

Leave of Absence

Tuesday, October 16, 2012

SENATE

Tuesday, October 16, 2012

The Senate met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Vice-President: Hon Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe who is out of the country.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the Acting President, Timothy Hamel-Smith.

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency TIMOTHY HAMEL-SMITH,
Acting President and Commander-in-Chief
of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ Timothy Hamel-Smith
Acting President

TO: MR. DEON KIRTSON ISAAC

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

NOW, THEREFORE, I, TIMOTHY HAMEL-SMITH, Acting President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44(1)(a) and section 44(4)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, DEON KIRTSON ISAAC, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 16th October, 2012 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the
President of the Republic of Trinidad and
Tobago at the Office of the President, St.
Ann's, this 12th day of October, 2012.”

Oath of Allegiance

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OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Deon Kirtson Isaac took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

**GREETINGS
(50TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE)**

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, on behalf of several districts and regions on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Independence of Trinidad and Tobago, I just wish to place on record greetings from several countries: from the Houses of Parliament of Jamaica, signed by Heather Cooke, the Clerk to the Houses, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Independence, greetings and best wishes; on behalf of the Members of the Kuwait National Assembly, signed by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Kuwait, Jassem Mohammed Al-Kharafi, greetings on the occasion of the 50th anniversary; and from the Parliament of Canada, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary, as well as the recognition of 50 years of bilateral relations between the two countries, signed jointly by Noel Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate, and Andrew Scheer, Speaker of the House of Commons, for the record.

**CONDOLENCES
(JOSEPH YOUNG)**

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, yesterday, we read and paid tribute to a former Member who passed away, Faisal Rahman. Today, I would like to indicate as well, Mr. Joseph Young, a founding member of the Transport and Industrial Workers' Union and retired Industrial Court Judge, Joseph, better known as Joe Young, died on October 02, 2012. He was in fact appointed a Member of this Senate by former President, Sir Ellis Clarke, in September 1976, on the advice of the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Basdeo Panday, and served in this Senate for one and a half years. I just wanted to place that on record.

**SESSIONAL SELECT COMMITTEES
(APPOINTMENT OF)**

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, in accordance with Standing Order 64 of the Senate, I wish to announce the appointment of the following Sessional Select Committees for the third session 2012/2013 of the Tenth Parliament.

Standing Orders Committee

Mr. Timothy Hamel-Smith	Chairman
Mr. Anand Ramlogan SC	Member
Mr. Davant Maharaj	Member
Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh	Member
Mrs. Helen Drayton	Member

House Committee

Mr. Ganga Singh	Chairman
Mr. Kevin Ramnarine	Member
Ms. Christlyn Moore	Member
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds	Member
Dr. Rolph Balgobin	Member

Committee of Privileges

Mr. Timothy Hamel-Smith	Chairman
Mrs. Lyndira Oudit	Member
Mr. Vasant Bharath	Member
Miss Penelope Beckles	Member
Mr. Subhas Ramkhelawan	Member

Statutory Instruments Committee

Mr. Timothy Hamel-Smith	Chairman
Mrs. Lyndira Oudit	Member
Ms. Christlyn Moore	Member
Miss Penelope Beckles	Member
Mr. Elton Prescott SC	Member

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual audited financial statements of the Trinidad and Tobago International Financial Centre Management Company Limited for 14 months ended September 20, 2010. [*The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh)*]

2. Annual audited financial statements of the Trinidad and Tobago International Financial Centre Management Company Limited for the year ended September 30, 2011. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (ENTERPRISES) COMMITTEE
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS AND SERVICE
COMMISSIONS
STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AND STATE ENTERPRISES
(APPOINTMENT TO)**

The Minister of Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Madam Vice-President, I beg to move the following Motion:

Be it resolved that this Senate agree to the following appointments:

On the Public Accounts Committee—Mr. Jamal Mohammed in lieu of Mr. Danny Maharaj.

On the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee—Dr. Rolph Balgobin in lieu of Mr. Basharat Ali.

On the Joint Select Committee appointed to enquire and report to the Parliament on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission—Mr. James Lambert, Ms Marlene Coudray in lieu of Brig. John Sandy, and Mr. David Abdullah, respectively.

On the Joint Select Committee established to enquire into and report to the Parliament on Ministries, Group 1, and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises falling under their purview—Mr. Ganga Singh and Mrs. Christlyn Moore in lieu of Mrs. Verna St. Rose Greaves and Mr. Danny Maharaj, respectively.

Question put and agreed to.

**APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2013)
BILL, 2012
[Second Day]**

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 15, 2012]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Madam Vice-President: Those who spoke yesterday, Monday: Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai, Minister of Finance and the Economy, mover of the Motion; Sen. Dr. Lester Henry; Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan; Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine; Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe; Sen. Corrine Baptiste-Mc Knight; Sen. The Hon. Christlyn Moore; Sen. Helen Drayton; Sen. The Hon. Jamal Mohammed; and Sen. James Lambert.

Before I ask Senators to join, I wish to congratulate all Senators who spoke yesterday and especially for the adherence to the Standing Orders as advised earlier on, and I do wish to remind Senators who will be speaking today, as well, to bear in mind the Standing Orders as prescribed in the booklets and our Standing Order guideline. Any Senator wishing to join in the debate may do so.

The Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment (Sen. The Hon. Vasant Bharath): Thank you, Madam Vice-President, for the opportunity of speaking in the third budget debate of the People's Partnership Government. Before I start, let me acknowledge in the audience, in the public gallery, my father, [*Desk thumping*] a former Member of Parliament for St. Augustine, who would have also had the opportunity between 1966 and 1977 to have contributed to several debates on the annual budget.

Let me also congratulate, Madam Vice-President, the hon. Larry Howai, my Cabinet colleague, for his commanding performance in the delivering of his first budget. The first I am sure [*Desk thumping*] of many to come under the People's Partnership, and the first one aimed at stimulating growth and generating prosperity.

Madam Vice-President, the preparation of any budgetary statement, whether it is for an organization or for a Government, requires that one looks at the context in which the statement is being prepared. One must look at current circumstances, one must look at projections in trends for the future and one must look at how decisions of the past will impact on those decisions for the future. And this is therefore the basis on which I intend to present this year's statement for the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment to the national population.

We are indeed very fortunate to have in this land, Trinidad and Tobago, two men of the calibre of Winston Dookeran and Larry Howai, who together have been able to steer the ship of State to a very safe haven, despite the tumult that has occurred in the last three years in the financial world; much so that we have emerged strong, we have emerged resilient and we have emerged stable, a boast that very few countries, which have been similarly circumstanced are able to

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make; that, as my colleague, Sen. The Hon. Jamal Mohammed stated yesterday, in spite of the financial burdens that we inherited: the Clico and HCU issues, the outstanding payments to contractors, the outstanding union negotiations, outstanding VAT refunds. But in addition to that, having inherited inflationary pressures at 16 per cent—it was actually in 2010, when we came into office, inflation was running at 16 per cent. It was the highest since 1987 in this country; the highest for 23 years.

In addition to that, many people failed to remember that the budget deficit that we are currently working with, \$7½ billion, was inherited from the PNM Government. It did not fall from the sky and did not come into place during the last three years. We inherited it in 2010. In fact, there were two consecutive years of budget deficit, \$7.5 million in the year 2008/2009 and a proposed budget deficit of \$7.8 billion for 2010.

Of course, in May 2010, the People’s Partnership Government came into office and was able, essentially, just to present the information that had been inherited from the previous Government.

10.15 a.m.

We must also remember that it was the first time in 17 years since 1993 that this country suffered what was called “negative growth”; negative growth of 3½ per cent. We must take all that into context in determining the budgetary statement that Minister Howai has presented here for the fiscal year 2013. We must also remind ourselves, lest we forget, that revenues were at an all-time high. Gas prices were \$13.06, oil prices were at a high of \$147. In fact, energy revenue was at an all-time high of \$29.9 billion.

Essentially, what happened during that course of time, it signalled a great time of merriment for those across on the other side, not necessarily the individuals sitting here, but certainly for the then Government; it signalled a time for great merriment in the PNM camp. We are all aware of the extravagance of the Brian Lara Stadium, the Scarborough Hospital, the waterfront projects that we have here that we would be paying off over the next 17 years—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Singh: Squandermania!

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath:—that we will be—*[Interruption]* As the Leader of Government Business says, the squandermania, the extravagance, that has left us essentially having to pay off debts for the next 17 years on some of these projects. It went as far as—this is how ridiculous it got—where it was alleged and

reported that the Prime Minister's bed sheets cost \$3,000 and his curtains cost \$3 million. That was the level of extravagance that we experienced. But, you know what? Those are the extravagances that we are aware of or the population is aware of, and there are many more that as we are in Government for a longer period, we could uncover as time goes by, they are unearthed as time goes by, and I will mention some of them a little later on.

Madam Vice-President, despite all the warnings that were coming from everyone: coming from the IMF, coming from the Opposition, coming from economists of international repute, according to the then Leader of Government Business, it was full steam ahead. They continued with their reckless spending. It was almost, despite the warnings, Madam Vice-President, akin to the sailors on a sinking ship firing on the rescue party as the warning after warning was sounded.

When all was said and done, when in fact as the proverbial fat lady did sing and the now Leader of the Opposition actually criticized his own party when he said “de money now done and we going chirrip chirrip”, cap in hand, door to door, trying to raise money through rum and cigarette taxes. What did they then do? They abandoned the ship of State, Madam Vice-President. They called an election, and not for the first time, they lost. [*Crosstalk*]

So this is why, Madam Vice-President—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: We missed you.

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath:—I was so disappointed in the contribution made by Sen. Dr. Lester Henry, very nice chap, very affable, we are very good friends, but I was very extremely disappointed. I am sure looking at the faces of those opposite, they were also extremely disappointed in the contribution of—[*Desk thumping*]*—*which, I mean, if I am to be charitable, was poor at best, quite frankly. He seemed to be meandering aimlessly all over the place. I do not think he made a single point—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Unprepared!

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath:—of any note. He seemed to have committed a misdemeanour, the lawyers will know as “loitering without intent” as he skirted, [*Desk thumping and laughter*] using some statistics. Madam Vice-President, I do not know where they came from, moving from statistic to statistic, almost like “ah drunk uses a lamp post” just for support but not for illumination. [*Desk thumping*]

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and laughter] You know, at one point, Madam Vice-President, someone from this side attempted to interject and he retorted by saying, no, he is not going to allow it, because he was flowing. [*Laughter*] But, clearly he was flowing upstream against a very heavy current. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: A point of order, Madam Vice-President. As much as I hate to interrupt the charm and wit of my learned friend, Standing Order 35(4), “skirting” on the issue, and I wish my learned colleague just to be a little more careful in his language towards another Member of this Chamber.

Madam Vice-President: Duly noted, Senator.

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: I intend to take notice of the comments of my good friend, Sen. Al-Rawi. But, he did make a couple of points which I want to refute at this point. He said that the Minister of Finance and the Economy painted a very rosy picture of the global economy. Well, this is what the Minister of Finance and the Economy actually said. He said:

“The sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone remains the most obvious threat to the global economic outlook...”

He said:

“Many Governments are also attempting to address fiscal imbalances...where uncertainty is high, confidence is low, financial sectors are weak and growth”—may be—“minimal.

It is anticipated that growth in world output will fall from 3.9 per cent in 2011 to 3.3 per cent in 2012...”

That is what the Minister of Finance and the Economy said, but Sen. Dr. Henry said the Minister painted a rosy picture of the global economy.

Now, how could anyone interpret what the finance Minister said as having painted a rosy picture of the—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: He was flowing! He was flowing.

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: But as they said, he was flowing. [*Laughter*] Madam Vice-President, I would like to advise Sen. Dr. Henry that whichever student of his who wrote that speech should get a resounding fail. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: F! F! F!

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: Let me say this, we are very well aware—the Minister of Finance and the Economy and myself and those on this side of the Senate, are very well aware that we do not operate in a bubble. We are very cognizant of what is taking place on the world stage, and particularly with our trading partners across the world; much differently, I must add, to a previous Minister of Finance on the other side, who claimed once that we were in a cocoon, and that we would not be impacted on by what was happening in world events. I suspect, Madam Vice-President, that is why most countries across the world, developing and developed, appoint Ministers of Finance who have a finance background or who are economists rather than law lecturers to do the job. I mean, by that token, we could well see, God forbid, if the PNM ever gets back into Government, Minister Hinds, God forbid, sitting behind the steering wheel of the economy at some point in time. [*Laughter*]

As the Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment, we are very well aware of our responsibilities and how the wider world impacts on us. Minister Howai went into much of the detail, and I would not do so now because it is obvious that there are issues across the globe and there are issues in the Eurozone area. In fact, the very euro, the currency that holds together the European market, is under threat as a direct result of the sovereign debt crisis in the United States. Growth has been elusive and so much so that for the first time in American history, they have had a downgrading of their long-term debt rating.

The BRIC countries have also suffered a similar fate where their growth projections have been decreased, and in Caricom also, as a direct result of the loss of the tourism market or significant reductions in the tourism market, as well as high debt to GDP ratios, Caricom markets are also suffering. Only Guyana and Suriname, because of the fact that they are commodity based, have shown a relative degree of—a relative increase in growth; I think it is about 5 per cent.

But despite all that prevails around us, the fact is that this People's Partnership has handled the economy well, [*Desk thumping*] so much so that we have emerged, as I said, in a far better position than many other countries across the globe which have been similarly circumstanced; so much so that we now have \$10½ billion worth of foreign exchange, which represents 14 months of import cover; \$2.443 billion in our current account reserves; unemployment down to, as admitted by Sen. Dr. Henry, 4.2 per cent which, of course, essentially signals full employment; our Heritage and Stabilisation Fund of \$4.7 billion; a projected inflation rate of 5.6 per cent—as I said, down from 16 per cent when we came into office—and a projected growth rate of 1.2 per cent.

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Now, let me put that into context, Madam Vice-President. As I mentioned earlier on, we inherited a growth rate of negative 3.5 per cent, and what that means is that in the last two and a half years, under the watch of the People's Partnership, the economy has grown by 4.7 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] It is indisputable!

Sen. Ramlogan SC: It is a fact! That is a fact!

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: But more needs to be done. We recognize that— that more needs to be done. In fact, when one looks at the competitive levels of Trinidad and Tobago, we see that we are ranked at number 84, having fallen two spots in the last year from 82—three spots, from 81 to 84. But let me also put that in context. When the PNM Government came into office in 2002, we were ranked number 42 as far as global competitiveness was concerned. In fact, when they demitted office, we were at 92. We fell like “ah stone” 50 places in eight years, Madam Vice-President.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Thank you for giving way, hon. Minister. I am sure that you would regale the Parliament with the fact that that list grew, and that therefore, the competitive ranking did not actually fall but simply adjusted itself in relation to the new members added on. Thank you.

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: Although there were a few members added on, Madam Vice-President, but there were not 50 members added on.

One of the indicators of global competitiveness is the ease of doing business. We are ranked number 68 in the world out of 183 countries as far as ease of doing business is concerned. Singapore is ranked at number one; South Korea is ranked at number seven. Madam Vice-President, Singapore was a swamp 50 years ago. Today, they can boast of the best health care in the world, the best education system in the world, best port facilities in the world and the best airline consistently in the world. South Korea, similarly, basically was built out of rubble after the Korean War. Today, they are the largest shipbuilder in the world; they are number one for e-Government services in the world. They are ranked number seven as far as ease of doing business is concerned.

Hon. Senator: Malaysia.

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: The fact is that when one is looking to place money anywhere in the world today—because money is borderless; money could transcend borders today. I could be sitting in Maracas, or anyone could be sitting in Maracas or in Mayaro, and conducting business in China or in India or in

Africa, or in any country across the world across a computer. You do not need to be physically there. So when people are looking at extracting, for example, we have \$6 billion or \$7 billion sitting in our economy in Trinidad and Tobago, we have local business people looking to do business, when they have an idea that they may want to extract value from, what are they going to do? They are going to look at the conditions that prevail in the country.

When foreign direct investors are looking at where they can place their funds, again, similarly, in many cases, they may not come to Trinidad physically. They may pick up the global competitive index and look at the indices, and realize that look, Trinidad and Tobago ranks at 68, Singapore ranks at number one, Jamaica ranks at a much higher place than us and many of our Caricom—Dominica and Antigua and so on rank higher than we do. They are not going to come to Trinidad, they are not even going to look at Trinidad. So we have got to make sure that if we are going to increase our global competitiveness, we have got to ensure that we increase our ease of doing business.

Madam Vice-President, it takes 43 days to set up a business in Trinidad and Tobago. Forty-three days! Many of our Caricom partners take less time. It takes 297 days to get a construction permit in Trinidad and Tobago. Many people who are listening to this debate will be nodding their heads in recognition of that fact, because of the approvals from WASA, T&TEC, town and country and all the regulatory approvals; 297 days to get a construction permit in Trinidad.

We rank 132nd out of 144 countries as far as the burden of doing business through customs in Trinidad; the burden of custom procedures. Madam Vice-President, 132nd in the world because of the antiquated laws and procedures that we have here, because of the lack of transparency in our regulatory agencies, and because of the insufficient sharing of data between public sector bodies. This is something that the private sector has been complaining bitterly about over the last 30-odd years. The inefficiencies in the system translate essentially to cost and time delays that eventually get transferred to the consumer of Trinidad and Tobago.

10.30 a.m.

I am very fortunate that I straddle two Ministries: the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment and the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, and as a direct result of that, I have been able to make a very bold claim that we are going to be in a position to catapult Trinidad and Tobago into the top tier of ease of doing business in three years' time. [*Desk thumping*] And it is not empty rhetoric,

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the work has begun already. The single electronic window, popularly known as the TTBizLink, now allows individuals and businesses to be able to obtain, on a real-time basis, certificates of origin, work permits, import duty concessions and trade permits and licences instantly; something that previously would have taken several weeks or several days to have gotten, you could now get it instantly online. And we have several endorsements from the private sector with regard to the success they have had having used this system.

But, in addition to that, we currently operate, through customs and excise, a parallel system called the ASYCUDA system. Many business people across Trinidad and Tobago, having interacted with customs and excise, would have had many sleepless nights because of the ASYCUDA system. I want to inform this honourable Senate that, in conjunction with the comptroller of customs and excise, we intend to merge both the ASYCUDA system and the Single Electronic Window. I have a commitment from the comptroller and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment, that that will actually happen during this quarter. Before December 31, we will have both systems merged, such that an importer or a customs broker will be able to make declarations to the Customs and Excise Division and other government regulatory agencies at the same time. [*Desk thumping*] It does require an amendment to the Customs Act, which we will be bringing to Parliament very shortly. It does require an amendment to the Exchequer and Audit Act, which will allow the comptroller of customs to receive payments other than cash and certified cheques, and it does require a proclamation of the Electronic Transactions Act, which will allow electronic signatures and electronic transactions for customs declarations.

I want to also say that what the Customs Act amendment will do, it will allow sharing of data across agencies, as well, it will allow for manifests to be presented ahead of the vessel arriving in Trinidad and Tobago, which will give customs and excise sufficient time to process documentations and to release containers, as a commitment made by the comptroller, off the ports of Trinidad and Tobago within 24 hours. [*Desk thumping*]

I also want to alert this honourable Senate that we have a request for proposals out for four scanners that will assist customs and excise in better doing their duties and performing their responsibilities, so we would be able to cut down on the number of containers that would have to be unstuffed at the port and, of course, cut down on the amount of time that a container sits on the port.

But, in creating this environment and increasing the ease of doing business, we have sought to simplify the way business is conducted and the way business is done in Trinidad and Tobago. There are far too many bureaucratic steps in almost

everything that we do in Trinidad and Tobago and we have already started the rationalization and the streamlining of many of our agencies across the board that fall under the purview of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment. I shall name them quickly and then speak about them: investTT, the Business Development Corporation, the creative industries, the standards regime and setting up a business, which is the incorporation of businesses. All of these have been identified by the World Bank as impediments to doing business in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as contributing to our low ranking on the competitive index.

The first one I want to speak about is investTT. InvestTT is an organization which, up until two and a half months ago, was one organization out of 13 that was responsible for trade facilitation and investment promotion in Trinidad and Tobago; 13 agencies across three Ministries. Can you imagine the confusion, and the bureaucracy, and the additional cost, and the diffusion of human capital and financial resources—having 13 sets of management, having 13 boards, having, as I have said, a duplication of effort across the board? We now have a situation, through a Cabinet Note in July, where we now have one agency responsible for all of that. One agency will now be responsible for the National Investment Promotion and Facilitating Agency of Trinidad and Tobago, which cuts out the confusion in the minds of investors, cuts out the fact that we have lost many business opportunities because of the fact that many business people have come and gone, local and foreign, and because of the frustrations in the system, have left empty handed.

Madam Vice-President, I mentioned earlier on when I was speaking about a number of financial malfeasances that have not yet been discovered and some that have and had been kept quiet. I want to talk a little bit about investTT as part of a company called E TecK. E TecK was a company set up to manage the economic development of Trinidad and Tobago and was spun off some time ago into two agencies, investTT and the Asset Optimization Company Limited, which essentially handles all of the parks that e TecK currently manages.

We are all aware that under E TecK there was a company called Bamboo Networks, which, of course, is subject to a court matter, so I would not discuss it. But there is an impairment value in Bamboo Networks that has been written off of \$31,500,000 on E TecK's books. But, as I said, I would not discuss that in any detail.

Some of the ones I want to discuss where we have an impairment of value, let me just say for the uninitiated, an impairment of value means that we have expended large, or we have expended funds to create an asset and when we

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finished, the asset is not worth what was spent on it, so we have to write down the value. Essentially, taxpayers would have lost this value for the moneys that they would have made towards the building of that asset or the purchasing of that asset.

There is a company listed on e Teck's books called InterFix Ventures, LLC. E Teck went into a facility called medical transcription and as at 2008, as a direct result of that venture, they have written off \$18.5 million for medical transcription services. Now, I decided to do an Internet search of this company called InterFix. They are listed as business offices, 6 Concourse Parkway, Northeast 1475, Atlanta, Georgia, and listed as a private company categorized under "business services". It was established in 2006, just in time to take advantage of the services of e Teck and incorporated in Georgia. Their telephone number on the Internet is listed as 770-698-7330 and I called the number. The operator comes on and says: "I regret to inform you that this number is disconnected." There are no further telephone numbers on the Internet for this company. So it appears, at the outset, that this company was set up to do business with e Teck and then went out of business owing e Teck for services, \$18.5 million, which was paid by e Teck.

Similarly, we have written off for the Vanguard Hotel, \$148,261,000. In other words, moneys expended on that hotel in Tobago have not created the value of the final asset. So, we have had to write off \$148.261 million. There is also a write-off for a company called UniBio Project; \$10 million written off in 2008. *[Interruption]*

Sen. Singh: What is that?

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: I have no idea what it is but apparently it is some arrangement with a Scandinavian company; \$10 million.

Madam Vice-President, you will recall that during the CHOGM, back 2008/2009, the last Government spent a tremendous amount of money in the upgrade of the Trinidad Hilton to accommodate heads of state who were coming in. This is to give you an indication of the amount of money that we have had to write off, or that has been written off as a direct result of not having had value for money; in other words, we have spent significantly more money than the asset was worth at the end, we have written off, this country has written off \$277 million on the Hilton Hotel in Trinidad and Tobago.

Another, the Tamana InTech Project, has cost this country \$1,215,000,000 and if anyone were to take a drive up to Wallerfield and have a look at what exists there, you will see that there are several building shells that require several

hundred million dollars more to make any of them workable and usable. We have written off—when I say “we” I am talking about the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, not this Government—\$118.7 million on the Tamana InTech Project, and I can guarantee you there are several hundred million dollars more to be written off, having visited the compound myself very recently; of that \$118 million, \$70 million is written off for a company called Alutech, which, if you go up there, is really just a steel structure with nothing on it. They have had to write off another \$70 million. And let me also say that this same company, Alutech, has another liability of US \$4 million owing to NEC, which is another amount that is going to have to be written off very shortly. And then there are other industrial parks which are other works that were done by e Teck at the time in 2010. They are to write off \$59.6 million.

From 2005—2010, there was an impairment of value in the assets of e Teck of \$715 million, almost three-quarters of a billion dollars, written off the assets that would essentially be a cost to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Singh: Shame!

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: So, yes, there may be some financial misfeasance known with regard to some of the big projects, the Brian Lara Stadium and the Scarborough—but there are many more that we uncover in our daily business at the Ministries. That is investTT.

The second company that we are restructuring is the Business Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago. The Business Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago evolved from the Small Business Development Company and essentially it has just lost its way. It went into all sorts of things that they were not supposed to do. They went into leasing of assets, they went into lending money, guaranteeing loans, with the direct result—of course, with very little control—that several millions of dollars have not been repaid to the BDC. In fact, a loan from the Chinese Government of \$20 million has just disappeared. Not a cent has been repaid. Assets that they bought and leased to individuals have disappeared, have been lost, cannot be recovered. That Business Development Company is also now being restructured into what is called Export TT with a view now—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: Ganesh Sahadeo.

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath:—to positioning the BDC to create internationally competitive firms in the export sector.

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The third area is creative industries sector. One of the legacies of the previous regimes really was to throw money at anything that they thought was a good idea and set up lots of committees, set up lots of organizations and companies and so on. Unfortunately, one such was the creative industries sector, where \$88 million of taxpayers' money was put behind film and entertainment over the last seven years. Out of that \$88 million, \$40 million was spent on salaries and administrative expenses. So, only \$48 million out of the \$88 million, only 50 per cent, was actually spent on the development of the sector. That sector has also now been restructured and reorganized into what is called the creative industries sector.

The fourth area is the standards regime. A major bugbear of the private sector over the last 30 years has been the fact that we operate with two different standard setting bodies in Trinidad and Tobago: the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards and the Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division of the Ministry of Health. But, because of several antiquated sections of the Food and Drug Act, because of human resource constraints, there have been situations in the past where there has been, what I would call diplomatically, a lack of predictability in the way that standards have been enforced and in the way procedures have been enforced by the Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division of the Ministry of Health.

In addition to causing major problems for local manufacturers in Trinidad and Tobago, many of the problems have escalated to almost being diplomatic incidents. The Jamaican Government, for example, has complained to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago with regard to Jamaican products having access into Trinidad and Tobago, because they believe many times they are blocked, their products are blocked from coming into the country. The famous Patty War about a year ago is a good example.

10.45 a.m.

Very recently, the Barbadian Government had cause to complain, because Pine Hill Dairy could not get their products and produce into Trinidad and Tobago. Flour from Barbados was also prevented from coming into Trinidad and Tobago or blocked on the ports to a point where clearly with perishable items, there is a time frame within which these goods must be cleared. I am talking about produce and products that go all over the world, that are acceptable in Canada, in the United Kingdom, in the United States, but are blocked, and impediments are created as a direct result of the bureaucracy involved.

I want to alert the honourable Senate, Madam Vice-President, that I currently have a high-level team working on these barriers to trade, because clearly they are creating major problems for importers and exporters, and putting us in bad light as

far as the international community is concerned. So I have a high-level team together with the Ministry of Health, under the guidance of the Minister of Health, coming up with recommendations by the end of October—this month—that will identify, eliminate and remove all the existing impediments and inefficiencies in that system.

The fifth area is steps to starting a business. I mentioned earlier that it takes 43 days in Trinidad and Tobago to set up a business; we are ranked number 74 in the world. I want to let you know that in conversations with the Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue and with the Executive Director of the National Insurance Board, we have been able to eliminate several bureaucratic steps in the system, embossing of articles of incorporation, the fact that the National Insurance Board and the Board of Inland Revenue must visit the premises prior to issuing of licences and so on. We have agreed and they have committed that the number of days will now be reduced, because of the removal of the bureaucratic steps—will now be reduced from November 01, 2012, from 43 days to a maximum of three days. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to turn very briefly to sectoral reforms because the importance of trade to the diversification of Trinidad and Tobago is extremely important and cannot be overstated, but in creating markets for our manufacturers, we must do so understanding very clearly that there are certain markets that will be more competitive than others, we must do so hand in hand with the private sector because they clearly understand the markets that they can add value to and they could be competitive in.

Far too often as Governments, we have negotiated bilateral agreements with many countries across the world, and those agreements just sit on shelves gathering dust simply because the private sector was not involved. We have several agreements that we are currently negotiating. We are negotiating agreements with Canada at the moment, because by December 2013, the existing CARIBCAN agreement will expire, and we do not believe that the Canadian Government will go back to the WTO to ask for a renewal so, therefore, we need to conclude that arrangement by the end of 2013, which will allow us to get our services and trade back into Canada. It allows us also a market of 34.1 million people with a purchasing power of US \$41,400 per capita; very high.

Secondly, the European Partnership with CARIFORUM, CARIFORUM being the Caribbean region as well as the Dominican Republic. Madam Vice-President, that agreement was signed in 2008 but not yet ratified; it allows us a market access to 500 million people, again allowing us to export our services as well as our goods

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into that market. Of course, that market again, high GDP per capita, US \$31,300. But we do have a problem. It appears that inadvertently, in 2008, we allowed the access of duty free paper and paper products, and I have been working assiduously with my staff, many of whom are here today, to ensure that we are able to get paper and paper products back onto the list so that they are not allowed in the duty free. [*Desk thumping*] My Caricom fellow Ministers and myself will be meeting with the European commissioners towards the end of this month, the 26th of this month, to attempt to negotiate that, because it means the loss of possible 300 to 400 jobs if we allow paper and paper products into the Trinidad and Tobago market free of duties.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Well done!

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: The third bloc that we are looking to continue our negotiations with is the Central American and South American markets which allow us access to 600 million people. We have already agreed and signed bilateral agreements with Paraguay. We concluded agreements with Guatemala only last week and that allows us access to another 20 million people.

Madam Vice-President, let me turn quickly now to the sectors which this Government has identified for diversification of the economy. Trinidad and Tobago has several natural advantages that we must be able to leverage to our advantage, to ensure that we can position Trinidad and Tobago as a destination of choice for those who are looking to invest their moneys. We have a wonderful strategic geographic location, because we are below the hurricane belt; stable economy; stable political climate. We have a generally very good telecommunications infrastructure. We have cheap energy, relatively speaking, and we have a very skilled and highly literate workforce and we must leverage these advantages as we move forward.

The sectors that we have identified for diversification of the economy are as follows: financial services, as Sen. Ramkhelewan spoke of yesterday, the potential of it; financial services; the ICT sector; the tourism sector; the creative industry sector; agriculture; the maritime sector, and sport for the first time as a business.

Sen. Subhas Ramkhelewan spoke at length yesterday about the financial sector and he declared his interest, of course, as a practitioner in that area. The financial services in Trinidad and Tobago contributes \$13.1 billion, up from \$12.3 billion last year to the GDP of Trinidad and Tobago; in fact, it represents 25 per cent of the non-GDP of Trinidad and Tobago, and actually it employs—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Non-energy sector.

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath:—non-energy sector, yes. And actually employs 55,000 people directly, so it represents tremendous potential for us to develop that sector. Very recently, in fact, only about three weeks ago, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in order to expand that sector, launched something called the financial support services sector really to concentrate on back-office processing, BPO as we call it, and attempting to lure financial services companies to Trinidad and Tobago, to relocate their back-office and middle-office functions to Trinidad and Tobago.

The BPO market globally is valued about US \$135 billion, with a projected growth rate of 3 ½ per cent for 2012. The services that are offered generally as far as BPO is concerned, are finance and accounting; administrative services; operations and supply management; customer management and human resources. Although cost is still a priority for those companies looking to relocate, the fact is many of them are looking for speed and agility, innovation and creativity of the markets they are going to, as well as industry specific skilled workforce. We expect that over the next three to five years we can generate 3,000 knowledge-sector jobs in this area; 3,000 will be indirectly created; because of the multiplier effect between 6,000 and 12,000 jobs.

Madam Vice-President, you will recall that despite spending hundreds of millions of dollars, under the previous regime, despite flying off to many of these exotic locations like Dubai and other places, and despite promising this Parliament many phantom tenants, like Merrill Lynch and Bear Stearns and others who never materialized—in fact, 1,450,000 square feet of real estate remained empty and wallowed for the last three years. I am happy to tell you that only about a month ago, this Government signed an MOU with a very large financial institution, our first investment in this sector, Scotiabank to relocate [*Desk thumping*] a shared back-office service in Trinidad and Tobago, with an investment of \$100 million, and the employment and the creation of 200 new jobs in Trinidad and Tobago.

We are currently in discussions with three other large financial institutions to do very much the same as we have done with Scotiabank in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We hope that by the end of this calendar year, we will have at least two of them signed up under the Financial Institutions Support Services mechanism.

Madam Vice-President, the other area that we have targeted is the creative industry sector. The creative industry sector represents about 7 per cent of world GDP and it is forecast to grow at about 10 per cent—[*Interruption*] sorry.

Sen. Ramkhelawan: I thank the hon. Minister for giving way, but I thought it was a good point to ask a question with regard to financial services and trade. He made comments about trade and financial services, but can the Minister speak to the fact that most of these trade agreements, the new ones that we have, do not involve any allowance for trade in financial services, the EPA, the Panama Agreement, and the current agreements that are being negotiated, and if we are going to get financial services going, we need to have trading services and in addition double taxation agreements with these countries. Can the Minister speak to these facts?

Madam Vice-President: Senator, before you—hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. F. Al-Rawi*]

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, before I do put the question though, I would like to recognize in the visitors' gallery, Mr. Felix Gazzo and members of the Blind Welfare Association who are here to witness this. Welcome. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*] Let me just quickly respond to Sen. Ramkhelawan. You are quite correct. These negotiations do not include negotiations with regard to financial services and this is the reason I suggested at the outset that we need to involve the private sector in these negotiations to understand very clearly where the opportunities lie. So, I want to assure the hon. Senator that we will be looking—in our future discussions with all of these countries—we will be looking at double taxation relief as well as financial services, and if, in fact, we could incorporate them in any of the existing agreements we will attempt to do so. I want to give you that assurance.

Creative industries, as I mentioned, represents about 7 per cent of world GDP and it is growing at a rate of about 10 per cent per annum. In fact, the film industry alone is valued at about \$60 billion. About 10 years ago I had the opportunity to work on setting up an equity fund for the Bollywood film industry, where I was able to see first-hand, the thousands and thousands of people that were employed in that sector producing 800 films per annum, far greater than the US or the European markets, 800 films per annum they are producing, but spawning several industries out of the film sector itself.

We have 20 film production companies in Trinidad and Tobago, 57 companies offering production services support and 11 television stations, and altogether we employ about 2,000 people directly in that sector. There is no need for us to reinvent the wheel, we can look at what others are doing and build on that by just injecting our own flavour and our own flair into what is taking place.

For example, the Nigerian film market started only 13 years ago, but is currently valued at \$250 million and employs several thousand people. Over the last two years, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has supported a number of initiatives in the film sector and a number of programmes, but in order to build on that success we have increased the initiatives.

11.00 a.m.

I want to talk about just a few of them; not in great detail, but just to touch on them. There is an incentive called the Production Expenditure Incentive Rebate Programme where we give rebates for producers of films, up to 35 per cent of production cost. Previously there was a ceiling of US \$2 million. We have now increased that ceiling to US \$3 million so that is essentially a \$20 million rebate for those wishing, both locally and internationally, to make films in Trinidad and Tobago.

There is a 150 per cent incentive that was previously offered only to corporate sponsors—tax incentives. We are now extending that to private investors in film as well and, very importantly, in addition to the 35 per cent rebate that we are giving for the production of film, we are giving an additional 15 per cent, which makes it 50 per cent for film production crews from abroad who wish to utilize local labour. So all local labour will have a rebate of 50 per cent in the production of film.

We also intend to establish a film city, which is a production house, Madam Vice-President—because we do not have that in Trinidad right now—which will have film sets; it will have equipment; it will have screening facilities; and it will have editing facilities. We intend to establish Trinidad and Tobago as the film city of the Caribbean.

There are many impediments. One of those impediments is the access, duty-free and VAT free, of equipment coming into Trinidad to make these films. In fact, right now, if a film producer wants to come to Trinidad, they have to place a large bond and we know what are the bureaucracies in doing all that.

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We intend to bring legislation to Parliament to allow the temporary importation of various goods and services for the film industry through something called the ATA Carnet Regime, and there will be exemptions, temporarily, from VAT, duties and taxes on equipment for film specific goods and services, with a three-year limit placed on the resale of these equipment. In other words, you “cyah” bring it in and sell the equipment under a period of three years. These are major incentives.

The second area we want to look at is fashion. Global fashion has exploded over the last decade. We have some very, very talented people here in Trinidad and Tobago. That industry is worth well over \$350 billion and, as a testament to the kind of designers we have here—in fact, very recently at the London Fashion Week, fashion designer Meiling, Anya Ayoung-Chee, Project Runway 2012 winner, and also Rachel Ross, who is a jewellery designer, gained rave reviews at the London Fashion Week for their sensational designs.

So we have a host of incentives for that sector. I am cognizant of the fact that I am running out of time and I want quickly to touch on the maritime sector which, again, offers tremendous potential for Trinidad and Tobago as far as ship repairs, shipbuilding, ship financing and insurance services. We have significant advantages. We have a sheltered harbour here in Trinidad and Tobago out of the hurricane belt and we have somewhat of a sector here for maintenance; but it is not in a structured or a formal way and, with the opening up of the Panama Canal, which will allow 60 per cent more cargo coming through that canal, we must position ourselves to take advantage of that increased traffic.

I have also had discussions with the President of the SWWTU because he has mentioned to me that there are some 4,000 able members of his union who would be willing to work on ships across the world, much in the same way, spawning an industry like the Filipinos, who export the services of their seamen across the world, and we intend to do that with the SWWTU.

I want to touch very quickly on the area of food, Madam Vice-President, because it is another area that we are looking to develop. One of the blessings I would say of having served as the Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs in a previous incarnation is that it opened my eyes to the business opportunities available in the food sector.

We have never profitably extracted the value out of food as a business because most agriculturalists in Trinidad and Tobago, or farmers in Trinidad and Tobago, really have done it on a small scale and we have never been able really to

commercialize, across the board, in any large way, agriculture as a business. So, I want, of course, to thank the hon. Prime Minister, who had given me the privilege to have served in that sector. I am sure that my colleague, the hon. Devant Maharaj, will speak in more detail of the initiatives that are being taken in that sector to increase food production.

In the meantime, Madam Vice-President, because of the large reliance that this country places on imported food, we have a situation where we continue to be at the mercy of imported food prices. We are at the mercy of the inflationary pressures as a direct result of the large food import bill of \$4 billion that we incur every year. It is in this context that the hon. Prime Minister, in her desire to alleviate the hardships posed on the most vulnerable in our society, the disadvantaged in our society, instructed that relief be given on value added tax of basic food items in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

We have said very clearly that this is an interim measure whilst we build our own capacity in the agriculture sector. I am simply amazed, however, by those on the Opposition Bench who have been chosen to take cheap potshots at the expense of those very same people we are looking to protect. At the end of the day, we are pretty sure that the removal of VAT on food items in Trinidad and Tobago will benefit many of those people with lower pricing on thousands of items. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, just for the sake of clarification, this is a listing of the items, 54 of them, that were removed by the previous regime—on one page they could be incorporated—from which the previous Government removed VAT. [*Senator holds up page*] I have here a listing of items that are going to be removed. This is the list; this is the comparison. [*Senator holds up document*] [*Desk thumping*] I can go on and on; but the list—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: That is like a petition without signatures.

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath: I was about to say that this contains real names. There are real names on this list unlike the list that was allegedly presented to the President.

Let me just read out a few of them: pigeon peas, cornflakes, coconut milk, Quaker Oats, Cream of Wheat, guava jam, mashed potatoes, apple juice, grapefruit juice, picnic hams, which almost every family is going to have on their table—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Karim: “Ay, not every family.”

Sen. The Hon. V. Bharath:—not every family, of course—mayonnaise, Kool-Aid, baked beans, Smalta, soya for vegetarians, black-eyed peas, kidney beans,

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macaroni, and pig tail. Those are some of the almost 6,000 items listed here that will alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, I am fully aware that—in my last few minutes, I wanted to conclude by saying this People’s Partnership Government has steadied the ship of State. The country’s finances are now on an even keel with a commitment from the Minister of Finance and the Economy and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to balance the budget by 2016.

The worst is behind us; we have emerged strong, stable and resilient, with much to look forward to as a country. According to the IMF, we have turned the corner and can now look forward to growth of 1.2 per cent in the next fiscal year, well on our way to what we would call sustained and sustainable recovery.

We are unashamedly backing the most disadvantaged and the less privileged in our nation by giving them a “hand up” and not a handout. We are creating the enabling environment for businesses to regain confidence, to invest, to thrive and to create productive employment; all at the same time seeking to repair the disastrous model of boom and bust economics. We have taken the tough but responsible decisions. They were difficult decisions; none more so than those taken by the hon. Prime Minister herself, who for the first time in the history of this country, is the first Prime Minister who has been prepared to put country before party and self. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, we have a fistful of achievements here—that no other Government in the history of this country can lay claim to—laid out in this and other publications. [*Senator holds up booklet*] The road is long, the mountain is high; but it all begins with that first step. We have taken several of those steps already and I can think of no other way of concluding my contribution today than by quoting from this very same booklet which highlights the achievement of the People’s Partnership in the last two and a half years. It is from the Prime Minister herself when she talks about fulfilling the promise, shaping our future. She says, and I quote:

“We must heal old wounds and build our resilience. We must diffuse the present pressures and agree on a new foundation of mutual engagement, acceptance and trust.

We must convert disappointments and errors into a pool of knowledge that will educate our future.”

—and we must fashion a future, not just of prosperity for all, but one in which dignity and equity are the natural deliverables of every policy.

“We are already off to a great start with more and more indicators everyday which tell us that the resolve to hold firm to our policy direction is delivering results,”

Madam Vice-President, I thank you.

Sen. Terrence Deyalsingh: Madam Vice-President, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this Bill entitled, “an Act to provide for the services of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September, 2013”.

First of all, I, like yourself, would like to welcome Members of the Blind Welfare Association, Mr. Felix Cazoe from Maloney, Miss Nyla Joseph from Petit Valley and Miss Beverly Ann Fitzwilliam, all the way from Claxton Bay. [*Desk thumping*] So, on behalf of the floor, I welcome the members of the Blind Welfare Association.

I also welcome, like the hon. Senator before me, Dr. John Bharath. [*Desk thumping*] Minister Vasant showed off his familial relationship as that of son, but I have a closer relationship with Dr. John Bharath in that he was my first dentist, so I have known him since I was around five years old. The fact that I have teeth today is testimony to his expertise.

Madam Vice-President, Sen. Bharath’s contribution was a good one, very enlightening, [*Desk thumping*] filled with humorous anecdotes and he spoke about making Trinidad and Tobago competitive and I agree with him. But my question to the hon. Senator and to the Minister of Finance and the Economy is: how do two gentlemen like yourself sit in the Cabinet and possibly recommend to the Cabinet that you call a public holiday with less than 12 hours’ notice? Where is the ease of doing—so you have people flying in to do business on a Monday morning and a Minister of Finance and the Economy and a Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment possibly recommend to the Cabinet to throw a public holiday for the Olympians with less than 12 hours’ notice?

Hon. Senators: “A-a-a-a-h!”

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: If you want to honour them with a public holiday, plan it out. Give the country “a week or two” notice. Honour them! That is what you do.

The hon. Minister spoke about trade ties with Costa Rica, Paraguay, but in the same breath, he ill speaks the investment made to Hilton and he ill speaks these tall buildings. Is the hon. Minister aware that one of the reasons south trade is so strong—for two reasons: the work done by the former Minister of Trade and

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Industry, Mr. Ken Valley; and, two, the fact that Trinidad and Tobago hosted the Fifth Summit of the Americas right here in Trinidad and Tobago? In these same tall buildings, we had all the Presidents from Central and South America coming here—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: How much did it cost?

Sen. T. Deyalsingh:—so we knew that. And the question you are asking, how much did it cost, do you look at it as a cost or as an investment? This same thing that you are decrying is an investment. [*Crosstalk*]

11.15 a.m.

Where would those Presidents have stayed? In Hilton! Before you decry, look at the gestation period that we gave you to bring you to the point where you can consummate deals with the South Americans. [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Do not look at this as a holiday; look at it as an investment of it. [*Laughter*]

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Madam Vice-President, as you would have noticed yourself, I kept very silent throughout all debates here. I ask for the same respect and protection. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: “Doh beg, doh beg!”

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Madam Vice-President, I make my contribution in the fact that budgets—this is the third budget of this Government, and we cannot take this budget in isolation but in the context of what they have been doing since 2010.

I will be referring to the *Hansard* from the 2009 debate when the Government was in Opposition. Under your watchful gaze, Madam Vice-President, I do have the honour to be referring to your *Hansard*. But luckily for it this time what I will refer to as your *Hansard* is supportive of one my points later down. The first piece of *Hansard* I want to refer to is that of the then Member of Parliament, Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, who is now a Cabinet Member.

I am sorry that the hon. Larry Howai is not here—but I am sure that his support staff is here because what I am about to read from Dr. Gopeesingh’s *Hansard* in 2009, has some serious consequences for this Minister of Finance and the Economy. I read from the *Hansard* September 14, 2009, I start:

“The Government has signed a guarantee for Taurus Services for \$2.7 billion; \$373 million for PTSC for buses. Who brought these buses into Trinidad?... Who was the man who brought the buses and they found out that the air-conditioning units were not there? Who brought the bus that split into two on the highway? And you want to boast that you have signed a guarantee for \$373 million!”

I want to know “where the \$373 million gone.” This is where I am now calling on the Governor of the Central Bank who issues bank licences to pay attention to what I am about to say next. Dr. Gopeesingh goes on:

“Do you want to know where the money gone? The money went into the hands of PNM friends. This is where the money gone; the First Citizens Bank.”

Dr. Gopeesingh, in Opposition, is charging the First Citizens Bank with being a PNM bank. [*Crosstalk*] I want to know what is the position of the Central Bank, the Governor of the Central Bank who issues licences to banks. Is it that the First Citizens Bank was infiltrated by the PNM? This is the charge he is making. He is saying to the First Citizens Bank:

“...where the money gone?...the First Citizens Bank.”

Friends of the PNM! When you read the Financial Institutions Act, Part IV, it speaks about fit and proper persons to be directors of a bank. It does not define what fit and proper is. It speaks about it in a roundabout manner. Is First Citizens Bank a PNM bank, a COP bank or a UNC bank? That is the question to be asked, Madam Vice-President, because this budget envisages the divestment of shares of First Citizens Bank from last year to this year.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Yeah, but to the people.”

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: So, we want to know. I call on the Governor of the Central Bank to investigate that. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: He has no time for that kind of spurious—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: When we look at the budget of 2010, I want to ask this Minister of Finance and the Economy in the context of coming into power in 2010. Where they claimed the Treasury was empty—profligacy—there was nothing left. But the 2010 budget spoke of growth poles, and a tunnel from Tunapuna to Maracas. Could this Minister of Finance and the Economy give us an undertaking that that tunnel—as spoken to in the 2010 budget—is or is not going to be built? Give us an answer.

I also ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy to tell us about the east Port of Spain growth pole. In the 2010 budget it was mentioned, but during a debate in this honourable Chamber when I raised the issue—what is happening with the east Port of Spain development—the new Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, hon. Sen. Bhoendradatt Tewarie said that was now being coupled with the Invaders Bay Project. It was never the intention of the Government in 2010 to couple and marry the east Port of Spain development with

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Invaders Bay. What is happening to the East Port of Spain Development Project? What is the plan for Port of Spain? Because if the East Port of Spain Development Project is being coupled with Invaders Bay, and in the context of moving Ministries out of Port of Spain—so you have the east Port of Spain development plan on hold, it is being linked to Invaders Bay in the West, nothing is happening, and we are emptying Port of Spain of workers in various Ministries which add life to the city of Port of Spain—what is the plan for the city of Port of Spain? [*Desk thumping*] Could somebody tell us what is the plan? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Ask Louis Lee Sing!

Sen. George: Something else!

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: That is why we say on this side, this is a budget in search of a plan. [*Desk thumping*] It is a budget that is seeking, that is searching in the wilderness for a plan.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Desperately!

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Another issue spoken about in the last budget—
[*Interruption*]

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I am going to ask for the protection of Sen. Deyalsingh as he makes his contribution, and I ask that it may be done so in silence, please. Thank you.

Hon. Senator: Come on Faris!

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Another issue spoken about in the last budget; the 2011 budget, Madam Vice-President—when they were in Opposition, they fought down the revenue authority. Minister Dookeran as he then was, Minister of Finance, spoke about transfer pricing, and I welcomed the move. I spoke in support of transfer pricing. From then to now, we have heard nothing on the issue of transfer pricing. I would like the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy in his wind-up to tell us, what is his philosophy on the revenue authority? What is his philosophy on transfer pricing? Do we have the requisite skills residing in inland revenue to implement transfer pricing?

Transfer pricing, Madam Vice-President, is crucial to this country because the energy sector, where this is targeted most to, accounts for 40 per cent of our GDP. In addition, transfer pricing could also be used for our multinational enterprises outside of the energy sector. So we will be trapping more and more taxes in a much more efficient manner. That was the vision we had then for the revenue

authority which was spoken about in derisory terms, but yet we are coming back two years later to speak about it. They are always two to three years behind the vision of the People's National Movement. Please tell us, are you going to go ahead with transfer pricing or not? Please do!

Madam Vice-President, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has unfortunately inherited a problem with Caribbean Airlines to which I will now speak. Caribbean Airlines has now been placed under the Minister of Finance and the Economy, before it was under the Minister of Transport. I am saying upfront that after I talk about what is happening at Caribbean Airlines, the name Su will fade into oblivion. Because what I am about to say, this Government will have to look at all the names from Allison to Zenora inclusive of Su—if you want to go that far—because what is happening with these two leased Boeing 767s is going to put the Minister of Finance and the Economy in a position to undertake some serious investigations, because this is taxpayers' money allocated for in this budget being spent to dry-lease these two Boeing 767s.

Madam Vice-President, we have entered into a dry-lease agreement with LAN Chile for two Boeing 767s. Nothing is wrong with that. LAN Chile is an excellent airline, good safety rating. Their corporate objective is to have a fleet with a plane life of 6.1 years. In order to meet that corporate objective, they hive off their older planes. We have undertaken to lease two Boeing 767s which have never flown a TransAtlantic route; that is over large bodies of water.

They were used primarily for the Chile/New York route; flying over land. What is the importance of that? The navigation systems in these two planes, they use something called the IRS system, Initial Reference System, which is in itself not a problem. But when you are flying a TransAtlantic route over bodies of water, this IRS system has a margin of error, drift, which multiplies itself the further the journey is.

The issue is, when you are flying a TransAtlantic route, you also need your planes to have your IRS system supplemented by a GPS system. I am asking the Minister of Finance and the Economy to investigate whether these two aircraft do, in fact, have a GPS system to supplement the IRS system, and whether the authorities in England know that we are bringing planes into their airspace without a GPS system. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: My car has a GPS system. Your phone has a GPS system.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Madam Vice-President, one last issue on those two planes. What I am about to say does not apply to the current fleet. I want to be perfectly clear. LAN Chile, as part of their corporate policy, upgrades their planes. If you look at new planes, Madam Vice-President, they all have their wings, the part that goes

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up, the winglets, the wing tips. All of LAN Chile's planes, including the two that we have dry-leased, were retrofitted with winglets to save on fuel, and to decrease carbon dioxide emissions. Excellent! The question this Minister has to answer is: with that post manufacturer modification, have those airline manuals been adjusted by Boeing, not Caribbean Airlines, not our CAA, by Boeing, so that ground crew will know how much fuel to load up the plane with, and the flight crew will know what they are flying with? I leave the CAL issue alone for now.

Hon. Senator: What issue?

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: You see, there is a history of the board not knowing even where these planes were. I refer to Tuesday, April 26, 2011, a quote by Mr. Rabindra Moonan:

At this point in time we feel that it is most appropriate type of aircraft to use. I have to find out why one of the B 767s has been parked up in Mexico City.

He does not even know that the plane was parked up in Mexico City. Are we to trust this board with a technical evaluation of these 767s as I have outlined? I certainly do not. This Minister as a line Minister for CAL has a duty to investigate what I am asking; to question CAL, to question the evaluation team that went to look at these planes.

Madam Vice-President, I now turn to energy following Sen. Ramnarine's contribution yesterday. There are certain issues that need to be addressed. Before I talk about and ask about what is this Government's policy on energy, I have to say the eloquence of the silence when it comes to the issue of the cat cracker is ear-splitting. The eloquence of the silence of the fact that the cat cracker, after close to 16 months of being offline, has not been elucidated on in this Parliament.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Not one word!

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Not a word!

11.30 a.m.

Madam Vice-President, the cat cracker, as we lovingly call it, was taken offline in April 2011—and if I am saying anything factually incorrect, I would give way to the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. I am glad he is here—with a hundred-day period to be offline for the particular repairs to be done. In June 2012, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs said it would be up by next week—June 2011, sorry, it would be up by next week.

In February 2012, the *Guardian* media reported high ranking official from Petrotrin: the company was attempting to restart the cat cracker, but with the—“impending strike action, importation of gas would have to continue”. Now, Madam Vice-President, look at the words—“importation of gas would have to continue”. That leads one to ask the question, when did the importation of gas actually start?

Sen. Al-Rawi: Sen. Lambert said nobody is striking in this country.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Because part of your energy policy has to do with energy security; that the country is energy secure.

Madam Vice-President, I have it on good authority, and I would give way to the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs that the cat cracker is still down. Is that correct hon. Minister, yes or no? The cat cracker is still down.

Sen. Ramnarine: Senator, I am advised by the leadership at Petrotrin that the cat cracker will commence operations in November 2012.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Sen. Ramnarine: There have been a number of constraints and challenges with getting the cat cracker back up, some of those include accidents and so on that have happened in the process, but the advice given to the Minister from the company is that the cat cracker will be back up in November. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: So, therefore, the answer to my question, which was: “is the cat cracker still down?” The answer is yes. That is all. [*Desk thumping*] The cat cracker is down 16 months after it was taken offline. That is what the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has just admitted in a roundabout way, and I thank him. What is the implication for that? This country rolls on gas. This budget is about transportation; it is about providing goods and services. This Minister, this Government took a conscious decision to take the cat cracker offline for normal maintenance, which is fine—we have done it in the past—but never in the history of Trinidad and Tobago has the cat cracker been offline for this extended period of time. Never!

We are importing gas, and that was not a PNM decision, that was a UNC decision. So the questions to the hon. Minister, which he can pass on to the Minister of Finance and the Economy to answer are—we now know that the cat cracker is still down: did we borrow moneys to upgrade the cat cracker? Why is it still offline? What is the fault? Why is it offline still? Who is at fault? Are we invoking penalty clauses in those contracts? From whom have we been importing gas and diesel for the past 16 months and at what rates? Now, I know the start-up is November, and I would hold the hon. Minister to his word.

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My investigations tell me that the cost per day of having this cat cracker down—the cost per day to this country; all costs—cost of the importation of gasoline; cost of the importation of diesel; penalty clauses; and the ongoing cost of construction for the past 16 months; all ancillary costs—amount to something like US \$600,000 per day since this cat cracker is down. Multiply that for a month, you get US \$18 million per month; multiply that by 18 months, you get \$324 million; multiply that by TT; TT \$2 billion, over the past 18 months that this cat cracker is down, and the silence is ear-splitting, but we hear about Sen. Vasant Bharath—InTech’s, \$18 million and so on, I agree.

Let us talk about that. I have no problem talking about that, but in the same breath, Sen. Bharath, tell me, how do we justify the incompetence that has cost the taxpayers of this country \$2 billion [*Desk thumping*] over the past 18 months, because the UNC took a decision to take the cat cracker offline, and for whatever reason due to incompetence or whatever, I do not know, it is not up as yet? TT \$2 billion! Let us talk about that. It was not mentioned in the budget; it was not mentioned anywhere; no communiqué, nothing! That speaks of our fuel security.

I want to ask the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs to make a statement—he has already spoken, and I have given way to him once—and tell us what is the true state of play with the cat cracker. Are my figures wrong? I urge him to be very careful because I am standing by my figures. I urge him to be careful. The same way I urged the Minister to be careful about those two B 767s, I urge them to be careful about this one.

Madam Vice-President, yesterday hon. Sen. Ramnarine spoke about energy policy. Sen. Ramnarine is an excellent young man. I like him, I have come to know his father, I think he is a wonderful young man—wonderful young man; excellent historian. [*Crosstalk*] I know his father. I have come to know his father. We sort of dine at the same place on Park Street. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Manos!

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Manos! “You know de ting.” [*Laughter*] The hon. Minister has never lied, but he is selective with facts, in that when he speaks about the diversification of our gas markets away from the eastern seaboard, he makes it sound as if that was a decision taken under this Government. He always fails to mention it was done in 2007, 2008, and that is one of the reasons this country continues to enjoy robust gas prices, because we migrated out of the Henry Hub markets years ago. Am I correct, Sir? [*Sen. Ramnarine nods his head*] Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: He nearly said yes.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: The hon. Minister spoke yesterday about self-marketing and he took all the praise for the self-marketing of our LNG, but what I have to—if I could use the word “chide”—mildly chide the hon. Minister for is, in his contribution yesterday, he gave the impression that BPGM—if I am wrong, hon. Senator, again, I would give way to you—British Petroleum Gas Marketing was somehow giving us the wrong end of the stick. This is where UNC philosophy would always differ from PNM philosophy, because we understand gas diplomacy; we understand energy diplomacy; we understand international relations; and we understand joint ventures with multinationals.

BPGM would have joint-ventured with us back in the days, hon. Minister, when we did not have the local expertise, we did not have it. So, what a joint venture would do, we have the raw material; you have the expertise. The impression that I got from listening to you yesterday was that if we were self-marketing from the very beginning, we would have been in a much better position. I respectfully disagree because back then, as hon. Minister Larry Howai would know—he was the chairman of NGC—we did not have residing within the NGC and residing within Trinidad and Tobago the local expertise. So, we invited BPGM; they were a partner.

Hon. Senator: What year was that?

Sen. Al Rawi: “Where de AG gone?”

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: That is how joint ventures work; we have the material, you have the expertise—it is a symbiotic relationship—BPGM must make a profit. But the insinuation was that BPGM somehow shafted Trinidad and Tobago—if we did not partner with BPGM, the gas would have stayed here. So, it is a symbiotic relationship, and the self-marketing project which you so proudly spoke about yesterday, actually started prior to 2009 [*Desk thumping*] when NGC realized they had residing within the NGC, the necessary expertise, because we had worked with BPGM over the years [*Desk thumping*] and we had developed it, and now it is time to strike out on our own. [*Desk thumping*] Those are the facts; the incontrovertible facts, that it started prior to this Government gaining power in 2010.

Even though there was a one-year period to terminate the contract, which was terminated in 2010, notice would have been given in—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: 2011!

Sen. T. Deyalsingh:—2011—2010, there were negotiations taking place before that, which started under the last administration, because you do not just sever a contract with an international partner like BPGM, because we never know when

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next we would need them, and we understand energy diplomacy; the UNC does not. Fact of life! So, before we make statements and insinuate things about BPGM, let us be careful. They provided a valuable service. They made money, yes. We learnt from them, the expertise now resides here and let us leave that at that, please.

Then it asks me now, what is your plan for gas? Because you, hon. Minister, are in control of 40 per cent of our GDP—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Forty-five!

Sen. T. Deyalsingh:—45 per cent of our GDP. So, before I ask you, what is your plan for gas and what is your energy policy, I want to briefly explain to the national population, if I could, what has brought this country to the level of prosperity we enjoy now, and this is where gas diplomacy, gas policy and energy policy are within the DNA of the People's National Movement.

In the '60s and '70s, when we were flaring gas, we said: Do you know what?—let us stop flaring gas; let us bring up this entity called the NGC and let us deliver this gas to power plants.” That was the first policy paradigm; the gas-to-power phase, in the '60s and '70s. That was a PNM policy.

Two—'70s and '80s, a policy shift; because if you cannot monetize your gas, it is a wasting resource. We had the gas to petrochemical shift, where we said, “Okay, let us take our gas and fire up methanol plants and ammonia plants”—PNM policy in the '70s and '80s—policy.

In the '90s to early 2000s, another policy shift; gas to LNG. [*Crosstalk*] Correct, hon. Minister. In the mid-2000s, another policy shift; gas to manufacturing; AUM 1, possibly AUM 2, which your predecessor, Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan spoke about, and which we no longer hear much about, AUM 2. But the last administration bequeathed to this country and to this Government another significant policy shift which would have taken Trinidad and Tobago into the international sphere of energy, and I refer to the Ghanaian project which the PNM administration bequeathed to you when you came into office.

11.45 p.m.

What transpired after May 24, 2010, is possibly the sorriest episode of energy diplomacy in Trinidad and Tobago—the sorriest episode of energy diplomacy, lack of foresight, lack of vision. [*Desk thumping*] And nothing characterizes that lack of vision than when President Mills from Ghana came to Trinidad to try to consecrate that deal, sought a meeting with the hon. Prime Minister and could not get a meeting—heads of States. But, I would leave that alone, Madam Vice-President.

Another disgraceful episode of the UNC's ignorance of energy has to do with the non-appointment of an NGC board until November 2010. By that time the Ghanaians got absolutely fed up with dealing with Trinidad and Tobago—absolutely fed up—because they wanted to deal with us; there was no board; they could not meet, and this is what Dr. Botchwey of the National Gas Development Task Force of Ghana said in March 2011:

It points to the tremendous political risk we take in handing over all critical aspects of this important project to a state-owned organization—meaning NGC with no board—that could so easily be held hostage to the vicissitudes of political cycles.

Sen. Al-Rawi: “My gosh!”

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Let me repeat that for the national community and for *Hansard*.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Who said it?

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Dr. Botchwey of the National Gas Development Task Force of Ghana, March 2011. And this is why I say they do not understand energy diplomacy; energy policy—it is not in their DNA.

It points to the tremendous political risk we take in handing over all critical aspects of this important project to a state-owned organization that can so easily be held hostage to the vicissitudes of political cycles.

[*Interruption*] I will give way soon again, hold on. This is the political fiddling that took place over the Ghanaian project. It was another policy shift to take this country on the global scale when it came to energy. It was an opportunity lost for diversification of NGC's revenue, again, into ammonia and methanol.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Give way.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Sen. Ramnarine: Sorry. Thanks for giving way. I just wanted to put on the record that as far as we are aware—at that time I was the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs and Minister Howai was the chairman of the NGC around that time—President Mills did not come to Trinidad; it was the Minister of Energy from Ghana, Dr. Joe Oteng-Adjei, who visited Trinidad.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: I am so advised and I accept your explanation, and if I am wrong on that particular fact I apologize, but I think everything else I have said so far can stand scrutiny. [*Desk thumping*]

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Now, Madam Vice-President, faced with this, all the indices in the *Review of the Economy*, on page 17, are negative. Briefly, if I go to the *Review of the Economy*:

“...contraction of 4.2% is expected in refining...decline of 1.0%...projected in 2012 for the largest petroleum sub-industry, exploration and production...”

It goes on. It is a war of contraction. Crude oil and condensate—which the hon. Minister spoke to yesterday—declining.

“Total natural gas production declined by...”

It is a war of declining. The only thing that is on the uptick is drilling exploration and we admit that, and that is on the uptick, but as far as the indices to bring in revenue all are on the decline. All the indices are in negative territory—all.

LNG exports—down; petrochemical and export levels for ammonia, urea and methanol—down. Down! Down! Down! And if we do not come up with an energy policy soon we are going to be between the devil and a deep blue sea. And I just want to alert the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs and the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy to tell the country what is the state of negotiations between Trinidad and Tobago and BP for their Dolphin contract which expires in 2015.

Sen. Ramnarine: BG.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: BG. What is bpTT’s domestic gas supply contract with NGC which ends in 2018? All those things are on the horizon. The Train 1 gas supply agreement ends in 2018—on the horizon. BG’s incremental gas sales agreement ends in 2019—on the horizon. These customers will be looking for new gas, cheaper gas; what is your policy? Where is the policy statement? Where is the policy shift that PNM undertook in all the decades, from the ’60s to the 2000s, that I have elucidated on? [*Desk thumping*] What is your policy shift especially as the Ghanaian project has fallen through? Because we cannot even get the cat cracker up but we want to talk about energy policy.

It brings me now to the Loran Manatee field. The hon. Minister spoke about it yesterday—and now that the Venezuelan elections are over and Hugo Chavez is back in power that is a good thing for us, because it means there is continuity of policy between the last Hugo Chavez regime and this one. But the hon. Minister made a very disturbing statement yesterday when he said our Ambassador, Mr. Edghill—am I correct?—is conducting negotiations or—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramnarine: It was just a meeting on behalf of.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh:—a meeting on behalf. Madam Vice-President, I would like to recommend to the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, that our Ambassador there could be a facilitator, could be a conduit, but if we are going to have serious cross-border negotiations, you need to put in place—and I think you had it because you answered a question in the Parliament—a serious technical and legal team, versed in maritime law, versed in harmonization between borders; please do that.

I do not think that your emissary there, your Ambassador or High Commissioner, is the correct person to be taking a lead in negotiations; he can facilitate negotiations; please. This Loran Manatee field is too important to Trinidad and Tobago. So please get your team back up and cracking.

Madam Vice-President, I also ask the Minister to tell us what is the delay about in the Soldado project? And I refer to *Guardian*, Friday, October 12, 2012: “Delay in bids for Soldado project”.

There seems to be a bit of warfare between two companies over this project: the companies being IAL Engineering Services and TOSL Engineering Ltd. I do not want to go through the details of what the article says, but the project seems to be held up for reasons which you should be aware of and which you should be taking an active role in solving. I will just read one paragraph of that article, Madam Vice-President.

“All records and letters were submitted more than eight months ago...”

So we are in October; these records would have been submitted eight months ago, early 2012.

“but an invitation to bid has not gone out. The unanswered question is why weren’t IAL and TOSL invited to bid...”

Why—according to the article. You need to investigate this.

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senator, just for the record I wish to declare that I do have a personal interest as my husband is engaged in employment at TOSL. I just wanted to declare that.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Madam Vice-President, I am well aware of that and I was not going there at all. I am just asking the hon. Minister to tell us what is the delay in the Soldado project.

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Madam Vice-President, I refer to another article. It was good media fodder when this Government was in then Opposition to speak about precipice and cliff, empty treasury; we were going off a precipice and if you follow the PNM we will all go over the precipice.

Sen. Al-Rawi: We were looking up.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Sen. Al-Rawi: We stand on the edge of a cliff looking up.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Madam Vice-President, I think I have made a good case, that this Government does not have a clue—[*Desk thumping*—]—not a clue about energy, and we have the population—445,000 souls who voted in May, 2010, have put their faith in this Minister and his Ministry, and this Government—speaking about cliffs and precipices back then.

Madam Vice-President, I do not know how you will rule on this one so I am telling you upfront, I will be reading something here and if I offend the Standing Orders, which you spoke about earlier, I will so desist.

Sen. Singh: I do not want to be anticipatory but is that a statement by the acting President?

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Yes it is and that is why I am asking.

Sen. Singh: But you cannot do that. You cannot do that.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: That is why I asked. Could I then, quote Mr. Derek Hudson.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Yes.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Mr. Derek Hudson.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hold on. The acting President did not write as acting President he wrote as Timothy Hamel-Smith—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: No! No! No! There is no distinction.

Sen. Al-Rawi:—it is not the name of the President. It was not a publication under the President's hand, so ask for her ruling.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Madam Vice-President, could I have a ruling if something is in the public domain—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: And say who it is written by—Hamel-Smith himself. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, in anticipation and in the insight given by Sen. Deyalsingh, I would like to draw your attention to Standing Order 35(7), which refers clearly to the name of the President, as well as 35(8), in terms of the name of the President used to influence the debate. However, Standing Order 35(3), specifically makes reference to any matter that was actually considered under the debate and closed off, come to a conclusion during the current session, and that matter was dealt with if it is that you are dealing with the references from the statement of the President.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Madam Vice-President: All right. So, I would ask you to look at Standing Order 35(3), Standing Order 35(7) and 35(8) and be properly guided, and to stay away from that particular statement.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Madam Vice-President, by your guidance, can I refer to a statement by Mr. Derek Hudson?

Sen. Al-Rawi: Of course you can.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: I can? Who attended the same meeting as the acting President—by Mr. Derek Hudson.

Madam Vice-President: Proceed.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Madam Vice-President: Okay.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: The headline is:

“BG East Africa president Derek Hudson: T&T facing energy...cliff.”

He says:

“If (T&T) does face a cliff, but from my perspective, I’m not prepared to fall off that cliff...”

Am I on solid ground, Madam Vice-President? This is the type of cliff that this Government has led us to. [*Desk thumping*] This is the type, an energy cliff, because they have no stated energy policy. They cannot even get a cat cracker up. After 18 months no energy policy and we entrust this Government—445,000 souls have entrusted this Government to lead them, not to the promised land, but

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over a cliff—“ah” energy cliff, but you will still blame PNM for everything. Why you did not blame us for global warming and El Niño, while you were at it? Madam Vice-President, could I ask how much more time I have?

Madam Vice-President: [*Inaudible*]—you are finishing now.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: My first 45 minutes?

Madam Vice-President: Yes, but let me ask. Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. F. Al-Rawi*]

Question put and agreed to.

12.00 noon

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Madam Vice-President, I turn to expenditure on a drawdown on our Consolidated Fund. This drawdown, in the vicinity of millions of dollars, is due to the fact that this Government has flip-flopped on a crucial issue over the years, and that has to do with the Caribbean Court of Justice. The flip-flopping is well known. They were in Government, they sought the Caribbean Court of Justice, they got it. They were in Opposition, they opposed it. They are back in Government, they denied; they steadfastly at every opportunity said we were not going to the Caribbean Court of Justice. They would issue statements, they would answer questions, “We are not going to the Caribbean Court of Justice.” Until one day when there was an embarrassing question to be answered, and lo and behold, we are going to the Caribbean Court of Justice, but not whole way, in a half-baked way.

Madam Vice-President, the Caribbean Court of Justice Trust Fund Act, Chap. 70:08, speaks about the setting up of a trust fund for the establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice. It speaks about the contribution of member States in the Caribbean Court of Justice, which we have to pay. Our allocation under that Act, contribution of the members of the trust fund: the smaller territories like Antigua and Barbuda, 2.11 per cent, Jamaica 27.09 per cent, Trinidad and Tobago, the biggest share, 29.73 per cent. So we pay 29.73 per cent of the administrative costs of the Caribbean Court of Justice.

Madam Vice-President, when one goes to the Draft Estimates of Expenditure from 2004 when this Act came into force, one would see that on the Consolidated Fund:

Expenditure charged upon the Consolidated Fund in accordance with section 118 of the Constitution, Caribbean Development Bank loan of US \$31.6 million for the Caribbean Court of Justice Trust Fund...

And every year we make two payments: I think one to principal and quarterly payments to interest. So in 2004 we would have paid TT \$10.9 million; in 2005, \$4.977 million to be paid quarterly. When one adds up all the bills accruing out of repaying this loan for the Caribbean Court of Justice, to which we have no access because of the intransience of this Government while in Government and Opposition, it adds up to \$339 million. That is what we have been paying from the Consolidated Fund from 2004 to now, to support a Caribbean Court of Justice which was promised to us for the 50th anniversary, just like the CD that Sen. Dr. Tewarie promised us—\$5 million for a CD; never got it.

We were promised the Caribbean Court of Justice for Independence, \$339 million charged on the Consolidated Fund, and the Attorney General said that he had advice which told him it could have been done. Where is the advice? Let us see it.

But there are other costs: the building being rented on Henry Street, which stretches from Henry Street to Charlotte Street, do you know what the rental is that we pay there, which comes out of the office of the Attorney General? Madam Vice-President, \$468,974.60 per month—per month. So every year the taxpayers of this country cough up \$5.6 million in rent for the Caribbean Court of Justice, a principle to which this Government has flip-flopped on so much, but they are now saying they are going to go it half way. What is the position on the Caribbean Court of Justice? Tell us.

The debate is not about the Caribbean Court of Justice, that debate was had. It is not a matter of if and when we go to the CCJ and leave the Privy Council. They have told us to please leave; they do not want you. Even they themselves in England have downgraded their own Privy Council by the establishment of their own Supreme Court out of the Constitutional Reform Act of 2005, where civil and criminal cases from England, Northern Ireland and Scotland no longer go to the Privy Council. They go to their own Supreme Court. So they have devalued their own Privy Council. They have told us in no uncertain terms, “Please go, we doh want you.” I am calling on the Government today to set up the machinery to take us to the Caribbean Court of Justice. [*Desk thumping*] Why are we dilly-dallying on the issue, and we have been paying hundreds of millions of dollars? Please!

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Madam Vice-President, the last piece of my contribution luckily revolves around your piece of *Hansard*, which I alerted you on earlier. This has to do with an unholy phenomenon taking place in Trinidad and Tobago, which is the suppression of statistics, whether it is crime statistics, unemployment statistics, inflation statistics. In the budget certain statistics are quoted, “full unemployment”, but when you go to the CSO you do not get figures, and I have lamented on this over and over in this Senate.

The last administration recognized the need, as far back as 2004, I believe, that the CSO needed to be “re-resourced”, revitalized. We invited then Statistics Sweden to undertake a comprehensive review of the CSO. So Statistics Sweden has been here for a while now, not in recent vintage under this Government. I want to make that absolutely clear.

In 2004 we got an IADB loan for the modernization of the public service specifically to deal with the CSO, and there were a series of reports that spoke to the CSO. I have here the third report 2006 and the details of the report. But what is happening—and hon. Sen. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie can correct me if I am wrong, because I have it on excellent authority—is that this Government is calculating in its attempt to suppress statistics that are not in agreement with their PR mode, whether it is crime statistics or official unemployment figures. And there is a charge in the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development that at one time under this Government, and not under former Minister Mary King, there was a directive that crisis data was not to be sent to the Central Bank for publication unless vetted and unless massaged in some way, and that good news or bad news—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Mohammed: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: Would the hon. Senator give way?

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: You will get your turn.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: Would the hon. Senator give way?

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: I simply want to indicate that if at all any directive was given, it was not given by me, and I deny that categorically and I doubt very much that any such directive was ever given.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Madam Vice-President, I am heartened. I am hoping I get some injury time.

Madam Vice-President: Would you allow that the call for a ruling on Standing Order 35(5) was made. I am going to ask you to be very careful, that while you may wish to raise the point of an action that was taken, at least desist from casting any aspersion to the motive or the intention.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Madam Vice-President, I cast no aspersions on anybody present in this Senate. I take your warning.

I have been calling for an independent CSO with the permission and concurrence of my political leader who feels strongly on this issue—an independent CSO. [*Desk thumping*] Many other people have been calling for that, and not only myself:

“CSO: Unemployment down to 4.9 %, but...

Experts doubt drop in jobless”

Ronald Ramkissoon—the experts do not take this Government’s word on unemployment. So again I am calling for the establishment of an independent CSO, fashioned after England and Jamaica, that reports to the Parliament.

You and I, Madam Vice-President, are in sync with this. If I may read from the *Hansard* of your contribution of September 23, 2009 referring to the Minister of Health:

“I have here with me 2008 statistics that the Minister, simply at his disposal, could have gotten; better figures. Do not use CSO statistics, where we are not even sure that the information coming from Mount Hope, the San Fernando hospital or any one of them, were [*sic*] even compiled in an objective...manner.”

That is the same feeling that experts have today, that the information, the data coming from this Government is not objective:

“or, I would say, in non-political manner. There are many things that you could actually use. Do not use local statistics.”

These were the words of hon. Sen. Lyndira Oudit as she then sat in Opposition.

Hon. Senator: Who was the Minister?

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: So, Madam Vice-President, I, like the rest of the country, do not trust the statistics, and I join with you. You did not even call for an independent body, but you alluded to the fact that back then statistics coming out of the CSO could not be trusted, that they may have been politically motivated, and that charge still exists today. I call again for an independent CSO.

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In the last minute I have left I want to touch on a very touching issue that has to do with Divine Echoes. Could this Government tell me why they discontinued Divine Echoes, when we want to embrace youth, teach them morals and values? If you could find \$10 million from private investors for “Hoop of Life” to bring down Shaquille O’Neal, why can you not keep on funding Divine Echoes? The value of Divine Echoes stretches beyond music. [*Desk thumping*] These young people were leading successful, fulfilling lives. The members of Divine Echoes could be held up to their peers as leaders, as opinion formers, opinion shapers. We pay lip service to children, and here you have Divine Echoes, just because it was “a PNM ting” you disbanded it, but you could find \$10 million to bring down Shaquille O’Neal.

I am calling on the Minister to find the funds, find the political will, to reinstate Divine Echoes or even give them the instruments, pay them their severance, but do something with it.

Madam Vice-President, with those few words, I thank you.

Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin: Madam Vice-President, I rise at a time of growing concern for the economy. I note also increased tensions in the society and some challenges for our democracy. I have concerns about these, but I think Trinidad and Tobago will eventually fulfil its destiny and be a great nation, but in the fulfilment of that I expect we would have to take things one step at a time. There are always road bumps that we have to experience and pass over.

So I am looking at the budget and the associated documents to provide clarity on ways forward: how do we take the next step, or the next several steps as we enter, we look at fiscal 2013? And so I propose to frame my contribution in this regard.

Starting at the macro, I am very concerned about our continuing deficits. I understand that they did not start with this administration. To me the ownership of the administration is less relevant. We are now several years in deficit, and there are inherent risks that my colleague, Sen. Ramkhelawan, pointed out yesterday, associated with continuing along this particular road.

Attendant to that, which I have not heard said before, is that I grow concerned about the size of recurrent expenditure. If I am to accept the numbers put forward in the budget and the related documents, it would appear that our total revenues are expected to rise by \$172 million; that is an increase of 0.36 per cent. But our recurrent spending is to rise by around \$2.2 billion, which is an increase of 4.9 per cent. If this puts us into a place, which it does, where 96½ per cent of our

revenues is now accounted for by recurrent spend, we have to examine what value we get for that recurrent spend, because we are running neck and neck. We have just undergone some years of GDP contraction. We are now estimated to be coming out of that, but a 1 per cent rate of growth is a very, very narrow thing and can very easily be derailed by any environmental or even local circumstance.

12.15 p.m.

So, yes, in fact most people would have a margin of error in a statistical calculation that would be greater than 1 per cent. Our recurrent spend is running neck and neck with our income, and I do not think that we have fully recognized, therefore, the immense challenge that the Minister of Finance and the Economy would have had to come into in addressing that. My problem is, it is a growing issue, recurrent spend continues to grow, and in business, when your expenses grow faster than your income, you pay close attention, and if it grows faster than your income over an extended period of time, you are going to go bust, you are going to fail. There is only so long that you can keep borrowing to prop yourself up.

My feeling is that most of our recurrent spend is not contributing towards the creation of new revenue. Instead, it is being used to support an existing infrastructure, physical and human. So, from my point of view the economy is not stabilized. What does stabilized mean? The *Titanic* is stabilized. It is under two miles of water but it is stable down there. When we say stabilized I am not quite clear, because for me, I continue to be concerned. I do not think that the indicators are moving in the right direction at all. That is not to say that we have made some big disaster or catastrophe of the economy, but I am merely wishing to sound a warning that I do not think that things are as rosy as some of us would wish for things to appear.

I think that the Minister, and by extension the Executive, would be much better served if they had more discretionary money to focus and—what they say—stimulate the economy, and the economy needs that. It needs a shot in the arm, it needs an injection. The problem is that too much of our money is tied up paying for unproductive things, and unproductive people. So we do not have the discretionary spend, so what must we do? We must borrow it. We must borrow it.

That having been said, the Minister has recognized the need for prudence, and so he has said that he intends to balance the budget by 2016. I have gone through the several hundreds of pages inside of here, and for the life of me I cannot see how he is going to do that; not that he would want it, but I would very happily give him the shirt off my back in 2016 if he did do it. I would go find him wherever he is and say: “Here is my pen or my shirt, congratulations.”

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I just cannot see how it is going to be done. The structure of our spend is so ossified, it is so hardened, it is so cemented that we are going to have to have a mini boom between now and 2016 to pull this one out. The ideas for budget balancing as presented in the document that was sent to other place—because we got a summary document up here—but what is in the public domain as the published budget is fairly vague; it speaks to three things. It speaks to a land and building tax—now my calculations may be wrong, but if I recall when we were talking about this property tax thing, we said that that would raise about \$300 or \$400 million if we were to implement it in its current form, so let us see. Three or four hundred million dollars—let us give you a “bligh”, take \$400 million. So, you have \$400 million you can claw back from that. The public statements are that the fuel subsidy reduction on premium will give you a net back of \$100 million. So you have clawed back \$500 million.

The third initiative says improved tax collection because the assumption regarding the leakage runs to the tune of several billion dollars, but I am not sure how we are going to get that done. Our deficit this year is almost \$8 billion. I have got \$500 million so far from property tax and fuel subsidy, and I am not ever sure that the fuel subsidy will hold, because if everybody that is using premium goes to super, the subsidy will increase. So, that tax collection really needs to be run by “Jack be nimble Jack be quick” who will presumably jump over a candlestick and get us our money.

I actually was gung-ho with the Minister’s initial comment which he appeared to reverse hastily from. I actually related to his very initial comment, having been appointed as Minister of Finance and the Economy, where he said, “Well, you know this thing ain’t going to work without some austerity.” Then, of course, we went into this cycle where we redefined what austerity means, and then we got to well, no austerity at all. I do not see how we are going to balance the budget by 2016 without austerity, and it is an open question in my mind, Madam Vice-President, how the population is going to handle this, when people light tyres in the road and block roadways and so on if there is a hole in the road. We seem to—and I will talk to that when I speak about a culture of entitlement. It is very unfortunate that the kinds of demands being made by the Government or on the Government now by certain sections of the society, and it is something I think that we should be united in standing up against, but I will come to that.

Turning to energy and diversification, I listened to the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, he is a very competent man, and he needs no correction from me, but just for the elucidation of some of the things that he was talking about, all of

our exploration activity is for oil, it is not for gas. What we do is we look for oil, hope that we find what you would call associated gas with nowhere to go. You then lift that gas up, you can flare it or you can send it down to NGC or whatever, you can sell it, and you make some money. Now, that logic works fine, but I am not quite convinced about the numbers when we talk about the economics of this thing.

Shale gas is a growing phenomena. World gas supplies—our notion of what they are—are being revised almost daily, based on these new technologies. The cost for lifting gas in Trinidad and Tobago is only going to go up and up, not down. Now, that brings into sharp focus the question as to the viability of our downstream and even midstream sectors, and looking at Point Lisas one wonders where we are going to go because many of those plants are fully depreciated. For the average man what that should mean is that the people have made their money already. They do not have to stay. While it has been held up in the past as a success model, the fact of the matter is that, in many cases, many of those companies down there do not pay much tax you know. They do not pay much tax. They pay very low levels of tax, and so the main benefit they provide to the economy is the few hundred people that they employ. Most of the value that they create is repatriated somewhere else in the form of dividends. So, in my view, we are still very much an extractive economy in some critical respects. It is probably the only thing that Mary King and I agree on—someone who used to be here, no longer here.

Our gas and oil production increase I think is something that the Minister should be congratulated for trying to accomplish. Certainly the rise in exploration activity is laudable, and it is something that we need to continue to press. I only want to say to the Minister one thing; he said it, and it sort of just passed by. Petrotrin controls a lot of the land-based acreage for the production of oil, and my view is that Petrotrin does not have the capacity to bring those fields on line. They may have done the seismics and so on, but my view is that they should contemplate leasing some of those acres out. Well, from what we are hearing they are having problems with getting a cat cracker up and running.

Now, why would they not do that? They would not do that because there may be pressure from other interest groups, and particularly from labour unions and so on, that say we do not want this acreage to out to any private developer. Well, surely as a society we have to get past that. We have to get past that. The Government cannot continue to be the prime mover in everything that we do in

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this economy. We are not going to go anywhere quickly if that is the case. So my advice would be, do not be afraid of the unions, if that is the issue, and really Petrotrin should either develop these fields quickly or lease some of them out, and let us get moving.

In relation to TGU, which I saw in the notes to the budget, I had a question about what happens to the competitiveness of PowerGen when TGU comes onto the grid. Now, I only ask that because the State is a part owner of PowerGen, and this is not the first time that the State has bounced up with itself. The State owns the Port of Point Lisas and it owns the Port of Port of Spain, and the two of them have been engaged in cut-throat competition for 30 or 40 years now; very dysfunctional, lots of value destroyed.

So, I think that the State should be mindful about what it is going to do, if it is competing against itself, and that then led naturally to the very useful identification by the Minister that we have 56 state enterprises. I wonder why we have to have so many. Certainly going through the list a great many of them can and probably should be privatized, and I am not clear why we do not. Why is Petrotrin not privatized? Plipdeco? TSTT? Well, TSTT shares are I think are through NELL. Why do we not get into privatizing some of these revenue-generating entities, and have the State play the role, not just of facilitator, but perhaps initial investor—go in there break, the hard ice, open the thing up, and then get out? Fifty-six state enterprises impose a governance requirement on the Executive of a small nation that really is too lumbering and difficult for anybody to manage.

Aside from that, many state enterprises are saddled with moribund management, and sycophantic boards, and I heard in the debate yesterday someone say that when you are on the board of a state enterprise that you have to answer to the people. That is not exactly the case, you know. If these companies are set up under the Companies Act, the directors of the company answer to the shareholders, and their first duty, their fiduciary duty is to the company. It is not to the general population. So there is a kind of complexity that is attendant to state enterprises and state agencies and so on, which is further compounded by the creation of state vehicles, through Acts of Parliament, which have their own sets of rules and so on.

12.30 p.m.

The long-time logic that supported this, used to be that we need to retain control of the commanding heights of the economy. But, Madam Vice-President, my more educated guess is, it is easy money, and most Governments have not been able to have the moral courage to walk away from that. These are funds that can be

accessed without all of the hoopla of going through the Consolidated Fund. So what do we need to do? Remove temptation. The aggressive professionalization and privatization of some of these state enterprises, I think should be vigorously pursued. So it is not just First Citizens Bank and the Home Mortgage Bank, there are many, many others that can be put on now, and let us expand the capital market and put those things out for public ownership, or let somebody in the private sector buy some of them. Get them off! Release them! Release them!

In terms of education, Madam Vice-President, I note that education in all its forms has been granted \$9 billion. Nine billion dollars! Hooray, we are blessed! We are blessed with a Government that understands the importance of education, but here is what: 35 per cent of people that wrote CXC Maths passed; about 40 per cent of people that wrote English failed, so you combine that. Less than half of the people that are passing through our education system can read and write by the time they are finished. That is five years of primary school; five years of secondary school; so we have taken these children for 10 years, and after 10 years they cannot read and they cannot write.

I could not understand why the parents from Malick were making a set of noise outside the Minister of Education's office, your children might be safer not in school. If the school system is destroying your mind like this, what is the basis for giving this system this kind of allocation? We are graduating illiterates and the reason for that is we look at enrolment rates and not at success rates.

I was very pleased to hear the Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training's public comments on GATE. GATE has been abused for a very long time. I remember speaking to one of his predecessors when the abuse has just begun and I indicated to him at that point that I felt it was a very bad idea to include private institutions under GATE. I felt that the original Dollar for Dollar logic made the most sense. The student has to invest in his or her own development. [*Desk thumping*] Everybody instead wants everything free.

When you expand GATE to the private tertiary system as opposed to the public tertiary system, here is the difference. In the public tertiary system the surpluses stay in the system, they can then be reinvested for research, for next year, for more faculty, for better plant. In the private system what happens is, as well meaning as these entrepreneurs are, they are entrepreneurs, the surplus at the end of the year has a different name, it is called profit. [*Interruption*] Profit is a thing that goes in your pocket. So, we should be investing what little GATE resources that we can put forward into the development of our public institutions, and on the capacity for better lecturers, better professors and better teachers there.

Hon. Senator: Good point. Well said. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Madam Vice-President, we are spending more and more money on a system that does not work, and we have yet to address the question of the mismatch between the economic and the education systems. There is nothing in the estimates about that, but if I recall the original Dollar for Dollar logic really funded programmes that were felt to be necessary for national development. I stand to be corrected if I am wrong. And I think that is what we should—we should never have departed from that.

Sen. George: You could say that again.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Instead of this massive free-for-all, and people are doing two and three programmes and getting GATE funding for all, failing, willy-nilly and just drop a programme and go and walk off and sign up in a “next” one. [*Interruption*] Absolutely stunning! How ungrateful many of these people are! They come into these systems and they have not really understood what a blessing the country is giving them.

I would like to turn my attention now to manufacturing, Madam Vice-President. The VAT removal on food and beverages—I saw the hon. Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment, produce, what looks like a very long computer printout which he purported to say had grocery items on it. I did not see the list. He did not give it to me, so it could just be a printout of whatever. I do not know. [*Interruption*] It could have been a raffle sheet. [*Interruption*] [*Laughter*] But, the food and beverage manufacturing sector is one of the few parts of local manufacturing that actually works in Trinidad and Tobago, so we should be careful to include VAT exemptions on imports of inputs for people who are involved in local manufacturing of food and so on.

The reason for that is if you do not, then you are basically wiping out what protection the common external tariff would give you. If the CET gives you 20 per cent but then you give the importing guy a 15 per cent uplift, then you are basically levelling the playing field. And the playing field, Madam Vice-President, I can tell you for a fact is not level.

I am involved in manufacturing in the food and beverage sector and I can tell you the level of subsidies that producers from large countries receive can be quite significant, and it is done in very sophisticated ways. It is not a man writing you a cheque. So, we need to be mindful that we retain the competitiveness of our food and beverage sectors, and I am glad that there is going to be consultation and so on, but I would really like to see that you are also removing the VAT on inputs for local manufacturers in the sector, so that we can really make things affordable for the local consumers.

I would also like to suggest that one of the opportunities I felt that we had for the demonstration of real courage in the budget is that the Government should use its purchasing power to raise the standards of manufactured products in the private sector. Many of the things we buy are imported, even these chairs we sit on. I do not know if these tables are made locally, probably not, but there are global standards that exist for almost any product that you could manufacture today, and all the Government has to do is use its purchasing power to raise the standards of manufacturers by saying, “Look, this is the standard we expect you to be by within three years, after three years we ain’t buying anything from you unless you have achieved this certification.”

This is a very important step for Government to take, even as we think about public procurement and so on, because it is not just—public procurement cannot just be about transparency and openness, it also has to be about the encouragement, the support, the nurturing and the development of local industry. Standards have been low in the past, but I do not think that is true to say now. And why do I make this statement about manufacturing, Madam Vice-President? It is very straightforward. To me competitiveness is about productivity, yes, but another way to express it would be to say, competitiveness is about capturing value. We must capture value.

Now, if I want to import milk, and sell milk, I only need one cold truck and two fellas. If I want to produce it, I might need two or three cold trucks and 20 or 30 fellas. The more value you capture in your economy, the more employment you create, the more skills you generate, the more sustainable your spend becomes; your tax base, everything smoothes out very nicely. There is enough precedent in the world for it. We cannot encourage our business community to just be buyers and sellers of things. If I buy this book from you [*Senator holds up book*] and I mark it up 10 cents and I sell it to you, where is the intelligence in that? Where is the innovation? Where is the value added? It is when you make it, and then when you get smart enough, really, to drive the contents, well, then you are golden.

We talk a lot about the global competitiveness index and so on, but the fact is the top 20 or 30 countries in there do that. They capture as much value as they can at home. So we have to work our way up the value chain and retain more value or as much value as we can, so I would encourage the Minister not to underestimate manufacturing. When we had the wrong ideas about agriculture—look at where agriculture has fallen to—and those wrong ideas were really economic ideas put forward in the 1980s when people talked about comparative advantage, and the argument was Trinidad is an industrializing society, we “ain’t” need to worry about growing any food. Well, look now! So, do not feel that manufacturing is something that is dispensable. It is not. It is indispensable, and we need it.

I was very encouraged to hear this idea about the transformation of CEPEP and so on, because CEPEP and the URP really strangle the SME sector and the manufacturing sector because they cannot get people to work.

Hon. Senator: Correct.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: So we need these programmes to back away slowly, and we need to release these people into the system where they can get private sector employment. Duty-free equipment, you know, allowances and so on, is not enough. We need more intelligence and focus in the development and the support of the manufacturing sector.

Now, I would just like to say something here about Tobago, and that is to say that something has to be done. Something has to be done. That island as far as I can tell has a major productivity problem. There is a major problem of productivity in Tobago, and the whole debate is about how much money they are entitled to. But Tobago appears to me to have a serious productivity problem.

According to your draft estimates of revenue for the year, if I may take such a liberty, Madam Vice-President, on page 52, it says very clearly—it was pointed out to me, for which I am very grateful—estimates of revenue for Tobago, \$163 million. The subsidy for the Port of Spain City Corporation is bigger than the amount of revenue that Tobago generates, but I think the numbers are wrong, somebody do tell me “eh”, but look it there. [*Senator holds up book*]

But the demand is for billions. The demand is for billions. So, yes, Tobago, what have you been doing with all that money? I think it needs to get going and that is all I would say about that. I do not want to say too much more because I am sure they would ban me from Tobago. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Senator: The Minister of Justice would not allow that.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: I would like to speak now, Madam Vice-President, about competitiveness and institutions. The social sector investment programme really had a kind of mind-numbing analysis of what is going on with competitiveness and Trinidad and Tobago, and so, to my mind, there was a clear misunderstanding about what needs to be done in order to move this economy and this society forward, and there are three things I would say in this regard.

The first I would say is that we have a very serious problem with labour and labour productivity. While labour appears to have the time to protest, which is a legitimate right, we have a problem with the productivity of our people.

12.45 p.m.

Someone called me on the phone this morning and he said, “Well, I would like to meet with you”, and I said, “No problem. When would you like to meet?” He said, “Well, we suppose to be striking just now, so when I get one ah those days, I will come and talk to you.” I would be very impressed if I saw a labour leader—instead of trumpeting how much money they got, talk to the people and talk to the society about productivity. Because if our economy is contracted by 10 per cent over the last three or four years and you get a 9 per cent increase—let us just look visually at that for a second, I have dropped it by 10 per cent and I am giving you 9 per cent, what happens there? Who is going to pay for that gap? Who is going to pay for that? Someone has to pay for it.

Too many sections of the society are playing for themselves alone, and so we need labour to take its rightful place at the table of national development, and I encourage them to do that because the culture of entitlement in this society—Madam Vice-President, in my opinion—it is killing us, our social spending institutionalizes an underclass.

There are people who are living off these things for years, so I encourage the Minister to come forward with details as to how he is restructuring CEPEP, URP and all of these things, as quickly as possible, and not just say it, and then we come here next year and say it again.

As a side note, Madam Vice-President, I would say that we have not explained the responsibilities of citizens as well as we have explained to them the rights. People are very clear here about what they are entitled to. But I think a fundamental aspect of citizenship has been lost on this entire society and that is that you have to add value to live here. Why are you living here? Why do we want you here? You have to be here because you add to the society. If you are a Carib or Arawak and you are living in a small community, and you just lie down in your tent whole day and want to eat, do you not think that at some point they will want to come and “beat yuh out of the tent and run yuh” and say go and live somewhere else? So this culture of entitlement—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Privilege of independent.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: What? Yes, the privilege of independent which I shall take full advantage of. [*Laughter*] The second thing is, Government, and I do not just mean this Government, I mean all Governments have to stop being part of this vast criminal enterprise where we give bandits and criminals State funds. If you look at studies on gangs it is very clear that the lubricant, the lifeblood of

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gang activities is not sex, is not cars, it is money. So again, there is an opportunity for the demonstration of courage here by my friend the Minister who is an extremely honest man, to say well, okay, as a matter of principle we will not give people who are known to be criminals State contracts, we will not give that to you. That money is not for you. No contracts for gang leaders, is the refrain.

But then you see you have to understand there are other parts of the society that are living it up, “Gangnam Style, Gangnam Style.” Someone called me on the phone and said do you know the head of the—is there a Commissioner of Transport? Do I know him? I say “Well I doh really know him, yuh know”. “Do you have his cell number?” I said, “No.” I said, Well, why do you need this?” He said, “Well, listen, I need to talk to you. So I said, “Okay, fine.” He calls me back, so I think this is some kind of dramatic issue. He says, “What happen is, I have a Porsche coming in and I want to get a number plate.” I said, “Well, look at that, you are not just grateful that you have a Porsche, you must have a number plate too, a special one,” “Gangnam Style”. Everybody is living it up.

I do not understand what is happening in the society and so I crave the statistics that the hon. Minister Dr. Tewarie has promised us. I crave it because 16.7 per cent are living in poverty according to the documentation in the budget, 9 per cent are vulnerable. So, let us say that is 25.7 per cent—let us say 26 per cent, but the unemployment is 4 per cent. So, it must mean either the statistics are wrong or we have a very large amount of people who are in fact the working poor and I suspect both may be true. Both may be true. Meanwhile, there are sections of this society that are living it up, living it up and they are doing this in a very visible way. So you have pips and Porsches.

People are buying breasts and BMWs. There is a very big breast implant business in Trinidad and Tobago now. You do not have to go to Margarita again. Yes, I ran into people who tell me, “Aye, I have a big issue here, big debate. What size we going with?”—\$50,000. I say well, look at that, you know how many poor people you could feed with that? So there are parts of the society that are living it up. What is painful to me is that several of these people do not pay their taxes, they avoid it. But throw a stone and you will find a man, or a woman or a family that has no toilet, or no running water or no lights.

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Well Sir, I am from south and I could carry you for a drive and I will pelt a stone and show you people standing on the side of the road bathing from a bucket, bathing from a barrel, but you know we are in a nice tall

building here. Here we are, this is a sign, this is evidence of our development. I thought development, really, is about how you treat the least fortunate in our society—together we aspire and together we achieve.

Moving quickly now on to institutions. I looked at the allocations for institutions and I was a little concerned. Recent events in the public domain show how weak our institutions are and we must strengthen them to provide balance. I think the public view our institutions as weak and I was just going through a list: the Public Service Commission, the Police Service Commission, the Teaching Service Commission and the Integrity Commission all have been scandalized of late. They are silent on things that they are not supposed to be silent on, and very loud on other strange things.

The Integrity Commission—what did they say they wanted, the powers of arrest? I thought well, “ha, ha, ha”, what you want that for? You have a big police service right there. You want the powers of arrest. What does that say, that the police would not do their job? But you know what, they might be right.

The fire service has rats in the building at headquarters which I thought was almost tragic. The Judiciary in my view is flat on its back. The Chief Justice may disagree and he is entitled so to do. But I think that they have been overrun by the sheer volume of cases coming at them even with very low detection rates from the police. It tells you something both about the rampant criminality of this society and also about the fact that these institutions in our society have been starved of resources. For years the budgetary allocations to them are really not about driving meaningful transformation, they are just rollover spend.

Subsidies: let us look at that for a moment, the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards—\$12.4 million. Development spend budget for the Industrial Court, \$1.4 million; Parliament, \$6.6 million, but this is Parliament. The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, which does very little or nothing to protect the consumer in Trinidad and Tobago from inferior products from abroad, is getting a subsidy of \$12.4 million. This Parliament for its development programme gets \$6.6 million.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Thank you, Madam Vice-President, [*Desk thumping*] I wish to—but it gets better, you see. [*Laughter*] The Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago is getting this year \$112 million in subsidy, \$112 million in subsidy. Do you know what the development budget is for the entire Judiciary? It is \$76.9 million. I wonder which poses the greater threat to our development—the Port Authority’s operation or one critical arm of our democracy. I must think about that. If I get a cogent answer I will come back to you, Madam Vice-President, but to me the answer is obvious.

So, we need—if we are talking about competitiveness, a big weakness in our competitiveness statistics—when we look at what is holding Trinidad back from achieving a better score—institutions stand out. We need to strengthen our institutions, we need the money that we are spending to prop up inefficient bureaucracies, put towards the Parliament, the Judiciary or these independent commissions and so on, that we have to strengthen them to improve them, to give them life because, if you do not do that, then they are starved for money and then they become sycophantic to the Executive, then the Executive can capsize the entire democracy. No Executive wants to do that. It seems to happen from time to time, but that cannot be the intent of any right-thinking leader in this society.

There must be balance, there must be checks. So what we have is too opaque a system and we need stronger institutions to make it more transparent. For an external person looking in, how will this opacity be cured? Well, in rides investTT, which Minister Bharath spoke about and which is a laudable initiative. As I had put it down, it is meant to help navigate the mysteries of the State? But why do we not just demystify the State. Why are we putting lipstick on bulldogs? Let us fix the problems. Let us get in there and fix the problems.

Well, on the export side, “Lord have mercy”. I do not know what next the BDC would become. In fact, I think it should just be shut down. It is of questionable use. It has gone for years and years without a purpose. It went from giving away money to giving away leases which involves spending money and now it is going to become some kind of export thing. Is there anybody in there who knows how to export a “tambrand ball”? Because if they do not, then they should not be in charge of anything to do with export; that is my new measure.

If you do not know how to sell a “tambrand ball”, do not come and tell me anything about money—or a salt prune.

1.00 p.m.

So the BDC, I think, you know, needs to focus on exports. I am hoping that they have people in there who understand export and who have done it. I am hoping to see that. There is an entity in Trinidad called Proexport that exports items from

Colombia to Trinidad and Tobago, and they are extremely efficient, very effective. It is a great model to follow. They post people in the destination country and “man”, they are aggressive about getting business for their country.

Another opportunity for the demonstration of courage which I felt the Minister might have wanted to take, or might wish to take in the future, is to conquer the bureaucracy of the public service, especially where you are dealing with the public. I think that we should open public offices on Saturdays. Well, the electronic transactions thing is going to come through shortly so, hopefully, they will be able to take LINX. You should do little things like post sample forms online or on the walls, so we do not have to go inside a public office, pull a number, sit for half the day, reach in front of somebody and then be told, “Oh, you filled the form out wrong”.

In terms of governance, Madam Vice-President, my view is that our weak institutions continue to perpetuate a sycophantic society and there are parts of this society now that reek, that stink of corruption. You could smell it from far. I think that we have a real opportunity now to change that, and I want to encourage us so to do.

I see national security has been given \$5.5 billion, but then, to my surprise, the Minister “gangsters” people in Debe; threatens a journalist—or appears to, I do not know. I did not understand what exactly happened there when he says, “Well, we know where you live and we know who is paying your rent”, or whatever; gagged the police, which turned out not to be true.

I am just curious about what the national security apparatus is being used for, and I am relating that to institutions, Madam Vice-President, because it is not a political comment. What I am saying is that these things happen and there is no institutional check; there is no balance; there is no consequence. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has to have the capacity to investigate people and to check on things; to look into matters. Instead, you know, what does Stephen Williams have to say about this whole section 34 fiasco? He says, “Well, you could quote me on that. It ha nutten in it.”

I do not know how he did that. I hope that is his private opinion. But these institutions have to be strong and have the courage to go and look into it and say, “Well, listen, there is really nothing there.” If justice were to cross a bridge and something happened and breaks down the bridge, the course of justice would be perverted. That is a police matter.

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I think money needs to be spent on the development and strengthening of our institutions if we are to build an economy and a society based on merit. Where do we turn? The population has repeatedly exercised its mandate. We have thrown out Government after Government. What next? What now? What else do you want the population to do? Our best and brightest continue to disappoint us, but some of us want congratulations. So in that regard, if the public utterances of the Chairman of the COP are to be believed, then he is in want of some congratulations for getting a “work”. So congratulations to Joseph Toney. I congratulate you. You have got a job.

We have serious work to do, and I think that we need to restructure and restrain our spending, Madam Vice-President, so that we can free up the moneys that the Minister and the Government will need to get into real stimulus, and get this economy back on track. I think we need to stop pointing fingers; we need to stop justifying ourselves by pointing fingers at others.

I do not think it is a tenable excuse or argument to say, “You used to do it too, so we are doing it now”. I am not interested in those kinds of things anymore. What I am interested in, and what I am hoping for from the Minister, who I know is in a position to give it, is increased productivity; policies that ensure that more value is captured and created here in Trinidad and Tobago; that we strengthen our institutions and, therefore, our governance; that we have prudence, and through prudence, free up the resources for targeted and meaningful stimulus. There is a great opportunity here; it is an opportunity for leadership. The Minister must guide the way.

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

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is now 1.06 and I propose that we take the lunch break. We will resume at 2.06 p.m. This sitting is now suspended until 2.06 p.m.

1.06 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

2.06 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President, for allowing me the opportunity to join with my colleagues on both sides of the Senate for the 2013 national budget debate. But let me also thank the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, for committing her life’s work to the development and security of our great nation, her astute caring and, as we have seen, decisive leadership which characterizes her qualities, but also are admired by all our people of Trinidad and Tobago.

[*Clearing of throat from other side*]

I would pass some dinner mints to you later on. [*Laughter*]

This budget, aptly entitled: Stimulating Growth, Generating Prosperity, is testimony to the hon. Prime Minister's vision and purpose of her leadership. Madam Vice-President, permit me, as well, to congratulate Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai—

Sen. Hinds: “Yuh have de job already. Yuh have de work already.”

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: I know you want to come on this side “bad, eh”, but we “eh” accepting no members as yet.

Sen. Hinds: No, Sir.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: I will give you a different colour for your tie.

Sen. Hinds: No, Sir.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Madam Vice-President, my good friend there will not distract me this evening.

I was saying that we wish to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, my esteemed colleague, Sen. the hon. Larry Howai, for delivering his maiden budget speech here, which was both clear and very focused. [*Desk thumping*] The intentions in the allocations are also very clear and focused in terms of stimulating the economy. I would also like to recognize the contributions of our colleagues and Minister Howai's colleagues in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, Sen. the hon. Vasant Bharath, as well as the hon. Rudranath Indarsingh.

Madam Vice-President, before I get into the meat of my contribution, let me take this opportunity to debunk a statement that was made just before we went to the break, by my very good friend, Sen. Deyalsingh, when he spoke about an energy cliff. I wish to indicate that, in debunking this myth, it always presents us with an opportunity that we see from the other side regularly, as a scare tactic. In answering that question, I wish to refer my learned colleagues to an article in the *Newsday* that appeared today, entitled: “TT is ‘core country’ in energy”, written by Janelle De Souza, and it goes like this:

“The British Gas group would continue to invest in maintenance, new field development, and exploration activities in Trinidad and Tobago because the company was confident...”—in the country and its future.

2.10 p.m.

“The assurance of continued investment by the company came from Martin Houston, Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of the BG Group while speaking yesterday afternoon at the BG and First Citizens Energy Luncheon Series at the Hyatt Regency, Port of Spain.”

Mr. Houston went on to say:

“I’m a geologist and an eternal optimist. I am confident about the future in Trinidad. I am confident of 20 years of history where we have worked effectively with people and governments, our customers and NGC (the National Gas Company), and we’ve made a success of it for all of us, he said.

“There is a great symbiosis between what Trinidad and Tobago needs, and what your shareholders need, which is a long-term sustainable future that is economically rational and sensible for both parties.”

These are the words of Martin Houston showing great confidence in the future of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, I applaud my Cabinet colleagues for their foresight in identifying education and training once again as strategic priorities, and consequently, as our Sen. Dr. Balgobin alluded to as well, for having the largest share, the sectoral allocation of \$9.1 billion to education and training of which \$2.5 billion went to the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training.

Madam Vice-President, this follows the pattern for the last two budgets, previous to now, in which in 2010 education and training received \$8.3 billion out of a budget of \$49 billion or 16.9 per cent, and in 2011, \$8.7 billion out of a budget of \$54.6 billion or 15.9 per cent.

Madam Vice-President, as my colleagues have done before me, I too intend to demonstrate how this budget is designed to and will be effectively implemented to stimulate the growth of all sectors of the economy, and I stress all sectors of the economy.

Madam Vice-President, our Government has hit the ground running upon election into office, just 29 months ago, by the strong and unrelenting demand of the people of Trinidad and Tobago for a change in leadership and governance. How different were these conditions to previous scenarios in which the PNM was basically handed a government, a Christmas gift in December 2001, which was approximately 100 months into office or nine years which they held power.

Madam Vice-President, the truth will always remain the truth. Therefore, the truth is that after nine years in office, and having squandered over \$280 billion, that did not improve substantially the quality of life of our citizens.

However, what is the mantra for the People's Partnership Government? We are about equitable distribution of resources, first-class delivery service, participatory democracy, consensus building in decision making, and ethical and transparent conduct in public life. Madam Vice-President, we stress that this is a people's budget for all to benefit and none to be discriminated against.

Madam Vice-President, it might be instructive for me to just recap and to remind us here and the national community of some of the benefits which were included in the 2013 prosperity budget. They include: improvements in welfare programmes through the increase of the Disability Assistance Grant by \$200 to \$1,500 per month. In addition, children with medically certified disabilities will receive an increase from \$800 to \$1,000 per month.

I know those on the other side are always nervous when we talk about children and the Children's Life Fund—not that anything is wrong with it, but we see the significant benefits of not having these young children sell raffles and have cake sales to ensure they can be able to have access to operations—lifesaving operations. The People's Partnership Government, through the Children's Life Fund, has ensured that all of them are well taken care of.

Madam Vice-President, we also recognize improvements to the National Insurance Scheme. All NIS benefits would be increased by 50 per cent overall, with the exception of the minimum retirement pension which was already increased. In addition, maximum insurable earnings will increase from \$8,300 in 2012 to \$10,000 in 2013 and continuously to 2020. I suspect that date sounds familiar to those on the other side.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Vision.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Madam Vice-President, the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy also told us substantially about the resolution of the Clico issue. I need not go into much detail about that, but to also say that this Government will address the HCU issue whereby settlements with beneficiaries over \$75,000 will commence at a cost of \$521.1 million.

You would have seen from my colleague's contribution this morning—Sen. Bharath—where he had an exhaustive list of items, particularly food items, with respect to the removal of VAT. In addition, there is the introduction of a 150 per cent tax deduction for local production companies and corporate sponsors up to \$3 million.

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Madam Vice-President, we can go on and on to indicate that we have established strategic priorities in the following industries and sectors, just to name a few and to repeat some of those with very minimal effect, if I may say so. I would just deal with those that Minister Bharath did not mention this morning and I will include in those, tourism. He may have also mentioned to some extent the downstream energy sector.

The consensus of the business community, Madam Vice-President, is also important with respect to how they saw the 2013 national budget. The nation too has expressed its satisfaction with the prosperity budget. It is another important point of delivery for us.

Some of the comments—and you would have noticed in the newspapers—include Andrew Sabga, President of the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, when he spoke about strengthening the competitiveness of the economy. He said and I quote him:

“...we are pleased to see that the Budget has not been one of austerity, but rather one of stimulating the economy, which we hope will lead to Trinidad and Tobago being better positioned to eventually achieve a more balanced budget.”

Under the heading of crime and national security, the CEO of the Chamber as well, Ms. Catherine Kumar, indicated:

I have also noted one of our key recommendations over the past year in our discussions, the focus on crime, continued in this budget with a significant allocation of \$5.5 billion or 10 per cent of the budget, she said. I am delighted to see that.

Under the heading of infrastructure public/private partnerships, the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association indicated that they welcomed the tax exemption on construction on commercial buildings and car parks as this would stimulate economic activity. In addition to the announcement that a number of construction projects utilizing the PPP model public/private partnership model is welcome.

Having said that, we also noticed over the weekend that Mr. Lok Jack at a panel discussion at the Graduate School of Business (UWI) indicated that he too felt that one of the ways to stimulate the economy was to engage in construction activities.

Madam Vice-President, positive reviews were also received from the doctors, they said they were pleased; from the police body, they were happy with fiscal measures, and TTUTA was happy with the budget allocation for education.

The “Sando” business body gives Minister Howai’s budget a thumbs up as they said. Natuc welcomes Government’s labour plans. You would have heard from my colleague yesterday, Sen. Lambert, who spoke extensively on the trade unions, their involvement and their satisfaction with the budget presentation.

Amcham as well said they backed the removal of fuel subsidy which was discussed substantially by my colleague, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. Therefore, all of these proclamations are evidence that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are very satisfied with the budget and, therefore, would not be sidetracked or distracted by some of the rantings of those who opposed it.

Madam Vice-President, much has been said about the GATE programme. I want to take this opportunity, and I think that one or two of the Independent Senators and certainly my friend, Sen. Deyalsingh asked me, to make a comprehensive statement on the GATE programme.

Madam Vice-President, let me say categorically—and the hon. Prime Minister has supported this, the Minister of Finance and the Economy said this in the budget speech and I wish to reiterate, the GATE Programme—the GATE will remain open. [*Desk thumping*]

Contrary to desperately misleading information, emanating from some quarters, this Government is committed to human capital development and, in fact, as you would have also heard from Minister Tewarie as a strategic intervention to sustainable socio-economic development.

Madam Vice-President, I think the problem with some of my colleagues in the foreground, just on the other side, is that they do not read. Read the budget on pages — 40, section 4. [*Crosstalk*] Immediately here me—and as my friend who is sitting to the top of your bench always says, do not sing like seagulls.

For the benefit of those opposite, the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy in his contributions in the 2013 national budget stated, and I wish to reiterate them. The GATE Programme will be focused, refocused on priority study areas to support our strategies of economic and industrial development.

I think it was Sen. Balgobin who indicated just before the lunch break that it is important for us to respond to the labour market demands and not simply put on programmes that we think are profitable, and he made some mention about how do we plough back some of that surplus.

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My colleague, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, also spoke to the fact that tuition fees for undergraduate programmes at both private and public institutions would be funded at varying rates based on national socio-economic priorities.

Madam Vice-President, let me say categorically as well, this does not mean that anyone will be denied access to tertiary education based on their socio-economic status. I ask why? Why is this being mentioned? In fact, the Government, this Government, the People's Partnership Government has not approved the implementation of a means test which would limit access to the GATE Programme. Not we; not the People's Partnership Government. I will tell you who.

It was the PNM Government which introduced a means test. Therefore, sometimes we have no choice but to say the level of hypocrisy that we hear sometimes is often mind-boggling. I have in front of me here, the Cabinet Minute, as a matter of fact, 229 of January 22, 2004, and I quote:

“Cabinet agreed:

- (a) to the establishment of a new funding mechanism to replace the Dollar for Dollar Education Plan, entitled Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE), under which half the tuition for any student enrolled in tertiary programmes at public as well as accredited private tertiary institutions would be paid by the Government;
- (b) that means testing be utilized to assess students who are unable to pay the remaining tuition;”

That is where you would have heard about means testing in black and white.

2.25 p.m.

Madam Vice-President, that means as we said, that those who could not afford it will be assisted. I will show later on what was the mechanism put in place to assist students who are unable to finance their tuition expenses entirely, but also additionally some of the other expenses like accommodation or books or transport.

Between fiscal 2005 and 2006, 5,966 students were means tested and moneys to the tune of approximately \$31 million were appropriated to students who were means tested in keeping with that Cabinet Minute. [*Desk thumping*] That is the fact! Members on the opposite side are fighting, in my view, against their own

policies. When we look at what is being said—in fact, they would like to tell the national community and to make us believe that the dollar for dollar programme was never at all implemented for any length of time, but for two years they perpetuated the dollar for dollar programme. They utilized it. Yes, they improved it and we will talk about the kind of improvements we would have seen and noted under the dollar for dollar programme.

They further recommended that the funding mechanism be named after dollar for dollar, F-A-T-E, financial aid to tuition expenses. We are witnessing a trend. The PNM Government did not have the F-A-I-T-H in F-A-T-E, and now the current Opposition does not have faith in its own means test policy which it implemented and then recanted. “Flip-flop, that is the style.”

Madam Vice-President, we indicated that the GATE Programme will be refocused as a mechanism for diversifying the national skills base to support emerging economic priority areas. Some of these, as we mentioned earlier on, include agriculture, the creative industries, maritime services, financial services, tourism and ICT.

Until the priority areas were established—and I want to tell you that since 2004 the GATE Programme was supposed to address priority areas. Let me once again quote:

...that until priority areas are clearly defined, all tertiary programmes qualify for funding through GATE and HELP.

Between 2004 and 2010, the PNM failed to identify socio-economic priorities for funding under the GATE and HELP Programmes.

Yesterday, my Independent Senator colleague, Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight, asked about the HELP Programme and, in fact, if I am quoting correctly, indicated to the extent that HELP is available, but hardly accessible. Senator? I decided to look for the data on the HELP Programme—HELP meaning the Higher Education Loan Programme. For the identification of the goodly Senator and all of us, let me give you the figures with respect to HELP and you will conclude and deduce whether it is accessible:

In 2006, the total number of loans, 390, amounting to \$8.1 million;

In 2007, it went up to 2,529, who accessed a total of \$41 million;

In 2008, 2,293 persons accessed a total of \$39 million;

In 2009, 2,295 accessed \$41 million;

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In 2010, 2,259 accessed \$44 million;

In 2011, 2,147 accessed \$42.4 million; and

In 2012, so far, you have 2,030 persons accessing \$41.9 million.

That gives us a total of 13,943 persons, almost 14,000 persons, who would have accessed a total of \$258.6 million. [*Desk thumping*]

I ask you, therefore, whether I just gave the figures to convince my colleague; that in fact it is very accessible and a lot of students do in fact take access of it, take advantage of it. Yet in 2010, Madam Vice-President, my friends on the other side, in the PNM manifesto they boasted about the fact that over 275,000 applications were approved at a cost in excess of \$2.5 billion since the GATE Programme started in 2004.

They approved 275,000 applications, if I may dare say, without any alignment to the labour market needs. This Government, however, will utilize the GATE Programme to support our diversification thrust as we seek to develop the non-hydrocarbon sectors. In so doing, let me say, categorically, where we intend to go. We will create jobs for our graduates, make them employable and not dependent on handouts, but rather help them to become self-sufficient.

Madam Vice-President, the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy also stated that the GATE clearance policy will apply to all private and public tertiary institutions. My friend, Sen. Deyalsingh, will know because he is very familiar with INTAD, an important training institution in the private sector—that it is not only about the private tertiary institutions that we are looking at, but that we want to ensure that there is equity across the board and that the GATE clearance system will now apply to all institutions, both public and private. That was another inheritance that we needed to correct when we came into office in 2010.

In addition, we found that students were enrolling in multiple programmes at the same time and they were not maintaining their minimum GPA academic performance standards. They were engaged in as well what we found to be “programme hopping”, and they were failing to meet that minimum performance standard. In other words, we detected abuse in the system which festered under the previous administration. Under the last two years, we have increased the percentage of detection of student abuse, resulting in an increase in moneys being recovered from underperforming students, and students who withdrew from programmes on a year-to-year basis under the GATE Programme.

Madam Vice-President, I wish to advise that in fiscal 2010, approximately \$3.2 million was recovered; in fiscal 2011, approximately \$3.8 million was recovered, and in fiscal 2012, so far, what we have uncovered, \$12.4 million was recovered. Therefore, that could have only happened with some stringency. If you look at what was said in the previous budget by the former Minister of Finance, Minister Dookeran, you will see that in last year's budget he spoke about tightening the GATE Programme, and in fact did so, on page 8 of that speech. Therefore, one of the things that we want to ensure is that our students pursue programmes and succeed.

I would like to inform those of us in this Senate, and the national community, of the minimum GPA requirements of some of the leading universities in the world:

The University of Oregon, GPA 2.0;

Boston University, 2.0;

The University of Texas, 2.25;

The National University of Singapore, 2.5;

Harvard, 2;

COSTAATT, the minimum GPA is 2.0;

UTT, 2.0;

UWI, St. Augustine, the GPA is 1.0.

What we are doing, Madam Vice-President, is first enforcing these requirements and then ensuring that they are benchmarked internationally to ensure that our institutions could match up to the standards in the rest of the world. I dare say that you cannot become a First World country if you intend to continue doing things in the way in which Third World countries do.

Madam Vice-President, the matter of new service providers was also raised in the other place for the last two years, and I wish to advise of some of those—I think there was a bit of a misunderstanding between those institutions that were GATE approved and those institutions that were accredited. Let me just give an idea, since the question was raised in the place, about some of the institutions that were approved in the recent past:

Advanced Solutions Technical Institute, approved in July 2010;

Dawill Law Academy and Consultancy Services Limited, approved in July 2010;

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International Institute of Cosmetology and Aesthetics, approved December 2011;

Kenson School of Production Technology

[*Desk thumping*]*—*you see the desk thumping. We do not discriminate and that is a San Fernandian thumping the desk for another San Fernandian. Kenneth Ferguson, the former PNM Mayor of San Fernando—approved July 2010;

The Civil Aviation Authority, September 2011;

Trinidad Tower Crane Services Limited, September 2012;

These are the facts, and we are clear that fair and transparent methods are used in GATE approval for institutions.

Madam Vice-President, the GATE Programme expanded from \$102 million in 2004 to \$625 million in 2011. In 2012, the expenditure under the GATE Programme was \$758 million and not, as referred to by Sen. Lester Henry, \$834 million, and as quoted in the other place. Sen. Henry more or less asked what was this increase about. The increase is attributed to a number of factors. Let me just give you one or two of those. Part of the reason for the increase in the expenditure in the GATE Programme was the fact that until May 24, 2010, the GATE Programme was entirely almost for academic studies.

In the 120-day action plan of the People's Partnership manifesto, to be precise, item No. 2 of that action plan, it says that we will secure the GATE Programme, and for the first time in the history of this country, extend the GATE Programme to technical and vocational education and training. That is a significant landmark achievement for the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] In other words, we are affording the same parity of esteem with academia and vocational studies.

Madam Vice-President, we have also witnessed increasing numbers of claims from institutions. Once an institution makes a claim based on the enrolment of a student, we are obliged to make payments to that institution, regardless of the size of the class. Some classes we have found even have less than 10 students, but is that a carrying cost? It may be construed, as Sen. Dr. Balgobin hinted, as carrying revenue on profit.

We continue to extend the scope of our service delivery under the GATE Programme, and we also are intent on really dealing with a lot of the abuse in the system.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy also mentioned, and I wish to quote him; on pages 38—40, you will find that in his budget presentation, the hard copy, where he said that:

“More comprehensive methods on the determination of tuition fees at public and private tertiary education institutions will be instituted.”

Madam Vice-President, that is in contrast starkly to what obtained before. What we found as well is that some institutions were doubling their fees in some cases. The GATE Programme made some institutions into cash cows; taxpayers have been investing heavily. As we speak, it is over \$3 billion of taxpayers’ investment since we started in 2004, and we have said that the time has come—and I think we have support from the Senators opposite as well—to ensure that this expenditure gets value for money.

Madam Vice-President, it has been revealed that some institutions are, in fact, over-invoicing the Government because no standard existed for the determination of tuition fees.

2.40 p.m.

Madam Vice-President, I could almost hear one of their colleagues saying: “How yuh could do that? Yuh shoul’n’ do that.” Well, let me give you some of the real examples, the facts as we have found them. A diploma in marketing, advertising and public relations at one institution cost \$6,000 and at another institution cost \$11,100. A BSc in information systems and management at one institution cost \$16,700 and \$25,500 at another institution, and yet, at another institution, \$27,300 for the same degree. A diploma in accounting and business at one institution cost \$3,120 and at another place, cost \$6,210.

Madam Vice-President, we have disbursed the following moneys to our public and private institutions between 2005—2011. I just want to give you an idea of some of them. University of the West Indies: \$825 million, St. Augustine campus; the University of the Southern Caribbean: \$303 million; the University of Trinidad and Tobago: \$271 million; one major private institution: \$245 million; UWI ROYTEC: \$180 million, and I say that over \$3.9 billion cumulatively of taxpayers’ moneys have been expended on the GATE Programme to date. The question we must ask and we must answer: why should we not have a commensurate—and also, very important, we have to consider: what is this rate of return on this investment?

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Last night, I was reading a magazine that said that in Hungary, they are asking their students to sign 10-year contracts for state-financed education, and in some cases, if you do not want that, you can finance it yourself. We have not done that in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, we have a scale in terms of the number of years that you need to serve the Government and to serve the private sector based on the quantum of money that would be invested.

So that while we invest heavily—and I know that Sen. Prof. Ramkissoon must make mention, when he speaks, about research and innovation, as I know that he is very serious about the investment in terms of research. Of course, having spent many years at UWI, one of the things that we are always mindful about is: how do we rank in the world competitiveness index and how do our institutions rank? The University of the West Indies, you might want to know, is ranked 1,749th in the world. Therefore, I say that to mention the fact—and I do not want you to be too startled—it is out of 49,536, and this is really from the International Colleges and the Universities Rankings of 2012.

We know that is a cause for concern but I tell you that in terms of the amount of money that would have been expended and, therefore, it comes under the rubric of how much do we get in terms of the return on investment. So that as we opened GATE before as a free-for-all, this Government will ensure that our students have a good education and well-paid jobs. Under this Government, the irregularities of student abuse and tuition differentials will stop. We intend to take a very strong look at that.

Under this Government, the GATE Programme will be aligned to national socio-economic priorities. Under this Government, we will ensure as far as possible that we do not have cost overruns, wastage and corruption. We must never experience what we have experienced under the previous regime. We must never experience WGTL Petrotrin \$9 billion; [*Desk thumping*] the Tarouba Stadium \$1.1 billion; e TecK, \$1.2 billion; the Education Towers, \$400 million; the Ministry of Legal Affairs, \$200 million. Billions of dollars wasted, squandered and mismanaged!

Madam Vice-President, I want to turn now to the University of Trinidad and Tobago. We were advised in the other place by one of the colleagues from the other side, “Do not touch the UTT; leave it alone”. Madam Vice-President, the University of Trinidad and Tobago is the only national university in Trinidad and Tobago. We have UWI which is a regional institution and we have the University of the Southern Caribbean which is a private institution. Therefore, we were advised not to harass UTT and that we were trying to shut it down. Nothing could

be further from the truth! As a matter of fact, the hon. Prime Minister in her contribution to the 2013 budget stated, and it is there in the *Hansard*, that not only was that furthest from the truth, but that her son was, in fact, a student at UTT.

I will tell you about some of the things that we are doing with UTT, but let me just say that with respect to UTT and all the institutions which are funded by the taxpayers and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, just like the people of Trinidad and Tobago demand high expectations of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, we demand also high expectations from those who we invest in, and UTT is not exempt. Therefore, we will continue to focus UTT to ensure that it becomes one of the premier institutions in Trinidad and Tobago.

Under this Government, UTT has delivered the UTT Chaguanas campus which will cater primarily for UTT professional education courses. If you drive down Wrightson Road, you would see how we have rebranded UTT Port of Spain, now called the “Creativity Campus”, the former John S. Donaldson Technical Institute; we still maintain that name. That campus is now primarily engaged in programmes of fashion design and management, ICT, and visual design and animation. That was a campus that was literally left abandoned, underutilized. In fact, if you look at it now, you would see that there is a different ambience and a facade, but it is not only the outside, we have also improved the quality of the delivery of the programmes inside. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, you will also see that we have rebranded the former San Fernando Technical Institute to UTT Manufacturing Campus. The Point Lisas campus has been rebranded to the Energy Institute of Trinidad and Tobago, and they are saying that we should leave it alone. We will not leave it alone to decay; we will ensure that we improve every one of the campuses of UTT.

Under this present regime, the People’s Partnership, UTT has made significant strides. Let me give you a few of those. In May of this year, UTT signed a Memorandum of Understanding with LABIDCO Port Services Limited establishing a partnership that will see UTT execute strategic programmes in port skills within the community of La Brea. In July, UTT signed a Memorandum of Understanding with CrimsonLogic PTE Limited of Singapore, which is really based in terms of providing e-Government solutions.

In August, UTT received Chartered Engineering Status and Specialized Accreditation from the Energy Institute in the United Kingdom. [*Desk thumping*] In September, UTT hosted an entrepreneurial conference entitled “The Role of Universities and Entrepreneurship for Socio-Economic Development” which focused on the Triple Helix Model of Prof. Etzkowitz.

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We have also seen the expansion of programme offerings. UTT has commenced a certificate programme in early childhood care; launched a new MSE programme in ICT; achieved Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago approval for diploma in agriculture, engineering; diploma in food technology; professional certification; bachelor's degree of applied science in computer engineering.

Let me also say that for the first time, UTT has taken the bachelor's in education programme to Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Our teachers in Tobago do not have to travel at great cost and inconvenience to themselves and their families to come to Trinidad to pursue courses in education. Madam Vice-President, we are really about stopping all that propaganda; the record speaks for itself.

I want to tell you that we have also been accused by one of the colleagues on the other side in the other place by saying that we have not delivered, and, in fact, almost went into a chorus of "not delivered". I said earlier on in my contribution that the truth will be the truth and nothing but the truth. It is right there in the *Hansard* so let me give you some examples. In October 2002, in a contribution in the Parliament—I just want to mention some of the comments by one of the former Ministers. He said:

"What we need to do is to set up a commission that will ensure that there is standardization and a uniformity of standards throughout the country. Exactly how to do that, we have not yet determined. What we do know is that the University of the West Indies is a resource base that we can start with because they understand it and have been dealing with it for some time.

Mr. Vice-President, we would be forming a group to study the issue and will be leaning heavily on the advice that we get from the University of the West Indies and the people who work there."

No institutions accredited under that administration. Not delivered! 2002.

In October 2003, I read:

"...there will be a new campus for what is now called COSTAATT, in the St. Joseph area, it would be a very large facility, and there will be dormitories available for students coming from Tobago..."

Madam Vice-President, not delivered! 2003 again:

"...there will be a campus of the University of Trinidad and Tobago in Tobago so the students can go there"—in terms of funding and all that is required.

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Madam Vice-President, in 2003, not delivered! In October 2003 again:

“In terms of funding”—the Minister is saying—“I did mention a bit earlier that very shortly we will probably be bringing legislation—it may take a little while—that will change the landscape of funding...for tertiary education”—students.

2003, not delivered! Again, I continue:

“This is why UTT has absorbed that building in Couva as its Point Lisas campus and it is now adding all the things that were missing. We will be establishing other campuses in other parts of Trinidad and Tobago. We are establishing a campus in the Mayaro/Galeota area.”

Madam Vice-President, not delivered!

In October, 2004:

“I am informing the Members of the House that the lands that were reserved since 1986—200 acres of Orange Grove lands—will now be used to establish a new campus of the UWI.”

In 2004, not delivered!

In 2005, one of my predecessors was saying:

“At Mayaro we have planned a drilling school”—this is October 06, 2005—“and again we are in the process of identifying a site for that purpose.”

Not delivered. October 2005:

“I just want to point out what our investments look like as they relate to UTT. The main campus of UTT”—and this is October 2005—“would be located at Wallerfield on a 100-acre site. The designs are completed”—listen to this—“and we expect to have our first intake of students in the year 2008. Mr. Speaker, we expect that campus to accommodate 5,000 students.” [*Desk thumping*]

Not delivered! October 2005:

“We are even considering the establishment of a prosthesis institute inside of COSTAATT so we can teach our citizens how to make prosthetic limbs.”

Madam Vice-President, you know about COSTAATT. Not delivered!

In October 2005, another person who was a former Minister in a Ministry that preceded me, he was saying in 2006 that the On-the-Job-Training Programme will continue to train OJT workers, give them work-based experience to develop skills and attitudes.

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“Within the next fiscal year”—and this is October 13, 2005—“we intend to train, at least, 10,000 individuals.”

Not delivered!

2.55 p.m.

In October 2005, the 18th to be precise: we propose to look at all our indigenous art forms and create scholarships out of that at UTT. Madam Vice-President, not delivered. We can go on and on and on.

Let me just say that has been the way of the past. The way of the present is what we say we do. We do and deliver. [*Desk thumping*] “Ah doh think dey want tuh hear anymore. Dey getting tired ah we.” I just want to repeat—[*Interruption*]

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

Motion made: That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. Dr. B. Tewarie*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Thanks very much to my colleagues and to you, Madam Vice-President. I now realize I have to move a little faster. In fact, I was just going to tell you a little bit about Tobago but then, from yesterday, after I listened to my colleague from Tobago, Sen. the hon. Christlyn Moore, I realized that the only thing I could remember frequently, and I want to repeat it, is that while we invest in Tobago, Tobago has become a Zoit BOLT—[*Desk thumping*]—a Zoit BOLT that had hit the fan.

Now, I will tell you what we have done. We have delivered the MIC/YTEPP Tobago Technology Centre. We have delivered in Tobago, a dedicate mobile computer training bus funded by USAID and YTEPP. We have delivered an on-the-job training office, another one, at Roxborough. We have delivered, through the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, a digital map of all registered institutions. We are soon going to be opening the Tobago trade school with PTSC and the NESC and we will deliver, very shortly, the lands—we will get those lands—and begin construction of the integrated campus in Tobago, of the University of the West Indies, COSTAATT and UTT.

Sen. Hinds: When did you deliver Resmi?

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: I want to tell you what you delivered. “Since yuh provoking meh, I want tuh tell yuh what you delivered.”

Sen. Hinds: Tell us about Resmi.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: One of your colleagues—he has now exited the Chamber—said before we went to the lunch break, he made a plea for Divine Echoes. “Yuh know ‘bout dat?” Divine Echoes “doh” sound exactly like what you accustomed to with the seagulls. I want to read something for you that you will want to hear. As a matter of fact, if it is that music was the love of the former Prime Minister, then the mantra was to find the musicians and play on, regardless.

During the period 2007/2008—“ah was not going to say this but since yuh provoke meh”—the then Prime Minister had begun the process of establishing a national orchestra. The orchestra was to be made up of foreign qualified musicians. A consultant was engaged, via UTT, to pull the musicians together. A certain person negotiated the terms and conditions of contract for the members of the orchestra and a vote of money set aside in the Prime Minister’s office for this purpose. The orchestra was to be funded and managed by the Prime Minister’s office.

By the time of the election, 20 musicians were sourced and brought to Trinidad for this purpose. Let me just give you some of the details because I have so much I want to talk about. Section leader, viola, monthly remuneration, \$80,920 per month.

Sen. George: What?

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Section leader, trombone—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: That is £8,000.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: \$74,670 per month.

Sen. Hinds: That is £7,000.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Professor music and section leader, \$78,270 per month; section leader, double bass, \$66,920 per month; senior artiste in residence, whatever that is, \$72,920 per month; another senior artiste in residence, an associate professor, \$82,560 per month; concert master for the band, \$90,570 per month. “Ah could go on.”

Hon. Senators: Go on, go on!

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Professor of Music, Divine Echoes—“meh pardner now come.”—and principal trumpet, “he getting” \$80,650 per month.

Sen. Hinds: That is £8,000.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Since “yuh” talking about pounds, yesterday Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight mentioned scholarships. I want to say categorically, when we talked about the slush fund yesterday I would tell you about the slush fund and who described the slush fund. Let me say, in terms of scholarship, we had people from the University of Trinidad and Tobago from February 2006 to April 2010, who were receiving tuition fees, overseas living expenses, and airfare to the tune of \$1.7 million. In fact, I can tell you about three students, I have their names here, non-UTT personnel, who are pursuing a PhD in mechanical engineering, Imperial College, UK, since September 2006, \$1.244 million; PhD engineering, University of Cambridge, UK, April 2006, \$1,565,861.69 and another one, University of Cambridge, PhD in engineering, \$1.4 million. And we are talking about—you were labelling this budget an austerity budget.

Yesterday we spoke about scholarships and we talked about the slush fund. House of Representatives, Monday October 17, 2011:

“In 2009 this country was rocked by a scandal which erupted when it was discovered that over \$45 million was spent in secret scholarships by the PNM.”

This is the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar; \$45 million, and yesterday when mention was made about the scholarship fund that was in the previous Ministry of Community Development going to the Prime Minister’s office now, I mentioned slush fund and someone said: “How yuh could say dat about de Prime Minister?” We were talking about the slush fund before and let me make it abundantly clear, this was information that was spoken of from the Equal Opportunity Commission. The Equal Opportunity Commission said, and I quote the hon. Prime Minister:

““No record of selection committee meetings: the EOC was informed that there are no copies of minutes of ANY”—kind of “the Selection Committee or ANY information regarding what would have taken place during the evaluation of applications.””

It goes on and on, this entire thing.

The complainants—do you know who was one of the complainants in this matter? Do you know who brought this matter to the fore? One of our colleagues here, now Minister Devant Maharaj. [*Desk thumping*] I want to tell you what the Equal Opportunity Commission said. The Equal Opportunity Commission found—and I was only saying this in response to GATE and scholarships— [*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Mr. Divider you are talking about—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: “Ah think you talking ‘bout ah calypsonian.”

“The Equal Opportunity Commission found that more than 50 per cent of those who had filled out the form came from the following constituencies...”

San Fernando, Port of Spain North/St Ann’s West; Diego Martin West; Arima; and Laventille East/Morvant; you should know that one. Those are some of the areas, and we are talking about discrimination.

As a matter of fact, I want to take this opportunity, in the few minutes I have left, to just respond to some of the questions that were raised by Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight yesterday. Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight, yesterday raised some very important issues, one of which had to do with the fact about transportation for students who are attending tertiary institutions. I think it will please this Senate and the national community to recall that in 2010, at the commencement exercises, we launched, for the first time, a dedicated PTSC bus service from San Fernando to the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, and from Sangre Grande to UWI, St. Augustine—[*Desk thumping*]—incorporating all the institutions that were along the way.

I also want to advise Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight that I have taken into consideration her request with respect to COSTAATT. I did investigate and you are correct, the PTSC bus does not go to COSTAATT but what we have decided to do is to pursue with PTSC, to see whether they can pass near to the institution to pick up students to take them to City Gate. In fact, I want to tell you that yes, the last bus leaves at 10 o’clock but classes—my information from PTSC is that the bus works until 10.00 o’clock—at COSTAATT end at 9.00 p.m.

In saying that I also want to say that in keeping with one of the promises of the People’s Partnership manifesto, we have launched the Education City Committee and very soon will be opening the El Dorado nurses training academy and allied health services institute. That will open in January 2013, and that too would be facilitated by transportation services for our students from COSTAATT, UWI to the Eastern Main Road. I also wish to tell you that I intend to request from the PTSC, for the entire Education City, to have a service called “Hop a Bus” where you can actually move. That is what we are talking about in terms of developing the Education City, as mirrored in other parts of the world.

Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight also spoke about student support services. Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight, I wish to advise you that I have obtained from all the institutions, the major ones, their brochures and their programmes. I have them here and I can go through them. Every one of them talks about support services to students.

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I also wish to say that this morning, I had the pleasure of meeting with another group that was concerned about student support services and in fact they are called, and we have representatives from that association here, the Caribbean Tertiary Level Personnel Association. They have 65 members, both in the public and private institutions of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to indicate their mission: the improvement of the tertiary education landscape of Trinidad and Tobago through meaningful interaction with student and academic stakeholders in order to facilitate holistic student learning and the satisfaction of the educational needs of Trinidad and Tobago. This is just to give an idea as to what they do and I can tell you about all the other major ones: ROYTEC, UWI, and also USC. They all have services for the improvement of student activity.

Madam Vice-President, as I move to conclude, I also want to make mention of the fact that Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight asked about library services. I wish to advise, in the document prepared by Sen. the hon. Dr. Tewarie, Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, on page 117, some of the key projects under the heading: "Increased provision of opportunities for all life-long learning" include libraries, opening of libraries on Sundays in San Fernando, Couva, Debe, Sangre Grande; books on wheels, the introduction of libraries at St. Jude's School for girls, St. Michael's School for Boys and at the women's prison and maximum security prison; construction of libraries at Chaguanas, Rio Claro, Mayaro, Arouca, Siparia, Couva, Penal, Moruga, Toco, Morvant, Diego Martin, San Juan and Arima. A certificate, of course, in terms of library studies continues and also a bachelor's degree.

I also want to mention one of the highlights of the People's Partnership has been the workforce assessment centres of which we are indeed very proud. The workforce assessment centres give all our citizens the opportunity to ensure that they have skills but not certification. I wish I had some more time to deal with the CVQ but I would pass on some information, in terms of the Caribbean Vocational Qualification.

As I approach my time being up, let me once again congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy and let me say that we are very proud of the accomplishments of the People's Partnership. We have expanded the OJT Programme to OJTS, meaning sectoral. Never before has there been that kind of emphasis; sectoral in terms of medical, sectoral in terms of education, agriculture and the environment.

3.10 p.m.

I wish, therefore, to conclude by reading a statement from the hon. Prime Minister, as I end my contribution. She says, and this really epitomizes the Government:

My Government has been committed to education. My Government has always seen education as a passport to a better quality of life. We have pledged that we will grow the tertiary education sector, because why? Human development is one of the cornerstones of the philosophy and the underpinnings of the People's Partnership.

Madam Vice-President: Senator, wind up.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Madam Vice-President, we can see clearly now—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Sit down!

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim:—that the PNM has gone Gangnam Style, viral and wild.

Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President.

[*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Faris Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. Thank you, honourable colleagues. It is a pleasure to join in this debate: An Act to provide for the Service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on September 30, 2013.

Of course, we are here pursuant to section 113 of the Constitution; it is a requirement that we sit here. I am by my estimation, the 57th speaker to stand and speak in this debate if you add those 41 speaking in the Lower House, the Minister of Finance and the Economy speaking twice and 14 Senators today. I say that because there is a lot that has been said in relation to the budget, but it is an important event in the cycle of planning in Trinidad and Tobago. I think, Madam Vice-President, that insofar as section 64 of the Constitution provides that the House of Representatives can deal with a money Bill all on its own, in fact, without the involvement of the Senate, it begs the question as to what we do as a Senate here other than make observation. We are not required to vote, and more particularly it, therefore, begs another very important question: should not the Ministers that hold very important portfolios in this country, in fact, deliver as they are permitted to under the laws, their contributions to the Lower House?

And I say so because the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs whom I compliment in giving a very solid contribution as to his Ministry; the hon. Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment; the hon. Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development; the hon. Minister of Food Production; the hon. Minister of Justice; the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the hon. Minister of the Environment and Water Resources, none of them spoke in the Lower House and, therefore, the interrogation in relation to matters contained in the Appropriation Bill, a money Bill which is to happen in the finance committee stage could not happen. So the very process by which we decide upon our financial year, from year to year is, I think, in need of significant improvement.

The Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs alone accounts for 45 per cent of our GDP. It accounts for 88 per cent of our revenue and, therefore, it is critical that we have that interaction in the Lower House.

Now, Madam Vice-President, the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, Sen. Fazal Karim, delivered his usual clean contribution.

Sen. Hinds: Clean?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: He is clean even when he attempts to throw picong, insofar as you can see the nature of the man, a good-hearted man, I am sure he is working hard. I have not heard any negatives in terms of his performance, but he did not wear very comfortably some of the allegations that he put out. He said in a very impressive line: we must never experience wasted cost, squandermania and mismanagement. Yet, we are here discussing the third budget of the People's Partnership, the UNC-led coalition as we call it, and that third budget represents \$164 billion in the purse of the current Government.

This Government came into power saying that the PNM had been profligate, and that the PNM had engaged in squandermania in a period of eight to nine years in having control over and presiding over \$300 billion worth of budget. Yet, we are here today, \$164 billion later, we have crossed the halfway mark to \$300 billion in two years, Madam Vice-President, and the average citizen in Trinidad and Tobago is asking himself and herself, where has the money gone?

We are told that this largest budget is an extremely important one. We are told that this is the budget by which positive growth is to happen. Of course, you are well aware that despite the promises in the September 2010/2011 budget, despite the promises of positive growth, it did not happen. We are told despite the promises in the 2011/2012 budget as to growth; that did not happen. We are told now that we are to engage in deficit spending, something which I have no objection to in principle, Madam Vice-President.

We are to engage in deficit spending so as to generate 2.5 per cent growth and, therefore, the questions before this Parliament for interrogation are: do we have confidence in that statement? And when we look to the particulars behind the budget, can we see that the history with respect to implementation and efficiency is so good that we ought to have confidence in that number, because that is the crux of this debate. Can we achieve 2.5 per cent growth in this coming year?

We are told, Madam Vice-President, that the budget is the package to get us here. It is conspicuous that my learned colleague Sen. Larry Howai who, in fact is not delivering his maiden presentation as all of his colleagues seem to say, but is, in fact, delivering his second presentation, he having delivered his maiden contribution on the Financial Intelligence Unit debate, has regaled us with nine pages of presentation in his piloting of this Motion. Nine pages of double-spaced presentation; that is the detail we got in terms of the piloting of a debate.

Now, I have no problem with that because I teased him in crosstalk and said: Madam Vice-President, it appeared to be an executive summary, because one is required to read all of the many documents that comprise the budget debate. This is the Senate of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and sitting behind me are Independent Senators who do not have the representation that the Opposition does in the Lower House, and the national community looks for some sense of balance and, therefore, I think that it ought to be a requirement for a full and proper contribution.

Now, our 2.5 per cent growth that is estimated, upon figures that are nine months old as presented in the budget, there is a nine-month period presented for the 2012 period, in coming from September 2011 to now. We have had a year but some of the figures as the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has pointed out are nine-month figures, and I accept that caveat.

That 2.5 per cent growth is to happen on the basis of a mere \$1 billion in increase if you look at deficit to deficit, year on year, comparison. So last year's budget was premised on \$7.6 billion in deficit I believe it was, and this year it is premised on the same \$7.6 billion, but the *Review of the Economy* says that: the \$7.6 billion last year really was \$6.6 billion and that the expenditure this is year is \$7.6 billion. So, therefore, we are looking at a comparison between 4.6 per cent of GDP versus 4.3 per cent of GDP; we are looking to \$1 billion extra in deficit spending to get us there.

But it is the *Review of the Economy* in particular that speaks to how we are going get there, because as my colleague Sen. Deyalsingh pointed out, and as my colleague Sen. Dr. Henry pointed out, all of the figures in relation to the sector by sector

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analysis, the vast majority of them are on decline, some 30 per cent, some 10 per cent, some 2 per cent, some 0.5 per cent, all are in decline. The *Review of the Economy* tells us that on page 28, if you permit me—the *Review of the Economy* forgive me, Madam Vice-President, it is a little earlier, page 17: in an analysis of the real economy and the gross domestic product, it is set out on page 17, I am sure with your permission, that:

“Following its contraction of 2.6%...”—the economy is expected to grow 1.2 per cent. “This pick-up in economic activity is consequent upon growth in the non-petroleum industry of 1.9%, which will outweigh a decline in...petroleum...”

The non-petroleum sector is then discussed and the sectors share GDP.

“The brighter outlook for the non-petroleum sector is premised on a projected 2.4% expansion in the largest non-petroleum sub-sector,”—being—“services.

The services sub-sector’s contribution to GDP is...expected to increase from 49.7% in 2011 to 50.2% in 2012.”

Madam Vice-President, services is then discussed at page 29 in the *Review of the Economy*, and when we look to the state enterprises procurement programme for 2013 at page 5 we see: services by way of profit after tax in 2011 contributed \$148.3 million. So, we are pegging our 2012 work, our 2.5 per cent performance upon a growth in the services sector, and here is what services include from the *Review of the Economy* at page 28. Services include: finance, insurance, real estate,...distribution and restaurants, transport, storage and communication. That is the area that our 2.5 per cent growth in our GDP as a country is expected to centre upon. That must be had, I agree with Sen. Bharath, by way of a comparison to the historical information and context within which we are discussing this debate, and specifically I mean in appreciating whether we can get to 2.5 per cent growth. We need to see whether this Government is capable of getting there through its efficiency of implementation of the projected expenditure in this year, and that can easily be had by a comparison of the projects which were identified in 2010 for delivery and the projects in 2011 for delivery.

It is spectacular to observe that this budget, the budget statement, certainly not the nine pages of double spaced typing that my learned friend has regaled us with, this budget statement has no form of comparison in the budget statement itself of the history. So we are basically being told, let us press the reset button, do not worry with a comparison, go and read it in the *Review of the Economy*, and in the fine print documents which the vast majority of citizens do not have access to or

ready access to, go and look for it in the details—which by the way, Madam Vice-President, is frowned upon in a court of law, as my learned friend Sen. Christlyn Moore can tell you. You ought to put it in your statement.

So we are told, look for it in the details, but what did the details in the 2010 and 2011 budgets tell us? You heard my learned colleague, Sen. Karim, say that there was a list of things which were not done, not done, not done. The 2010 and 2011 budgets, the two preceding budgets, were very, very careful. The confidence which the previous Minister of Finance sought to build upon was pegged very specifically in creating as he said new spaces; financial room; certain sectors, but in particular the energy sector.

The hon. Minister of Finance in his 2010 presentation came to us; he produced some incredible figures as the debt-to-GDP ratios, none of which are repeated in the historical revised information that we have in today's debate; none of which are repeated in the debate we had to increase the guarantees and loans in 2011, by my learned friend the Attorney General who said that debt-to-GDP was 69.5 per cent: None of those figures are here, none of them in the revised figures, but the Minister of Finance and the Economy was careful to say that the People's Partnership would engage in the following projects to achieve growth: integrated Tobago campus, UWI southern campus; Mamoral Dam, Navet trunk line; business incubators; Tamana InTech Park; establishment of a recycling industry; viable shipbuilding industry; San Fernando/Point Fortin Highway; trauma clinics; Scarborough Hospital; greenhouse for food production.

3.25 p.m.

It is safe to say that the Navet trunk line was engaged by WASA—and I compliment them for that. It is safe to say that the Scarborough Hospital was in stages of delivery. It is safe to say that the Navet trunk line had all the pipes, materials and engineering done long before my learned friend became the CEO of WASA in the very transparent process by which he was hired; and it is safe to say that the Scarborough Hospital also had a staged delivery; but none of those things had been accomplished in 2010. There was also a very specific promise in 2010 that the People's Partnership had established a new legislative agenda for Parliament and next to it the word “done” was put out and next to that “Desk thumping”.

Now, Madam Vice-President, I have repeated that point and focused on that last point for a very simple reason. In this budget, the vast majority of projects in which we are told to have faith, all require legislative adjustment. All of the

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persons speaking opposite to me, Madam Vice-President, have said, “We will bring legislation; we will do this; I am going to the LRC; Cabinet has approved”; but, most spectacularly and most unashamedly, we still do not have the legislative agenda published.

I went back to our records. There was a Motion on the Adjournment of the House of Representatives in December 2008, piloted by one Subhas Panday, in discussing the so-called illegality of SAUTT and the illegality of using joint patrols between army and police. I will come back to that. There, in that debate, was the then Attorney General, putting her legislative agenda on the table, item by item, as built upon by legislative agenda laid in 2004 by John Jeremie.

So, Madam Vice-President, one of the aspects of confidence that we must have is the ability to see what we are dealing with because you know what happens when this Parliament cannot factor what legislation it is going to discuss from week to week; cannot factor the fate of that legislation; cannot interrogate the particulars behind material upon which the legislation is based. You need only remember the Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) (Preliminary Enquiry) Act to remember fiascos that can happen along that route.

Now, Madam Vice-President, I therefore call upon the hon. Leader of Government Business, very well-seasoned parliamentarian, somewhat more vociferous these last few days than we have seen him before; but we call upon him to publish his legislative agenda; not because I want it; not simply to satisfy me, but because the promises inside of your budget, this budget are pegged upon legislation to come.

When we look to the 2011 budget that was promised—by the way, in 2010, Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs then, came to the Senate after speaking in the Lower House, specifically to say that young Sen. Al-Rawi did not have his facts correct; how dare he speak on certain downstream projects, and then proceeded to “boof” me, as we say in local parlance.

Sen. Singh: “You take that?”

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I took it because I respect her, yes. I have known her for my whole life. I listened to what she had to say because it is a very good thing to let people continue to dig themselves in. [*Crosstalk*]

She said, in her budget contribution in 2010:

“Madam Vice-President,”

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—because, Madam Vice-President, you have had the pleasure of presiding in three budget debates so far; this is your third and I congratulate you. She said at page 517 of her *Hansard* contribution of Tuesday, September 21, 2010:

“...let me go to the gas-based projects, because I understand Sen. Al-Rawi had a lot to say about downstream yesterday...”

And then she goes on to discuss very particular projects.

“With respect to the maleic anhydride, the investors for that project...”

She goes on to discuss:

“We have had...interest in these project today since the People’s Partnership came into Government...”

So, Madam Vice-President, let me just start by saying, based on this evaluation framework, we have started the process of evaluating an integrated downstream ammonia project...An announcement of the details of the selected proposal will be made in the coming weeks.

What is the estimated expenditure for this project? It is approximately...\$1.7 billion. The project is expected to be completed in 30 months, with peak employment during construction of 2,000 jobs;...300 permanent jobs...”

—and I am paraphrasing in part here.

She goes on next to discuss Alutrint and the Trinidad Generation Unlimited. She speaks in detail, then, as to major downstream potential for establishment of the Union Estate. She says:

We are in the process of preparing requests for proposals with respect to inorganic chemicals, glass manufacture, alternative industry, plastics and agrobusiness.

We are currently reviewing the options for the anchor project which will allow for maximizing of the Union Estate. The estate candidates are the plastic plant provider, methanol to olefins, world-scale manufacture of glass and photovoltaic cells. [*Desk thumping*]

On and on about projects, none of which were repeated in 2011 in terms of a statement as to success; none of which were repeated in the 2012 debate with respect to the upcoming budget until my learned friend, Sen. Hinds, interrogated the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs in relation to certain projects.

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Madam Vice-President, the track record in relation to promises made and promises broken is spectacular. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, if I give credit to where credit is due, the only Minister standing opposite us who is capable of saying I promised X but delivered X+1 or X+2 is Sen. Vasant Bharath—the only man.

Sen. Hinds: No, it is Mr. Volney! Volney! Volney!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President, my point is, not a single other Minister is capable of standing up and giving us a results-based analysis as to promises made and projects delivered.

I say that because the only one of the Ministries reported by any of the accounting companies is, in fact, in relation to the Ministry of Food Production. Sad to say, however—and I hope my learned colleague, Sen. Maharaj, is able to speak to this, after Minister Bharath left his Ministry, a number of projects went fallow—they fell into nothing—and I am sure we will get a report about that from my learned colleague after.

The energy sector, the driver of our economy; in 2010 promises were made; in 2011 promises were made; but none of them have met with the kind of success to drive our economy. So how is our economy working? Our economy works on the basis of tax collection and on the basis of other revenue collection, in particular royalty collection.

It means, therefore, that we are living on autopilot. There is no generation of incentive. There is no confidence in relation to the manner in which we achieve projects. So, when we come to hear, in 2012, a statement by the learned Minister of Finance and the Economy that our economy is going to achieve 2.5 per cent growth, 1.2 per cent having nearly been achieved, but 2.5 per cent at the end of fiscal year—on the basis of the services sectors and its subsectors—I am left to question whether this is capable of being achieved.

Let me say why. The services subsector has some interesting aspects to it. It has contained in it, in particular when you look to communication and you look to transport—when you look to communication and transport, as two major aspects of this subsector, you are left to wonder how this is at all possible.

Relative to communications, we are told that the Government is going to speak to performance. In fact, we heard the hon. Sen. Jamal Mohammed yesterday speak to communications. He is the Minister of Communications. He spoke as to a pledge for, in particular, CNMG, to hold up the mantle of delivering things; of allowing freedom of the press through his Ministry; of allowing respect for institutions, et cetera; but a very peculiar thing occurred in the Lower House debate.

I was not able to be here and I tuned in to television in flipping to get to the budget debate and do you know what I saw? When I hit CNMG, I saw the hon. Prime Minister being covered on CNMG. So I asked myself: is the Prime Minister wrapping up the debate? In those circumstances, the broadcast rules by which the Parliament Channel operates, the hon. Prime Minister would be able to do that; but lo and behold, Madam Vice-President, the Minister of Finance and the Economy then wrapped up the debate.

I said to myself: how could CNMG be broadcasting live the Parliament debate by carrying the hon. Prime Minister's speech? How could she do it? It just cannot stand to reason that a Minister of Communications can stand here and tell us that this Government is going to respect laws, rules and guidelines and there is a parliamentary guideline on broadcasting rules, which prohibits that kind of carriage of live media, specifically prohibits, so the hon. Prime Minister is in breach of the rules of this Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] The hon. Minister of Communications ought to know that. The Leader of Government Business here surely knows that, I hope; and the Leader downstairs must know it as well, Madam Vice-President.

So I would like to know, as quick as they were to move Motions of Privilege against Sen. Hinds and me in the last session, if the Minister—the hon. Leader of Government Business in the Lower House—is going to move a Motion of Privilege that the hon. Prime Minister be censured for breaching the rules of Parliament. You see, that relates to the budget allocation to communication to institutions like CNMG and if we cannot respect the rules of Parliament, where are we going? [*Desk thumping*]

So, Madam Vice-President, I am giving, through my tax-paying dollars, through this budget, money to an institution to break the law—CNMG, breaking the rules of Parliament, and that cannot be tolerated. I have raised that as a small item because we must obey, lest we run afoul of the caution offered to us by the hon. Vasant Bharath, Sen. Bharath, and the hon. Sen. Karim—lest we run afoul of the cautions that they gave, that never again must profligacy and must wastage see this.

We must look, in analyzing confidence, to a very important issue of efficiency and do you know what the singular most important item of efficiency is? It would be on a legislative agenda, if we could see it; but there is none, despite promises.

Let me tell you what it is. It is procurement legislation. [*Desk thumping*] Procurement legislation essentially deals with every allegation against the PNM when it was Government and against the UNC while it is now the dominant partner in this Government. It is a quick, easy, simple answer to ensuring that when you go down to the river with a bucket to fill it that you do not pull up a basket with holes and collect nothing. We need to have that; but what do we have instead?

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Relative to procurement, we have the hon. Prime Minister of this Republic speaking in the Lower House debate, on October 10, 2012 at 5.15 p.m., telling us that—and with your leave, I wish to quote:

“the issue here is one about transparent procurement regimes.”

The hon. Prime Minister then goes on to speak about the now well-known Milshirv, Tobago, BOLT structure which my learned colleague, Sen. Moore, spoke to; and my learned colleague, Sen. Cudjoe, spoke to. We have the hon. Prime Minister then telling us that it appears that the THA negotiated an arrangement which was designed to bypass and circumvent the provisions of the THA Act.

3.40 p.m.

She then tells us central government was left out of the loop. She says the THA is prepared to mortgage the future of children without any form of accountability or transparency. She says it is at minimum against the spirit of the Act, and at maximum a breach of the law. She asked, where did unsolicited proposals come from? She said, Madam Vice-President, nowhere is it tendered, nowhere is it seen; unsolicited proposals and it is now saying 233 million. She says, how did either of these companies become aware of the aquatic centre? She says there is absolutely no evidence of any such document for tendering.

Madam Vice-President, the hon. Prime Minister then says, how is that transparent? Were the other bidders afforded the same luxury? She says, after she deals with all of this, that her Government—at page 40 of her contribution—within 30 days of convening the Parliament, we said we would lay the public procurement legislation, so said, so done.

She says, Madam Vice-President, that she is going to have the Attorney General deal with the issue of procurement, and essentially, that this document has been prepared—forgive me—we propose to send before the Legislative Review Committee, the report of the joint select committee and a document prepared by the JCC which is called the Public Procurement and Disposal of Property Bill, 2012. That is going to go to the LRC for consideration. She says the Opposition refused to participate.

Now, let me put this straight, Madam Vice-President. The hon. Prime Minister has quite correctly said that procurement is a burning issue. She has held up an example of what she says is a failure of transparent procurement practices. She has held up an example which she says other people were not allowed to participate in. She is holding that up because I am confident that she must be sure that everything is well on her ship.

She says that the JCC public procurement Bill is going to be put before the LRC. I nearly fell off my chair when I heard that; I will tell you why, for two reasons. Number one, this Government has close to its bosom the worst record in relation to public procurement, in past and at present. [*Desk thumping*] Secondly, the reason that the Opposition withdrew from participating in the joint select committee's report, which has now been delivered to Parliament, was specifically because the Government insisted upon rushing ahead in relation to matters which we had serious objection to, that required procurement consideration.

They included the light transit rail which the then Minister of Transport was dealing with, and also the UDeCott Invaders Bay Government of Trinidad and Tobago \$1.25 billion disposition of lands. We specifically objected to those things. We dragged the Government to the line by saying; publish your policy! What is the point of having a joint select committee if you cannot state what your policy is from day one?

Madam Vice-President, I as a member of that joint select committee went through the Minutes before coming to this speech, and I have seen on the records of the Minutes constant refrain from the Members asking for the Government to state its policy. January 2012, we were told policy will soon come; nearly a year after. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Hinds: Who told us that—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Then we withdrew and in May the policy came. But that policy which the hon. Prime Minister says is going to be put before the LRC together with the JCC's draft legislation, those things are mutually exclusive in a very important way. The JCC's proposal specifically prescribes the use of a commission of enquiry type of power on a constant basis and the deliberations of the joint select committee are the exact opposite. The hon. Prime Minister must know that.

Madam Vice-President, how could she say that she is going to put two mutually exclusive items on the table for consideration? Even if you accept that she does that because one can distil a better document out of considering the two; what was the Government doing for two years in relation to public procurement laws, something which they came into office riding high on a horse, making all sorts of allegations? [*Crosstalk*] What was more distressing than that, was to hear my learned colleague, Sen. Christlyn Moore, give an account of the Ministry of Justice's performance.

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Now, Madam Vice-President, Sen. Moore, Sen. Ramlogan and I all went to law school together. We know each other well, we have known each other for years. I have regard for her. I know her as a good lawyer. I know she has an invidious task of trying to make right in the most sanitized way, the wrongs of a particular Ministry in some senses, and to give an account of a Ministry which has been operating for two years, she only having just come into the saddle, so I give her that slack.

Madam Vice-President, if you go to the terms of reference of the Minister of Justice as has been gazetted, if you go to the fact that public procurement is the most burning issue, if you go to the hon. Senator's commentary in relation to the Milshirv project, where she asked questions about RFPs and needs analysis, and why was it not done in answer to Sen. Cudjoe, how then could she forget the fact that the hon. Prime Minister specifically when she came into office said that Minister Herbert Volney, Minister of Justice would, in a matter of weeks, be bringing forward the implementation of the Uff Commission's 91 recommendations? How could she forget that?

We did not need to be schooled in relation to the DNA Act, the electronic monitoring Act, the indictable proceedings Act. We did not need to be schooled on those four bits of legislation that millions of dollars have been put into the Ministry of Justice on. We needed to hear about procurement, in light of her own commentary on Milshirv, and in light of her own commentary on the platform in Tobago, and in light of the Prime Minister's commentary. No report on the Uff recommendations, none whatsoever! And procurement goes on left, right and centre.

Let me give you an example, Madam Vice-President, with your permission, in relation to public procurement. There are small examples, and there are large examples. I will deal first with a few small examples. We are in this Parliament Chamber. This is the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. There is an allocation in the budget for the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Vice-President, when we were moving across here, I as a Member of the House Committee came to walk the floors of this Parliament, and had the privilege of participating in where we would be located, in making recommendations, et cetera. I did this voluntarily with Prof. Armstrong, with Mr. Imbert, with a number of Government Ministers. We came here—in fact, the Senate was supposed to sit in the other room over there. I proposed that it would have been a bad use of resources for us to duplicate the Senate and the House insofar as *Hansard* is the only singular resource and we could not sit contemporaneously, hence the reason for having

one shared Chamber. I did not send a Bill for that. I did not do any of those things. Lo and behold, I get something in my mailbox; a small example, in relation to procurement. I get something which is from the HDC, it originates in the HDC, and it deals with procurement of things for the Prime Minister's office in this building.

Madam Vice-President, we have a 20 by 20 office. You heard hon. Sen. Bharath talk about extravagance in Patrick Manning's so-called bedroom. He talked about sheets and curtains, and millions of dollars. He talked about sheets for \$3,000. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Hinds: They did not tell us—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President, outfitting of works at Tower D Wrightson Road invoice from the HDC, billed to UDeCott; I have no idea where in the constitutional set-up of the HDC they come to outfit offices in this building. It is not within their statutory purport to do that. They are in the business of low-cost housing. I “doh know since when dey” in the business of furnishing the office of the Prime Minister in the Parliament. That is a job for the Parliament to do, or the agent of the Parliament to do, but certainly the Parliament.

So in the hon. Prime Minister's 20 by 20 office, listen to the invoice attached to this outfitting works, details listed:

Furniture and accessories:

- one Signature selection, \$33,788;
- one big blue bag, \$77,859;
- one arts and antiques, \$100,522;
- bathroom accessories;
- one DH gift, \$715;
- one Bella Leno, \$6,926;
- one decorator's dream, \$922;
- one Galt and Littlepage, \$6,000;
- one stationery plus \$5,000;
- one Nigel R Book Sellers;
- SuperPharm;
- one TT imports;
- one Sherwin Williams.

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Basically, there is an invoice, which clearly must be referenced to where they bought the goods from, for hundreds of thousands of dollars in fact amounting to \$355,633.84—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Wow!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—which, when passed through UDeCott, I am advised, is now \$444,000. So Madam Vice-President, this is an invoice under the current procurement structure of this Government; small example! By my estimation, it cost \$1,100 a square foot to furnish the Prime Minister's office in this building. One thousand, one hundred dollars a square foot, Madam Vice-President! Do you know what the House Committee decided it would cost to build the Parliament building, the annex building next to the Red House? One thousand, two hundred dollars a square foot—brick, mortar, concrete, air-conditioning, parking, roads, costs for engineers and architects. So \$1,200 a square foot—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator:—and outfitting?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: No outfitting. Twelve hundred dollars to put up a building. Now, Madam Vice-President, I have a client base that is heavily engaged in construction, and I could tell you that the current rate is nowhere near \$1,200 a square foot. The \$1,200 a square foot also factored in certain works that we had to do to the restoration of the Red House; a special building. So it cost us \$1,100 a square foot to furnish the Prime Minister's office and I am advised that this bill has been paid. That is the procurement practice on a small level.

But let me tell you about something that is a little different. Today—I just got a note—the chairman of Lake Asphalt is at it again; covered in the *Newsday* today. The Prime Minister of St. Vincent is in the Parliament of St. Vincent—I am advised—saying that the CEO or Chairman of Lake Asphalt—forgive me if I got it wrong—that Lake Asphalt has promised to give him free asphalt. Now, we know the relationship in Caricom is a long one, and that Prime Ministers' words need to be taken seriously. I do not recall anything in the budget statement about free asphalt to St. Vincent. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: What?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I have absolutely no objection to us continuing the PNM's excellent relationship with our Caricom neighbours in fostering their growth because the Caricom market is important for us, and it is not to be viewed that Trinidad and Tobago is an ATM, as the hon. Prime Minister said we were. That is to destroy diplomacy. Madam Vice-President, that is another example of

procurement, because it is a two-way street on procurement. Here is another example of procurement. It was covered in the Lower House somewhat; HDC again. Now, I declare that I sat as a member of the board of directors of HDC for a couple of years, off and on, gaps in between, and I recall dealing with—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: Thank you. I thank the hon. Senator for giving way. Were you a member of the board at the time that the decision was made to build the Las Alturas housing in Morvant, right next to Lady Young that has since collapsed?

3.55 p.m.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I do not recall that I was. I am not quite sure. I could tell you that I was a member of the board when two very important events came: one is when the HDC was going to engage in some form of high-rise building in downtown, Port of Spain. I, sitting at the HDC said: “Hold on, our statutory mandate does not include that aspect”. And, therefore, I consider that it ought not to be done and the project did not continue on that basis. But, more particularly, listen to the important point. I recall the HDC engaging to buy a property—I think it was the Trestrail property in Arima.

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

Motion made: That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes.
[*Sen. T. Deyalsingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. I recall specifically requiring the board of the HDC to go out and procure the services of, I think it was seven valuers for one property. That was because of the size of the acquisition—I think it was about \$50 million—was something that I thought we ought to be very transparent on. I recall receiving valuations from a broad section of valuers. As an attorney involved in the conveyancing and mortgaging practice, I can tell you that I work with valuers on a constant basis.

When Dr. Rowley raised in the Lower House the issue of an acquisition by the HDC of property situate at, what is called, I think it is Eden Gardens Residential Development, a project involving some 50 acres, when I saw the response by the hon. Leader of Government Business, the Chief Whip, the Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Resources, I was startled. First of all he said, “I have my papers here, I felt he was coming.” I do not know how he knew Dr. Rowley was coming in relation to that issue.

Sen. Singh: Intelligence! Intelligence!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Yes, it may be intelligence, but intelligence of a particular kind—*[Interruption]*

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Electronic!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—and we have made that statement openly. Here it is that this project comes out, and I thought to myself, well there has been no coverage on this issue let me get some more facts on it. Fortunately, in my mailbox again, there appeared the Cabinet Minute in relation to this project. Cabinet Minute dated June 06, 2012, decision confirmed by Cabinet, June 14, 2012. It is copied to the Auditor General, interestingly, and the Director of Budgets as well. The Cabinet Minute 1538 of June 06, 2012 says that the HDC proposes to acquire 50 acres of gently undulating land with completed infrastructure including roads, drainage, detention ponds, et cetera, which would give two residential commercial sites, two nursery sites, four community sites, two recreation grounds and four playgrounds with a total yield of 275 residential units, and it says quite correctly:

A valuation of the property by Linden Scott and Associates in the net value of \$52 million was obtained.

It says:

However, by letter dated April 26, 2012, the Commissioner of Valuations advised that \$180 million is a fair estimate of the current open-market value for the unencumbered freehold interest in the subject parcel of land with vacant possession.

Attached to that is a note for Cabinet, and that note for Cabinet attaches the Linden Scott Report and also the Commissioner of Valuations report.

Now, it certainly did not resemble the kind of project where for \$50 million when I was at the board of the HDC, we had seven valuers check it. Very, very, interestingly, we have the Linden Scott and Associates valuation here which says that the value that he is premising is on the basis of one person purchasing the entire development en bloc and, therefore, the gross developmental value, the period for disposal of the lots, the purchasers profit for risk, stamp duty and legal fees agents fees, et cetera, have been excluded. What does that mean? Short story! Government valuator comes in and says with no material attached to the Cabinet Minute other than the letter: “Forget that \$52 million do not worry with that; \$180 million is good!”

Sen. Deyalsingh: What?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Right! Do not worry with an established valuator's report of \$52 million, forget all of that, I, the Government valuator, say \$180 million. Now, the only place that I know that the Government valuator must give the certification on a deed for is Tobago, because Tobago is treated specially by the Valuations Division at the Board of Inland Revenue; the only place. So, Trinidad and Tobago, \$52 million, a reputable valuator on every bank panel in Trinidad and Tobago conducting mortgages, risk on the mortgage portfolio is based on his valuation.

Ask Sen. Howai, he sat at FCB, he would tell you Linden Scott is a very reputable valuator. Do you know how much risk his valuations would have underwritten in this country? Do you know how many millions and millions of dollars of credit would have been extended on that basis? But Government valuator rolls around, so I decided that I wanted to check the land value in relation to this property. Madam Vice-President, let me ask you if I could, how much do you guess the deed in 2010 for the purchase of this property by the developer was for? How much do you think? Madam Vice-President, \$180 million is the value of the project to be bought by HDC—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: By the Government valuator!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—in 2012—March 2012, early 2012. Third day of February 2010; a deed prepared by one Roopchand Chadeesingh, same 50 acres, do you know what is the value? Five million dollars!

Sen. Deyalsingh: Wow!

Sen. Hinds: Lord!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President, \$5 million is the value of the deed. So, \$350,000 in stamp duty is paid on this \$5 million acquisition, stamped by the Board of Inland Revenue, checked—insofar as there is the implied ability to revoke any valuation report that you submit, the Commissioner of Valuations would have checked that and seen \$5 million worth of land. No problems! You could buy \$5 million worth of land and you could develop it. You could put down infrastructure; you could ameliorate the value. Mr. Scott contemplates that in his valuation report. He says if you factor in development, developmental costs, the maximum you are getting up to is \$115 million. Now, let me explain that. His valuation report which is attached to this says that if you look at it, gross developmental value \$150 million.

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I have done a massive amount of conveyancing in that particular area, Balmain, Couva. A lot of land 5,500 square feet—as these lots are lotified—maximum, \$350,000 in sales. When I did the calculation of 275 multiplied by \$300,000 and I said to myself, I have to run the charges and interest in relation to developmental cost because nobody has \$20 million lying around in a bank account to develop a project just like that. Ostensibly, it is borrowed, you develop the land, you pay interest on the development, but you are giving a purchaser right now the option to buy at \$180 million when the vendor's actual cost—if you add interest, if you add developmental cost and interest on developmental cost—you cannot cross \$115 million. The market is soft; the *Review of the Economy* says that. The construction sector is going down; the *Review of the Economy* says that, and yet this Government is going to buy land for \$180 million. Why? Because there was another offer on the table for \$200 million which was not disclosed.

Hon. Senator: From whom?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: We do not know from whom. The same way the hon. Prime Minister demanded that the Milshirv project [*Desk thumping*] and the aquatic centre [*Desk thumping*] be referred for investigation, is the same way I demand [*Desk thumping*] that this project be checked. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: “Oh, yes!”

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I demand that the hon. Minister of Justice start doing the work that the last Minister did not do. I demand the introduction of the Uff Commission Report. [*Desk thumping*] Those recommendations stand to be implemented, because they have not been implemented with dramatic consequences in the Invaders Bay project, but nothing on the Invaders Bay project in this budget. Nothing at all!

Madam Vice-President, the Central Tenders Board Act says, specifically, at the end of it—it was, in fact, law brought on by Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj—Legal Notice No. 179 of 1997, functions and duties of the Central Tenders Board Act included the authority to act for and on behalf of the Government to dispose of real property owned by Government. The Invaders Bay project is owned by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; no Central Tenders Board participation. The Attorney General still will not publish the advice. We are still waiting on the Lewis QC advice to be published. It has not come yet. Let him join that with the other advice.

He said in the Motion of no confidence in the House that his advice is that the project is legal thus far. What does that mean? Are we to be regaled by inconsistencies of this type? Are we to take our opponents seriously when they say, “No more profligacy, look at the PNM, what is going on.” What is happening to the \$60

million that this country spent on the Uff Commission of Enquiry? Why are those recommendations not before us? Why did the Minister of Justice not speak to it? I hope that the hon. Minister Bhoë Tewarie, will stand and tell us about the Invaders Bay project, and I will tell you why I say so. Those persons who have invested in that project are likely to lose their wicket.

Hon. Senator: How?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: How is the State going to give them a lease? When the State gives them a lease it would be evidence of an “ah-ha” moment. It would be “ah ha” the State could not issue the RFP, because it would have had to have gone through the Central Tenders Board, and if it did not go through there, it means the process is null and void. So, what is going to happen to those good souls who—I have been accused of trying to whittle away their investment. They have accused me of trying to sabotage their project, but I am not. I am trying to protect their money, because “when de mark buss God help them.”

When the State has to give the lease, the Central Tenders Board Act would be deemed to have acted. So, this Government would have presided in the giveaway of \$1.26 billion worth of land; people would have invested millions of dollars in coming up with ideas and potential to stimulate our economy, and litigation will follow and delay will happen. That is not speculation; that is fact. Litigation, mark my words, will follow. A judicial review must follow. [*Desk thumping*]

So our economy is going to be stalled. We are not going to see the investments that we so desperately need. We have not heard anything from the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs on the most important gas negotiations or the fact that the gas cushion offered by BP and BG is no longer in existence. The gas cushion is critical for us to be able to have our industries perform while maintenance is down.

So, Madam Vice-President, we are on a precipice, to use the words, not of the hon. President, but to use the words of Derek Hudson, a well-respected man in the energy industry, someone who would have received commendations from the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs yesterday. Every man opposite has to come up to the call. Do you know why? The only really progressive steps that we have seen in this Government—if you look at the bench opposite me alone, do you know what is the most progressive see it moving engine is? The change of Senators opposite me. Ten men gone already! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Beckles: And women.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: And women. The man shall include the woman, section 3 of the Constitution, so I use man that way.

Sen. Hinds: More to go!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Ten people gone from opposite me, only five people left!

Sen. Hinds: George next!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Sen. Howai, through you, Madam Vice-President, is a good man, but the point is that he is likely to follow a similar fate. I do not wish that for him. He has given up his life in banking. He was an excellent banker. I do not want to see that happen to him. It is time to get the act together; time to do the right steps.

4.10 p.m.

Madam Vice-President, I have barely scratched the surface of material that I wish to discuss. I chose to focus on certain central issues to show the deceit and lack of transparency on the part of this Government. The citizenry is, as my learned colleague Sen. Lambert says, not marching. I do not know where he has been. The hon. Senator is wrong when he says that the trade union is calm right now.

So, Madam Vice-President, things are happening in this country. Government do your part. You are driving my car, I want to get there safely. We call upon you to do better. Madam Vice-President, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Victor Wheeler: Thank you, Madam Vice-President, for allowing me to contribute in this third budget debate. I am afraid I would not be as active and lively as Sen. Al-Rawi, but I will try to do my best.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the new Minister of Finance and the Economy on his first budget presentation. It was certainly one of the shorter presentations we have had from a finance Minister in the Senate.

Madam Vice-President, my contribution today will be on several areas. I will be reviewing what my expectations were in the last budget of 2012. I will also be reviewing if they were met. I will be reviewing what promises were made by the Ministry of Health and the Minister of Health. I will be reviewing the promises made to Tobago. I will be reviewing the tourism sector, specifically Tobago, and I will be commenting on some funding issues related to Tobago.

Some of the areas that I focused in my last budget contribution of 2012 were: the state of land titles in Tobago; the completion of the Magdalena Grand Hotel; the need to stimulate the tourism sector in Tobago, and also the need to complete the new Scarborough General Hospital. Madam Vice-President, as far as the state of land titles in Tobago, this is a matter that is still outstanding. I refer to page 63 of the People's Partnership manifesto, where they say as part of their promises:

“...we will...Implement measures to regularize land titles in Tobago based on a review of the recommendations of recent reports on this matter”

I am aware that the Ministry of Legal Affairs has been taking some steps to address it, but I was very surprised that in this budget of 2013, I was not able to find any mention of the land titles issue being addressed or plans to have it addressed. I know that a committee was set up by the last Minister of Tobago Development. Meetings were held but still there is no solution to the problem.

This inability of Tobagonians to have proper land titles is certainly negatively affecting those in Tobago. Madam Vice-President, the aim of this 2013 budget is: stimulating growth, generating prosperity. We know that Tobago lags behind Trinidad in terms of growth, in terms of development and prosperity and a solution to this land titles issue will certainly help those Tobagonian landowners to be able to access funding from the bank. They will be able to access funding from the ADB. Right now the ADB has lots of money to lend farmers, but the farmers in Tobago have difficulty accessing it because they have no security of title—the land that they are farming on, they are not able to produce any document to say that the land is theirs.

So, by having this matter addressed it will help the farming sector in Tobago, and we already know that the rising cost of food will continue. Even though the removal of VAT may have some effect, a solution to this problem will certainly help to revive the farming sector in Tobago and help Tobago earn some foreign exchange. At one time Tobago was actually feeding Trinidad and this came to an end with Flora in 1963.

The other area I addressed in my last budget contribution was the need to complete—well, the then Vanguard Hotel but now the Magdalena Grand Hotel—and I have to commend the Government for achieving this even though it should have been completed in December 2011. It was actually fully operational by May 2012. It is a beautiful hotel and the Government should be proud of this, and on behalf of Tobago, I thank you for completing the Magdalena Grand Hotel. [*Desk thumping*]

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The other area I had mentioned in my last budget contribution was the need to simulate the tourism sector in Tobago. Madam Vice-President, we have seen that for 2011 compared to 2010, the number of international passengers coming to Tobago by air continues to fall: from 34,391 in 2010 to 33,236, a reduction of 7 per cent. When you look at arrivals of foreign passengers by cruise ship, the fall is more significant. There is actually a drastic 27 per cent reduction in cruise ship passenger arrivals from, 61,596 in 2010 to just over 44,000 in 2011.

Now, this reduction in international arrival has been offset in some way by an increase in domestic travel: this increase by air from 321,675 in 2010 to 350,000 in 2011; and there was a modest increase in arrival by ferry, from 489,000 to 494,000 in 2011. With regard to hotel occupancy, this improved slightly from an average of 38.2 per cent in 2010 to just over 39 per cent in 2011. There was a slight decrease in guesthouse occupancy falling from 34.3 per cent in 2010 to 33.5 per cent in 2011. These figures were produced by the division of tourism of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Madam Vice-President, I now come to the completion of the new Scarborough General Hospital, which was a major concern of mine last year. Even though this hospital was partially opened in 2012, today, October 16, 2012, it is still not complete—more than six months. The Minister of Health in his budget contribution of 2011 promised that the hospital would be opened by Christmas of 2011. Well, we know that did not occur.

On April 05, 2012, the Prime Minister, some Members of her Cabinet, the Minister of Health, Chief Secretary, Members of the Executive, came to a partial opening of the new hospital. At that time the service that was opened was the outpatient clinic, radiology department, some pharmacy services and some lab services. The other areas, that is, the wards, supporting departments, they were all supposed to move and the hospital was supposed to be operational by the September 01, 2012. This date came; it passed; there was another date of September 29, 2012, that came and passed. And as I stand here today there is no date for the staff of the hospital to be told when the new hospital will be opened and when they will be moving.

Somebody really needs to explain to the Tobago public why this is the case. It has been over 40 years that the people in Tobago have been waiting for a new hospital. On April 05, 2012, I attended that opening ceremony. There was a lot of celebration. People were taking pictures in front of the new fountain. The building is actually a fantastic facility. We were all pleased and proud of finally getting a new hospital.

But alas, a lot of the enthusiasm is starting to wane when more than six months later it is still to be complete. And I am informed that the Ministry of Health has still not yet handed over the hospital to the Tobago House of Assembly—that is the other clinical area—so that it can be occupied by the TRHA, and at this point in time we would be very lucky if this handover takes place before Christmas.

Madam Vice-President, I turn to some other promises that were made by the Minister of Health in 2011; this includes the Chancery Lane complex in San Fernando, which was supposed to be delivered by December 2011, and it has not been. The budget documents, today, state that they expect that the Chancery Lane complex, at least the first two floors, should be ready if not by December 2012, very likely in early 2013. The Point Fortin hospital, which when the Government came in in 2010, they said they will start by 2011, has not yet been started. I understand, however, that a new site has been obtained and the plans are in place. I presume they will be starting tender soon for this.

The Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex was supposed to have a two-storey building erected at a cost of \$61 million—nothing has happened in that. There were also supposed to be two dialysis centres built to deal with the rapid rise in renal failure that is taking place in this country. This has not started yet. In fact, the last budget had mentioned that the design-build method was supposed to be used to build the centres, not the BOLT, as is being used for projects in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

The National Oncology Centre which actually was started under the PNM in 2004—the 2010 budget and also the 2011 budget—this project should have been restarted, but it has not happened. What did take place, and I am sure that the people of San Fernando would be happy for this, is that the Ministry of Health had intended to upgrade the eye department in the San Fernando General Hospital, and also to expand the services provided by the eye unit. This has actually been completed and there is a plan in place for training local eye surgeons in new techniques. This is something that will certainly benefit the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

One other area I would like to touch on, briefly, which is a promise made by the Minister of Health, is with respect to the Children's Life Fund. There was a space that was supposed to be upgraded at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, and I am presuming that this has actually been done. What I did read in the press sometime recently is that the first CEO resigned under some dubious circumstances, and those circumstances, I am informed, surrounded provision of funds that were supposed to be taken out of Ministers' salaries into the Children's Life Fund.

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I know Mr. Geoffrey Lewis, he is actually someone of high character, impeccable standing in the community, so something must have gone wrong for him to resign from something like the Children's Life Fund. I do commend the Minister of Health, though, in his fight to lead the fight against lifestyle diseases in Trinidad and Tobago. He has been the forefront of this with his "Fight the Fat" campaign, and I am certain that if the rest of the population takes his advice on board it will help. It will certainly help in reducing the cost of burden of disease.

Madam Vice-President, I will now come and focus on some of the provisions made in this 2013 budget. The Minister of Health and the Ministry of Health have stated that they will be drastically cutting back on outsourcing or even stopping the outsourcing that has been taking place in the RHAs over the past few years. If you will allow me, I will just refer to a newspaper article in the *Trinidad Guardian*, Monday, October 15, 2012: "Doctors against Fuad's plans for Mt Hope". And please permit me to quote:

"The Medical Professionals Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MPATT) is opposing Dr. Faud Khan's plans to hire private managers at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences, Complex, Mt Hope. Last Wednesday, Khan said protest action by the staff had forced the North Central Regional Health Authority (NCRHA) to seek private partnerships for the management of services at the facility."

4.25 p.m.

I am aware of some of the reasons why the members of staff at that facility were taking action. It was because they were not paid outstanding arrears of salaries, going back several years. So, I would have thought that it would really have been cheaper to just pay the arrears and have the workers come back to work than to try to outsource for clinical services in all of those departments which would mean spending an exorbitant sum of money. Outsourcing has its problems because the people who come in are not under the direction of heads of departments in the institutions and it is usually a recipe for chaos.

Outsourcing is also expensive. Some RHAs have had to outsource service, for example, ICU beds when there are no ICU beds. Some radiology departments have had to outsource the need to provide radiologist services to read CAT scans, MRIs and so on, but in this particular issue I actually have to agree with MPATT in that it really would have been better to just pay the people's arrears and bring them back to work.

At this point, Madam Vice-President, I would like to say that the Ministry of Health, in its budget presentation for 2013, seemed to be focusing a lot on buildings—building new buildings—purchasing new hospital equipment, but I do not see much effort being placed on the most important component, or the most important resource in the provision of health care, that is, the health care worker. A hospital by itself will not treat you. A new CAT scan machine by itself would not diagnose your condition. You need to have properly trained, well-motivated and sufficient staff to provide this. I fear that this is something that not enough attention is being paid to in this particular budget.

This now brings me to what has been happening in Tobago. On the front page of the *Tobago News*, Friday, October 12, 2012, headlined:

“Emergencies Only”

Protest action at the hospital lab crippled operations at the hospital

If you permit me to read:

“In a memo to hospital staff dated Monday October 8...Medical Chief of Staff...”—at the hospital—“has blamed...(PSA)...Watson Duke for leading the laboratory staff on a protest action that has virtually shut several hospital services down.

According to the memo, the industrial action by the laboratory workers was due to longstanding environmental issues caused by the burning of waste and fumes from the incinerator...”—nearby—“which has contaminated the laboratory area.”

Madam Vice-President, if this hospital were completed, and the workers moved in, as we should have, this would not have arisen. Somebody really needs to explain to the health workers in Tobago—the people in the lab—why this has occurred. It is a very dangerous situation where the hospital in Tobago is outsourcing laboratory services. It is a very dangerous state of affairs because, if you outsource laboratory services, when you need those results urgently, you are not able to get them.

We have had instances where doctors in Tobago have had to cancel operations for patients because results were not available. We have had doctors in Tobago having to operate on very ill patients without the benefit of results of lab tests. This is really an unacceptable state of affairs and I hope those in authority will address it as urgently as possible. Some doctors on the ward have also been treating patients for serious illnesses without the benefits of laboratory tests.

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There is one particular doctor who is from another country—from Africa—who told me even in his country, with so much money that we have in Tobago, this state of affairs is really unacceptable. I ask, again, someone needs to explain what is really going on.

Madam Vice-President, on page 22 of the PSIP for 2013, No. 59, it says:

“An Operational Plan was completed and diagnostic and ambulatory services including radiology, point of care testing, outpatient clinics, pharmacy and mortuary services were commissioned at the new Scarborough Hospital. The sum of \$145 million was utilized for the commissioning of services at Scarborough Hospital.”

Opposite there are two pictures. In the top picture you would see some patients milling around in the waiting area in the outpatient clinic. The picture below has what appears to be a ward, but that ward is not open. It is not being used. It was really deceptive to give this impression as if the service is being used.

Right now in Tobago the hospital does not have a radiologist. So, you have X-rays being done, CAT scans being done and there is no one to read the reports. You even have some radiological investigations that were previously started not being done because there is no radiologist. I really do not understand what is taking place.

In April 2012 there were lots of celebrations and sighs of relief when people saw that new hospital, but things have deteriorated to a state where, right now, some of the workers are getting very disenchanted. I need someone to explain what is going on.

The Ministry of Health, in its allocation, PSIP for 2013, I see there is \$20 million allocated for a new MRI machine for Tobago. It is said to be containerized with housing for the new hospital because right now there is really no space in the building to place an MRI machine. An MRI machine was never included when the plans were made for the hospital. However, there is enough land space around that that can be done. I do hope that this inclusion in the budget will become a reality because it would mean increasing the diagnostic capability of the hospital, whenever it is opened.

Madam Vice-President, I now want to touch on the allocation for the THA in this year's budget. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has said that the THA has been allocated 4.03 per cent of the national budget. He also said that the expenditure by other Ministries would increase that percentage to 5 per cent of the national budget, and reference was made to the Dispute Resolution Commission. I actually have a copy of that here.

This is one case where I would have to agree with Sen. Cudjoe when she said yesterday that the Dispute Resolution Commission refers to the percentage of allocation to the Tobago House of Assembly; it does not refer to the money spent in Tobago. We welcome the money being spent in Tobago—you could spend twice that amount—but it really sought to address the financing that the Tobago House of Assembly needed to deal with the execution of its responsibilities under the THA Act.

Now, there is a lot of heavy weather about this 4.3 per cent to 6.9 per cent of the national budget, but that was actually one of seven recommendations of the Dispute Resolution Commission, which was appointed under section 56 of the THA Act, 1996, and chaired by Mr. Justice G.A. Edoo.

The other comment is made:

“2. That releases for recurrent and development expenditure in each fiscal year to the Assembly bear the same proportion of total releases made to Government departments and authorities in Trinidad.”

It also said:

“3. That the human resource needs of the Assembly be rationalized as early as possible since personnel expenditure forms a significant component of the recurrent expenditure.”

It also made reference to:

“5. That the present arrangements for the collection and deposit into the Fund of taxes and duties as indicated in paragraph 7.11 be continued.

6. With respect to revenues to be collected in Tobago, that a revenue sharing arrangement should be worked out with the Board of Inland Revenue and appropriate administrative arrangements be made to give effect thereto as a matter of urgency.”

Sen. Dr. Balgobin had made reference to the budget, stating that Tobago only generated about \$140 million or thereabouts and it was requesting \$2 billion. Now, in this dispute resolution—when this was argued by the THA—the point was made that there are many companies and agencies that have branches in Tobago, that, to this date, there are lots of difficulty in getting them to pay their taxes that are generated in Tobago.

If this were to be effective, you might actually find that the real contribution of money generated in Tobago may be far higher than the \$147 million. However, it still does not excuse the fact that Tobago is still very dependent on Trinidad for funding. From what I have seen, whether Tobago generates \$1.00 or \$2 billion, they still get the same 4.03 per cent.

Now, it could be that in the THA's efforts to generate extra income, that may be the arrangement why—it was certainly one of the reasons why a previous Chief Secretary entered into Ring Bang and ADDA to try to raise income for the THA. It could be a reason this present administration has resorted to avenues of funding such as BOLT and so on to try to carry out what they deem to be their plans for the development of Tobago. We must all remember that it is public funds that are being spent and that money should be spent in a manner that is open and transparent. As Sen. Al-Rawi said, it also spoke to the need to implement proper procurement legislation.

Before I wrap up, Madam Vice-President, I just want to address two things that were mentioned by Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight when she made reference to the 22 cataract surgeries that cost \$2.5 million. I strongly believe that was a typo. It was more likely 220 cataracts at a cost of \$2.5 million which would put the cost to be about \$11,000.

The other thing that she had mentioned was with respect to her concerns about the HPV vaccine for the treating cervical cancer. It has been undisputedly proven that HPV is the cause of cervical cancer. Even though there have been fears of vaccinating children—younger girls—in the past, the vaccine is actually quite safe and it has been proven in other countries—developed countries as well as underdeveloped countries—that it significantly reduces the risk of cancer. The risk of cancer in a 20-year-old is certainly low but, in Trinidad and Tobago, we have a high rate of death from cervical cancer. So I think it is something that will be worthwhile and I do not think you need to worry too much about it.

The last thing I would like to mention is that there is a dependency syndrome in Tobago with respect to the central government. [*Interruption*] Well, I can only speak for Tobago. I hope that efforts are taken to wean us off this. There should be efforts taken for Tobago to try to generate foreign exchange—I know the THA has been making some efforts, but right now those efforts need to be multiplied and expanded because in the long run we would all benefit from this.

With that, Madam Vice-President, I thank you.

4.40 p.m.

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George): Madam Vice-President, thank you very much for permitting me the opportunity to contribute in this budget debate this afternoon.

First of all, let me join my colleagues who went before me, and other presenters in this Senate, in congratulating the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, Sen.

Larry Howai, for a budget that was excellently presented and thoughtfully compiled. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me also congratulate all the Independent Senators who have so far contributed to this budget debate and who, from what I have garnered from listening to them, have all spoken from their heart and in large measure have supported the Minister of Finance and the Economy and his proposals in this budget. They have found one or two issues that they have asked questions about, and I am certain that in his wrap-up the Minister of Finance and the Economy would deal with those.

Before I get into the meat of what I have to say, Madam Vice-President, I think I should refer to what has been said by Sen. Dr. Lester Henry, which was echoed by one or two of his colleagues on the Opposition Bench. I do not think I am quoting him accurately, but I might precis what he said by saying that a budget is supposed to present an account to the Parliament and the people for the spending of the people's money, and that this budget did not do that at all.

It was echoed subsequently by his colleague, Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe, and I think I quote her accurately here by saying that she said the Minister of Finance and the Economy did not give review of what happened in 2010 or 2011, and that that was a big gap in the presentation by the Minister of Finance and the Economy. I think Sen. Al-Rawi also went in that direction, saying that this was the third budget presented by this Government, and altogether it involved the expenditure of over \$160 billion and that the average citizen was asking, "Where de money gone?"

I do not know whether these comments come from people who have not been in a milieu where they see and hear budgets being presented in this Parliament. But the Minister of Finance and the Economy cannot in his budget presentation address all the issues of delivery of what was promised in the budget speeches. He leaves that normally for Ministers with responsibility for Ministries and for actually getting these things done, to make their contributions and to deal with these issues in their contributions.

Sen. Singh: Only Eric Williams did that.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: It is a little disingenuous to come here and say repeatedly that a significant omission in the budget was that the Minister of Finance and the Economy did not give any information about what happened in 2010, 2011 and in years gone by, but I will deal with that from the perspective of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. My contribution this afternoon will deal

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with what was done last year and then with what we plan to do in the coming year. We will do this in the order of dealing with the bridges, landslips, traffic and road safety measures, highway extension, expansion and improvement and road repairs, the projects that are undertaken under the PURE Programme, the issue of the repair of heritage buildings and addressing coastal erosion matters.

Madam Vice-President, hon. Senators would be aware that one of the targets that this Ministry has set for itself is the provision of very sound infrastructure, in particular road infrastructure, bridge infrastructure and in some cases drainage infrastructure. In fiscal 2012, the Ministry received the sum of \$732,450 million to implement its capital programme of works. Expenditure as at September 30, 2012, that had come back in was in the region of \$619 million, and that amounted to some 94.31 per cent of the allocation to the Ministry. So I think the Ministry did extremely well in undertaking [*Desk thumping*] its projects over the past year.

If you spend and undertake and complete in the region of over 94 per cent of what you said you would do, I do not think that anybody could argue that you have not performed as a Ministry. I think that if I go back to what was said by my colleague, Minister Vasant Bharath, and my colleague, Minister Fazal Karim, they too did indicate what had been done in their Ministries, and they too had very high rates of completion of their programme of works. So I think the Government, led very astutely by hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, our Prime Minister, has been delivering to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, for the coming year, fiscal 2013, the Ministry has received a total of \$749 million, which is made up of \$113.8 million under the Consolidated Fund and \$635.6 million under the Infrastructure Development Fund.

The main thrust of the Ministry's programme in utilizing these funds would be to expand the road network to open up areas of the country for development. It will also be focused on the maintenance and refurbishing of existing infrastructure, and also on implementing road safety measures. As I said, I will be going through these areas as I proceed in my contribution this afternoon.

A significant number of things are happening in the Ministry. Other than the Ministry's mandate, the Highways Division undertook an assessment of the infrastructure which consists of the country's main roads and highways, and it discovered that a significant number of the bridges in the Highway Division's network are in a dilapidated condition. There are numerous landslips which have compromised the travelled roads, and then there has been the deterioration of road signage as well as the lack of adequate road signage in several parts of the country. All of these have led to the development of programmes to address these challenges.

We have divided the programmes into three essentially: a bridges rehabilitation/reconstruction programme, a landslip repair programme and a traffic management programme, which we call a BLT programme—bridges, landslips and traffic management essentially.

Sen. Singh: “You leave out de ‘O’.”

Sen. The Hon. E. George: I leave that for the people in Tobago. [*Laughter*]

First of all, let me say what has been happening in 2012. For that I want to go back to the document: *Fulfilling the Promise, Shaping Our Future*, which was compiled by the Government Information Services Limited. If we go to page 33, lest we forget, there were several projects completed in the previous year by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. Just to remind of some of them: the replacement of the Marianne Bridge in Blanchisseuse; the opening of the Grand Bazaar to Chaguanas interchange and the Aranguez overpass on the Churchill Roosevelt Highway. We have continued in parts to install cable barriers and New Jersey type barriers. Traffic wardens have been put out on the streets, and we intend to expand the number of those wardens as time goes on. New traffic schemes have been implemented in several areas: Port of Spain, San Fernando, Princes Town, along the East-West Corridor in Tacarigua, St. Joseph and Arima, and so on.

The Priority Bus Route was opened up to members of the public in a restricted manner. We have restructured the National Road Building Programme involving 166 projects, and we have rehabilitated many of the major roads in south Trinidad, roads like Pond Street and Pond Street Extension in La Romaine; Seepersad Trace; Pointe-a-Pierre Road in Vistabella; Rock Road in Penal; Lachoos Goodman Road in Penal; Alfred Street in Point Fortin. We have done retaining walls at Forres Park Trace in Tabaquite. Roadwork was done on La Paille Road in Naparima, Thomas Ross Road and the paving of the south-bound lane of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from Tarouba. There was major rehabilitation of roads in central Trinidad, including the Chaguanas Main Road, Edinburgh Road, Sampson Road and Sampson Extension, Rock River Road and other roads that network with it.

In terms of what was done in north Trinidad—because we hear repeatedly that we have been discriminatory in terms of the development of Trinidad and Tobago and that we are focusing only on central and south, which is completely untrue. Roads in Laventille and Piccadilly were done. Roads on the North Coast, Blanchisseuse, and rehabilitation of the Macqueripe Road, the Churchill Roosevelt Highway between Trincity and the Golden Grove Road Extension.

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So all these works, I want to remind the population, have been undertaken by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure over 2010 and 2011. In 2012 my colleague, Mr. Jack Warner, during his contribution to the Appropriation Bill 2011, advised of the Government's initiation of the bridges programme to repair 62 bridges. I am pleased to inform that in March of this year phase one of that programme commenced with the design of 26 bridges identified as being in critical need of reconstruction. I am saying that the designs were done, and the cost of those designs was in the region of about \$20 million. But we have to design the bridges before we undertake the actual construction work, because we do not want to be working by guess. You have to do your research, do your designs, so that you do your work on the basis of sound information and sound designs.

I can list, but I will not go through exhaustively, the 26 bridges that have been identified for reconstruction work, and we expect these works to start around January of next year. Again, these bridges are distributed throughout the country: Calcutta Road No. 2; the Eastern Main Road in Guanapo; Talparo Main Road; Valencia Road; bridge 11 on Coblentz Avenue in St. Ann's; bridge 11, Orange Grove Road in St. Augustine; bridge 122 on the Naparima Mayaro Road; bridge 122 on the Toco Main Road; bridge 166 on the Paria Main Road to Blanchisseuse; bridge 173, Southern Main Road to Cedros. We have 26 of these listed here, spread throughout the country. Work on these bridges is to begin early in the coming year.

In respect of what we plan to do also, bids were invited in October, that is this month, for the construction of 10 of the 26 bridges, under phase one of the programme. The closing date for those bids is November 07, and we plan to invite bids for the remaining 16 bridges under this phase one, and hopefully we will be able to issue those construction contracts, so that construction can start in January of 2013.

4.55 p.m.

Let me list the 10 bridges that we plan to commence very shortly. Bridge 11 at Coblentz Avenue in St. Ann's; bridge 12, Eastern Main Road, St. Joseph; bridge 19, Talparo Main Road; bridge 119, Eastern Main Road, Guanapo; bridge B21, Valencia Road; bridge 13, Cedar Hill Road; bridge 12, Rivulet Road, Point Lisas; bridge 11, Ring Road in Ste. Madeleine; bridge 23, Papourie Road in Debe; bridge 11, Orange Grove Road, St. Augustine. Again, Madam Vice-President, distributed throughout the country.

Again, the technical officers of the Ministry, Madam Vice-President, did another review because there are lots of bridges in the country that require attention in addition to these 62 bridges that we have here, and the 26 that I have identified. In fact, from 62 they have increased the number of bridges to 92 which have to be attended to, and we plan to address these and bring these in the programme as time goes on.

In doing these bridges, Madam Vice-President, the people who did the designs have taken the decision to integrate the infrastructural requirements of these bridges with the needs of the communities in which they are going to be built, and some of the extras that are going to be put in, are the incorporation of pedestrian walkways and lookout points within the structure, so that the bridges will not only be for vehicular traffic, but will also cater for pedestrians by those pedestrian walkways.

The intention also is to landscape the approaches to the bridges to enhance the natural beauty and to also illuminate these bridges using energy efficient means. Particular attention is also being paid to the heredity that we have of these bridges, and to try to keep two iconic structures in particular, and these are the last two spring bridges that exist in Trinidad and Tobago, the bridge at the Paria Main Road in Blanchisseuse, and the bridge B11 in Moruga. So we are paying some attention too, to our heritage bridges, so that we do not lose, in this reconstruction programme, the history behind these bridges.

From the bridges programme we move on to the landslip repair programme, Madam Vice-President, and we have about 406 really serious landslips in Trinidad and Tobago. This is not an exhaustive number because as I go on I will inform this Senate that there are considerably more than the 406 landslips that we are identifying here on this landslip repair programme.

The programme commenced in June of this year, and we are addressing initially, 33 of these landslips in what we call phase one. Again, the landslips are distributed throughout the country, but I want to make mention of my own experiences, having visited many of the constituencies that are affected by these landslips.

Very early in my tenure as Minister of Works and Infrastructure, I took the opportunity to visit the Moruga/Tableland constituency; the Princes Town constituency; the Cumuto/Manzanilla constituency; the Caroni Central constituency, and the Toco/Sangre Grande constituency. I must admit to this Senate that I was horrified at the state of the infrastructure as a result of all the landslips that we saw.

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I did mention in speaking with the technocrats in the Ministry, and I want to mention to this Senate and to the national community again, that if we took the entire budget of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure for this year, and spent all of it attempting to fix the landslips in the Moruga/Tableland constituency alone, we would have expended the entire budget and would not have fully addressed and resolved the challenges of the landslips in that constituency alone. That should give us pause, and that should let us know the magnitude of the problem, and how the neglect by the former Government of all these areas has led to a situation where it is extremely difficult to catch up; extremely difficult. Obviously, no work or very little work was done in these areas over the past many years because these things did not happen overnight. But we have now, as I said, to play catch-up, and if we had the money, I suppose it would have been easier, but that too, with the expenditure and waste of the previous Government, presents us also with a challenge.

So, our intention is to deal with 33 of these landslips, in the first phase; as I said, in checking there were 406 of these very, very bad landslips. These landslips threatened to cut off communities completely. Again, I want to talk to some of the landslips that we plan to do, again to give the lie to the suggestion that comes from the other side and it is repeated—they are repeating it to themselves almost as if by repeating it very often they themselves would believe it, that this Government is discriminating in respect of the placement of infrastructure throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and only placing infrastructure in the central and southern areas.

We have landslips on the Moruga Road; in the Bon Aventure Road; on the Southern Main Road; on the San Francique Road; Morne Diablo Quarry Road; Arima/Blanchisseuse; the Western Main Road in Chaguaramas; the North Coast Road, the Saddle Road in Maraval—and there was one at Saddle Road in Maraval just opposite the La Seiva entrance, that happened recently, that we have to pay attention to because it threatens the collapse of a roadway that provides access to several resident of that area.

The Saddle Road in Santa Cruz also, then we have in Mayo Road; Torrib Tabaquite; the Naparima Mayaro Road; Penal Rock Road; Kanhai Road and Papourie Road. I know some of these roads will be unknown or not familiar at all to my colleagues on the opposite side.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Oh no, uncalled for! [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Just for further details, Madam Vice-President, construction work on 26 of these landslips are due to be commenced by February of next year, and it is the intention of the Ministry in dealing with these landslips to work very closely with the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, specifically, the Water and Sewerage Authority, T&TEC and other the utilities, I think TSTT, more than likely we will have to work with them too because they will all have infrastructure alongside these roadways that are affected by these landslips. We want to ensure that when the work is done, that the Water and Sewerage Authority's pipelines do not leak and make the situation worse. So we want to work closely—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Senator: Collaborate.

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—with those Ministries to make sure that we do a job that lasts a long, long time.

The next item that I want to get on to, Madam Vice-President, is the traffic management programme. I want to underscore why this traffic management programme and what we do in this programme to make the road network safer is crucial, and to do that I want to detail the road fatality figures over the last 10 ten years. I know these numbers are sometimes lost on the population, so I think I need to make mention of them in order to bring into stark focus the importance of the traffic management and road safety measures that we are putting in place.

If we take a 10-year look at the road fatality figures: in 2002, there were 163 road deaths. In 2003, 199; in 2004, 209; in 2005, 216; in 2006, 214 road deaths; 2007, 214 road deaths. There was a significant jump between 2007 and 2008 because it moved from 214 in 2007 to 262 in 2008. It fell almost as significantly the following year from 262 in 2008 to 222 in 2009. It fell again in 2010 to 206. In 2011, it fell again to 181, and so far for 2012, there are 148 road deaths.

Now, Madam Vice-President, one road death is too many and therefore, the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure will continue its programme of work to address the deficiencies in the road infrastructure that perhaps might contribute to the road death figures, and we are happy that they are declining, but as I said, one road death is one too many.

Hon. Senator: Highway patrol.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: But while the Ministry is doing its part to put in the traffic management infrastructure such as guard rails, signage, thermoplastic and manual road markings, retro reflective road studs—that is like cat eyes—

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zebra crossings, zigzag lines and our cable barriers, and New Jersey barriers, there is one thing that is missing, and that is the population of motorists and road users—this goes for pedestrians—have to take responsibility and play their part in bringing the road death figures down. Drivers, please slow down, and pedestrians be careful how you cross.

We will play our part, but members of the public, motorists in particular, have to play their part also in bringing the road death figures down, and the Ministry intends to focus in the coming year on putting in the necessary infrastructure that will make the roads safer. Judging from the fact that the figures have been declining steadily over time, we feel that these measures are working, but we would not be resting on our laurels in the Ministry to continue to ensure that these road death figures continue to dive over time.

In addition to those items mentioned, the other significant infrastructure in terms of the attempt to prevent road deaths having to do with the placement of cable high tension barriers, and the installation of New Jersey barriers will continue.

In respect of 2012, cable high tension barriers were placed on the Solomon Hochoy Highway in some portions, but for the coming year the Central Tenders Board has recently awarded a contract for the placement of 25 kilometres of high tension cable barriers between Chaguanas and Golconda on the Solomon Hochoy Highway. The contractor has mobilized and we expect that he will start work shortly. On that highway there are certain areas in which these cable barriers have already been placed, but this contract will be to place the barriers along that same highway in the areas where the barriers have not yet been placed.

In 2013, it is the intention to place these cable barriers on the Uriah Butler Highway, north and south of the Caroni overpass, and of course, this will prevent the crossover of vehicles over the medians of the highways because these accidents have been occurring much too frequently.

5.10 p.m.

The intention is to place these barriers on the median of the Churchill/Roosevelt Highway, east of the Beetham Highway, 2 kilometres of cable barriers on the median with the Churchill/Roosevelt Highway between the Valsayn South entrance and the Southern Main Road, and the installation of 0.4 kilometres of cable barriers on the median of Churchill/Roosevelt Highway between the Valsayn North and South entrances.

In respect of the New Jersey barriers, in 2012 a contract was awarded for 1,450 metres of these New Jersey barriers to be laid at key locations along the median of the CR Highway in Trincity. To date, barriers have been placed for a distance of about 350 metres east of the Orange Grove intersection.

Members of this Senate and the general public would realize there has been an area where there has been a crossover of vehicles from one side of the highway to the other, and in fact, one of our very eminent justices was injured there and we wish him well in his recovery. This is for 2012. In 2013 it is planned to continue the installation of the New Jersey type barrier from Trincity up to O'Meara on the highway, and also the plans are to do some of this on the San Fernando Bypass.

Another area where we will be attempting to deal with the safety of the roads is in respect of the placement of traffic signals, and the issue of providing back-up power supply for these signalized intersections. Madam Vice-President, the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure maintains about 169 signalized intersections in the country. We will continue the signalization programme along Coffee Street and Gransaul Street in San Fernando; Lady Hailes and Ruth Avenue; Embacadere Road and Roodal Cemetery; and Gulf City Road and Trunk Road, Avocat Junction and the Tarouba Road and the San Fernando Bypass, where we intend to put signals in 2013.

We also have to deal with the issue as we continue this signalization programme of placing back-up power to support the functioning of these traffic signals even in times when the normal electricity is cut. Because, once the normal electricity is cut and these signals go dead it presents an increased risk of accidents and death. So, what we are planning to do in the coming year is to place uninterruptible power supply or standby power supply systems at many of these intersections.

In fact, in 2012, these back-up systems were placed at three intersections: the Priority Bus Route and the Eastern Main Road at Scott Street in Curepe, and the Sierra Leone Road on the Diego Martin Highway intersection, and the Churchill/Roosevelt Highway, Santa Rosa Heights intersection.

In 2013 the plan is to do a whole list, numbering about 20 of these intersections, and we gradually, over the years, will attempt to put back-up power at all of these intersections so that if the traditional electricity goes from the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission, these intersection traffic signals will continue to function and so maintain the safety of the road user. Some of the areas where it is planned to place these in 2013: Diamond Boulevard, Diego Martin Main Road, Diego Martin Highway and Four Roads, Ariapita Avenue and Colville Street and so on. I would not go through the whole list because it is pretty long.

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I have called some of them in the north, let me call some of them in the south, just to be careful with my colleagues opposite: Papourie Road, Barrackpore; Curepe Presbyterian, Lyndon Street; Laventille Boys Government School; Union Claxton Bay Senior Comprehensive. A lot of these would be given—we would be putting these traffic signals and pedestrian crossings to assist the road users.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Hon. Minister, Curepe is in the north. Curepe Presbyterian is in the north.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Yes, but I did also say Laventille, you did not recognize that too. [*Interruption*] Yeah, okay. [*Laughter*]

In an effort to address the issue of traffic congestion nationwide, Madam Vice-President—and I must say this because in the period 2010 to the present time, this Government put in place over 50 experimental traffic schemes throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and I did mention sometime, I think in July, late July early August this year, in speaking to the press, that in the eight years that the PNM Government was in power there was not a single experimental traffic scheme put in place. [*Desk thumping*] That sends a signal as to the perspective that the PNM had on the importance of helping people through their traversing the routes of Trinidad and Tobago and dealing with the issue of the traffic congestion and the frustration that this traffic congestion brings to people in Trinidad and Tobago. The PNM Government never cared about the population that uses the roads of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

In saying so, I think I must mention the issue of the west Port of Spain traffic scheme which was put into place some months ago and which we stopped about seven weeks after it was in use. People in the west, Woodbrook and St. James, will recall that that traffic scheme was implemented in order to address the issue of traffic congestion in St. James and Woodbrook, and to allow people coming from the west in particular to be able to get to their destinations and workplaces in the morning quickly and the reverse in the afternoon by getting back home quickly. And, we recall that after seven weeks of that measure being in place, that scheme being in place, we brought it to a halt.

It was brought to a halt because after having met with those persons in St. James and Woodbrook and their representatives, we discovered that they were being negatively affected by the scheme. The scheme did indeed work “eh”, because it produced a freer flow of traffic, people got to work very, very quickly and they got back home quickly in the afternoon also. [*Interruption*] But, what we discovered was that the people in Woodbrook and St. James were complaining

that they were losing business, that they were being inconvenienced; they could not come out of their homes, the traffic jams were now being faced in places like Ana Street and so on, when you could not come out of your garages and that kind of thing.

The decision turned on the fact that, while the persons who were coming through from Petit Valley, Carenage and Diego Martin and now those who were coming from the east and heading straight west were getting through very easily, and they, of course, were benefiting, the people who lived in those two areas found that they were being considerably disadvantaged and that they were getting no benefit. So, all the benefit went to persons external, in their view, and they had to bear the brunt of the pressure and inconvenience and so on.

This Government is not in the business of inconveniencing people and giving people pressure and so on. So, we felt that in all of the circumstances that were described by the people that we spoke to who represented the people of St. James and Woodbrook, that we would halt the scheme and go back to the drawing board and see how we could, over time, ease the pressure that people are undergoing as they try to pass through those areas. It is a problem that we must address; we cannot leave it and simply stop the scheme and do not make another attempt.

As the name implies, it was an experimental traffic scheme, it was a scheme that was put in place to see what were the implications; and the implications for us in the Ministry and the technocrats in the Ministry, on the basis of the feedback, were that the negatives outweighed the positives, and therefore we were forced to truncate the scheme.

I want to say to the people of St. James and Woodbrook, and the people of the west, that we do not think that the matter should rest there, and there are certain items in that scheme that we feel we can put back in place at minimal inconvenience to the people of the area, but which will help motorists and other road users to traverse the area much more quickly and to ease the problems that they are experiencing in that area. So that, Madam Vice-President, from the lessons learnt from that west Port of Spain traffic scheme, it will now inform the Ministry's approach to identifying a more tenable solution to the issues there.

The other issue that would interest the people of that area and particularly the people of Diego Martin is the dualling of the Diego Martin Highway from Victoria Gardens to Acton Court. Initial works were undertaken there and we now have to continue that work. The initial work that was completed was the paving of the area, the widening of the highway between the Western Main Road and

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Victoria Gardens, and now we have to do the other piece that goes from Victoria Gardens to Acton Court, and persons who traverse that area will see that signs are up indicating that plans are afoot to continue that work, and I want to give the people of Diego Martin and surrounding areas the assurance that come January of next year work would be moving apace.

It will be done in four phases having to do with the placement of culverts, the building of a sound barrier wall and so on, and all of the contracts have already been awarded, but works have to go on that involve the replacement of utilities, and the first thing that has to happen is for T&TEC to come in and remove a lot of the infrastructure that they have there so that the contractors can come in and do their work. I have been given the assurance by the CEO at T&TEC that they will begin the removal of the infrastructure that they have to move from those areas come November. So that once they remove their infrastructure and we address the infrastructure that WASA might also have to relocate, we expect that the works would begin in this area come January of next year.

I now want to turn to the works that are being done under the Programme for the Upgrading of Road Efficiency, that is works being done under PURE, and again, I go back to fiscal year 2011/2012, because, again, I want to give an account of how the Ministry performed so that all doubts of the population—and these doubts are being promoted by persons on the other side as to how the money was spent and so on—will be put to rest.

In fiscal 2011/2012, Madam Vice-President, 393 projects were undertaken by PURE at a cost of approximately \$770 million and utilizing 179 contractors under PURE. In respect of the funding, \$293 million was funded from the Infrastructure Development Fund and \$477.5 million from loan funding, and the projects—we could summarize the projects that were done under PURE. Under bridge works, again, we do it in the form of bridge works, and road rehabilitation, landslips and drainage works, and repairs to bridges.

There were four projects, four bridges and the cost was approximately \$19 million; drainage works, there were 106 projects at a cost of just over \$127 million; road rehabilitation, there were 236 projects at a cost of a little over \$533 million; and landslips or slopes stabilization works undertaken by PURE between October 2011 and September 2012, there were 47 at a cost of approximately \$89 million.

All of these works were done last year, so I am giving an account again of what was done under the programme.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

5.25 p.m.

Madam Vice-President: Sen. George.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Thank you to my colleagues and to those opposite. Just by way of detail out of those consolidated figures for bridge works, drainage works, road rehabilitation and slope stabilization, I just want to identify very important ones that were completed. And I must mention the Uriah Butler Highway, northbound, from the Chaguanas overpass to the Radio Beacon.

Now, people who come from the southern parts in particular will certainly be singing the praises of that piece of work that was done to add another lane to the northbound of the Uriah Butler Highway so that we can relieve some of the congestion that took place in that area over the many, many years; so that project, the Uriah Butler Highway northbound, Chaguanas overpass, the Radio Beacon just before the Caroni bridge, the placement of an extra lane and appropriate drainage improvements and so on. I would not go through the technical details of what was done, but road users would certainly appreciate the importance of that piece of work.

The Couva/Preysal interchange, again, a very significant piece of work that will make the traversing of that particular area a lot easier and a lot quicker for motorists who use that area. And those of us who frequent or use that part of the highway network have certainly been relieved of a lot of traffic congestion. In fact, there is virtually no traffic congestion at that point since the interchange has been put in, and for that we must say a special thanks to the people in the Ministry who went overboard. [*Desk thumping*]

For those of us who again live in the west, we would recall that whenever you came down or up Wrightson Road in the vicinity of Ana Street or you went through the traffic signal just before Peake's at the end of the Audrey Jeffers Highway, it was a very rough ride and the pitch made a lot of what you might want to call "bubbles" in the road and made your drive very, very difficult. Of course, this was caused primarily by the loading caused by the braking action of

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heavy vehicles that use that road. The Ministry solved the problem by using a stone asphalt mix at both the intersection of Ana Street and Wrightson Road, as well as the Audrey Jeffers Highway intersection just before Peake's at that traffic signal.

I am certain that those of us who use that area will recognize now that the road is very, very smooth, and we do not have the bubbles of the pitch there, what we call surface deformation. I said bubbles because I know people would understand in common language exactly what I mean, but they might not understand when I say surface deformation. The technical people will say surface deformation was due primarily to the loading and braking of trucks and other heavy vehicles.

So that the type of asphalt mix used there was different. And it provides not only a surface that will not deform very easily, but one that has increased frictional resistance and stability against cracking. And we will see as we continue to use the roads over the coming months, and so on, whether that is really true.

The other significant piece of roadwork was the St. Helena bypass. Those of us who travel on the road that went to the old airport and down into St. Helena, in our attempt to get to the Caroni South Bank Road, now can do so much more easily. I want to congratulate, again, the people in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure for a wonderful job done. [*Desk thumping*]

I think I must mention this one as the final one in the selection of those that I think are worthy of mention, and this is the Mt. Pleasant landslip. The Mt. Pleasant Road provides an alternative access from Arima to Blanchisseuse, but was inaccessible to vehicles for some 27 years as a consequence of slope failure. For 27 years it stood there defying the PNM Government. I should not say defying, I think it is the wrong; I say the PNM Government was not interested in fixing it. So let me not say that it challenged them. I do not want to say it challenged them, but they would not pay any attention at all to the people of that area and the need for this piece of road.

So 27 years this went on for, Sen. Al-Rawi, and finally it was repaired and fixed by this Government a couple of months ago. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: "Al-Rawi, you learning fast, boy; you learning fast."

[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Not in [*Inaudible*] NAR, UNC—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: "NAR wasn't in power."

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Madam Vice-President, for 2013, the PURE Programme has received \$300 million. Now, this, when you compare it to the \$790-odd that was allocated and expended—I want to quote the figures correctly, let me just go back to them; if you will bear with me. Yes, I said the PURE Programme in fiscal 2011/2012 spent \$770.5 million. In this year's allocation, only \$300 million has been allocated, so that it will present a challenge to the programme to undertake its work. What we might want to do during the course of the year is to seek approval to borrow some money to do the work that we feel has to be done in respect of all of the programmes to fix the bridges, the landslips and the roadworks, the road repair that needs to be done under this programme.

Some of the key projects that we would like to do—but again it depends on the funding so I hope that I am not held to this at next year's budget, that I have to come and account, because I am saying that this is predicated on the availability of funds; but here are some of the things that we would like to do.

We would like to build a walkover at MovieTowne. It is too dangerous for people crossing that highway [*Desk thumping*] and for people who drive very fast cars, like Porches and so on, and who traverse that road regularly, present a challenge to the pedestrians. So that I—I know Sen. Al-Rawi is smiling. I do not know why he is smiling, but the danger posed to persons who cross from the highway and who come from Diego Martin and Carenage and the West, so to speak, and have to cross from the Hasely Crawford side and over to get to Movie Towne, we want to make sure that their lives are spared. So we intend to build that overpass to deal with the safety of those road users.

We also want to do an overpass in the Oropune area because up at Oropune, since that development has now been peopled, there is a challenge posed for persons who cross the highway in that area. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Very wise, very wise.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: So we would like to place a walkover in that area for the persons who live or who visit Oropune Village; sorry, or the Oropune Housing Development.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy, in his budget statement—and I just want to go to it just briefly here, Madam Vice President—spoke to three highway developments that I think I should mention. He says for the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, a number of projects aimed at opening the economic space of Trinidad and Tobago are scheduled, and he said these three are among others:

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One, the extension of the Churchill/Roosevelt Highway from Cumuto to Sangre Grande, which would be phase one of the opening up of the north-east coast of Trinidad and Tobago; two, an additional access from Cocorite to Chaguaramas to improve access to and to develop the north-west peninsula; and three, the dualling of the Rivulet Road to improve access to Pt. Lisas. Now, these it is intended to do under a private/public partnership method.

We have to develop in the Ministry a process by which we can get these highways completed because, I mean, if you think, for example, about Rivulet Road, Rivulet Road is the main road that connects the north-south corridor, that is the Solomon Hochoy Highway to the Pt. Lisas Industrial Estate. Well, the Pt. Lisas Industrial Estate has been developing over time and this road, Rivulet Road, is not really now capable of dealing with the volume of traffic and the weight and the large trucks and so on that are using it, and so the intention is to dual the Rivulet Road.

The intention is because, as I said, the allocation to the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, whether under PURE or to the Ministry itself, is inadequate. It is more than likely, or we are trying to see how we can source funding out of the private sector by getting the private sector involved in undertaking these works. Of course, the Government will pay for it over a period of maybe a decade or two.

So that these bits of infrastructure are vital for the development or the ongoing development of the country and we are of the view that while the Ministry of Finance and the Economy cannot fund it, given its current revenue and expenditure position, we have to try to find out and to perhaps, if it is possible, use the resources of the private sector in doing a build, fund and operate—I do not want to say BOLT again, you know, because it is becoming a bad word—but perhaps use that kind of public/private partnership arrangement. Right.

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*] will not get funding.

Hon. Senator: “Say ZOIT, nah.”

Sen. The Hon. E. George: I do not want to say ZOIT and BOLT again because those are becoming bad words in our thing.

So that we are trying to involve the private sector and we hope that we can get the private sector involved and interested. So we will perhaps go out first for expressions of interest from the private sector to undertake these works. And if that is forthcoming, then we foresee that we can get these highways completed.

The other one that is of significant importance for people in the east is the roadwork between Cumuto and heading to Sangre Grande and Manzanilla because the Valencia junction presents a very, very serious challenge to the people of the east, people who come from Valencia, Toco, Sangre Grande and so on, or who go to visit or who live in those areas have a very, very serious challenge at Valencia junction. Any of us who go to use the beaches of Balandra or Salybia and Toco and so on have certainly been challenged by that. It does not matter whether it is an ordinary workday or a weekend, you have problems when going through that junction.

So we have to address the challenge and the difficulties faced by people living in the north-east and we have to attempt to relieve their problems, and this is what we are proposing to do. If we can get the private sector, again, involved, we expect that we would be able to get some relief for persons in that area by getting this particular job done.

5.40 p.m.

In respect of the alternative access—[*Interruption*]

Madam Vice-President: Senator, time.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Yes. In respect of getting the alternative access to the west, that to we have under this particular programme of work. So finally the one other thing I want to mention, is the issue of our heritage buildings, and just to say that we plan in this fiscal year to deal with the issue of the refurbishment of the President's House which has been a challenge for us for some considerable time.

I thank you, Madam Vice-President.

Madam Vice-President: Senator, before you make your contribution I would like to advise the Leader of Government Business to move the Procedural Motion before we do so.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Madam Vice-President, I beg to move in accordance with Standing Order 9(8), that the Senate continue to sit until 10.00 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

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Sen. Hinds: [*Inaudible*] Democracy reign! Democracy must reign! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Deon Isaac: Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President, for allowing me this opportunity to come from Tobago—[*Desk thumping*] and to make my contribution this evening in this august Senate.

Sen. George: You are always welcome; welcome.

Sen. Deyalsingh: “Talk man talk.”

Sen. D. Isaac: I appreciate that, Mr. Minister, I appreciate that.

Madam Vice-President, before I delve into the crux of the matter, I, along with many other colleagues this evening, would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy Sen. Larry Howai for his presentation of the budget and for his articulation as it relates to the fiscal policies and measures that he has outlaid to this Senate. While I am in a congratulatory mood, I think it is well fitting to welcome and congratulate the new Minister of Justice—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: “Aww!” [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: “You lucky he talking.”

Sen. George: “He not like you.”

Sen. D. Isaac:—Sen. The Hon. Christlyn Moore—[*Desk thumping*] Tobago sister, and also Sen. Sherry-Anne Rollocks-Hackett—[*Desk thumping*] Speyside High School’s principal and—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: That is a gentleman.

Sen. D. Isaac:—a very—as far as I have heard, because I dwell in Tobago, as far as I have heard, the school performs well because of principal Rollocks-Hackett. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: Leadership, leadership! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. D. Isaac: But, Madam Vice-President, if it is one thing I have learned when I went to university—I did a course entitled Organizational Behaviour, in that module, Organizational Behaviour, they stressed that you ought to give kudos where kudos are due. [*Desk thumping*] They also stressed that in evaluating, you need to express where individuals, organizations and in this case where the

presentation of the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy may have had some shortcomings and also some failures. So, in good faith as I have always done, coming to this Senate on my fourth occasion, and I want to say thanks very much for the opportunity, I sincerely feel that my approach remains constant. I will indicate what I found was good and I will also indicate what I found was bad. So with that said, shall we enter straight into the substantive matter? [*Crosstalk*]

1. Recognizing and admitting that the property tax is essential for our nation's growth.

I would like to congratulate the Minister for that. [*Desk thumping*] Now, that was a good thing.

2. The new naval plan to combat the drug trade.

Madam Vice-President, that is also a major crime fighting initiative, but you know what he could have simply said OPVs? He could have simply said the Government would be reintroducing OPVs.

Hon. Senator: He told us the cost of it.

- Sen. D. Isaac:** 3. No duty on CCTV cameras.

I think that is laudable. I think that augurs well for the tourism industry in Tobago, and it would give visitors, potential visitors and returning visitors that sense of reassurance that safety is at hand.

4. The renovation and expansion of the ANR Robinson International Airport.

That too is a laudable consideration for the development of the tourism industry in Tobago.

5. The Tourism Development Fund.

I really would have liked the hon. Minister to be here while I am making my contribution, because I would have given way for him to respond to one or two questions that I would have had as it relates to this. I am curious as to this Tobago Tourism Development Fund; how is it going to work? How will it be administered? Who is going to administer the programme, the fund? Where would the fund lie? Would it be the parameters and responsibility of the Tobago House of Assembly or would it be vested in the Ministry of Tourism? Those are some of the questions that I have as it relate to that.

This takes me to my sixth point.

6. The loan guarantee fund that the Government has capitalized offering some \$200 million.

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Good! Laudable! But the questions remain; who is going to administer this fund? Would it be the Tobago House of Assembly, considering that the Tobago House of Assembly has responsibility in the Fifth Schedule, Madam Vice-President, for tourism? It is my concern as to where the criteria lie for accessing that fund.

7 The Government through private/public partnership and in other words BOLT, would seek to establish 1,000 new rooms through branded hotels.

I was quoting some of the words of the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, but, Madam Vice-President, this, as I heard the last speaker mention, private/public partnership, I think this might be a perfect opportunity to give my perception and my rationale on BOLT and how it unfolded in the Tobago scenario.

Hon. Senator: Is this peculiar? [*Laughter*]

Sen. D. Isaac: No, no seriously. I am of the view that the Tobago House Assembly has suffered far too long. The Tobago House of Assembly is 32 years old, and I am quite certain that every single Senator in this Chamber would acknowledge that once you have turned 18 years old “you turn big man and woman” and you should be able to handle your own finances. You should be able to take a loan, hence the reason I feel that the Tobago House of Assembly having struggled for so long after turning 32 years this year, has struggled to be able to handle certain capital expenditure, and borrowing is an issue on the front burner as it relates to the amendment of the Tobago House of Assembly Act.

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. D. Isaac: No, if it is that the Tobago House of Assembly would have had the opportunity to borrow, I sincerely feel that the issue of BOLT would have been a non-issue. But I took the liberty to walk with a copy of the Tobago House of Assembly (Amdt.) [*Laughter*] Bill for any of my colleagues on the other side who may feel so enlightened to have a view.

Sen. George: You going good.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: I thought you walked with the Annex.

Hon. Senator: Stick to the point.

Sen. D. Isaac: Madam Vice-President, based on that, I am of the strong view that the Tobago House of Assembly deserves an opportunity, the people of the Tobago deserve the opportunity to manage their own affairs wholly and solely.

With that said, I would like to turn to one or two of the shortcomings and failures that I have recognized in the present fiscal measures. We are all aware, and I am not going to lament it, we have heard it time and time again in debates gone by, and from the contributions of other Members of this Senate, that this Government has failed to award the Tobago House of Assembly its 4.03 per cent. I am not going to lament that, but it is law. So, if we are on one hand talking about upholding the law and saying that the Tobago House of Assembly received more than 5 per cent of the national budget, I say that the Tobago House of Assembly has responsibilities under the Fifth Schedule and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has responsibilities under the Seventh Schedule for services to be provided in Tobago. So based on that, the Tobago House of Assembly deserves its just due and the Government shall perform its duties under the Seventh Schedule.

Now, we have heard time and time again, the Minister of Finance and the Economy articulating over and over again that the Tobago House of Assembly has received more than its just due, but I beg to differ. I am of the view that austerity measures have kicked in for the Tobago House of Assembly. I will tell you why I say that. I will tell you why I said this. I turn to the request made by the Tobago House of Assembly in its fiscal policies for this year 2013. I will share some figures with this Senate justifying my claims as to why I am of the view that austerity measures have kicked in for the Tobago House of Assembly and for the people of Tobago, particularly the young people.

5.55 p.m.

I turn now to housing. The Tobago House of Assembly requested \$285.4 million for housing for young people in Tobago, to give young people an opportunity to be able to acquire housing. Now, I think that is important. But, Madam Vice-President, you know, the Government awarded \$28 million—10 per cent, on average.

Sen. Singh: But they get experience from Trinidad.

Sen. D. Isaac: Let us turn to the Speyside High School—and we have the beloved principal of the Speyside High School here with us, and I am quite certain and I am hopeful that the beloved principal of Speyside High School will use her influence—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: If any.

Sen. D. Isaac: Well, let us hope that she has influence—to convince the Minister of Finance and the Economy to have a heart. Madam Vice-President, for the expansion of the high school of Speyside, the THA requested \$1.35 million. They were allocated \$150,000. Madam Vice-President, I am really hopeful that this principal of Speyside High School would use her influence to make this change.

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The Young Professionals Programme: Madam Vice-President, the Tobago House of Assembly requested \$20 million to assist—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: That sounds like [*Inaudible*]

Sen. D. Isaac: No, no, no—to assist young people to get jobs. Let me explain a little about the Young Professionals Programme. The Young Professionals Programme is a programme that was set up by the Tobago House of Assembly's Division of Finance and Enterprise to allow for young persons returning home—qualified young persons—who would have travelled, acquired their qualifications and returned home, to offer service to home, and what that programme does is to give them an opportunity to start working from the outset, as soon as they return home, and I think it is a laudable initiative. The THA requested \$20 million and, Madam Vice-President, the THA was allocated \$300,000.

The Scholarship Programme—and I am really, really disappointed that the Minister of Finance and the Economy is not here because the figure requested was a figure very close to his heart, the figure was \$10 million. It is a figure that he could relate to, Madam Vice-President—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: “Doh go dong dat road.”

Sen. D. Isaac:—\$10 million. No, no, no. That is all I have to say. It is a figure that the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy could relate to; it is \$10 million.

Sen. Hinds: Oh, yes. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. D. Isaac: I would have thought that he would have said to himself, “Let us award this for scholarships for young people in Tobago. Let us award it.” But, Madam Vice-President, do you know what was awarded? I said \$10 million was requested. Do you know what was awarded? Two hundred thousand dollars.

Hon. Senator: Oh gosh!

Sen. Deyalsingh: Not even 10 per cent.

Sen. D. Isaac: Two hundred thousand dollars! Is it that the Government, or is it that the Minister of Finance and the Economy is saying to young people for this financial year, no financial assistance this year for young people in Tobago?

Sen. Hinds: That is what he is saying.

Sen. D. Isaac: Is that what he is saying?

Sen. Hinds: That is what he is saying! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. D. Isaac: The Tobago House of Assembly, Madam Vice-President—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: You have GATE.

Sen. D. Isaac:—has spent over \$75 million over the last decade on financial assistance for young people in Tobago. Over 1,500 young persons in Tobago benefited from that. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: Oh yes! Oh yes! Oh yes! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. D. Isaac: So on average, Madam Vice-President, they would have spent anything like, approximately \$7.5 million to \$8 million per year. So what is happening this year? The students who apply for the financial assistance are not going to get any. I am disappointed. I am extremely disappointed, Madam Vice-President. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Stay on course; stay on course.

Sen. D. Isaac: And you know what? There is a saying that goes like this: actions speak louder than words. However, in this case, I am of the view that money talks.

Sen. Singh: And what walks?

Sen. D. Isaac: No, no, no, I did not say that. I did not say that all.

Sen. Hinds: Stay on course.

Sen. D. Isaac: And against that backdrop, Madam Vice-President, I am of the view that Tobagonians—and I dare say TOP Tobagonians—are disappointed, dismayed and demoralized. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: Oh, yes. “Only 40 ah dem showed up. Is 40 or 50?”

Sen. Deyalsingh: And 30 from Trinidad.

Sen. Hinds: “Yeah, yeah, 40 from Trinidad.”

Sen. D. Isaac: I now turn, Madam Vice-President, to an issue that is very close to my heart, an issue that continues to have young persons in Tobago over and over and over again, time and time again, clamouring and calling for justice. I recall that the new Madam Minister of Justice indicated that justice must be swift—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. Moore: You were there?

Sen. D. Isaac: No, no, I watched it on television. Justice should be swift and justice should be sure, and I am calling on the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy to mete out some justice to the young people of Tobago. Reconsider your position of those allocations for the YES Programme. Reconsider your position of the allocation for the Financial Assistance Programme.

Hon. Senator: What is YES?

Sen. Deyalsingh: “Stick tuh yuh point. Ignore dat.”

Sen. D. Isaac: It is Youths Energised for Success. Madam Vice-President, the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, made a statement in her contribution to the debate in the Lower House and I quote, if you would permit me:

“Because the Partnership is based on mutual respect and appreciation of our...unique Trinbagonian identity and the need to reverse decades of political inequitable treatment and the consequential marginalization of the people of Tobago.”

Madam Vice-President, surely, those words are not reflective of the allocation given to the Tobago House of Assembly’s development programme.

Madam Vice-President, Tobago’s young persons, young professionals, young entrepreneurs, young, aspiring home owners, are truly disappointed. After continuous echoes of “We shall rise; we shall rise; together we shall rise”, young persons are faced with a position where they feel rejected and disadvantaged.

Madam Vice-President, I would like to take this opportunity to remind my fellow Tobagonians that the cries of that \$20 billion that individuals have been making—that cry of \$20 billion spent and “where it gone”—I would like to remind individuals that that \$20 billion represents recurrent expenditure for the last decade, and if you calculate the pay, or the salary of individuals, of 20,000 persons, you would see that on average, that is approximately \$8,000. So that \$20 billion would have paid salaries; it would have paid wages; it would have paid rent. It all came under the recurrent expenditure. It did not come under development at all. So I would like to clear up that misconception out there by many individuals.

Madam Vice-President, I have a major concern, as a young Tobagonian, with the representation that we are presently receiving in the Lower House. I would like to use some statistics. It is so important to have stats. Statistics create knowledge and knowledge creates understanding. I was perusing the Parliament’s website and I

came across some interesting stats, and they pertain to our representation in the Lower House—Tobago's representation in the Lower House. It reads: Hon. Vernella Alleyne-Toppin, MP for Tobago East—Bills, seven; Motions, one. The hon. Dr. Delmond Baker, MP for Tobago West—Bills, four—these are the contributions they would have made from 2010 to present—Motions, three.

Madam Vice-President, when you examine the contributions that they would have made in this House from then to now, and we look at the budget and the contributions that they would have made in this fiscal presentation here, you would realize that they really did not defend the position of the Tobago voice. They really did not defend the position of the Tobago voice. And I need to congratulate my colleague, Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe, because in contrast, she would have spoken 33 times—Bills, 33 and Motions, 10. Now, I am of the view that we really are losing—or have lost—our representation in the House of Representatives.

Sen. Singh: What about your THA representation? Let us hear about that.

Hon. Senator: Call the THA election.

Sen. D. Isaac: Madam Vice-President, we all know what happened with former Ministers Nathaniel Moore and Agnes Williams. You remember 17/17/2, and that coalition-formed Government? Back then, Nathaniel Moore and Agnes Williams stood up for Tobago and they were fired. I did not hear the MP for Tobago West, nor did I hear the MP for Tobago East standing up for Tobago and indicating to their colleagues what is just; what is due to Tobago and for the Tobago House of Assembly. But instead, they cautioned the Minister of Finance and the Economy to watch how he is releasing the funds to the Tobago House of Assembly. Madam Vice-President, in all fairness, I would have hoped that our representatives would have done some justice in this Appropriation Bill in terms of representation of the people of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Madam Vice-President, there is no doubt in my mind—there is absolutely no doubt in my mind—that the Minister of Finance and the Economy will reconsider his position as it relates to his allocation, especially for the financial assistance to young persons in Tobago. I have absolutely full confidence that he would do just that.

Madam Vice-President, as I close, I wish to take this opportunity to encourage the Minister of Finance and the Economy to consider the review of his allocation to the Tobago House of Assembly. Consider the law and give us our just due.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: Excellent!

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is 6.10 and we will take the dinner break at this time and resume at 7.10 p.m. This sitting is now suspended until 7.10 p.m.

6.10 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

7.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Madam Vice-President: Sen. Bernard.

Sen. Dr. Lennox Bernard: Thank you. Thank you colleagues, Madam Vice-President. I am grateful for the honour and privilege to speak on the budget, more so as it refers to education.

Let me at the outset congratulate Sen. Howai on the delivery of his budget. It was cogent, lacking in much vilification, he stayed the course and he did his bit well. I also welcome Sen. Christlyn Moore. I did it privately but, once again, I want to welcome you and I want to welcome your colleague, Sen. Hackett, from Tobago, who is here as a Senator on the Government side.

I would like to spend some time, Madam Vice-President, looking at education, taking us through some aspects that relate directly to curriculum at times, directly to teacher training and, as well, to early childhood care and education. The Minister of Finance and the Economy allocated \$9.149 billion to education and training.

Sen. Karim told us what his share of the budget was, and that is good and that is interesting because in many budgets in some of the developed world, more money is ploughed into tertiary education rather than to primary and secondary. I am sure by showing the focus, as we have, in primary and secondary education, we have in fact given some indication of our willingness to deal with our young ones at an earlier age, even as we seek to bring them up to the point of tertiary education, and the 60 per cent cohort that the Government is seeking to have represented.

This funding represents 16 per cent, or approximately 16 per cent, of our annual expenditure, and more than 6 per cent of GDP. Now, this compares favourably with our regional partners. In fact, only three of them are able to have a 6 per cent GDP and not much after that. And in the developed world they struggle, some of them, to spend upward of 10 per cent.

We spoke of Ghana yesterday and today, and I took a quick glance at what Ghana is doing. Ghana is at 5.3 per cent. I looked at India, because I was very interested in what was happening in skills development in India and even though India spends US \$47 billion on education, they are at 3.5 per cent, and their politicians quarrel that they have to do more in that regard. So, on paper and in the context of principle and in the context of intent, we are not doing too badly by having our budget pegged at 6 per cent of GDP for education. The intent is there, but I will want to go down this road with us, or you with me, to see if in fact we are getting value for money. Some of my colleagues have spoken, in part, about the value-for-money aspect to education.

Now, the Ministry of Education recently put out what is a Strategic Plan for Education 2011—2015. It is an ambitious document, well written, a lot of verve, a lot of good intentions but no sweeping changes. It has always been said that teachers seem to be some of the most conservative people in the world. In fact, it is argued that we spend a lot of money training people in teaching, but most of the time they go back into the system and do exactly what they did before.

One individual has said, using the isms, that teachers stay within the context of presentism, that is, they are more comfortable with the present and unwilling to move beyond, or if it is not them, others who chide them for moving onwards. Then it is said that teachers have become too individualistic—individualism is the second one. So, some of the benefits to education, like cooperative teaching, cooperative learning, master teacher, for want of a better term—looking for a better one that master teacher—and, in essence, the system again suffers.

The last one, as I said, is conservatism, where we are fearful of reform. We are fearful to change things. But comprehensive reform requires us to think outside of the box. In so doing, and I think Prof. Sankat said it—I saw it on the papers in passing yesterday—that in seeking to do that, we have to ensure that we embrace as many people as possible within the community to support what we are doing.

So, the current situation with the continuous assessment programme, where Minister Gopeesingh is still struggling to provide us with enough information and data to say that it can work from Standards 4 and 5 at this time, when people are saying we are not yet ready for it, speaks to that question of not allowing all those other voices in early in the game.

We have been reading some of the recent commentators who laud the successes of places like Finland and Ontario, Canada, and may I add in reading last night, as Sen. Karim was doing his reading on Hungary, I was doing mine on Poland. These successes, Madam Vice-President, are built on reform that requires the decentralization of power.

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Now, that is not what exists at the moment in our Ministry of Education. Our Ministry of Education is monolithic, and even when we go through the strategic plan with ideas for improving our school supervisory system, and getting back to some of our school boards, it is not the type of reform that would give teachers, and principals the opportunity to empower themselves in the classroom, and empower themselves in their schools. I do not know why we are fearful of this, because I think in fairness to our teachers, generally, and to our principals, there are many of them who, if given the opportunity to be in charge, will do a good job within the system. Of course, there will be checks and balances necessary to ensure that this is happening.

Part of my work in this Senate, and I want to assure you, Madam Vice-President, I will be doing this all the time, is to ask people in the system, the voiceless ones, to tell me what they want to hear because I have to be on the ground to know what is going on. Principals said exactly what Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight said, that they need a better format for dealing with their budget. Budgets come late. Budgets now are not given in a yearly manner anymore. Money is released as the Ministry of Education sees fit. Some people say by the time they get the money, the projects that they have in mind must be truncated because they cannot do them within the time that is given to them.

So, again, in terms of ownership of their schools we have to do better in terms of how we finance our schools and the power we give to our principals to run their plants. This is something I wish the Ministry of Finance and the Economy would take seriously because one of the complaints was that, as we get nearer the budget period, no money comes to the school. So that it is likely that August, September and even October, you would be running, as one principal puts it, on fumes. Nothing is coming in to assist you to run your plant.

Now, with all the good intentions and with all the grand ideas for change, if we do not address this problem seriously, much of what we hope to do will fail. What makes Finland and Ontario and Poland much better than us at this point is they focus on underachieving pupils and schools. Madam Vice-President, almost 60 per cent of our children in schools are underachieving. I will say it again. Almost 60, some say 67 per cent of our children are underperforming. What we are literally doing at this time is taking care of a 30 per cent academic elite.

What we are doing at this time—and mind you, this is no castigation of this Government, they are new in the game. As Sen. Karim said, the amount of pieces you have to pick up at this stage is tough. This started all in the '70s. We were on autopilot since the '70s. I can tell you because I had a serious role to play in the 1993—2003 Task Force Report, where we felt that for the first time there would have been a breath of fresh air—we had done all the work necessary to make this change possible.

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. Dr. L. Bernard: Yes. And what followed was a piecemeal approach; piecemeal in so many ways, colleagues. Let me give you an example, because it almost now exists. First-choice schools in 1993 amounted to 12, which meant that they had 1,440 spaces. In those days, the numbers were higher in terms of the number of people writing the exam, 24,000. You, therefore, had 80 per cent of those—19,200 people trying—to get spaces, 1,440. If that is not gridlock, I do not know what is.

Now, what we have is 17,000-plus children, and we have only increased the number of first-choice schools by maybe another 10 or 15. Minister Gopeesingh loves to say 35, we are at 35. I do not think we are yet at 35. In the 1990s we went to a Minister of Education and we said, “Mr. Minister”—and that was before the plan was even completed—“Mr. Minister, if you can upgrade 10 more of these schools,”—and some of the these schools simply needed an auditorium, Sen. Mohammed—St. George’s College, which is a good school.

7.25 p.m.

We went looking at the schools—Iere High School, Holy Cross College, the school on the hill in San Juan, Woodbrook Secondary—everywhere. We told them hey, if you can change these choices and add to that list these schools, you will begin to break down that barrier. We did not do it and we are still the 30 per cent academic elite—that yes, we glorify in every year—and I help celebrate that, but in essence the 67 per cent or more are staring at us.

The only thing that this Government faces that is worse, is that they are meeting children now who are disconnecting totally from the system—totally from the system. Whereas in the earlier days the children would—even in the 1990s—go to school, try their best maybe and do a little bit here and there, this is not happening.

Special needs of students are identified early. Now, Sen. Drayton will not be against me saying this, but in 2007 United Way got together with Families in Action. United Way promised \$2 million, Families in Action was there. The plan was to set up a Children’s Diagnostic Centre using a wing of our Eric Williams hospital. The project would have cost \$9 million. They met the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education liked the project. Then the struggle began as to ownership of the project, because you were putting it now in the Ministry of

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Health's hospital and the tussle began. United Way took its \$2 million, and by now after three years, we would have had a diagnostic centre to examine every child if possible, between zero to five and identify an area of disability if it existed, and through that intervention, help that child to rise above it.

What are we hearing now from our Special Services Division? We went there on another matter and what are they telling us? They are telling us that—I have gone a little ahead of my notes—in essence, as was found in the strategic plan, the Minister of Education is on track. He is intending to set up testing and neurodiagnostics of children. I do not know if it is one centre. Ministry of Education said they had in mind three, and that the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development would have another, or two of them, that would deal with other aspects of social development rather than some of the clinical areas needed that would be undertaken.

Why the two groups cannot come together and create one set of diagnostic centres, or even going back to the original plan, or even begging United Way to give us that \$2 million that can be used—of course it would not cost \$9 million now. So in a meeting with the Ministry, five diagnostic centres would be established by the Ministry that would allow for screening for vision, hearing and other development issues including cognitive development.

Fifteen per cent of our children in the school system need that right now—15 per cent as a benchmark. If it is not hearing, it is eyesight. One friend went to Toco and did some diagnostic work and found that many, many—percentage-wise—of the children could not see the blackboard, the chalkboard or the whiteboard properly.

Are we not setting up our children for failure, in a situation where, with a huge budget, we are not taking care of those things? That is Finland; Finland that started 30 years ago in the '70s, I think it was, or a little later—have reached this point because they made that important.

What did they make important again? The rejection of high stakes testing. There is too much high stakes testing in Trinidad and Tobago. Why should we be further testing our children on a continuous assessment from as early as Standard 1? In dance, how would you measure that? How would you measure the music? What would be the criteria you would use for measuring?

Even as you do this, as some of us believe, we do not need an SEA exam now. We have places in the secondary school—we have places in the secondary school. Even if we have to deal with the Concordat which everybody seems fearful to deal with? They do not want to touch it. It has to be touched. It is 60 years old. It still allows for inequity.

In fact, I am telling some of my Catholic people, you better talk to the Government soon, because after a while when Minister Karim and Minister Gopeesingh look at these figures and realize as Minister Gopeesingh is beginning to sing the mantra: Catholic schools, 40 per cent failure at the primary level—we, the Government, paying for that. Anglican schools, ditto; Presbyterian schools, the noblest of the lot, 20; Hindu and Muslims balancing it off, doing better—cannot go on.

Now how do you deal with that and not lose an election? You have to find ways to deal with it. One of the ways I ask my Catholic friends—and they may not give me communion next time—[*Laughter*]*—*is, dear Catholic friends, instead of taking the band of 80 per cent to 90 as your 20 per cent, why do you not take the band of 60 percenters and mix them up? You should just guess some of the opinions I get for that. People ask, are you mad? One lady said to me, we have done our work; we cannot do the work for the Government. I say but it is all our work. It is all our work. I went back to India, and I found that India has in its Education Act—and I was so proud to see this—a provision of 25 per cent seats in schools to underprivileged children.

There is a theory out there, that if you take children who are underprivileged and you mix them with children who are more privileged, the likelihood is that you are going to pull up the underprivileged. There are many who believe they do not want to deal with that messiness because that messiness requires you to have people to work with the children. In fact, one person when I said this, said, they would come and “mash up we school.”

So it calls on a Government with a lot of political will to say let us share the wealth, let us spread it out, because what we literally have now is a kind of elite—academic elite. If we do not change that, the 7,000-odd that we are missing, that we do not know where they are—I think we know where some of them are. Sen. Karim will know where some are with what he is doing—some are on the block, some are joining gangs and some are just there.

If you do not believe me there is work going on, articles in journals, geographic discussion on poverty and underperformance among people—still on Poland.

So we have too many exams. Finland has two high stakes exams. They let the child go right up to 14 plus, first cycle, secondary education. Why do we tackle you there? We want to see career-wise where you are going. Then the next one is for matriculation to higher education—and the children, well not all of them love

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school. Leonard Bernstein responded to Kevin Baldeosingh's article on it and he ended by saying, "their work is impressive". I quote, Madam Vice-President, with your permission:

"The Finns are, however, like everyone else, being challenged by the forces of modernity: immigration, changes in economic markets, an aging population."

That is one I am not seeing in our education plan or Sen. Tewarie's plan. How is he going to deal with all these old people who by 2015 would be over 65? Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight referred to in it terms of transportation. Already some of us are beginning to limp, and we would not be able to drive because night driving may be affecting us and so on.

How do you take care of all of us in a situation—but the sadder part to that is what Sen. Howai has said when he asked, "where the children?" We were at 17,000 children for Common Entrance for the last few years.

So the Finns—and the last one the Finns do. They do not have many subject silos. Look how many subject silos we are now imposing on primary school children. Look at how many subjects. In fact, one principal was saying, "I have to change my report book because I cannot put all dem subjects down."

All those things tend to making learning at primary education sheer drudgery. We have taken the fantasy and feeling from education at the primary level and children are in a state of drudgery from an early age.

Kindly indulge me for a while to deal with it from a geographical mapping standpoint. Total number and percentage of students scoring 30 per cent and below by educational districts—and this can be done by any one of us.

7.40 p.m.

In fact, Sen. Dr. Tewarie's CSO people did an excellent job with their human resource development atlas. In fact, all you can do is now take those layers, put them one on the other and know exactly where all of this is happening. Believe me you, the layers are falling one, one on the other. Hear it for the SEA:

North-eastern county: and I am giving you a cycle of six years, because my thesis statement is that we have reached the point of entrenching failure in our system. No wonder when these children, after they leave these schools and are told where they are being placed, go through the trauma that they do at age 11.

North-eastern: I heard Sen. Al-Rawi say that that is one almost of a crisis area because the layers for north-eastern pile up with everyone. Low standard of living, problems related to educational attainment, and they are all there—has a big task on his hand.

Hon. Senator: All of us.

Sen. Dr. L. Bernard: All of us. St. George East: south-eastern—south-eastern, of course, as you know, is Mayaro, Rio Claro. Then my colleagues from Tobago—and I am glad they are here in their numbers. Tobago is at the bottom of the pile and Sen. Dr. Balgobin felt that they might not want him to go to Tobago, but already I am getting that kind of slack because I have been to Tobago three times on this matter and people do not seem to want to hear this.

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Do not want it?

Sen. Dr. L. Bernard: They do not want to hear this. The national norm in 2011 for students scoring 30 per cent and below was 9.9, and Tobago was at 10.1. The highest was north-eastern at 16.4. When we compare this with the 60 per cent band—and I did not finish my story with the church. If the church were to take the 50 and 60 percenters instead of the 80 percenters, mix them up a bit, we would find that in essence—and Sen. Coudray, one of the top schools in south tried that experiment, the convent, and it worked. She took 10 per cent of her Concordat bit, and she took 10 per cent of the poorer children, and those poorer children did well. Have to try something. Sixty per cent band consistently below the same group of people. I am sorry, to say, we had to add St. Patrick.

It was a joy last evening when I went home to see Cedros celebrating 40 of their schools, where some of the children did well in the SEA, but what was even more important, a community leader—and I wish I remembered his name to go down in *Hansard*—brought these people together to celebrate this child who did so well from one of our Cedros schools. St. Patrick, however, joined the list of those who were not doing so well at the 60 per cent band. Then we get to the high-flyers, the 90 percenters, all the others are out and consistently in place, Caroni and Victoria. What is it saying to us? We have normalized, even if we only use the primary, that problem related to schools.

We take the secondary, briefly. Bear with me, Madam Vice-President, secondary schools. Ministry of Education, Dr. Gopeesingh again, on the floor saying it loud and clear, we heard it earlier, Ministry of Education notes that only 44.6 per cent were successful in five or more subjects—what wastage—while 43.3 per cent were successful in five or more subjects including maths and English. And what two areas can you guess were the two areas that scored 52 and 50 per cent of all their schools, respectively, scoring above that point? Caroni and Victoria. So if we were to do the layering effect, you would invariably see that failure was coming up the rank from the primary to the secondary.

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Tobago, again, struggling, and with all deference to you, Sen. Rollocks-Hackett, for your school—and I know Speyside needs another type of curriculum, needs something with environmental education in it to deal with your boys so that you can teach them differently. I know of the project that was started some time ago. The thing is there is one saving grace in both St. Patrick and Tobago; one school that saved the day for both in both countries. Tobagonians are bright people. There was a time we felt that Tobagonians were brighter than Trinidadians.

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: That is a change. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. L. Bernard: “It still so?” Why are Tobagonian children performing badly at school? Who will examine that carefully in terms of the wastage that is taking place? That is why when Sen. Dr. Balgobin spoke of low productivity in Tobago, he was quite correct. That too has to be changed.

I specifically examined, Madam Vice-President, the reports as they relate to schools that had students coming from the so-called hotspots—I do not like the term—coming from the high-risk areas, and all these schools have consistent history of poor results. So you are spawning failure, and in the face of it we are looking at that failure and we are not doing anything about it, Sen. Tewarie. That is why I remember Lloyd Best’s remark and I want to put this in the record because I am unhappy how we have treated Lloyd Best in this 50th anniversary. We should have had a chair set up in honour of Lloyd Best this year. [*Desk thumping*] I am not Tapia, but I think in terms of intellectual thinkers he is not easily matched, and with all this we are doing in our 50th anniversary—in fact, we could have even given him our top national award, posthumously, because he deserves it. We may not always have been able to fathom the things he said, but he was a sensible man.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: Everything is not finished yet.

Sen. Dr. L. Bernard: Hear his words—a chair, a chair, a chair, a chair, plantation economy, young minds to study this. Hear Lloyd:

“I keep warning that the increased expenditure in human development that they are calling for has been leading to less development...the real problem with the school system lies with the values of the culture, which underlie the school system. It has very little to do with the availability of resources. It has to do with values and state of mind or the psychology with which the country is approaching its problems.”

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I really want us to hear this last part of Lloyd Best's comment because it hits at all of us and really we can introspectively think of if we are in here:

“Most of the elites who make the decisions and who are responsible for planning and management believe fervently that inequality is a normal and permanent condition, if not a desirable condition.”

My God! The power we will have always with us, sounds just like that. That is Lloyd! That is Lloyd!

Our Minister in his moment of frustration—and you can see he is frustrated. I am so sorry for that man at times because I know he too gets up each day wondering what next to hit him. Noting about the missing children, noting that some 5,000 students out of 17,000 after writing the SEA do not make it to the CSEC level he said, and I quote:

“...how long can a Minister of Education allow students to suffer the indignity of failure year after year, and generation after generation and not do something about it in haste?”

Newsday, Thursday June 21, 2012.

Of course, he was commenting on the continuous assessment and saying that he wants to have it happen, but even if taken out of context, you can see that the gentleman was crying out for what obviously is failure staring us in the face.

This other one that bothers me is the question of educating boys. For years we know that boys learn differently. All the psychologists tell us that boys are wired differently from girls. We even have some of the local people, like Mark Figueroa and others, who spoke of male privileging and other things that tell us that we cannot keep teaching boys the same way we do girls. Boys need open spaces, boys need kinesthetic elements to their learning, but we continue to foist on our young men situations which, in fact, add to the disconnect that they now have at schools.

Our boys are not learning at schools. The few boys that continue to learn at school, learn because of some structure they have gotten in their home, in their religion and also the expectations of their parents who have been able, over time, to stress the importance of education. Think of all those children who are not exposed to that, who do not have what people like Jenks are telling us, subtle expectations to learning provided in the home daily, plus all the other things, the various religious tenets that show you that structure is important, so you stay focused just as the girls do. And those are the ones who are learning and we are not doing anything, Madam Vice-President, to change that.

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We talk about it. We have some institutions—and we are not alone in this. Some people are doing other things. More public schools are splitting up boys and girls because they learn differently. Some schools have tried to even separate them for some of the core areas of the syllabus in order to get it to happen. I want to suggest to Sen. Karim that in fact we need—and he shares that kind of passion for new learning—we need boys to learn at times where there is an opportunity to do job shadowing even as they are in the classroom. After-school programmes can become part of school programmes. There is nothing like part-time and whole time and all that again.

7.55 p.m.

So, Sen. Karim, if you have a situation where you are, as I was asking Sen. Tewarie, can you set up a small marine school as an extension of the IMA, near your east Port of Spain centre.

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Sen. Dr. Bernard has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin*]

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Vice-President: Senator, you may continue, please.

Sen. Dr. L. Bernard: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

I did not realize—I am so passionate about this, I may not finish all of this because I was hoping to be able to beg Sen. Karim to look again at our means test for GATE. Please look again at our means test for GATE. And he knows how I have always viewed the term “equality of opportunity” as not the same as equity. And in a modern, post-modern setting, equity is about equal as fitting. Equity is equal as different. Equity can never be equal or the same anymore. It never was, according to people like Mary Warner and Christopher Jenks. We fool ourselves into feeling that we can do for everybody the same way, the same way all the time.

But if we had, Sen. Karim, a means test, well done, above reproof, very transparent, as they are doing in places like Scotland—Wales dropped it because Wales experienced what you experienced with ghost students, so Wales gave up the programme, for two years they have not joined back. Scotland is doing it. They are not doing it for higher education, they are doing it for the vocational

subjects. But what they do is, and we were talking about that at the break, they allow employers to be part of this empowerment of the learner and the learner becomes part of the empowerment of his learning, something that Sen. Dr. Balgobin was saying.

When we talk to the people in the Remand Yard, because I am on another committee looking at the youth at risk; when we talk to people at Laventille Hill; when we talk to young, young people on the block, as sometimes I go out and speak to them, apart from the other value frames of rage, disconnect, victimhood, instantness, entitlement, and people are—and that is the point Sen. Dr. Balgobin was making, people feel that they are entitled to everything and in so doing they lose that sense of ownership of what they do and who they are.

With a properly run means test—and you are not going all the way down to the dollar for dollar, again, 50/50 might be a little tough these days; we can straddle it from about 70, 80, 90, 100 per cent; you give all to the very poor and you come down the line. But built into that, Sen. Karim, could be the whole question of the employer taking some part of that burden off the State.

Private industry has got away with too much in terms of training. The burden of training has been put on the State too much. They are not doing much more than doing the kinds of work related to their business, as Sen. Drayton was saying. So you are in banking, they may help the teller to do skills related to the work of the teller. But they are leaving the Government to do all the work.

Yes, we could give them a tax incentive for doing that, but surely they could be part of that whole new paradigm which could be our approach to learning accounts because I cannot see Sen. Karim sustaining this indefinitely. I do not know where he will get the money. And rather than us look down the road and see this thing crash in our faces, we should begin to look carefully at how we get people to share in their own development. I really believe this and I feel if he went that way, taking into account some of what Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight was saying, that even as we want to get them to learn and we challenge them to get a GP of 2.0, remember that there are some situational barriers to learning that people face, Senator.

In our work, we met some people who lived in high-rise housing and some of the young women said they could not study at night because the noise from the tenement building prevented them from doing their learning. They said if they really wanted to study they had to stay out, but staying out was so dangerous now, so their learning suffers.

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We have known in the UWI Open Campus and School of Continuing Studies, the second one, women being battered by their spouse for simply wanting to go back to school. That is another thing some people face that may cause their averages to fall; financial pressures; bosses telling them they cannot leave this afternoon, the very day that you have a class. They cannot go and they are forced to stay in the workplace, and they are mainly women. I think more than 70 per cent of your students are women. I do not have a fair count on that. Distance from the centre, and I am happy you are taking care of that. I am happy that you are, in fact, looking at that one for the shuttle service for the people.

Then there are some attitudinal problems they have: low self-esteem, fear of learning, phobia of maths. Do we really have in our help desk at all those institutions that you spoke about, a true level of counselling for these people, not just beyond the “lil” information we get to the public; dealing with some of these problems they face; poor tutoring, tutors who come with notes from 10 years ago? So this, too, must be considered even as I beg the Senator to look again. Look again.

Finally, I want to say something about teaching, and here I am going to get in trouble with TTUTA. Plenty people will get me tomorrow. A common feature of reform is teacher quality. We have excellent teachers in the system, you know that for sure, and they are struggling now with new pressures. They are struggling with what the people in demography call “the generation X, Y and Z.” Generation Z is generally referred to as digital natives, they have no time for the written word as we know it. They have no time for this type of elocution and talk as we do. How do we draw them into learning is something that is tough.

But we have delinquent teachers. We heard that in Tobago, dear Senators, that there were teachers who were studying for their exams and not teaching the children. And there will come a time when parents are going to litigate against us for not teaching their children and some people are not teaching the children in many ways.

At the school of education we used to call it, waiting, socializing, uninvolved, and we did a scan and we looked around, and we said, “ha”, they are waiting for the teacher to start the lesson. And waiting could not only mean that the person is silent, “eh”; the person may be pontificating about their political career; or the student is just uninvolved, just there, or the student is socializing. And in a new modern context, socializing with their phone under the desk and they do not even have to see when they are sending their text messages and they are staring you straight in the eye and nothing is happening in their heads. That is sad.

Quality teachers, according to the *Jamaica Gleaner* of 2011, reported that in a groundbreaking global study conducted by consulting giant McKinsey & Company in 2009, identified South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Finland—incidentally, South Korea has its problems, too, so do not be too gung-ho when we read these things—as the nations that consistently outperform the rest of the world. Success of these school systems was not based on higher education expenditure or even maintaining small class sizes. The one consistent thread was quality teachers equipped with the requisite skills to teach, motivate and inspire their classes. They were recruited from the top tier of graduating classes and they are well compensated. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot get them cheaply.

Hon. Senator: TTUTA will love that.

Sen. Dr. L. Bernard: TTUTA will love that. You cannot get them cheaply. In fact, the very Finland we are talking about demands that they are people with their masters degree.

So it means that we have to do something about standards. And in another place and in another time, I am going to make a case similar to the one that—I do not know if it is similar to the one the Minister is making here, but I think we have to make a case and be strong about it, that: an Act to strengthen the regulation and supervision of the practice of teaching—and it says here—to improve and strengthen the recruitment and training of all teachers; also, to provide the legal basis for the establishment of a certification and licensing system. Until we do that, until we do that, until we are able to bite the bullet and do that, people who walk into our classrooms automatically, because they have a qualification, cannot be called a teacher. [*Desk thumping*]

There must be an internship period, there must be a licensing period and, if you want to see the models, some of the models are harsher than others; Ontario wants it every three years; Britain just set up, since September 15, 2012, they want it every five years. We have to have a system just as every other good profession which will ensure that we get the best people to teach our children.

8.10 p.m.

Now, what does that tell us? That tells us that reform would require us to have a will that would move beyond the ordinary and allow us to explore those areas that will make learning much more meaningful for all the other things that our Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, and others, are hoping to do.

Madam Vice-President, I am grateful for the opportunity to have spoken. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: “Nah nah, doh stop, doh stop.”

Madam Vice-President: Sen. Moheni.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration (Sen. The Hon. Embau Moheni): Madam Vice-President, I am grateful for the opportunity to join—*[Desk thumping]*—in this debate—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Senator: Tobago man! Tobago!

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni:—which is so important as we face this crossroad.

Hon. Senator: “All ah we is one family”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: In doing so, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy for the manner in which he took up this challenge—shortly after coming on board and accepting the position as Minister of Finance and the Economy—to produce a budget that builds upon what was started by the now Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Winston Dookeran who, himself, had to rescue this nation and our economy from the free fall that it was in when the People’s Partnership Government came into office. *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Senator: Well put ! Well put!

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: I must say that both Ministers of Finance were faced with very challenging circumstances but, without any doubt, it is clear that a number of measures have been put in place: trying to pay a particular amount of attention to the human resource; to maintain a certain level of the social programmes; but, at the same time, seeking to begin to chart a course towards a better place where we could not only be in greater control of our economic life, but we could also begin that process of taking our nation to a stage of prosperity. However, I do share the concerns of Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin in as far as, how are we going to balance the budget?

The balancing of the budget, however, is a process that involves so many variables, one of which I hope to address in my contribution tonight; because, notwithstanding the mathematics, notwithstanding the investment variables, notwithstanding the global economy and everything else, a very critical factor in the whole process is our human resource. Critical to the factor of us being successful in balancing our budget, in rebuilding our economy, in satisfying our needs and in creating a greater sense of economic and social security for our people, a critical factor is our people.

Unless the population is involved in the process, unless the population understands where the Government is trying to take us, and they could feel a part—because you are not going to be a part of something unless you feel a part of it—and we could wake up that energy within our people, that creativity, and pool within ourselves the ideas and everything else, then Sen. Dr. Balgobin's feelings would become a reality.

That is why I would like to again commend the Minister of Finance and the Economy, because his very approach to this people's budget would have been more than what we may have heard in the past, that there is something for everyone in the budget. That is not how you approach a budget. This people's budget is a budget that sought to consult and get the ideas from as many persons as possible; and, within the short three months that he had, he was able to solicit ideas, concerns and advice from over 700 institutions and individuals in the process of the creation of his budget.

Not only that, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has also given us that sense of determination to continue that process of consultation, not only for the creation of a budget, but also in terms of the rescuing and the rebuilding of our economy. This is why I must also compliment our hon. Prime Minister who, in her wisdom and vision, saw the necessity and the importance to so create a Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration, the Ministry in which I am Minister of State working alongside the hon. Clifton De Coteau. [*Desk thumping*]

Our Ministry has been charged with the responsibility to challenge ourselves to tackle that problem of the population: their orientation; their sense of cohesion; their appreciation of government policy, beyond that to see how we can bring our population on board in the interest of rebuilding this great nation of ours.

Our Ministry is a relatively new Ministry—only three and a half months in existence—but we have accepted the challenge and, as the saying goes, we have hit the ground running. Our mission is to champion diversity and inclusion and help shape our evolving character as a nation through policy measures and institutional reforms that will use our heritage to build a legacy of strong inclusiveness. In other words, we need our human resource. Too many of our people are languishing on the sidelines. Too many of our people have been marginalized. We need to change that approach and that attitude.

I just want us to look at the question of social integration as defined at the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development which states that “social integration” is defined as:

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“The process of ‘fostering of societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.’”

That is from the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development.

So you would understand the importance of the Prime Minister establishing a ministry like this; that need for inclusion; that need for making that broader cross section of our population feel that they are a part; feel that they are important, and therefore the necessity, the desire to participate and to contribute to the process of nation building. The foundational principles include the promotion and protection of human rights; non-discrimination—I repeat, non-discrimination; tolerance; respect for human dignity. Again, if we could adhere to these principles, a lot of the problems we encounter today would diminish; that failure within our society to show that respect for the dignity of people.

We oftentimes respect someone because of their position. We respect them because we fear them. We respect them because they may have achieved something in life, but we need to learn that we have to start at the ground level to respect each other because we are all human; on the basis of our humanity. Respect for diversity; recognizing that someone may be different but they still have something to offer; each and every one must contribute. Respect for our democracy; equality of opportunity, solidarity—that active identification with; that shared responsibility to each other and to do to ensure that the individual as well as the collective could be taken care of; security; participation of all people; pluralism; non-violence.

Our Ministry would have responsibility for citizen facilitation. In other words, we would have an overarching responsibility to provide that channel between those of our people who have concerns, areas of need and areas where they may need assistance.

8.25 p.m.

We provide that channel between the population and the Government: civil society engagement, national heroes, protocols of the State, ecclesiastical affairs, museums, national trust, moral, ethical and spiritual values, and establishing a council for development of an integration and national identity policy.

In terms of the question of our national heroes, we recognize the importance of those who have contributed to the process of building of our nation. We recognize that what we enjoy today was built on the shoulders of those who sacrificed in the past. In recognition of our heroes, we not only recognize those who have claim to fame and glory, those who may have inspired the nation, but we also look at those who have worked tirelessly and quietly in their corners in order to carry out important functions that we could not have survived without. In that sense, we are in the process of doing a whole policy for national heroes.

Our Ministry has a responsibility for ecclesiastical affairs. This policy and the relationship between the State and religious organizations is predicated on the belief that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance, whether in private or in public. But we also recognize that these institutions have played, and continue to play, an important role in the social, educational and other areas of development of our society. Therefore, our Ministry will work with religious institutions in working out channels through which they could continue to contribute and enhance their contribution to the process of improving the lives of our people. As a matter of fact, we have already been in discussions with the inter-religious organizations and those discussions are continuing.

We have under our watch the National Trust. In recognition of the importance of heritage to the process of developing that sense of understanding of ourselves, understanding of our history, understanding of each other, and where the National Trust is concerned there are a number of initiatives, one of which is the restoration of the Nelson Island site which is a site that is exceptionally rich in history. As a matter of fact, both Minister De Coteau and, myself, along with a team of about 15 from the Ministry, as well as other stakeholders, did a tour of Nelson Island just about three weeks ago. The island holds the hearts of the East Indian immigrants' arrival to Trinidad as labourers, because that Nelson Island was used as acclimatization bay before they were brought to the mainland Trinidad.

It also holds the memories of African slaves who built the original structures, some of which are still standing there on Nelson Island; the gallantry of the European soldiers who fought there; the Jews who escaped the holocaust and landed there along with other captives. We should also remember that Tubal Uriah "Buzz" Butler was incarcerated there during the Second World War, as well as the chief servant Makandal Daaga and other detainees were held there in 1970. So it is a space that holds a lot of history that we intend to utilize both as a source of education and enlightenment to our people, and also as a tourist attraction that could generate revenue for our nation.

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In addition to this, the National Trust is going to work in terms of the development of our archaeological sites which number about 300. We are also in the process of the restoration and upgrade of the facility of Fort San Andres or the museum of Port of Spain, and work there is well on the way. One, we have restored the roof to the main house which was done by Island Roofing Limited at a cost of \$836,000; that is completed. Restoration of the electrical done by Watts Electrical, and work is continuing.

I want to move on to the question of the National Archives. The National Archives is the repository of official non-current records, as well as historical records, dating back from as early as 1797. In addition to the official records, there are unique collections such as the immigration records of enslaved Africans, Indian indentured immigrants, Chinese indentured immigrants, and a newspaper collection dating from 1821 to the present. The National Archives was established in 1960.

The National Archives is responsible for acquiring, preserving and providing public access to the documentary heritage of the nation. The work that they are engaged in is very painstaking, and what we have found, under very difficult conditions. Therefore, a lot of work is under way in order to improve the physical conditions under which they work, but also we are paying attention to the question of training because we are grossly understaffed.

What we are trying to do is to encourage young persons to become interested in pursuing careers in archiving. Part of what we have been doing is taking students from the University of the West Indies, giving them part-time employment during the holiday periods so that they can familiarize themselves, and become interested in the work of archiving. As I said, it is very painstaking because a lot of the material they have dates back to quite a number of years to the earlier part of this century as well as the past century, and it is very painstaking to pull that work together. We are also working on the initiative of increasing their outreach to the public in general, mounting of exhibitions, not only on 105 St. Vincent Street where they are located, but also taking their efforts to schools and to communities in different parts of our nation.

As far as the national museum is concerned, I must say that our Ministry has been working with the museum. We have been having regular meetings with the leadership, the acting curator along with other members of staff, on almost a weekly basis, along with meetings with the National Trust and National Archives on a very regular basis to ensure that these institutions could be given the recognition that they deserve. We have been working to ensure that the standards and, the conditions are lifted so that the workers could enjoy better working conditions, but also that the public could become more involved and more a part of what takes place.

In terms of the efficiency at these institutions, that efficiency has been bringing rewards and saving the Minister of Finance and the Economy. For instance, we have been working on reducing the cost of operations. The last exhibition that was held, 50 YEARS of Art in Trinidad and Tobago, had originally been costed at \$250,000, and because of the improvement in the efficiency, that cost was cut from \$250,000 to \$130,000; a saving of \$120,000. In addition to this, renovation and general improvement have been undertaken by the full cooperation of the staff, and we have seen that they were able to renovate the audiovisual room, the bookstore, the museum floors, as well as to purchase new equipment for the AV room to make it more standardized for future use for lectures, seminars, in-house trainings, film screenings, educational shows and other meetings.

We have also managed to pay bills for other exhibitions: Jackie Hinkson for the Heritage Day 2012. With the additional savings, we have also managed to clear outstanding bills from earlier in the year. There is an improved relationship between suppliers and other service providers and the National Museum and Art Gallery, because the museum has now introduced a policy of paying all bills within two weeks, and that has augured well for their relationship with suppliers.

I move to the question of national diversity.

Hon. Senator: “Tell dem, tell dem!”

8.40 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: National diversity is not just about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing each other’s uniqueness. In other words, the question is: how do we utilize each other’s uniqueness in order to pull on our differences to satisfy all the demands that we need for the building of our society?

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Well said, well said!

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: And the concept of diversity—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Yuh have about ah hour again.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni:—is one that recognizes the fact that Trinidad and Tobago is the most diverse society in the Caribbean, and we have seen, over the years, that our society has been fragmented and divided, sometimes for political mileage. *[Interruption]*

Sen. Deyalsingh: “Yuh going good, yuh bring in dat?”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: “Because is the truth.” We are not going to solve the problem unless we recognize the truth, so that we need to overcome that division or those divisions in order to build a more united society. *[Desk thumping]*

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Our Ministry also has a responsibility for the building of nationalism and patriotism, and we initiated a year of patriotism which we started with a month of patriotism between August 26 and September 26—[*Desk thumping*—]coinciding with our golden jubilee 50th anniversary. One of the initiatives instituted was a flag in every home, where we distributed over 98,000 flags throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

We also hosted a nationalism competition, which was hosted on radio with questions being put to the public and prizes being provided. We are in discussions right now with the Ministry of Education for the rolling out of our most patriotic school competition. We hosted a national day of prayer in schools on September 21, where the schools of our nation all participated in that national day of prayer towards building that consciousness of nationalism and patriotism among our students, because we are going to be paying particular attention to the students and to our youth in the process of building that sense of patriotism which is so important for everything else to succeed.

I move to the question of civil society engagement, which also comes under our Ministry. We recognize the importance of civil society engagement and the role that it has been playing and needs to be played by civil society in the process of community and nation development. In other words, it is in keeping with the policy of our Government to broaden the horizons of participation, bringing more of our people on board and having and assisting NGOs and other civil society institutions to become more efficient, more effective and, therefore, more productive in terms of—[*Desk thumping*—]their contribution to the building of our society.

Our Ministry continues to play its role in the process of patriotism, diversity and social integration. As I have said, we are three and one-half months in the making and you could expect a lot more in the coming year.

Sen. George: Talk.

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: I just want to shift a little bit to the question of Tobago—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramnarine: Yes. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Karim: “Doh bolt eh.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni:—because a lot has been said and I listened to those on both sides—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Karim: On bolt sides?

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni:—in terms of—both not bolt, on both sides. Minister Karim was outlining some of the initiatives that his Ministry has instituted in Tobago, and I must say that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has kept, and will continue to keep, its responsibility for the development of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. George: Well said.

Sen. Karim: In spite of the THA.

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: I have to agree, in spite of the THA, because the Minister of Finance and the Economy has placed a lot of his emphasis on the youth. The youth will and need to play an important role in Tobago. Also on the question of the development of entrepreneurship, which is so important for building of productivity in Tobago, we heard the concerns of Sen. Dr. Balgobin when he spoke to the low productivity in Tobago. Well, the Minister of Finance and the Economy is taking measures, through the development of financial education, as well as the establishment of business innovation centres towards the enhancing of entrepreneurship and the productivity level in Tobago. But one of the sore areas, and which has contributed a lot to the drawback in Tobago, has been the question of Tobago/Trinidad relationship, or the relationship between Tobago and the central Government in the past.

We have heard, and I have experienced over the years, the cries of the people in Tobago on the question of land deeds and titles to the lands that were handed down to them, where over 80 per cent of the owners of land in Tobago do not have proper titles and this Government has committed itself and has initiated a process to deal with that problem, so that the people of Tobago could have their land titles. [*Desk thumping*]

On the question of the Ministry of Tobago Development, it took the wisdom and the vision of the People's Partnership Government and the hon. Prime Minister to establish a Ministry of Tobago Development. [*Desk thumping*] And I should mention that it is not the first time that Tobago has had that Ministry. But those of you who know the history would know that in 1976, the people in Tobago voted for ANR Robinson and Winston Murray and voted out the two representatives from the People's National Movement, and in their vindictiveness, the PNM shut down the Ministry for Tobago Affairs, to spite the people for exercising their democratic rights. It took us 34 years before we could get a Ministry re-established, only with the advent of the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*]

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This Government is committed to establishing a new relationship between Trinidad and Tobago, side by side with each other. And this is why legislation will be laid in this Parliament, within this parliamentary term, for Tobago to have internal self-government—within this parliamentary term—something that the people of Tobago have been clamouring for, for several years.

I just want to comment very briefly on some of the remarks that were made earlier by Sen. Deon Isaac, because he spoke to the question of funding for the young professionals, but what he did not say was that the last time \$20 million was allocated to that area, it was expropriated and not used for that purpose at all.
[*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Karim: And they fired the Auditor General.

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: And while we talk so much about what is due to the Tobago House of Assembly, what respect they should be given, which I do agree with, a lot is due to the THA. Respect should be given to the THA but, how come we never hear them talking about what is due to the people of Tobago?
[*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senators: Yes, oh yes!

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: The THA is only there as a functionary to satisfy it, as a channel through which the people of Tobago could be given their just due.
[*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, when I made my maiden speech in this Senate on September 22, 2010, I called for an audit of the THA. At that time, I had in my possession the Auditor General's Report for 2003 and I pointed out to this Senate that the THA could not account for \$389 million. That is since 2003. That was over 20 per cent of the allocation to Tobago. So, you understand that the THA is a functionary to utilize the allocation of funds in the interest of the people of Tobago and when you cannot account for \$389 million, it does not speak good to the process. [*Crosstalk*]

I also dealt with the Auditor General's Report for 2004. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: So far back, 2004?

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni:—2004, which I do not hope to deal with today but I would just—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Karim: “No, take yuh time.”

Sen. George: Take your time. We have time.

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Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: I would just like to give one or two quotations, dealing with the question of unspent balances in 2004: [*Crosstalk*]

“Contrary to section 48 of the Tobago House of Assembly Act, at the close of the financial year, the Accumulated Unspent Balances totalling approximately \$39,850,403.94...”

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Unspent?

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: Yeah, unspent balances.

“were not retained in Assembly Fund and reflected on the Balance Sheet.”

8.55 p.m.

Madam Vice-President: Senator. Hon. Senators—Senator Moheni? Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] Thank you, Madam Vice-President, and thank you colleagues.

Sen. George: Sen. Isaac sweating.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “He batting like Marlon Samuels man. Doh fraid dem.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: I move to the Contingency Fund. Section 34:01 of the Tobago House of Assembly Financial Rules, 1990 makes provision for the transfer of surplus funds where the expenditure for the Assembly for any financial year is less than amount shown in the final estimates.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Whey!”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: There was non-compliance with this section of the rules in that an amount of \$4,573,891 was transferred from the fund account, to the Contingency Fund bank account on the January 15, 2004, which was prior to the determination of the surplus at the end of the financial year. [*Crosstalk*] So, the end of the financial year is September, but in January they had determined what the surplus was going to be.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Dey smart.”

Sen. Karim: “Dey have ah slush fund dey too.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: I want to go to the expenditure from fund account approved by the Executive Council. Accounting records were produced in support of expenditure from this account of only \$57,849,591.60 as a result; expenditure of \$10,352,400.79 was not verified.

Hon. Senator: “Where dat gone?”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: Ten million dollars—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Corruption man.

Sen. George: “Whey de money gone?”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni:—no accounting for that, that was 2004. I will go to 2005. Unspent balances: there was no system in place to ensure the accurate computation of unspent balances at the close of the financial year, in order to comply with section 48 of the Tobago House of Assembly Act which states:

“Notwithstanding section 42 of the Exchequer and Audit Act, monies appropriated by Parliament to the Fund for the service of a financial year which remain unexpended at the end of that financial year shall be retained in the Fund and utilised for the purposes of capital investment.”

I heard Sen. Deon Isaac and Sen. Cudjoe talking about how many projects—moneys that should have remained in the fund for capital development were taken out of that fund and put in the Contingency Fund which has been used for all types of purposes.

Hon. Senator: Good Lord!

Hon. Senators: “Whey!”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: And that is why their development projects are in the retarded state that they are in today. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] I do not have time to go into all the areas, but the poor people of Moriah—the THA began a project to build a playground for the students in Moriah. Some of them would have gone to school, left primary school, gone to secondary school, gone to university and there is still no playground.

Hon. Senator: “Geh married and all kinda ting.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: Started in 2001, scheduled to be completed in 2003 with a playground, a pavilion and a swimming pool—the only thing they have gotten is pools of water when the rain falls.

Hon. Senator: Oh Lord! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “I hear yuh.”

Hon. Senator: “Ah sorry for de people in Tobago.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: And after all these years, that project is still incomplete. I do not have to go into the library and the financial complex and everything else.

Let us go to the question of the cash flow statement; for 2005, the figure of \$10,958,637.90 representing cash and cash equivalents at end of the year reflected on this statement, did not agree with the figure of \$132,745,480.73 as shown as bank, on the balance sheet.

Sen. Karim: “Mr. London dem fellas have no idosity.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: What the THA has to tell us is what became of that other \$121,786,842.83—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: “Yuh is ah accountant.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni:—over \$121 million.

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Unaccounted for?

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: And that was since 2005.

Hon. Senator: “Ohhhhhh!”

Sen. Karim: “Dey could ah build ah new Speyside Secondary School.”
[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Yes, get new computers and air condition units.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Shame! Shame!

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: And this is why we have to ask ourselves whether we are dealing with a runaway train that has to be pulled. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: “Dey with Bolt in true. Dey bolting man.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: “Bolting, ah bolting train.”

Hon. Senator: “De horse dat bolted. Ah runaway horse.”

Hon. Senator: “Not ah train, is ah runaway horse.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: We go to the question of financial rules, section 52 of the THA Act, 1996 which came into force on December 10, 1996 states:

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“Within two months of the coming into force of this Act, the Assembly shall, subject to the approval of the President, make such Financial Rules as are necessary for the proper management of its finances and such Rules shall, when made, be laid in Parliament.”

Up to this date, those rules have not been laid in Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] In other words, they are doing whatever they want.

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Yes, that is it.

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: No rules, no regulations, and even the rules that are there, they are breaking them. I am telling you that the people of Tobago have a date with destiny where the people in this Assembly are concerned, and that date is coming. [*Desk thumping*] So, when I heard my good friend opposite talking about they should be given the right to borrow—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Frightening.

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni:—they cannot even account for what they got.

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Frightening thought.

Hon. Senator: “For de right to borrow.” [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Excellent point.

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Frightening point.

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: In the past 10 years they have had over \$1 billion of unspent balances, where is the need for borrowing? [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] So this is a very serious matter—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Karim: “Dey not borrowing, it bolting.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni:—because this is more than unaccounted for funds, this is more than wastage; we are talking about the lives of the people of Tobago—[*Interruption and desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Yes.

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Yes, so true.

Hon. Senator: “Yeah man.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni:—who entrusted their survival, who entrusted the development of their children—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni:—who entrusted the care of their elderly, who entrusted employment for their youth in the hands of that THA, and this is what we get. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] But as I said, Tobago has a date with destiny, so I will leave that for now.

Sen. Karim: Soon man, soon.

Sen. George: “Ah date with destiny, ah like dem words he use.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: In closing, I would just like to state that my Ministry has a promise to fulfil, we too have a date with destiny of a different type. I will just quote from the People’s Partnership Manifesto, which is now Government policy, page 5, from the preamble where it states:

“Our government will embrace the richness and beauty of our people’s great diversity to nurture a more humane and cohesive society.”

Sen. Karim: “And de seagull has landed.”

Sen. The Hon. E. Moheni: “Unity in Diversity will inspire the harmony which is so vital to national progress.”

Madam Vice-President, my Ministry is seeking to develop a new mindset in our nation, a mindset that could speak to harmony, cohesiveness, unity and productivity, where we could instil that sense of national pride in our people that could give us that determination to work hard to build our nation.

We would hope that this Parliament will be that example to our nation, where we could strive here to develop a new political ethic, recognizing that both the Government and the Opposition have their role to play, because enshrined in our Constitution is the need for both a Government and an Opposition. We also need to recognize that somewhere along the line, there has been a bit of deviation from what should be the approach.

We need to remember that politics is not the road to power and personal aggrandizement. Politics involves how we as a people could work to build a more collective, a more united, a more productive and a more progressive society. Whether you are in Government or Opposition that responsibility should be maintained. Being in Opposition does not mean that you have to try to tear down everything, that you have to be vitriolic, that you have to be negative. Whether Government or Opposition, our children have to live here. We need to show that sense of responsibility to the building of our nation regardless of where we may sit.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Food Production (Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj): Madam Vice-President, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute in this debate of the Appropriation Bill, 2013, and in so doing, give an account of the Ministry of Food Production's activities, achievements, for the past year, as well an indication of our plans for the fiscal year coming.

Before I begin, I have to congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy for his presentation of the 2013 budget, Stimulating Growth and Generating Prosperity, and more importantly the importance, the weight that was placed on the agricultural sector in the budget. This budget no doubt caused some unease within the Opposition as we see they failed to grapple, to command a serious response to the budget laid in the House by Minister Howai.

They, when in office, did not seek to stimulate growth, neither prosperity, in large parts of Trinidad and Tobago, so that is why they seem uncomfortable with the development of central and south Trinidad, areas of Trinidad which they have left neglected for years upon years. [*Desk thumping*]

Minister Ramnarine in his contribution made particular emphasis in his introduction to postulate some of the thoughts by many thinkers who said that there are three important factors in economies: water, energy and agriculture. Most of the speakers have focused primarily on the energy aspect. The aspect of water and agriculture, with the exception of Sen. Ramkhelawan and in passing Sen. Al-Rawi, there was no mention of the agricultural component and I think none at all on the water component.

9.10 p.m.

Water and agriculture. Some futurists have postulated that these two areas, in particular, may be the source of any future conflicts between nations and internally—in nations—and today it is indeed fortuitous that I am given the opportunity to speak in the Senate because it is World Food Day.

The theme for this year is Agricultural Cooperatives: Key to Feeding the World, and early this morning at eight o'clock, while most of us were still recovering from last night, I was up at Centeno launching World Food Day at the Centeno library, one of the most comprehensive libraries in agricultural material in Trinidad and Tobago.

Throughout the day, there were many activities within the community, the agricultural fraternity, observing World Food Day. World Food Day is celebrated on October 16. That was the day selected because it was the day that the FAO was formed in 1945; so today is a very significant day for the agricultural community.

In his contribution, Sen. Dr. Lester Henry cited a lot of information from the Central Bank's website. However, I find it passing strange that he ignored, very conveniently, the last media release of the Central Bank, September, where it is stated clearly:

“Inflation slows for the third consecutive month in August:

Central Bank reduces repo rate to 2.75 per cent”

I quote, if you permit me, Madam Vice-President:

“According to data from the Central Statistical Office, there was a slowdown in headline in inflation for the third consecutive month in August 2012 to 7.9 per cent...from 10.8 per cent in July, and from 11.0 per cent in June. On a month-on-month basis, headline inflation has declined by 1.2 per cent...”

It goes on further, Madam Vice-President:

“The principal factor behind the decline in headline inflation was a sharp deceleration in food prices. In August, food price inflation declined to 15.4 per cent...from an average of over 20 per cent in the previous six months. The easing of food inflation mainly reflected a slowdown in price increases for vegetables...and fruits...Slower price increases were also recorded for bread...cereals, milk, cheese...fish...” [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, this reduction in food inflation, which affects our national inflation, has also to be attributed to the sterling work of my predecessor, Sen. Vasant Bharath, [*Desk thumping*] who had worked in this Ministry for the last two and a half years, and I am just building upon the foundation laid by Sen. Bharath.

That is why I find it passing strange—and it is sad that Sen. Al-Rawi is not here with us tonight—where he asserted that some of the projects that Sen. Bharath would have started have now gone into neglect—allowed to be fallow. I wish he were here to answer what projects because we are all part of the same Cabinet and have collective responsibility and policies in the agricultural sector that are approved by Cabinet, all of us support.

Minister Bharath laid the blueprint which we all subscribe to. He may no longer be at the Ministry of Agriculture [*sic*], but the plans still continue. So, again, I am very interested to find out what plans Sen. Al-Rawi said were neglected. Perhaps, on another occasion, he could share.

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Sen. Dr. Henry, in his contribution, attempted to paint the international economic crisis on the situation, and other speakers on both sides of the divide shared that perspective of where we are in the global context in terms of the economy; but on the situation of food security, there is also an international place that we have to be located in at this point in time.

One of the major goals of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is to create a food secure nation. According to the FAO of the United Nations—permit me to quote:

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

There are major trends which are impacting on agriculture and food production across the world and Trinidad and Tobago has not been immune to those trends. One is that food demand is rapidly increasing. With a growing global population, food demand is growing and it is estimated that there are over 80 million extra mouths to be fed every year. Another global trend is sustained high food prices and high price volatility.

The FAO Food Price Index is a measure of the monthly change in the international prices of a basket of commodities. The index, in August 2012, was 213. For the year 2010, it was 185, so you clearly see an increase in the volatility of the prices and sustained high prices. The other trend is the increase in vulnerability due to disasters and floods—natural crises. We are hearing more and more on the electronic media, and reading about it, of the impact of the drought in the United States; its impact on the price of corn; its impact on feedstock, and the consequential impact on the price of poultry and other meat products. We in Trinidad and Tobago are not immune to the price increases in corn and the availability of corn. We have now to turn our attention to other areas that supply feedstock so that our farmers, our poultry sector, our livestock sector can produce meats, dairy products at an affordable, a reasonable price.

Our national policy. Our 2010 manifesto was entitled Prosperity for All and within this manifesto, there was an emphasis on innovation for lasting prosperity. That was reiterated in the National Food Action Plan 2012—2015 by Minister Bharath. The main objective was to develop a highly productive agricultural sector that is modernized, internationally competitive, generates sustainable income levels for producers, and it must be able to enhance our country’s renewable resource and biodiversity.

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These challenges, both locally and internationally, are not new challenges. They are challenges which we may think are new; we may feel are new because they affect us now and we are alive now; but Sen. Ramnarine, sitting at my side here, came with a book, *Forged From the Love of Liberty: Selected Speeches of Dr. Eric Williams*, first Prime Minister. You have it there.

If you look at page 95, Oil and Food, he is speaking here at a 1975 conference on Caribbean food prices. Much of what Dr. Eric Williams said seems to apply today. When he says:

“Our export crops, especially sugar and bananas, have been traditionally in difficulties in our export markets.”

He goes on:

“The price of our imported food continues to rise, aggravated by rise in freight..., insurance, etc. We remain at the mercy of all the imported inflation of the developed countries...”

Since 1975 this was said and today this could be replicated by any one of the economists, our food experts, our agriculturists, and it is still applicable. So the challenge of over 30 years ago still remains with us. Now, we have the added dimension of climate change. In 1975, climate change was not as important a factor on the national landscape; pollution as well, but nevertheless we have to face this challenge no matter the situation that we are located in.

Minister Bharath, when he came into office in 2010, was faced with a Herculean task and among the 12 labours of Hercules—Madam Vice-President, you may be familiar with that—the only one that is akin to Mr. Bharath’s challenge are the Augean stables. For the last decade, agriculture was neglected under the last administration. In fact, one of ideologues of the PNM, postulated aloud, was that to support the farmers was to support the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

Minister Bharath, no doubt, had a terrific challenge ahead of him, but it was one where he managed to rise to the occasion and laid the foundation on which the agricultural sector, for the first time, is seeing a light of hope. In fact, in the handing over between him and me, we met with the senior members of staff and none of them contradicted what he said. He said that when you meet other persons from other Ministries, they are proud to say, “Well, I am an employee of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs because it is aligned with all the dynamism going on in the country”; or if you say you are working at the Attorney

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General's office, you are associated with attorneys and so on. Ministry after Ministry, you have this prestige, but when you come to a Ministry of Agriculture employee, they mumble it under their breath. After Minister Bharath's introduction to that Ministry, they proudly boast about being in the Ministry of Food Production. He brought "sexy" back into the Ministry. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to turn my attention to some of the achievements of the Ministry of Food Production for the last fiscal year. There are a number of initiatives started by this administration during that period and continued from the year before, one of them being the agricultural incentive programme which was revived in a significant manner. The programme had to be significantly restructured to provide rebates in the areas such as aquaculture, on-farm security, post-harvest operations, agro-processing, marketing and so on.

During the period 2012, over 3,800 applicants were successful in the agricultural incentive programme and received a total of \$19 million in incentives. These incentives provided and encouraged new entrants into the sector, expanded farm production and encouraged agricultural development into non-traditional sectors such as aquaculture, which is like raising tilapia and so on.

In the area of credit, you had the ADB, for the first time, dropping its lending rate from between 8 per cent to 11 per cent, down to 3 per cent to 5 per cent; reduction in loan fees from 2 per cent to .5 per cent. We branded loan products. We had the introduction of Islamic banking which now allowed the Muslim community to participate in the ADB. [*Desk thumping*]

As a result of these initiatives, an increase in the sector resulted in over \$328 million. The bank disbursed \$167.5 million to 1,500 loan applicants. [*Desk thumping*] The ADB was doing the work it was supposed to do. The ADB developed a product called ADB Secure Loan which provided a facility that farmers could protect their farms. They provided a loan facility called School Nutrition Caterers Loan to assist school caterers.

What did the ADB do during the term of the PNM? Let me quote from the Auditor General's Report 2010. This was regarding an investment in Clico when Mr. Seebalacksingh, a former client of the Attorney General here in another incarnation, was unceremoniously fired from the ADB because he refused to participate in an investment in Clico using ADB funds. Hear what the Auditor General in a report of 2010 said:

According to the documentation from the Bank, the balance comprises premiums on three annuities. Investments of the bank funds in plans meant for individual retirement does not appear appropriate.

Who were the beneficiaries of this commission paid to Clico? The ADB continues an investigation. Right now, there is a forensic audit being undertaken into ADB regarding the lease of boardroom facilities. The ADB has an office, complete with a boardroom, yet the PNM board of the ADB rented another office for \$10 million for the period 2004—2010. This office was complete with exotic furniture and wine cellars and it was used as a venue to wine and dine PNM friends and family. The personal assistant that was hired to manage and operate this thing had a CXC certificate and got \$30,000 a month.

9.25 p.m.

Hon. Senator: To manage a boardroom?

Hon. Senator: “Dey used to play music too or wat?”

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: The ADB accumulated more than \$120 million in losses over the period 2004—2010. We have to remember that during the period 2004—2010, this country experienced an economic boom, and the ADB was experiencing an economic loss. When you understand—they were using the money to wine and dine friends and family. Loans! “Yuh could take a loan from the ADB, doh study to pay it back, nobody will check it.” Then they will take the general manager Mr. Seebalacksingh to court, among others. Who were the lawyers for the ADB? I am advised by the management that during the period some \$50 million in legal fees accrued.

Hon. Senator: What period is that?

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Fifty million, 2002—2010. And the law firm selected had as a senior partner a relative of the leadership of the People’s National Movement. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: Wow!

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: But the ADB has been transformed. They are focusing now on their core business. They are no longer—[*Crosstalk*]—the leadership does not include you Sen. Hinds. That is not you.

Hon. Senator: Sen. Hinds, will not be part of that. “Manning is the ringleader, ah sure!” [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: The ADB has now been refocused on its core activity of providing loans for farmers, persons wanting to go into farming, community access, the various products that are now available to it.

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Madam Vice-President, the other area of success within the last fiscal year—as you know as we open up these areas of land production, and lands are cleared and prepared, the soils are tested and so on—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: I am not doing any real estate caravan.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—what the farmers need to do is then plant, so they have to get planting material. Where do they get the planting material from? The Ministry of Agriculture [sic] propagates through its various stations planting material. I will tell you what we met when we came into office.

You know, if I stand here and I tell you that in 2011/2012 we produced 15,000 seedlings “ah zaboka”, you have no historical context. In 2008, the Ministry Agriculture produced 5,000 seedlings of avocado. Breadfruit, we produced 8,000 seedlings. In 2008, 1,000 were produced by the PNM. I go on. Citrus, the PNM produced in—I am quoting one year, 2008 versus 2011/2012; they produced 15,000, we produced 150,000 seedlings. [*Desk thumping*] I make the point, right now we do not have enough seedlings of citrus for people wishing to plant an orange tree in their backyard much less those areas of lands that are opening up and people want to plant orchards because there is a need to satisfy in the country for oranges, grapefruits, portugals and so on. I go on: Cocoa, in 2008, 250,000 seedlings; we produced half a million seedlings. Coffee, 2,000; we produced 5,000; mango, they produced 3,000; 15,000. So again, the focus has been on production.

Another area is access roads. When the farmers clear their land and now they get the seedlings that we producing extra of, or more of—and we plan to build on that, by the way, for the next year because more and more lands are available as the acreages come on stream. They need to get to the land, when they plant it, when they reap it they need to get it out. That is obvious.

During 2012, the Ministry of Food Production rehabilitated 39.6 kilometres of roads. The roadworks included—but were not limited to—the reconstruction of the base and sub-base gravel layers, construction of concrete-lined drains where necessary, construction of culvert, sealing of the roads with oil sand and so on. These works were undertaken on 19 roads including Orange Grove, Waterloo, Iere, Couva, Talparo, Macoya, Endeavour, Caroni, Debe. I know these areas outside of Port of Spain are probably terrorizing the PNM on the other side. These are outside of the urban centres that your concentration of development tends to focus on.

9.30 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: But I go on, Manzanilla, Rio Claro—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: The whole country.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Every nook and cranny.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Tobago is schedule five, Ministry of Agriculture [sic] is not there.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: [*Inaudible*] “Well, plant there, too. Doh study them.”

Hon. Senator: Plant everywhere.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: [*Desk thumping*] The Ministry conducted maintenance work on 35, agricultural access roads covering a total length of 105 kilometres. These roads were located in St. Joseph, Tacarigua, Bamboo, Pasea, Maloney, San Raphael, Cumuto, Manzanilla, Carlsen Field, Penal, Debe, Moruga, Princes Town, Ecclesville, Arima, San Raphael, Mamoral, Plum Mitan, Orange Grove, Cunupia, Caroni, Endeavour, Aranguez and Tabaquite, which has a special affection for my friend, the Attorney General. [*Desk thumping*]

Again, saying we did work on 19 roads rehabilitation, and maintained 35, again means nothing. You need to have it in context—so, again, 19 and 35. Let me remind you of what my friends across there did when they were in office—2008, rehabilitation of roads: 27 roads for 28 kilometres. In 2012, we did 19 roads for 40 kilometres. Maintenance of roads: in 2008 they did 31 roads for 30 kilometres. We did 35 roads for 107 kilometres. [*Desk thumping*] So, in roads, in seedlings, we continue, we continue.

Fish landing sites; another area, fish landing sites. We are undertaking construction in Brickfield, Fullerton, Otaheite, Salibia, Point Radix, and Grande Riviere. The fish landing sites are in various stages of completeness. By November 2012—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Which is what I was asking.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—by the next month. I have a complete schedule here showing—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: “How much money you give back to the Treasury?”

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—that these fish landing sites would be completed by November 2012. We would be opening in Brickfield, Otaheite, Salibia, Point Radix, La Rufin and Grande Riviere. The works had to be held up because some of the material that was required was simply not available in Trinidad and Tobago at the time.

When we look at upgrading of the fishing centres, again, historical context is important and I want to come back to that, because that is the only way we could weigh you, we could measure the PNM and find you all wanting. In 2008, you had three fish landing centres; in 2009, three. I will leave out 2010, that was election; 2011, we did 11. In 2012 we did seven. So, in one year alone we were equal to more than two years of the PNM. [*Desk thumping*]

My friend, Sen. Henry, talked about the decline in the sector. The sector did not decline overnight, Sen. Henry. The sector did not decline overnight. The food import bill in 1972 was \$19 million. The food import bill in 2010 was \$4 billion. The increase was an incremental one, and in the last decade the agricultural sector was brutalized, traumatized and terrorized by the PNM—[*Desk thumping*] closed down farms, closed down centres. The Cedros cattle breeding centre was closed down. Despite the fact that we have a shortage of milk, we have a shortage of meat, we need livestock, “all yuh” closing down breeding centres. “The Aripo livestock farm run down to the ground, all right.”

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]—they open a sheep farm in Tobago—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Well, the sheep farm in Tobago, they cannot find the sheep now. They cannot find sheep now, right. “When they have a rally in Tobago, everything, buss up.”

We have taken a very strategic initiative. We have linked the School Nutrition Programme with the Ministry of Food Production. [*Desk thumping*] What we found, Madam Vice-President, is that farmers were throwing away commodities; they say they cannot get a market for it, throw away their watermelon, “it staying on their hands, rotting” and so on. When we talk to the caterers they are saying, “Listen, we need this, we need that and we cannot find the commodity. We have to buy apples because oranges are unavailable.” So the disconnect was obvious.

So what the Ministry did was brought the agricultural groups together with the School Feeding Nutrition Programme and effective approximately two to three weeks ago, in every one of the extension offices, we have an officer there, assigned to be a liaison between the farmers and the caterers in the area. So, if a farmer has watermelons or oranges and so on and the caterers require fruits for their meals, they could be put in touch with each other and arrive at a price, perhaps even cheaper than what they get at the market.

Hon. Senator: Excellent, man, excellent.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: In the area of unfarmed ponds and water management—I am sorry that the leader has left because this even sounds like part of his Ministry—the Ministry of Food Production entered into a strategy of ensuring sustainable management of water resources. In the past, a lot of the farmers simply depended on rainfall or diverted a little stream into their area and so on. What this did—the Water Management and Flood Control Programme included an on-farm irrigation project and, thereby, allowed the farmers to shift production from seasonal crops to all-round-year crops.

In 2012 alone, Madam Vice-President, over 317 ponds were constructed—over 317. I will put it in historical context again for my friend. [*Desk thumping*] I want to call the areas. These are areas that are neglected, these are areas outside the urban centres, these are areas that the PNM’s gaze does not fall upon on a regular basis—Cunupia, Felicity, Caroni, Waterloo, Edinburgh, Plum Mitan, Carapo, Exchange, Wallerfield, Manzanilla, Caratal, Valencia, Bon Air East, Pleasant Settlement and Bon Aventure.

Again, in historical context. In 2008: 103 ponds—103 ponds. In 2009, it dropped, 99 ponds.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: What?

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: In 2011, we produced 172 ponds, and I said 377 last year. You know, there was a saying used in a previous election “performance beat ole talk”; performance beat the PNM.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Drown them in the pond, man. Drown them in the pond.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: The other area of water management—as Mr. Singh comes in, the Minister of Environment and Water Resources—is demonstration of an irrigation system, whereby we introduced a drip system, Madam Vice-President, into over 20 areas that would foster greater use and efficiency of water resources and be much more environmentally friendly. This project was geared to be examples in particular areas and encourage the neighbouring farms to buy into it by their visual appreciation of its use and its impact on their neighbours’ farms. The 20 systems were installed at Orange Grove, Union Food Crops Project, that was a three-system Cushe Food Crop Project, Jerningham two-acre plot, Sookoo Trace Project, Vega de Oropouche Project.

Hon. Senator: “That is up Grande?”

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: “Yes, up Grande.” Maloney Food Crop Project: the water management strategy also included a flood control measure. Since, of course, we are all familiar with the cries of the farming community every time there is heavy rainfall, crops are damaged in a significant way and losses are incurred, the flood control measures included the desilting of 33 kilometres of water channels in Fishing Pond, Waterloo, Caroni, Brickfield, Jerningham, Felicity, the introduction of a sluice gate at Esmeralda. I would not want to put the historical context again, because it goes along the same line of 3:1. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, the other area I want to focus on is lands. Improving land management tenure for farmers is very important to the farming community, both psychologically and economically. It is an important strategy to increase food production in the six commodity groups identified by the action plan I previously mentioned. These action plans, for those of you who cannot remember last year’s contribution, include vegetables, legumes, pulses, fruits, livestock and aquaculture.

Hon. Senator: No more onions this year, too?

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: What is that?

Hon. Senator: No more onions this year?

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Well, I am coming to the onions. “Do not frighten, I am coming to the onions.”

In 2012, lands were made available for food production through a special land delivery programme involving 4,223 acres of land. To date, over 100 probationary tenancy agreements have been prepared for approximately 924 acres of these lands. A further 922 acres of leases were also prepared for the Caroni two-acre plots. These plots, as you know, were long promised by the previous PNM regime, however, we are delivering it.

Madam Vice-President, also another initiative of this component of land tenure is the commercial large-farm projects. Again, speaking to Sen. Ramkhelawan’s point about opening up larger tracts for production, as he rightly pointed out, with Caroni no longer in existence, we have these large expanses of land that should be better utilized for food production, and they should.

Right now there are currently five farms under production, four have been allocated but not yet into production, large farms, that is, and 11 unallocated farms. These farms are very specific in terms of what they are targeted to

produce, and they include, well, of course, the Edinburgh area, 100 acres, and they are targeting sweet corn, hot peppers, pawpaw, sweet potato, cantaloupe and so on; Orange Grove, again, similar kind of products. Caroni, 100 acres, they are focusing on rice; Picton, livestock production and so on.

How are these farms doing, Madam Vice-President? If we look at the period October 2011 to June 2012, the Edinburgh Farm which was 100 acres, they produced 19,000, approximately 20,000, kilogrammes of hot peppers, 15,000 kilogrammes of corn.

Sen. Ramkhelawan: Thank you, Minister, for giving way. Could you tell me that by 2016, which is your planning term, how many acres of land you expect to have or target to have under agricultural production?

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: We have targeted approximately 15,000 acres additionally to what we have at this point in time for active production. The products, the commodities, to be grown on that are really being informed by our import bill. We have looked at our food import bill, disaggregated it, and looked to see what our tastes are like. Even if you go back again to the book, *Forged From the Love of Liberty*, page 93 of this speech of 1975, Dr. Williams said there that “Our tastes are being informed by our northern neighbours.”

The same applies today. Our tastes are western, North American in nature. We have to find a way to slowly cultivate a taste that is more localized. Similar to my colleague, Sen. Jamal Mohammed, Minister of Information [sic] speaking last night about the local content on the media, we need local content in the food, too. [*Desk thumping*] On a trip to Brazil I had two years ago, every restaurant you went to in Brazil they served you cassava chips, whether you ordered it or not, it comes as part of the dish, all right. We could be doing the same thing with cassava. Cassava is indigenous to this region of the world, breadfruit, as well. A number of our local fruits, and so on, but our tastes, we prefer to buy Irish potatoes, you know, and so on—exported from away.

So the commodities grown on these farms are really informed in large part by what we import, and we are attempting, really, to provide a local substitute for this. The main areas of our import bill that should be a concern are live animals, meat, fresh and chilled, feed for animals, milk, then others such as wheat, and so on.

Madam Vice-President, you have had an inclination based on what I have just said about the manner and way in which this administration is treating with the issue of land tenure, how we distributed to the farmers. Farmers for the last

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decade had no lease. As I said, the PNM neglected agriculture. They terrorized, brutalized and “murderized”, if you want, the farmers. They could not get their leases, that is why when Minister Vasant Bharath walked into the office of the Ministry of Food Production, there was an avalanche of leases waiting to be regularized, waiting to be regularized, and farmers need these leases when they go to the ADB to get a loan.

Hon. Senator: They were held to ransom, blackmail.

Mr. Lambert: Yes, they blackmailed the farmers.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: So when Sen. Henry speaks about the decline in the sector, the decline did not happen overnight. If you plant a “zaboca” tree, it would not bear the next day. If you plant an orange tree, it would not bear the next day. It takes a number of years for the plant to grow up. But how did they treat with land? Madam Vice-President, I want to quote from a very specific instance of how they treated with a lease, an agricultural lease.

Here we had a lease, Madam Vice-President, dated 14/07/1976, registered as 13281 of 1976, a parcel of land comprising three acres, three roods and 16 perches located at Wallerfield, Arima, and was leased to Annette Williams for 25 years. You know, Wallerfield was one of the areas allocated only to have farmers, livestock farmers, in particular.

Hon. Senator: “By who?”

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: “By the PNM, what yuh feel?” They were elected to do something, you know. In the 30 years you were in office, you wanted to sit back and “doh do nothing.” You had to do something.

Hon. Senator: Forty-three years.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: You did not fail thoroughly, you failed largely, but not thoroughly. [*Desk thumping*] You had to do something to get to—
[*Inaudible*]

On 05/06/1984 the direction of extension requested the parcel be served with a repossession notice. The notice was served by the Inspector of State Lands on 07/11/84.

9.45 p.m.

I am giving you the chronology from its inception, bear with me. An application was made by the Light House of Jesus Christ dated 13/07/2005 to the PS of agriculture for the said—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: Who made that application for agricultural land?

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—agricultural land, where people are supposed to be growing corn and peas—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: “Minding sheep and goat.”

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—minding sheep and so on—an application by the Light House of the Lord Jesus Christ on 13/07/2005 to the PS of agriculture for the said parcel. The letter of said date by Terry and Cindy Le Blanc stating their desire to relinquish any said rights to the parcel. Now hear this! Cabinet got involved.

A Cabinet decision, No. 2542 dated 2005/09/30, agreed that the standard agricultural lease known as Lot 104, Heights of Guanapo, be terminated, thereafter Light House of Lord Jesus Christ be granted institutional lease subject to the approval of the Town and Country Planning Division. Understand what went on here! “Farmers lining up for lease, and cyah get no lease, but it reach Cabinet; a lease is given to terminate an agriculture lease to give the prophetess Pena; the prophetess.” She was advising the Cabinet.

Sen. Singh: From 2005?

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: 2005! [*Crosstalk*] It is unfortunate no members of the former Cabinet are here. I want to go on. This matter was taken to Cabinet without any input from the Commissioner of State Lands, notwithstanding section 6 of the State Lands Act, which addresses the management of all state lands. So, they on the other side accused us of breaking the law; Cabinet, at that point in time, broke the law. Every lease that I carry to Cabinet passes under the hand of the Commissioner of State Lands, every lease. [*Desk thumping*] The Cabinet broke the law with the approval of this.

In a memo, the Director of Land Administration to the Town and Country Planning Division dated 22/08/2005, referring the application for change of use, and expressing the concern for consequential loss of agricultural land. So, the Director of Land Administration was telling Town and Country Planning Division, do not do this; this is agricultural land.

Sen. George: “Yuh serious!”

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: “But dey break de law already”, so who is the Director of Land Administration? The Cabinet decision received by the Director of Surveys on the 04/04/2006 was passed to the Commissioner of State Lands for

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implementation. They did not consult him in the beginning, but they tell him to implement their decision, and the comments of town and country were then sought. Do you understand? The cart before the horse! That is PNM Cabinet methodology; cart before the horse. The town and country on 02/07/2006 recommended the site not be subdivided, but an alternate site be located.

Madam Vice-President, I mean, when I discovered this thing—you know, if I did not have to meet farmers on a regular basis and hear the same cry over and over, this could have been probably laughed at, but since assuming the mantle of Minister of Food Production, I have gone to various communities throughout Trinidad, and there are five areas of concern, but one of the five is this land tenure. Every farmer cries out for regularization of their land, their leases, their lapsed leases to be regularized, and while they are crying for regularization, the Cabinet was breaking the law; the Cabinet was facilitating agricultural land to be transformed for this special accommodation for the prophetess of the Cabinet at the time.

Sen. Singh: She probably had waved a wand.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: What is interesting, as if to add insult to injury, as if to pretend that they were doing some agriculture, they added on—their proposal was submitted saying that it would be a comprehensive spiritual centre—[*Interruption*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Thank you very much colleagues. Yes, Madam Vice-President, [*Desk thumping*] as if to add insult to injury—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: “They have more than that again?”

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: They submitted a proposal which stated they are going to build a comprehensive spiritual centre including the cultivation for orchard. They just converted the land from agriculture to an institutional lease and they want to have an orchard.

In the Note to Cabinet dated 05/12/2006 entitled: grant of institutional lease to the Light House of the Lord Jesus Christ in respect to a parcel of state land

located at 104 Heights of Gunapo, St. George, three acres, three roods and 16 perches was sent to Cabinet.

Madam Vice-President, what even makes this mystery, I think, deserving of a movie—I think, Sen. Bharath said he is trying to encourage the film industry here in Trinidad and Tobago—*[Laughter]* This is a movie in the making: how Cabinet broke the law; how they were creative with agriculture land.

Sen. George: “Agatha Christie-style mystery boy!”

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: This is a Pena mystery. *[Desk thumping]* The search for this land was done by UDeCott. “Now, why UDeCott come into the dance?”

Sen. Singh: Hart! Hart! Have a heart!

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: You see the nexus between Hart and Pena and—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Senator:—Patrick!

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—Patrick, those I guess who took part in this breach of section 6 of the State Lands Act. Madam Vice-President, I know we are fast approaching our ten o’clock deadline that the Leader of Government Business set for us—*[Interruption]*

Madam Vice-President:—10.07!

Hon. Senator: You have time.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Okay. So, Madam Vice-President, that was their track record in land lease and security of tenure. Permit me to move on.

Sen. George: An unparalleled track record.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: I want to see what could beat that. Sen. Ramkhelawan wonders why more productive acreage was not coming on stream and so on, and now you know why. They were focusing on other areas of development. *[Laughter]* They were not concerned about food, rice and so on.

We have also focused the youth in agriculture. Recently, Minister Karim and myself launched the OJT Agricultural Programme up in Sangre Grande—another non-urban centre that my colleagues on the other side I hope one day would get familiar with—in which we hope to address one of the burning issues in agriculture. I said tenure of land is one, the other area is labour. So, we hope as this is a pilot project to monitor it and see its reception, and we would be able to see how we could develop it and spread it throughout the country.

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We have also experimented with CEPEP. I think Sen. Ramkhelawan also mentioned that. Over 165 CEPEP workers have been involved with a cocoa estate and that seems to be working well. The chairman of CEPEP and myself are speaking right now, and we are hopeful that if this model is successful, we will be able to take it further and replicate it in other areas as well.

Another burning issue in the agricultural community is the area of praedial larceny. It makes no sense that we open up these areas of land production; it makes no sense that the farmers take loan; it makes no sense that seedlings are produced by the Ministry of Food Production; and it makes no sense we build the ponds and teach them and so on—because there are a number of areas of training that goes on a regular basis—if after going through the exercise their produce, the fruit of their hard work is robbed. So therefore, a month ago, we relaunched the Agriculture Ranger Squad [*Desk thumping*] in Carlsen Field. That area was one of the at-risk farming communities. I know when we say “hotspots” we think of other things or at risk, but in the farming communities there are hotspots, and Carlsen Field was an at-risk farming community.

A month after its relaunch in Carlsen Field, the farmers of the area have reported they have seen a noticeable decline in thefts and so on in the area. So, we have also initiated discussions with the Minister of National Security to activate the Praedial Larceny Prevention Act of 2000 whereby the Commissioner of Police could appoint officers, and we are looking at, initially, approximately 200 SRP officers as part of the Government’s overall crime reduction strategy.

Madam Vice-President, our plans for 2013 include our focus to reduce the food import bill; reducing the food inflation component; creating sustainable employment; contributing to diversifying our economy and increasing our food security. To that end, we have allocated \$55 million for agricultural access roads; \$21 million for water management and flood control activities; \$18 million for fishing facilities; \$3 million for wholesale markets; and \$2 million for new packing houses.

Namdevco would be refocused on its core activity of marketing to support the agricultural sector, and we are seeking to capitalize on our world brands which I would speak to on another occasion. Madam Vice-President, I have a lot more to say, but I would chose to say it at another time. I thank you for your attention.
[*Desk thumping*]

Adjournment

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ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Madam Vice-President, after another lengthy day, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to tomorrow, Wednesday, October 17, 2012 at 10.00 a.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 10.00 p.m.