinidad and Tobago" It states very clearly—and I am happy that somebody on this side made mention of the issue

that the sugar workers were paid in 2003, the issue now will be the cane farmers of Trinidad and Tobago. This document clearly stated the features of their option in respect of the dissolution of the sugar industry.

4.00 p.m.

On compensation packages for farmers, the Government and the EU are to provide compensation to farmers and, of course, for the Government to extend exit programmes to those who will continue in agricultural and non-agricultural activities and so forth. Also in this document it states clearly that the closure of the sugar industry and the packaging of the severance payment have created a precedent which may invite invidious comparisons with any other groups, cane farmers not excepted.

Mr. President, you look at equity and we did 60 per cent of the cane, 9,000 hours just like the sugar workers, but more importantly this document provided a formula for the payment and compensation to the cane farmers.

Sen. Mark: Who is the author of that report?

Sen. S. Tambie: This is the EU Draft Report; Forthcoming Changes in EU Sugar by Dr. Ralph Henry, KAIRI Consultants. Of course, he did not do it alone, there were consultants who came in through the EU and did work. And the formula for payment of the cane farmers specifies a period of time, 2000—2004. Do you know why? Because after that there was massive destruction to the sugar industry and there was a feeding frenzy—a free-for-all and the evidence is there. While 3,000 farmers were kicked out having 40 years for labour, they got nothing.

Mr. President, the Minister talked about the issue of the EU Grant Funding to the national Treasury. I want to state clearly that the very letter from which she quoted from Mr. Christopholus, Charge d’Affaires of the EU of Port of Spain stated clearly—and while he talked about the issue of sector budget support, yes, we know that the money will be placed in the Treasury—he went on to say that the indicators, of course, they will define that, but it must be to fulfil the objectives of this programme which would be to promote economic diversification in sugar-dependent areas. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, I will explain that, I will bring to you evidence where money is going to be channelled. It is not a blank cheque you know. The EU in the case of Jamaica said clearly that while the EU money is free, it was not a blank cheque to do anything they liked, but she said it is for the Government.

Sen. Rahman: The hon. Minister said.

Sen. S. Tambie: Mr. President, the hon. Minister continued to talk; it is for the Government, it is for nobody else, it is for the Government alone, but who is affected by the closure of the sugar industry, the Government?

Mr. President, a document on the UK Statement on the Accompanying Measures for Sugar Protocol Countries acknowledged the fact that the closure of the sugar industry, particularly the Caribbean countries, its vulnerable communities where sugar was the economic base and so forth, those people who are affected should be looked after. And, of course, they said it clearly, that the money should be effectively approved in a timely manner since 2007, in small and vulnerable economies with a high dependence on sugar for rural employment. They understand social provision.

Mr. President, those are the people who are affected and that is the basis on which the European Union has provided this funding and I will prove to you that is the reason. But, having said all that, let us hear what the European Union has to say and I think we all must want to know and you would want to hear too.

Sen. Dr. Dick-Forde: I have all the files.

Sen. S. Tambie: You have the file?

Sen. Mark: "Doh take her on, address de Chair."

Sen. S. Tambie: Mr. President, the European Union has spoken, and I am happy that Regulation 266/2006 was referred to a while ago and it was absolutely clear that the Regulation provided funding for the development of the National Adaptation Strategy for the specific country, and in the case of Trinidad and Tobago, it is for two specific objectives. One is to promote economic diversification of sugar dependent areas and secondly, to deal with the broader aspects of the adaptation process related to the social, environmental, community and area based issues.

What this is saying, Mr. President, is that the European Union in its wisdom recognized that those people who would be affected are not only the cane farmers, their workers, their families, but the communities from which they come. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Gopaul-McNicol: "They don't understand that over there." They mash up communities, everybody knows that.

Sen. S. Tambie: Mr. President, the "EU hits the Govt delay in accessing grants". It is not accessing the grants to assist the people who were affected by the closure of the 300-year-old sugar industry.

Sen. Mark: What newspaper is that?

Sen. S. Tambie: This is the *Trinidad Guardian*, Wednesday June 25, 2008. Mr. President, Mr. Andy Johnson whom I have great respect for, interviewed Mr. Stelios Christopoulos, the Charge d'Affaires.

Mr. President: Senator, this is a place where we speak, we use words and language to communicate what we want to. It is not proper for you to be waving around photographs or newspaper articles. You may read from them, refer to them, but it is really not proper for you to be waving it around. Use the Queen's English and use it well; and you are doing very well so far.

Sen. S. Tambie: I apologize, Mr. President, and I thank you for your guidance in this matter.

Mr. President, I wish to quote from an article here by Andy Johnson; "Govt dilly-dallying on \$360m sugar grant". In it, the Charge d'Affaires in Port of Spain made some statements that there was some misunderstanding on the part of the Government to meet the complex set of approvals necessary in the EU administration. For two years, Mr. President?

And the same letter which the Minister quoted from Mr. Christopoulos, the same individual, is now saying here because of this misunderstanding, the National Adaptation Strategy must be effectively implemented. All the Government has to do is take steps to follow that. What is the issue; for two years is there still a misunderstanding that the money be placed in the national Treasury? It is a blank cheque; in fact, they are now saying it is the Consolidated Fund.

Sen. Mark: They misunderstand.

Sen. S. Tambie: I want to clear this misunderstanding. What he is saying is if the Government wants to provide training programmes, let it demonstrate that it is doing it. If it is to allow farmers to find alternative employment, let them do it; if it is compensation, let them do it.

The National Adaptation Strategy is the basis on which the European Union has provided its grant funding and it is absolutely clear as to what the requirements are, and the roles and responsibilities of the various ministries in the whole process of the implementation of this strategy. The project implementation unit must be housed in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, it was taken away from that ministry and placed in the Ministry of Finance and God knows where it will be placed next.

Sen. Mark: Maybe the Attorney General's Office.

Sen. S. Tambie: It is clear, Mr. President, that the Government must now inform the European Union that it will now adopt this National Adaptation Strategy Guiding Document before any disbursement of the funds could take place, and it has not done that.

Mr. President, it states very clearly that the real value should have come with the Government openly dialoguing with the cane farmers to indicate the real value of the funding and the European Union has committed itself to providing this additional funding, but that was never done, hence the reason the European Union is saying that these are indicative sums to promote economic diversification of sugar-dependent areas, and, of course, that is the letter from which the Minister quoted. The objective of that strategic objective is an exit strategy for cane farmers and sugar cane workers, not sugar workers, the sugar cane workers, and the package was to be discussed. With whom, Mr. President?

You can see from the letter from the Office of the Prime Minister to me, they have not put any mechanism in place as yet, so we are still waiting for discussion. Other than that, in supporting the exit strategy, the farmers who are exiting the sugar industry, moneys have been provided for a sub total of \$200 million. More than that, to improve the enabling environment for economic diversification, and that, in fact, deals with the cane farmers, and if they believe it is a misunderstanding, let the European Union make a pronouncement on that issue. We have been meeting with the European Union and the country knows that and we will meet again because I have a letter that we must now meet to discuss a baseline study and the socio-economic impact on the cane farmers and the wider community so we are embarking on that process with a view to minimizing the effects of that which also includes funding.

4.15 p.m.

It also says that to improve enabling environment moneys had been allocated and assistance with rural structure in ex-cane growing areas. I firmly believe that it has to do with the cane farmers' private land. It is not as this agreement by some groups to regularize the status of 6,000 farmers who had tenancies with Caroni. No, Mr. President. Therein lies the sting in the tail for money to come in respect of the infrastructure. If they believe that the cane farmers were tenants in Caroni, go to the State for the use of Caroni land. That is not true. Six thousand cane farmers never tenanted Caroni.

We have over 20,000 acres of private land. I firmly believe that that money is to assist the cane farmers with rural infrastructure more than to support. The

whole objective of the EU grant funding is to deal with rural poverty, poverty alleviation, rural development and bringing the rural communities into 2020 vision, not leaving them behind. It is to raise their standard of living.

The deal will provide sustainable social and economic support. Who are the people who need that? The Government? Social support? Cane farmers and their families. This report clearly identified some of the social issues that would befall the cane farmers. The preliminary socioeconomic studies were done to identify the issues as social breakdown; family dropouts and problems. It is there. Cane farmers have to leave their homes at 4 o'clock, as close knit individuals working in their plantation, to go to Port of Spain, to get what kind of job? They are not trained. Do you know what that does to the family? It is stated here. Serious social disruption to the family. The EU knows that. They are saying that. The Government had the responsibility, as the Senator mentioned, but failed to rationalize its decision in respect of the closure of the sugar industry on the whole. In order to make informed decisions they shut it down and deal with the fallout after.

I do not know if I will need more time. The hon. Prime Minister went recently to the United Nations and made a statement to the international community that the loss of preferential markets from the European Union is causing an increase in crime in Trinidad and Tobago. He has more information than I have. It is the same reason the EU in its wisdom has provided this funding to prevent the loss of employment and social breakdown that crime has its roots in those issues.

On one hand, preventing the money to be accessed for the benefit of the cane farmers and on the other hand, saying that because of that there is an increase in crime. The EU is saying that the money that has been allocated over the last few years should be commensurate with the loss of that preferential. They were reducing that preferential market by 10, 20, 30 per cent. The money that should have come in the last few years should have been commensurate with that loss to prevent the same issue about which the Prime Minister spoke. The EU has spoken also.

Before I pull up that, the Prime Minister came to Barrackpore—it was election time—and promised the cane farmers the golden handshake, similar as he said, to the package that Caroni (1975) Limited got. Where is the equity in this whole process?

This matter has reached the European Commission, notwithstanding what the Minister of Finance is saying. We all have the facts. This EU grant funding that was allocated through EU Regulation 266/2006 where 18 ACP countries

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benefited, it is absolutely clear and the commission has spoken on numerous occasions in respect of its decisions to pay. The governments had to provide to them that they would now accept the National Adaptation Strategy that was developed. Having now made an application on behalf of the Government and the beneficiaries, the cane farmers, the EU will now deal with that and take a decision based on the National Adaptation Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago.

The EU in its wisdom does not leave things by chance. The question was raised on our behalf in the European Parliament. I put it on record in this Senate. It was raised by Chris Davies. The question that was asked under Regulation EC 266/2006 of the European Parliament and the Council of the 15 indicated establishing accompanying measures for sugar protocol countries affected by the reform of the EU sugar regime. How much funding has been paid to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago? When was it paid? How many farmers have received funding? What mechanisms are in place to ensure that the money is in turn paid to the farmers for whom it is intended?

The parliamentary answer given on September 12, 2008 is: The EC modality of support to the sugar sector of Trinidad and Tobago's sector budget support which entails a transfer of funds to the Government national Treasury to be used in the implementation of the national adaptation strategy—[*Desk thumping*]

It went on to talk about the objectives of the National Adaptation Strategy. Among the objectives are an exit strategy for farmers and sugar cane workers and providing sustainable, social and economic support. For everybody. For the whole country. For Toco, Laventille too. It is related to the socioeconomic effects of transitioning out of Caroni.

I will not go on more but to say according to information received from the Government, not officials reporting, in October 2007, after negotiations with five cane farmer groups, four of which executed agreement, not execution, the Government provided \$80 million as income foregone. Is that compensation? As income foregone for 3,400 farmers who were cultivating sugar cane during any year of the two-year period 2006 and 2007. I just discussed the implications of that. I highlighted those issues. I will not call names.

Moreover, the Government agreed to regularize the status of those 6,000 cane farmers who had tenancies with Caroni. Six thousand cane farmers tenanted Caroni lands? No. That is not true. Cannot be true. There are private cane farmers. Few of them would have been tenanted Caroni lands. The majority of

cane farmers have their private land and infrastructure. That was the basis on which they sustained their families. That is where the funding had to be placed to deal with those issues. That is why it is important to note that in discussing this whole issue—this same response in the EU stated that the main reason this Government gave and the delay for not signing the financing agreement was that the elections were held at the end of 2007. The new government decided on a redistribution of tasks. The responsibility for support in the sugar sector moved from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to the Ministry of Finance. Therein lies the misunderstanding with the Ministry of Finance. They believe that the money is to be placed in the Treasury. They can do what they like with it.

I am appealing to the Senate—I have no misconceptions about where this funding should go and the main beneficiaries. The cane farmers who are here—

Mr. President: 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.

Mr. President: We will take the tea break and you would get your speaking time then. The Leader of Government Business has something to say.

**ANSWER TO QUESTION
(WITHDRAWAL OF)**

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. President, I wish to advise the Senate of a matter that has come to our attention and which we are required to make known to you. Sometime ago, the Government answered a question and as a result of that answer being provided, an article appeared in a newspaper. The substance of the article created an enquiry and there was a request for the auditors to look at the report.

The auditors in looking at the report found the report to be inaccurate and there were many inconsistencies. As a consequence of that, the ministry has written Parliament asking that the report be withdrawn, they would seek to correct the information and then resubmit it.

The report that I refer to is the Report on Community Safety and Enhancement Programme. It was question No. 13 which was previously answered. It reads:

Question Withdrawal
[SEN. THE HON. C. ENILL]

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“Could the Minister provide the Senate with:

- (1) a list of all organizations that have received funding, grants and/or financial support from the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs?”

The answer to this question previously submitted to Parliament is incorrect and the ministry has asked that this be withdrawn and that a submission would be made on the correction of this report.

4.30 p.m.

Sen. Mark: I would suggest that the report remain on the table of the Parliament and when the new submission is made, then the report be excised from the records of the Parliament. We first need to see the report before we can agree to have it excised from the records of Parliament. That is only fair to the parliamentarians, and I so submit to you.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran: I just wanted to get the name of the report. I have not heard it clearly. Will you please repeat?

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: It is the answer to a question. The question was:

Could the Minister provide the Senate with:

- (1) a list of all organizations that have received funding, grants and/or financial support from the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, during the period January 02, 2002 to December 31, 2007?
- (2) Could the Minister also provide the details of the amount provided and for what purpose?

This answer was submitted.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran: What is the number of the question?

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: It is question No. 13 of the First Session 2007. The report is here. I simply wish to report that the Ministry has advised the Clerk of the Senate that the report is incorrect and, therefore, they are taking the necessary steps to provide a report that is accurate. In those circumstances, this report as presented does not represent the facts.

Sen. Mark: That was submitted in 2007, if I understand correctly. What date is that? When was the answer given?

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: 2008.

Sen. Mark: May I also submit another proposal for your consideration? I believe this matter ought to be referred to one of the special joint select committees that deals with the Ministry and we can invite the people to give an account to the committee and the Parliament to whatever questions of concern. We want accountability.

Mr. President: I do not know that is a matter that is on the table at this point. I allowed a certain flexibility to the hon. Minister simply to indicate that the report that was previously circulated was inaccurate. The Minister is apologizing on behalf of the Government for providing information that is wrong, so that persons both inside and outside the Senate would not rely on the information contained in the document circulated; and is informing those persons that a new answer is to be prepared and circulated.

Sen. Mark: May I ask when?

Mr. President: I cannot say.

I am going to suspend the sitting until 5.05 p.m. for the tea break. The sitting is now suspended until 5.05 p.m.

4.34 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

**CARONI (1975) LIMITED
(DISBURSEMENT OF EUROPEAN UNION FUNDS)**

Sen. S. Tambie: Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to use the next few minutes to deal with some of the issues raised by the Minister of Finance in attempting to make her point that the funding is for the sector budget support, for the Treasury, for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; for nobody else, no particular group.

In making her statement, the Minister made the issue of Caroni (1975) Limited being a drain on the Treasury and for 30 years this Government had to find \$7 billion and climbing for the sugar industry. I would like to put on record here today that the European Union provided a guaranteed price for sugar—all sugar protocol countries—and we were getting euro 500-plus per tonne of sugar, which was close to \$4,000.

Out of that guaranteed price, the cane farmers, according to the processing of cane, paid for all the services and we were paid in total \$2,000. Out of the labour of the sugar cane farmers for 40 years, for 30 years this Government made a profit of \$2,000 on a tonne of sugar.

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The record will show that other countries are doing five and six tonnes of cane per tonne of sugar; Thailand and Australia and so on. They even challenged the EU on the issue of providing subsidies. This industry could have done six and seven tonnes of cane to a tonne of sugar. Therein lies the problem of inefficiency and wastage. More than that, I would like to put on record that the Government made a profit from the sugar cane farmers and we supported and subsidized the industry. The \$2,000 profit made on the sugar cane farmers was used for 30 years.

The issue here is not that the sugar industry was making a loss; it was mismanagement and corruption to the highest level. The will to deal with that was important and I as the General Secretary of this Association have made public statements on those issues. There was no political will to deal with the issue and the corruption within Caroni (1975) Limited.

Within the last four years, from 2003 to 2007—and you can deal with the efficiency in the sugar industry by the number of the tonnes of cane you take to make a tonne of sugar—the ratio climbed from 10:1 to 15:1 and, in the last year, it shot up to 20:1. In terms of value and money, 20 tonnes of cane to a tonne of sugar, really, bamboo grass could not make that kind of sugar. Twenty tonnes of cane could not make sugar. This points to something else; but the pounds of sugar and the farmers who produce that cane to make the sugar had to bear the brunt of that. We had to pay for that. Therein lies the issue.

For 30 years profits were made on cane farmers' heads, placed in the Treasury, never came back to the cane farmers. The cane farmers subsidized the sugar industry. It was not that the Treasury had to bail out the farmers; we were subsidizing the industry.

The issue of the sugar industry being a drain on the Treasury, as I said before, the Government needed it. I am not saying that the industry can be revitalized. The decision was taken five or six years ago to close the industry. We have accepted that fact, but the issues that needed to be addressed in respect of the cane farmers, to deal with the issue of compensation, social problems and environmental issues, needed to be addressed and, more importantly, according to EU Regulations 2006, it states clearly that the funding should have been made available in a timely manner as early as 2007 to ensure that the economic and socio-economic fallout would not take place.

The Minister quoted in her contribution that funding had been made available: euro 6 million, in 2007; euro 9.9 million, in 2008; in 2009, euro 10.8 million. I am stating here again that the prime beneficiaries of this grant funding are the cane farmers and their workers, not the Government.

In 2010, euro 14.9 million will be made available. Of course, in 2010, there will be an evaluation of the whole process with further funding to come for the next few years to ensure that the cane farmers are properly looked after.

Just two weeks ago, I got correspondence from the EU dealing with the fact that we need to discuss the issue of the socio-economic fallout and to find ways and mechanisms to deal with it. If an exit strategy were properly administered, as envisioned by the European Union, I probably would not be here today. If it were properly executed, then those issues we are tracing today would have been adequately dealt with and I would not be standing here to highlight these issues.

There is suffering among the cane farming communities, massive suffering, family break-ups. There are problems in the sugar industry. I am on the ground; I know what is happening. That is what the EU funding has been allocated for. EU Regulation 266 clearly states, not only that the funding should have been accessed in a timely manner, but it states clearly that:

“Any agreements resulting from this Regulation shall contain provisions for the protection of the Community’s financial interests, in particular with respect to fraud, corruption and any other irregularities...”

Mr. President, it is the Government of Trinidad and Tobago that has the responsibility to access the funding. We cannot “thief” this money. We cannot commit fraud. We are waiting on the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to put the necessary mechanisms in place to ensure that the funding comes to the benefit of the cane farmers and sugar workers. That is the issue.

The EU recently stated that they intend to give us three more years—extend the time period. Why? Because in the first three years nothing was done so they have now extended it in the hope that the necessary measures will be put in place to ensure that the beneficiaries access this funding.

5.15 p.m.

Mr. President, as I said before, we have had communication with the European Union in respect of the socio-economic consequences of the fallout of the sugar industry. We are supposed to meet with them, but for some reason, the cane farmers were informed that meeting could not have come about. What it deals with is the socio-economic fallout and to establish baseline studies as to how we should proceed with a view to alleviating the social catastrophe that is now befalling, not only the cane farmers, but the wider cane farming communities. Sugarcane was the main economic base in Trinidad and Tobago.

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The Minister of Finance talked about sector budget support, and I have dealt with that before. Yes, we know that the money is to be placed in the Treasury. We know that, and we have no problem with that. To implement the National Adaptation Strategy, the implementation unit must be placed with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, according to the adaptation strategy. The project coordination unit should remain with the ministerial committee that dealt with the cane farmers to coordinate this whole process.

Of course, there are requirements, and the Government must not only give the assurance that they will now follow the national adaptation strategy, but they must give the assurance that they will consult with the cane farmers and the stakeholders on an ongoing basis and as regular as needed. [*Desk thumping*] If something is going wrong, they must consult with us. In other words, we must be a watchdog to ensure that this whole process is implemented so that we can benefit. That has to be done.

The Minister of Finance has been talking about training and all kinds of things, but training for whom? Mr. President, 90 per cent of the cane farmers are 60 years and over. Who are they training? We do not know anything about this training!

More importantly, recently the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment made a statement that they would train farmers in whatever area they choose. Three years have passed and they still want to be trained in whatever areas they choose. Minister, I will bring a list of farmers who want to train as pilots, politicians, doctors and so on. Would you provide the necessary funding for that? We can talk and deal with that issue. We do not have any problem with that.

Mr. President, in closing, it is my hope, having conveyed to this honourable Senate today what are the issues, I bring the pain and suffering of not only 9,000 cane farmers, their workers and their families, but the 45,000 persons who have been affected and the wider community. I bring to this Senate the pain and suffering they are facing, but not only that, but the hurt and the anger that they are feeling outside there, one of betrayal, as to what has befallen the cane farmers, irrespective of what has happened to the sugar workers. We have been betrayed, we firmly believe that. Thankfully, Mr. President, the European Union, in its wisdom, beyond the capacity of perhaps this Parliament—I do not know—has provided this funding to deal with the issues that affect people who have been affected by the EU sugar sector reform, and in Trinidad and Tobago, the case of the closure of the sugar industry.

It is my hope that good sense will prevail and the farmers will be consulted and dialogue will continue. Let us get this matter resolved in the interest of all these people, and let us now leave in peace and probably shake the goodly Minister's hand. I note she mentioned to shake everybody's hand except my hand. I will want to shake her hand when that issue is resolved.

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

Sen. Dr. Sharon-ann Gopaul-McNicol: Mr. President, thank you and a special thank you to Sen. Tambie for an excellent rendition in helping us understand the plight of the sugar workers, the cane farmers and the entire Caroni (1975) Limited issue.

On December 30, 2002, I recall very vividly, because at the time I was the adviser to Minister Valley who was the Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance. I recall when there were cane farmers and sugar workers who came to the Ministry. They came up under the leadership of Rudy Indarsingh, the president of the Sugar Workers Association. I remember the concerns that they had.

Today, I did not plan to speak, but as I listened to Sen. Tambie, it all came back to me, the horror of it all when this was being proposed. I remember as a psychologist expressing my concern that if this was going to be done that there has to be a process in which it had to be done. Most importantly, after many years, some 30-something years of the sugar industry, something as this could leave a community crippled and could result in all kinds of social problems, and I was very concerned. I insisted that counselling had to be provided and all kinds of transitory support systems must be put in place to ensure that this would happen with a smooth transition. Today, as I listened, I realize that this did not take place.

I was since moved following that. A year later I was placed in another governmental programme, so I was unable to keep abreast in any special way, so like regular citizens, I followed the situation. I was very horrified—Sen. Tambie, I thank you for letting me know what transpired subsequent to the initiation of the talks on this issue.

Only recently I heard that many of those particular persons who went through this process were hospitalized, because of the trauma that it took on their families. They were hospitalized because of stress and uncertainty. Let me explain, psychologically, how this can happen. When you are in a state of uncertainty; constant uncertainty leads to anxiety. People do not understand this. When anxiety is not addressed it leads to depression. When depression is not addressed,

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it leads to anger. Now, anger is manifested in several ways. It could be manifested as anger turned inward which is further depression; it could be manifested as anger turned outward which can lead to aggression, and the extreme cases you see suicide and that is when the anger turns so deeply inward that people can be suicidal. Likewise, it could be seen in extreme cases when the anger turned so deeply outward that the person is homicidal.

The point is, here it is an entire community—this is not a geographic community that we are talking about, this is a cultural phenomenon that took place in our country 30-something or 40-something years ago. This was our main form of agriculture. So, if a change like this was going to take place, a lot of preparation was supposed to take place with preparing the farmers—looking at their age group and so forth, and this did not happen well enough, because we would not have been looking at the situation that we are looking at today.

It is clear to me, as I listened on further, several persons had called me throughout the country—various persons who were faced with this situation—telling me how depressed they were. I remember trying to refer them to the so-called counselling that I saw listed on writing and on paper all over that the Government was providing, but it was a journey accessing the counselling services. It was not as simplistic as we heard here today by the Minister. These are things that are on paper but, good Lord, we need to understand that the average person does not understand in our society—first of all, they do not even appreciate psychological counselling. Sorry, Mr. President.

Mr. President: I hate to stop you in full flight, but I note that you feel that you have an audience, but it is discourtesy to turn your back on the presiding officer.

Sen. Dr. S. Gopaul-McNicol: Sorry, Mr. President. I just wanted to give respect to our audience. I must say that it is important as a person who spent my life dedicated to the service of people who are in need and so forth, I was so thrilled to see the wonderful support that we have here today in the audience. So, please bear with me. I do apologize.

The persons who tried to access counselling could not access counselling as easily as was made out to be. In our culture, people do not even value psychological services in the first place or they do not even understand it, if I can correct my own self. In the second place, we need to realize that we must make the process of counselling a rather smooth and simple one. In our society, when people go for counselling, they are seen as if they are crazy. This is the term used.

We have to make the process a simple one. A supportive system such as counselling was necessary in this transition. It did not surprise me, as recent as last week, hearing that cane farmers and some of the workers in the sugar cane industry and so forth have been hospitalized; families have disintegrated because of economic reason and so on, and I am concerned. As I said, I would not be taking long. I just wanted to bring this aspect forward.

I also want to say to the Government that when the Minister of Finance stated something that the Government had extended itself over the 30 years by providing employment, and it did not bring the kind of economic gains to the Government, let me say this. Mr. President, it is the Government's duty to act in a parental role where necessary to nourish and nurture the dormant qualities in individuals and, therefore, if it is that the Government could provide a subsidy by ensuring employment in the sugar and cane farming industry, what is so wrong with that?

We have a whole industry in the URP—the Minister also said that is a social problem, and there is very little about URP that is a social programme. Let me be clear on that, for those of us who understand what are social programmes. That is not it. If you could subsidize and support URP programmes which bring very little or no benefit to this country, I cannot understand why you would want to disrupt a legitimate sugar industry that has provided sugar and other downstream industries for our country for all these years. [*Desk thumping*] I see no benefit in making that statement. It is the duty of a government to ensure employment of its citizens.

When we listen to employment records in this country, we include URP as a form of employment. I have always argued against this, but the point is the sugar cane industry and the cane farming industry were legitimate forms of employment.

I would like this Government to take stock of the social, psychological, traumatic effects that this has had on the entire central area. Communities have been disrupted; families have been disrupted as a result of this move. It is my hope that we would still try to honour what was agreed when this was started to make sure that the farmers receive the appropriate compensation economically; to make sure that the appropriate counselling and supportive service continue to be provided to the families.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Wade Mark: Mr. President, I would like to join this debate on this very important Motion moved by Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan. I also want to take the opportunity from the outset to warmly congratulate Sen. Seukeran Tambie for his

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excellent contribution in enlightening Trinidad and Tobago and the Parliament on this particular issue. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, what is being requested of the Government is very simple. The resolution that I have before me requests of the Government to take immediate steps to access the funds from the European Union and to disburse same to the actual recipients; the persons or the category of workers who are most affected by the closure of the cane farming industry and by extension the sugar industry.

What it is also asking is that the Government should dialogue and should consult with the cane farmers and keep them informed at regular intervals on the progress being made with respect to the drawdown of these funds from the European Union.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. President, we are clear that the Government's decision to close down the sugar industry in 2003 was politically motivated. There is no doubt in our minds in spite of all the attempts to cover up this particular objective, the reality is that the Government took a decision to close down the sugar industry because it was felt by the Government that sugar workers and cane farmers constituted the base support of the United National Congress, and therefore if they cut clean, first the sugar industry and later the cane farming community, the UNC would die. It was purely political on the part of Government.

It is on record here where in 2007 when the former Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs allowed her tongue to slip when she said for instance, the closure of the industry—words to the effect—benefited the PNM.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Who said that?

Sen. W. Mark: Joan Yuille-Williams, right here—words to that effect—go back to the records.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Quote the *Hansard*! Quote the *Hansard*!

Sen. W. Mark: I may not be quoting correctly, but I am saying that is what I recall.

The point I am making is that we are all citizens of this republic and if it is that the European Union is attempting to have what is called a smooth landing, having regard to the fact that they have removed preferential shelters for the ACP

countries and the ACP countries have decided to scale back on their sugar production because it is uneconomical for them to do so, then the Government has a duty to meet, treat and discuss with the stakeholders in the industry an exit strategy.

We were never in favour and never in support of the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited. We were never in support of it! We believe that there is a lot of value and there are possibilities in that industry and that would have been the bedrock of the agricultural revolution. Mr. President, are you aware that under this regime the food import bill moved from \$2 billion in 2003 to almost \$4 billion at the end of 2008?

This Government—and even though my good friend, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, who pats himself on the back and calls for the audience to clap him as the best Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. You know, he might be trying his best and he is looking for some glory, but the reality is that food production in this country is down. [*Interruption*]

Therefore, we had a golden opportunity—if it was not for the devious agenda of this Government to crush the UNC, to try and crush the cane farmers and the sugar workers, at the same time believing that if they go, we go, but they do not understand it does not work that way. We are here and the UNC is an institution and it is 20 years old. It will be here now, it will be here then and hereafter.

So, as far as I am concerned, this is a very important Motion calling on the Government to engage in some dialogue with the cane farmers with a view to seeing how, when we access that funding, according to the strategy I have before me, the economic diversification can take place and you can have a mitigation of the adverse social, economic and environmental impact on the communities. But we are hearing from different speakers today, as if for instance, this is a favour the Government is doing. I heard my colleague Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight making the point as if for instance, this Motion that we brought here today, we are trying to get so much out of the Government.

This is not something we are trying to get out of the Government. This is something that the Government has to do! [*Desk thumping*] They have a responsibility to do under the arrangement. All we have done today is to bring a Motion to get the Government to honour its obligations under this arrangement. That is all we are asking the Government to do. We are not asking the Government to pay the sugar workers cash. We are not saying honour the cane

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farmers cash. All this Motion is saying to the Government, you have funding to access, please access the funding and have dialogue with the cane farmers and the other stakeholders with a view to allowing them to resuscitate their lives. They are desperate!

Mr. President, you know what it is if they cut off your employment? You know what it is when for instance you have close to 6,000 cane farmers, 3,000 cane workers and you cut their umbilical cord virtually. What you expect to take place? You are going to have a lot of suffering and dislocation. Where is the next bread going to come from? The training that they had over the years was to plant cane, to reap cane, to harvest cane and to transport cane. Where is the love? Where is the compassion in that transition that is required? They gave the Employers Consultative Association some \$16 million to \$18 million, which I find was bogus money they collected, and they were supposed to train workers in all kinds of different skills. I do not know when the ECA became a body to train people? Who gave the ECA \$18 million to train workers in Caroni? Where did they get that skill from? But it was some family arrangement, some PNM corruption that took place there and they ended up getting about \$18 million, as I understand it.

This is a matter that is of grave concern to us in the UNC. We have a different philosophy to the PNM, you know. Mr. President, I want to let you know that if the PNM had vision of that industry and they had kept that industry, scale it down, restructure its operation and rationalize where you have to rationalize, today we would not have been a net importer of sugar.

Sen. Piggott: What were you doing then?

Sen. W. Mark: We are now a net importer of sugar. [*Interruption*] We would have never closed down the sugar industry. We would have never closed down the cane farming industry. We would have diversified, we would have had a partnership with the private sector in order to allow the industry to survive and live. That is what we were committed to. We were never going to sell out the rum stock for a few dollars and so on to somebody.

Sen. Narace: That is not what Ramesh said, "eh".

Sen. W. Mark: No. You and Ramesh are friends? Since when? [*Laughter and interruption*]

Mr. President, as far as we are concerned on this side, if this Government was serious about the whole question of revolutionizing the agricultural sector and ensuring food security for our system and our nation, we had it ready-made at

Caroni (1975) Limited. It was there, the infrastructure was there. Mr. President, I do not know when last you passed through Central and parts of South Trinidad? This EMBDC, former executive chairman, who invested hundreds of millions of dollars in what is called “Infrastructural development works”, saying that he got a mandate from the Ministry of Finance to build houses and put down structures, infrastructure, roads, lights, water, sewer and all sorts of things, when you pass there now you cannot even make out these areas, it is like for instance the place has been abandoned and hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested by the EMBDC in an effort to fool the country, that is the reason they closed down Caroni (1975) Limited, is to take Caroni (1975) Limited lands to build houses so they could voter pad and house pad.

That is why the Government does not want proportional representation, you know. Do you know why they do not want proportional representation? Because house padding can make you win an election. But there is a lady from England who was caught red-handed involved in that same kind of activity and I understand she is now paying personally, millions of dollars as a result of a ruling by the Supreme Court of England.

Mr. President, this is a matter that we believe that the Government should give serious consideration to and do not take it lightly and do not take it for granted and so on. You have a duty, you have a responsibility to ensure—I agree—that all workers who are retrenched in this country must get a proper deal. We do not believe in retrenchment and, even if you have to retrench people, you have to update the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act which is outdated. So you have to give people an understanding and appreciation that if you have to dislocate them there is something for them to live for after and we are not seeing that kind of commitment from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Therefore, I do not believe that we would be able to conclude this debate today. This is why I got up to say my small—be it limited—intervention today because I know that very soon this Parliament is going into recess and very soon we are going to expect a prorogation of this Parliament.

I want to give this Government the undertaking, that we intend to re-file this Motion in the next session of Parliament and we intend to re-debate it fully, and I will be much more prepared the next rounds. [*Laughter*] I am not prepared today. [*Interruption and laughter*] I was not prepared today and I told the President I am just getting up to make a few interventions. But when you see I do my research on this one and I come—

Hon. Senator: One week before the 14th. [*Laughter*]

Sen. W. Mark:—I will be able to make a comprehensive intervention on behalf of the farmers of this country to ensure that the Government is able to be persuaded in terms of trying to understand the just cause of what is being advanced here today.

Mr. President, I just want to take a few seconds and say that it was a bit difficult for me to contemplate a development I saw in today's newspaper.

Sen. Dr. Saith: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. W. Mark: Yes, it might be, but I will ask the President for a few seconds. [*Interruption*]

Mr. President, I do not understand why, we as a Parliament, continue to be shortchanged or why we continue as parliamentarians to shortchange ourselves. Here it is we are debating a Motion on getting some support for the cane farmers as a result of a funding arrangement through the European Union, and I recall sometime ago I raised a question in this Parliament on scholarships and nobody could have supplied me with answers. It was a secret. Lo and behold, I saw in the newspaper today a full exposé, and I got today, one fat file—it “eh” here [*Holds up pile of documents*] but I get a fat file [*Laughter*]*—*with almost 200 pages of all of the names of the people that this Government refused to give us. But you know what? The same Freedom of Information Act that was quoted by the hon. Minister at that time to justify the lack of disclosure is the same Act that was used to give Devant Maharaj all the information.

I just want to appeal to the hon. Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister and the hon. Attorney General, let us not continue, through the President, to treat this Parliament with utter contempt. I am a parliamentarian, I come to this Parliament, I raise issues and somebody outside of this Parliament is able to get the information and I have to go to that same person and beg them to give me a copy of the information that I put on the Order Paper that this Government refused to give me, but they were able to give a stranger who is not a member of Parliament that same information.

5.45 p.m.

I am saying, Mr. President, we are selling ourselves short, and I am saying we must be more respectful to each other in terms of our rights here. I will say no more on that.

What I would like to say in closing—it is a very limited intervention today—I want to really appeal to the Government on behalf of the cane farming community of this country, because we are the Opposition and we have huge constituencies in

the cane farming community. I want to make that very clear. I am declaring my interest. I declare my interest. The United National Congress has huge constituencies in the south and central parts of this country that are inhabited, and there are hundreds and thousands of cane farmers who have been displaced and it is our duty as a responsible Opposition, to bring to the attention of the Government the plight of those people, the plight of those farmers, to let you know that they are suffering, to let you know that they are going through pain, to let you know they are going through a lot of discomfort and dislocation. We are calling on the Government to intervene, to give some relief, to bring some relief and some hope to these people whose lives are being disrupted in a most severe manner as a result of a decision taken by this Government in 2003.

So, Mr. President, I hope that as the season which is drawing nearer, of goodwill and peace, that the Government will take some time to reflect and to think this thing through properly, and that they will be able before the year ends to tell this population that they are going to hold dialogue with the cane farmers, they are going to revisit their position, they are going to review their stance and they are going to access those fundings in the interest of the country, but in particular, in the interest of the cane farming community of this country. I think if we are able to do so, we would have done our duty to the best of our ability, and we would have been able to convince the Government or persuade them to take that particular point.

Mr. President, I said it is a very limited contribution. I want to thank you for the opportunity for allowing me to say a few words on this matter, but I give you the full assurance that in 2010, all things being equal, I will be more prepared to make a comprehensive intervention on this matter because we cannot conclude this debate today. The next day is sometime Christmas Day, and I do not think that we would be able to come here on Christmas Day. So I thank you for allowing me to say a few words. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: When the new political leader take over.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): We had an arrangement, Mr. President, and since that has changed, I therefore now beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, December 08, 2009 at 1.30 p.m., when we will discuss the Securities and Exchange Bill as we had previously indicated.

Adjournment

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Mr. President: Hon. Senators, before I put the question, allow me, on behalf of all of us, to congratulate Sen. Tambie for his great contribution. [*Desk thumping*] It certainly was enthusiastic. [*Laughter*]

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.49 p.m.