

Leave of Absence

Wednesday, October 17, 2012

SENATE

Wednesday, October 17, 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. James Lambert who is out of the country, and Sen. Elton Prescott SC, who is ill. We will have to return to this item when we do get the instruments of appointment at a later point in the debate.

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2013) BILL, 2012

[Third 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 have spoken on Monday, October 15, 2012: Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai, Minister of Finance and the Economy, the mover of the Motion, Sen. Dr. Lester Henry, Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan, Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine, Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe, Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight, Sen. The Hon. Christlyn Moore, Sen. Helen Drayton, Sen. The Hon. Jamal Mohammed and Sen. James Lambert.

Those who have spoken on Tuesday, October 16, 2012: Sen. The Hon. Vasant Bharath, Sen. Terrence Deyalsingh, Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin, Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim, Sen. Faris Al-Rawi, Sen. Dr. Victor Wheeler, Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George, Sen. Deon Isaac, Sen. Dr. Lennox Bernard, Sen. The Hon. Embau Moheni and Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj.

Any Senator wishing to join the debate may do so at this time.

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan SC): Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. Madam Vice-President, permit me to start by welcoming to the Senate on the Government side, my dear friend and colleague, the hon. Minister of Justice, Sen. Christlyn Moore and, of course, our colleague from Tobago, Sen. Sherry-Anne Rollocks-Hackett, and on the other side, Sen. Deon Isaac. [*Desk thumping*]

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Madam Vice-President, this budget is a very important one. It comes in our midterm at a very critical juncture in the People's Partnership tenure in office, and I want to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy for taking the baton, receiving it from his predecessor, the hon. Minister Winston Dookeran, and running this leg of the race with distinction and great prowess. [*Desk thumping*]

Minister Dookeran was able to stabilize the ship of state at a time when the waters were very choppy; at a time when the international and global economic meltdown affected economies and impacted on them in ways that were unimaginable, and hitherto thought not possible at all.

We have only to look at what is happening in the United States of America and, of course, in Europe to see why Trinidad and Tobago should be very proud of the fact that the economic stability that Winston Dookeran brought to bear, as Minister of Finance, is something that we should all pay commendation to.

Having stabilized and having kept pace with the pack, however, there comes a time in the race when having kept pace you will need to pull a little ahead and change gears. I think that is why I want to compliment the hon. Prime Minister for her choice in ushering in a new dawn and era in the financial affairs of this country by appointing the hon. Minister Larry Howai as Minister of Finance and the Economy to take that baton and to now try and step out and change gears, so that the economy can be stimulated and we go towards prosperity.

In the past we had to stabilize and we had some serious holes in the ship, and we had to first identify those holes, plug those leaks and then change course and direction very slowly. And, of course, those holes were, matters such as the Clico matter, which we inherited—\$20 billion bailout package—the Hindu Credit Union and several other matters which I would come to. But I think it sends a positive signal when the Prime Minister can choose someone who is a distinguished banker and someone with a proud and distinguished track record in the financial sphere of our business life in Trinidad and Tobago, and that will no doubt generate confidence in its own right. [*Desk thumping*]

The Ministry of the Attorney General, Madam Vice-President, is not really a deliverable Ministry, and by that I mean there are no tangibles—I cannot boast as to how many kilometres of roads I have paved or how many schools I have built, but it is the second highest office in the Executive arm of the State. It is the only one apart from the Office of the Prime Minister that is provided for expressly in the Constitution, and it therefore plays a pivotal role in the affairs of State and in the governance process.

I think if I may relate the role of the Ministry of the Attorney General to a debate on the economy and the budget, I would have to focus on the aspect of my portfolio which has the most direct impact on the economy, and that is the litigation portfolio of the Ministry of the Attorney General because the litigation against the State has deep-seated ramifications and consequences for the Treasury, and oftentimes that relationship is blurred and sometimes not highlighted for the citizenry to appreciate the role the Ministry of the Attorney General plays in assisting the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

As Attorney General, I must defend litigation against the State, and I do so with the bottom dollar in mind. I must do so to ensure that when the State is sued we can minimize the payout because when people sue, they want money, whether it is violation of their constitutional rights, whether it is breach of contract, negligence, at the end of the day justice is measured by compensation in monetary terms. So I must minimize the payout when we are sued.

Conversely, when the public purse—in the same way I protect and defend the public purse when there is a lawsuit against the State, or any of its functionaries, likewise, when the public purse is being plundered and robbed, I equally have a duty to make sure that I sue in the public interest so that the public purse can be reimbursed so that we can get justice for the people of this country. [*Desk thumping*] It is against that backdrop we have to analyse the history of the litigation that we have inherited at the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Madam Vice-President, what we inherited in terms of the avalanche of litigation was reminiscent of the California Gold Rush—that is what it reminded me of. And I say that because there was a complete absence of procedures, process and systems, and as a result of that there was a rush to exploit that grey area, that twilight zone for the benefit of private individuals and private corporations. And it really begged that question; why it is that we created fertile ground for litigation against the State by having such bad governance practice? Why did we not attempt to have some systems and procedures, and to have where the contract stipulated: X, Y and Z must be done, that we did not actually follow it?

You know, the State in Trinidad and Tobago, prior to my assumption of office, it was accustomed being in a reactive mode—it reacts. Anybody sue the State and everybody could sue the State, and the State will react by trying to defend, but the one thing that I found very, very interesting is that the State was unaccustomed to actually suing. [*Desk thumping*] The State would not sue but the State could be sued. It was a “bobolee” to beat up—but the State would never take action to sue.

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Madam Vice-President, I am proud to say that I have changed that and the State under my tenure as Attorney General is suing, and suing hard to recover money for the Treasury where there was corruption and misconduct in public office. [*Desk thumping*] There were two areas where the avalanche of litigation was characterized and prompted by this absence of systems and process, and those two areas were the construction sector and the energy sector.

In the construction sector, we had a construction boom and a lot of mega projects were undertaken—and we all know about the cost overruns, and so on; there is no need to remind ourselves about it. We had the Uff Commission of Enquiry and we all know about the cost overruns, but apart from the cost overruns—because cost overruns really mean that is money “yuh” pay—you budget it to cost \$100 million to build but it end up costing \$250 million, but that means you are paying \$150 million extra. But what it does not mean is that it does not tell you the invisible extra price tag that comes with the litigation that is pending.

So the cost overruns—nobody bothers to put a footnote to say, well, although there is a cost overrun here of so much, we still have X and Y amount as a contingency, which could be added on. And the construction boom was mainly undertaken through three vehicles: UDeCoTT, Nipdec and HDC. When one looks at what we inherited; UDeCoTT, \$1 billion—\$900 million, close to \$1 billion—\$1 billion in legal claims against UDeCoTT when we assumed office—\$1 billion.

In addition to all the scandalous cost overruns, the economy had to carry on its books a contingent liability in the sum of \$1 billion as a result of litigation against UDeCoTT. Madam Vice-President, I have worked very hard with UDeCoTT because those claims—we found ourselves in the unenviable position where people were producing invoices for work they claim was done and UDeCoTT had no records to actually substantiate or verify whether or not the work was done.

So, we were faced with a virtual assault upon the State and the public purse by contractors who were hired under the former administration, all of whom now seized the window of opportunity to suddenly lay claims totalling \$1 billion. Madam Vice-President, we had to sit and go through all those claims and we had to painstakingly look and see what we could find and rake and scrape in UDeCoTT for documents. I understand that is why, when administrations changed on the night of the general election, UDeCoTT was the only state enterprise that was the envy of Trinidad and Tobago because everybody was working.

10.15 a.m.

It was unbelievable! Incredible! That on a night of a general election, everybody went to work in UDeCoTT, I mean, such model citizens. But you know what they were doing; cleaning office and shredding! That is why a billion dollars' worth of claims against UDeCoTT and we could not find paper—the paperwork—from UDeCoTT's end, consistent with the contract to justify anything. I am pleased to say that we approached it on a quantum merit basis. We hired claims consultants, and we worked hard, and I am pleased to announce,—Madam Vice-President, that we were able to save \$200 million, and we have settled all those claims, and we were able to save \$200 million. [*Desk thumping*]

In addition to that, we filed suit against the former executive chairman, Mr. Calder Hart, the deputy chairman, Krishna Bahadoorsingh, the former chief financial officer, Mr. Richard O'Brian, and the former chief executive officer, Neelanda Rampaul, for \$465 million, arising out of the award of the contract for the ill-fated and doomed Brian Lara Stadium. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, compare and contrast that absence, that systemic failure in UDeCoTT with what has transpired under the People's Partnership. When last you hear UDeCoTT in a scandal since we have assumed office? UDeCoTT has been working—and you know sometimes we see we complete projects and our friends on the other side they are quick to claim credit, but nobody really knows. What they see is this edifice on the outside, but has anybody ever gone inside “dem” buildings? If you go inside those buildings, they are empty shells and you would be shocked at what you see.

But, Madam Vice-President, UDeCoTT—we have been a responsible Government. To the extent that we had contractual obligations and we could not get out of it, we completed those projects which were started under the former administration, at great cost, but we did it. But I want to pay tribute today to the leadership and management of UDeCoTT under the tenure of the People's Partnership administration for completing those projects without any scandal, and without the kind of cost overruns that characterized those projects under the former administration. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, NAPA South was opened recently. When that project, in May 2010, when we inherited it, it was about roughly 65 per cent completed—65 per cent completed—and two and a half years late—two and a half years late. Madam Vice-President, the Victor E. Bruce Financial Complex in Tobago, that was handed over in June of this year, and in February 2010, that project was only

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15 per cent completed; 15 per cent completed. Because what happened is then it came with a variation to the scope of works, and it mushroomed into a much larger project. But a project that was meant to cost \$32 million ended up costing \$103 million but was completed by UDeCoTT under the People's Partnership.

I want to say and point out that if you budget to build something for \$32 million, and with a variation in the scope of works just prior to the election, the budget is revised and goes up to \$103 million, I want to say that that Victor E. Bruce Financial Complex was built by this People's Partnership for the people of Tobago because we see that a whole new concept and design, moving from \$32 million to \$103 million was what was put before UDeCoTT, and they executed it, managed it, and did very well, and we must pay tribute to them. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, perhaps the most important and the closest project at hand is, of course, this very Parliament. The transfer from the Red House to this Parliament, done by UDeCoTT within budget, within the timeframe given to them at \$62.5 million, not a single scandal, and we sit here every day. We must learn not only to criticize, but to praise. So I want to stand here to say congratulations to my colleagues the hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs, Dr. Roodal Moonilal, the chairman, Miss Jearlene John, and the CEO, Mr. Kirk Ramlal for a job well done at UDeCoTT. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, when I spoke about the empty shells, the Government campus plaza, when we came into office—when you go into those building they are shells, and when we came into office, the base building alone was 80 per cent completed, and we had to now go and outfit and so on. It is estimated that it will take a further \$3.2 billion; that was the estimate that was there. I am pleased to say, Madam Vice-President, that we were able to bring down that estimate for completion from \$3.2 billion to \$1 billion—\$1 billion, a saving immediately of \$2.2 billion.

Madam Vice-President, in addition to that now, UDeCoTT has embarked on an aggressive programme of building police stations in Maloney, Cumuto, Piarco, La Brea and Arima. Work is also expected to start soon at Besson Street, Maracas/St. Joseph, Manzanilla, Mathura, St. Joseph, St. Clair, Matelot, and two of course, in Tobago, one in Roxborough and one in Old Grange. Fire stations are due to start in Mayaro, Chaguanas, Woodbrook, Arouca and a training facility in Chaguaramas; all of this being done by UDeCoTT.

In the health sector—Madam Vice-President, a woman came to see me last week and she said you know, she was in the maternity ward at the Port of Spain General Hospital, and because of the terrible state and the conditions there, she said when she eventually had her baby and gave birth, when she was going home and she was

remembering, she was so happy to leave there because of the delapidated conditions and so on, and she said she was passing NAPA, and she said she wondered, how could any Government see the state of the Port of Spain General Hospital, being what it is, and rush to prioritize, putting up NAPA in front of building a new hospital for “dey” own people. [*Desk thumping*] She said that she could not understand it, and tears came to her eyes. You know I never looked at it from that perspective; from the perspective of the patient in the San Fernando and Port of Spain General Hospitals, as to what the expenditure priorities were.

Madam Vice-President, I am pleased to say that this Government, we may not have the skyscrapers, but we are catering for the people because we are a people-centred Government and we are going to do the following in the health sector.

Madam Vice-President, UDeCoTT—we have the UWI south campus, the Chancery Lane teaching hospital which will be completed in December of this year. We have the Couva children’s hospital and multi-training facility for which the hon. Minister, Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie, planning permission has been granted from the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development; the Arima hospital, National Oncology Centre at Mount Hope, National Centre for Non-Communicable Diseases in Penal, and Point Fortin Hospital. Point Fortin, Penal, Arima, across the length and breadth of this country, we are delivering to the people and we are making the services in the health care sector better. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Health care for all.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Health care for all.

Hon. Senator: Egalitarian.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Madam Vice-President, yesterday, speaking about UTT, my colleague, Minister Fazal Karim, spoke about the millions of dollars spent—I mean, people are in shock this morning in this country you know. People are in a state of shock. When they read the newspapers and saw that Minister Karim could say in the Parliament that millions of dollars were spent on recruiting 20-plus foreign musicians, engaged by UTT to establish a national orchestra, and the terms and conditions included instruction for the students and so forth, we have to ask ourselves, Trinidad and Tobago which takes pride in the steel band—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Creative arts.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—which takes pride in the creative arts, with an abundance of raw, natural talent—just look at the National Calypso Junior Monarch—“and we importing people to teach we how to sing and dance?” And

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that was the Government? “Look at de money!” You know, they criticized us and they laughed when we say we will give the calypsonians \$2 million in the first year, and then we came down last year, we gave them one, and then they say, wait, they laughed and they poked fun at us. In the meantime they saw nothing wrong in giving foreigners that they imported all this money to come “and teach we how to sing and dance”. They really carried with them a deep-seated cultural inferiority complex of the worst kind. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, continuing with the construction sector, almost every single project that was undertaken by the last administration, not only had a cost overrun, but it also had a legal battle to follow, and the point I am making is that the Ministry of the Attorney General has had to play a pivotal role in managing these legal battles because the impact it will have on the economy could be quite dire.

So take, for example, the Scarborough General Hospital, [*Crosstalk*] a matter dear to my friend, Sen. Christlyn Moore and others here. But Madam Vice-President, could you imagine that the contract was awarded on March 06, 2003 in the sum of \$135.9 million. So in 2003, they awarded a contract for 135.9—\$136 million. In two years’ time, it was to be completed, that was 2003. Three years later, instead of being completed the contractor, NHIC, issued a notice of termination and claims \$183.8 million. Then a new contract was awarded to China Railway. Just before the election on April 20, 2010—the election was in May; in April they awarded a contract to China Railway Construction, and you know how much was the amount, \$477.6 million. So it moves from 135.9 to 477.6. Madam Vice-President, that is scandalous! It is outrageous and it is an abuse of taxpayers’ money, and we now have to inherit it, and you would like to think that since 2003 that when 2010 came, seven years later, the people in Tobago would have had the hospital. Not so, no such luck. This Government had to complete that hospital, Madam Vice-President, and now of course, we have to deal with the arbitration and the claims and the counterclaims with Nipdec and all the contractors.

It was in that situation that the Cabinet of the country under the distinguished leadership of Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, said look, because of the hidden cost to the economy and the impact it could have on the economy, it is time that we start having some probes into these projects to see whether if the public purse was robbed, we can in fact not recover some of those moneys. That is why those probes were instituted. Those probes were instituted because there was a free for all, it was a virtual gold rush, and there were no systems and procedures to guard against those things, and we were ill-equipped to defend the integrity of the State when all that litigation came.

Madam Vice-President, yes, we had those probes, and as a result of those probes for the first time in this country's legal history, I am very proud as Attorney General to say that those probes have resulted in several civil fraud and breach of fiduciary duty cases before the courts, for the first time in our country's history. [*Desk thumping*]

We have e TecK where we have claimed for \$30 million against former chairman Ken Julien and other members of the board, Dr. René Monteil, Eugene Tiah, Sonia Noel and Brian Copeland. We have UTT, Madam Vice-President. In UTT, it is well known that the guest house in Aripo, we have now filed suit against the former board, Prof. Julien and others for \$12 million. We have T&TEC where we propose to file litigation against the former chairman and board. We are still finalizing that matter, but rest assured, as night follows day, litigation will come against the former board to recoup those moneys. We have under the auspices of the Central Bank that proceedings have been filed against Lawrence Duprey and Andre Monteil and their own companies, seeking to recover hundreds of millions of dollars which was syphoned away from the companies that are at the very heart and centre of the Clico fiasco.

Madam Vice-President, we have now in the energy sector, we have one of the biggest fiascos of all times in this country, the Petrotrin WGTL project. What was meant to be a small scale gas-to-liquids plant at the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery, Madam Vice-President; a simple matter. That matter, WGTL, the joint venture business partner with whom Petrotrin went to bed for this arrangement, represented that they had the licence for the relevant technology that would allow for the catalytic converter, because this was to convert our natural gas reserves into diesel and other liquid by-products.

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And no one bothered to ask, well, what is your proof? Just like in UTT, nobody bothered to ask, well, show me your deed to show that you own the guest house. "They lease the guest house, fix it up, but they eh ask, show me if you own it nah." Same thing here! The relevant licence—because there are only a few companies in the world that have this kind of technology—from BP, the people did not have it. They did not have it, and what happened? Rather than pull the plug—and they bought that—we continued to pump money in it, Madam Vice-President, a project which was supposed to cost US \$10 million, by January 2009, we had pumped \$399 million; almost \$400 million. From \$10 million to \$400 million—

Sen. Singh: US.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—US. This is US “ah talking bout eh”. From US \$10 million to almost US \$400 million. [*Desk thumping*] Look at the movement. Look at the gap. [*Interruption*] You know what US \$400 million is? [*Interruption*] Four hundred million US dollars.

Sen. Singh: And not one drop of liquid.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: And not one drop—do you know what we had to do with that plant, Madam Vice-President? I want people in this country to know what happened in this country, because I had to sit down turning night into day to manage the litigation portfolio of the State. So you know what happened? That plant, the WGTL plant is now being sold off as scrap iron. Four hundred million US, and we have to sell it as scrap iron. That is the legacy of the PNM, and that is why today when they seek to point fingers about the state of ship in the economy, they must remember why the economy is in this state.

Sen. Singh: It is a sink hole.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: It is because millions of dollars, and that is US we are talking about, just completely funnelled away into a black hole.

Madam Vice-President, what happened, to add insult to injury they did no due diligence so the company, WGTL, if they had only done a due diligence, this company “eh have ah penny; dey eh have a farthing; not even ah red bean in their name, and they gone and do this big, big multi-million dollar thing”. But you know what happened? To add insult to injury, WGTL “come and sue” Petrotrin. [*Laughter*] In the US district court for the Southern District of New York, they filed claim and they claimed US \$2 billion, that is over 12, almost TT \$13 billion they sued. We were able to get that stayed because there was an arbitration clause and they went to arbitration, the arbitration is now completed. It went to the ICC International Court of Arbitration, under the auspices of the International Chamber of Commerce, and the ICC arbitration we are awaiting judgment. I expect that judgment to come out sometime before the end of this month, if not next month.

In the meantime under the London Court of International Arbitration there is another arbitration pending and that is carded for March 2013 in which allegations of breach of implied terms, deceit and fiduciary duty are involved. So that is the state of play. Whether it is Petrotrin or UDeCoTT, all of it comes out of the taxpayers’ pocket. It is the Treasury. [*Desk thumping*] When litigation comes, it is less money for beds in the hospital, it is less money to build schools with, and we have to spend money to defend that.

Madam Vice-President, on a happier note, I am pleased to announce that we won a major arbitration to the tune of—and we got US \$9 million, the Fluor Daniel, South America Limited arbitration. [*Desk thumping*] That arose out of the design and construction of the Isomerisation Complex at the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery, and we fought that hard and we won, and I am pleased to say that.

Apart from that, we have several other arbitrations on the outside. Time would not permit to go into the details but we have the Clico Methanol arbitration in London; again judgment is expected in that matter shortly. We have the OPV matter, the OPV matter: is a huge and massive arbitration with great implications for our economy. If we lose that arbitration our books will take a direct and forceful hit, and I have been micromanaging that OPV arbitration from the word go.

You see when we talk about the economy, one of the things that we really do not factor into the equation is really the litigation against the State—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: That is at risk factor.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—because it is all pending and it is all contingent. I want to tell you something, if one of these cases, if I lose one of these cases, the force of the impact on the economy could leave it reeling. It could catapult us downwards, and that is why we have to constantly monitor these things. They have also the Hyatt arbitration in New York. So, my plate is full. But all of this, Madam Vice-President, goes back to what we inherited.

On a happier note I want to announce, Madam Vice-President, that again, moving from the construction into the energy sector, one claim that I was able to settle was a claim brought by *Trinidad Energy Investments Limited v The Attorney General*, and that was a claim brought on the basis of a representation and guarantee made under the previous administration, and which guaranteed a supply of natural gas to TIL, and the claim filed against the State was for US \$200 million. “We talking ‘US’ dollars here you know. ‘US’!” And US \$200 million, Madam Vice-President, I am pleased to say that having negotiated and stood my ground in that matter, we were able to settle this matter by getting them to transfer a 50-acre parcel of land in the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, which is a rare and precious commodity, and furthermore, we got them to settle for \$50 million. From US \$200 million, I got them to settle to TT \$50 million. [*Desk thumping*] Less than 5 per cent of what they claimed is what they got, and in addition to getting less than 5 per cent I was able to get a 50-acre parcel of land at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate thrown in for good measure. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Vice-President, that is something that is a precedent in terms of settling.

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Madam Vice-President, that brings me therefore to the matter of the budget for the Ministry of the Attorney General. I hear a lot about legal fees and so on; it is a very touchy area. And you know, it is because of all this litigation that I have to have lawyers available at my disposal to take my instructions, take my guidance and to supervise them and let them go out there and do the work to protect the State and defend the public purse. The money that has been given for counsel remains more or less what has been given in the past; that has not changed. There is an item for the forensic investigation which is, obviously, a new item, having regard to the probes that have been instituted, and that figure is \$48.9 million for the forensic investigation matters, and the retainers for foreign and local counsel, \$34 million. That is very consistent with what has been given in the past; and overseas counsel and foreign witnesses, \$3 million.

I listen to people jump high and low and say, “Well, look at all this money” and so on, I want you to bear in mind the savings. I just mentioned US \$200 million and we settled at US \$9 million; I mentioned UDeCoTT, almost \$1 billion and we saved \$200 million. We have to balance it and measure it against that.

Sen. Singh: The risk factor associated.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: And the risk factor, because if I lose one, if I lose one—Madam Vice-President, if I lost the TIL case, it is US \$200 million Minister Howai has to find to pay out. US two hundred million! If he has to pay out that money it is a cost; there is an opportunity cost to it; something will have to suffer. We will have to scrap one of the police stations or one of the hospitals.

But, you know, Madam Vice-President, today I want to tell you that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones, because when they come and quarrel about these legal fees and so on, knowing full well that it is within the reasonable range—I discovered, Madam Vice-President, fees paid out under the former administration, and it easily overwhelms and triples the budget given to the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Sen. Singh: Tell us.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Madam Vice-President, you know under the former administration when people asked for the details about the legal fees paid to lawyers, the then Attorney General refused to provide the details.

Sen. Singh: “Dey say” client/attorney privilege.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: “Dey say” client/attorney, freedom of information, personal information.

Sen. Singh: Public money.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: We called—people scrutinize us in public life every single day and when public funds are spent, the microscope of the public, the public is entitled to place it under a microscope. That is why even our private lives day in, day out, are under the microscope for public scrutiny, Madam Vice-President.

Let me read, on June 05, 2008 an article entitled “March to secret Govt” by Andre Badoo from the *Newsday*, and it reads as follows:

“ATTORNEY GENERAL Bridgid Annisette-George was yesterday accused of taking the country one step closer to a secret government as lawyers, constitutional and public service experts”—all—“criticised her for...blocking parliamentary questions on the legal fees paid to private attorneys for State briefs.

‘It strikes me that this is yet another step in the Government’s march towards secrecy; to keep the citizenry in the dark while using the citizens’ funds’, said Reginald Dumas...

‘That is unacceptable in a society that has a proper respect for democracy and for its principles.’”

Madam Vice-President, I agree with Mr. Reginald Dumas, and that is why today I wish to reveal the fees paid by the Central Bank of this country under the tenure of the former administration and under the tenure of the former Governor of the Central Bank, which were not readily available and made known to the population at large. Whether it is spent through the Central Bank, whether it is spent through a state agency or anywhere else, it still comes out of the taxpayers’ kitty.

Bob Lindquist, for the period April 2009 to September 2011, \$82.8 million.

Hon. Senator: “Oh Lord.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: April 2009 to November 2010, \$46 million; February 2011 to August 2011, \$10 million; February to September 2011, \$17 million; November 2010 to September 2011, \$9.8 million. A grand total of \$82.8 million for Mr. Bob Lindquist. [*Interruption*]

We then go to the legal fees. Madam Vice President, legal fees: total legal fees paid to local and foreign counsel by the Central Bank during the five-year period October 2007 to July 2012, five years, \$113 million. “I getting \$30 million”, and that is the Ministry of the Attorney General—\$113 million. Total legal fees paid

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to local and foreign counsel in relation to CL Financial, \$103 million; total legal fees paid for the commission of enquiry, \$32.5 million. Total legal fees paid to local and foreign counsel in relation to fraud and the public, from October 2010 to July 2012, that is a mere two years, less than two years, \$57 million. The grand total for the expenditure of the legal fees by the Central Bank over that period is in the vicinity of \$305 million. [*Hon. Senator whistles*] Three hundred and five million dollars! “You coulda build ah new Port of Spain General Hospital with dat.” And what do we have to see and show for it?

Madam Vice-President, I saw recently—you know there is a lot of—a matter of a rather delicate and rather sensitive constitution and it has to do with the distribution of legal work. And I see people commenting about the monopoly and going outside of the traditional boundaries and so on, but permit me to quote. When people are talking and people jumping up, and people say “they standing up” on principle, the principle is what you must focus on, I want to tell you today about the money behind the principle.

Mr. Reginald Armour, for the period October 2007 to July 2012, a grand total of \$17.7 million from the Central Bank. [*Senator groans*] Elena Araujo, Araujo Law, \$11.5 million; Mr. Ian Benjamin, \$9.3 million; Lydia Mendonca & Co., \$4.2 million; Pollonais, Blanc, de la Bastide & Jacelon, \$3.4 million; Sherry-Ann Bachew-Rudd, \$2.4 million; May and Company, \$1 million, and the list goes on; a total of \$54.4 million.

Madam Vice-President, we then come to the consultants, and the consultants received 82.7. I am not going to go through them. These are the foreign consultants, but it is there. But, I make the point that when I am being criticized for the amount of money that the Attorney General’s Ministry is receiving given the vast magnitude of the litigation portfolio for the State that I have to manage, when you hear these figures, then what would you say? What would you say? [*Interruption*] You see, Madam Vice-President, in my Ministry unlike others, what I inherited—because the mismanagement was all over—in my Ministry are legal bills that remained unpaid for some strange reason going back to years, and I keep having to pay them and every time “ah pay is like Medusa’s head, one or two spring up out ah nowhere, and they kick meh.” [*Laughter*] And some five, seven years old!

Madam Vice-President, just by way of illustration—I mean I did a discrimination case in the Privy Council of Mohanlal Bhagwandeem in 2004, I was shocked to see that the bill for that is unpaid for the State’s Privy Council agents, Charles Russell and Company, and many of the cases I did it would

appear that they did not pay the Privy Council agents. I could not understand it. I happened to have fought those cases as a lawyer in private practice and now Attorney General, and I am now seeing that the moneys were not paid.

10.45 a.m.

But I also, quite interestingly saw, what they were paying the people who appeared against me in cases that I won, and I think I was underpaid, but anyway, Madam Vice-President, there are 25 bills that I inherited from the previous administration that I need to clear. The total money that I have to find to clear this and this is not money that I could now spend to do my work, but the total is \$19.9 million. I have to find \$20 million out of that \$30 million that I got to pay off the bad debts. These are debts from the official Privy Council agents.

So, it pains me when I see money spending and flowing like water elsewhere and we are entering into all kinds of arrangements to mortgage the future of this country, and I have to constantly run around like the long stump, running around at the boundary, constantly trying to save a boundary when other people just bowling wide and no ball. That is what I am faced with, and a case in point is the Milshirv office complex in Tobago.

Madam Vice-President, the hon. Prime Minister had referred this matter to me to look at, to ensure—to see whether or not there was any breach of the law. I spent the past two days looking at this matter and the law is fairly clear. Section 51 of the THA Act says the Secretary may borrow with the approval of the Minister for the purpose of capital investment.

Now, the issue which I considered really, is whether the BOLT arrangement is a way to circumvent this in an illegal manner. What you have when you enter into a BOLT arrangement really, is a capital investment and essentially your lease rent that you will be paying back is like a mortgage instalment, because you would own it at the end of the day, that is the “T” in BOLT for transfer, you will own it at the end of the day, but you have to pay for it. They build it, you lease it, you get it to own and they transfer, but you have to pay. So it is like they take the loan for you. But when you deconstruct the BOLT arrangement, it is clear that Mr. Orville London and the THA violated the law and section 51 of the THA Act.

It is on that note that I wish to announce that I have advised that the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy bring a claim and file legal action against Mr. London and the THA to seek a declaration from the court that section 51 was violated and the actions of Mr. London and the THA were illegal in entering into that BOLT arrangement for the Milshirv complex. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Orville

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London had no legal authority whatsoever to bypass the Ministry of Finance and the Economy and to enter in that BOLT arrangement. If we allow this precedent to be set then Trinidad and Tobago does so at grave risk and peril.

I will tell you why, that provision was put there for you to get the permission of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, because when the Minister is planning his national budget, when he is looking at the overall state of our financial health as a country, he must know what are the liabilities, contingent or otherwise. If you do not come to him for permission to say look, I want a \$300 million complex and I am going to enter into it like this. If you do not do that, then the Minister may be budgeting on a false premise. The country's balance sheet may be understated or overestimated in certain points. So you have to come—that is what the law intended. You cannot use a disingenuous device, a disingenuous and colourable financial device to get around that provision and avoid the law. That is why, Madam Vice-President, depending on what the court says has to happen in the aftermath, it may yet be that the people of Tobago will be saved from this pernicious and oppressive agreement that Mr. London entered into with the Milshirv and that transaction may yet be voided. [*Desk thumping*] Because if Mr. London had no legal authority to enter into the transaction, well the transaction may very well be illegal, null and void itself.

Madam Vice-President, there are too many questions to ask about this matter. You know, Mr. London—I saw him on television; he said “Well, you know we need to get development and thing,” Nobody quarrelling with that. Of course, we want to get development going, but not development at the expense of the taxpayers in Tobago. One must ask the question, he said that there was no tendering; there was no public advertisement and no open tender.

Sen. Singh: That is a PNM disease.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: But we have to ask the question you know. How did these people know that Mr. Orville London “want ah office complex in de first place” to come and approach him with the proposal? [*Desk thumping*] How did he know this man had this piece of land and suddenly he had a vision or a dream and he get up in a “vaps” and just jump out of his pajamas, run down the road and say Orville, I had a dream last night, they want a complex to put the agriculture division in and “Ah go build it for yuh”. How does this man know that? This is a strange case of political telepathy. Something is terribly wrong.

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

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Motion made: That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. But Madam Vice-President, there are too many questions about this deal. I want to ask Mr. London today, whether or not it is true that when the lease was executed he immediately paid 18 months' rent in advance—remember the building “eh” gone up yet “eh” not even a post hole dig in the ground and I want to ask Mr. London whether he really crazy enough to pay \$21.64 million through the First Citizens Bank account to the people. I want to ask that question.

Hon. Senator: Jesus!

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Because if that company folded up, that money gone. That is what happened in the e TecK matter which is before the court. That is what happened in the WGTI matter before the court.

Hon. Senator: Tobago schools need that money.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: You see, Madam Vice-President, we are trying to build a school for special children in Tobago. I went there with the Prime Minister and we saw the conditions. We see that there is room for marked improvement in Tobago. We, the people of Tobago—there has to be some measure of accountability to the people of Tobago. You cannot enter into these kinds of things just like that. Was there any public disclosure about this transaction at all? Was it even put before the THA for approval?

Hon. Senator: No.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Was it made known to anyone at all? You see—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: We would not put you on the spot.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: There are things about it from the start. However you twist it, however you turn it, however you dissect it, it reeks of corruption and misfeasance. [*Desk thumping*]

I heard Mr. Reginald Dumas ask a very pertinent question. He asked the question, in the first place—he asked Mr. London—was it really necessary to rent 83,000 feet of office space to house the agricultural division of the THA, 83,000 square feet to house the agricultural division of the THA? Up to now Mr. Orville London cannot answer that question. Then he asked an even more fundamental

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question. Look, the average rent in Scarborough, which is in the heart of the capital—he said the average rent there is between \$7 to \$10 per square foot. So he asked the question, he said listen, how could it possibly be that in Scarborough the rent is \$7 to \$10 per square foot, but in Shirvan it is almost double? You ever hear anything like that, that the rent outside the capital city is double to what the rent is in the capital city?

Madam Vice-President, I dare say it is because of those kinds of unanswered questions which Mr. London had refused to answer to date, that action will be filed against him in the court—and the THA—and this matter has been referred to the Integrity Commission by the office of the Attorney General, and furthermore, to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Commissioner of Police for an immediate and urgent criminal investigation to see if there was misconduct in public office by Mr. Orville London in entering into this sweetheart arrangement under the table. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: London bridge.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Madam Vice-President, we are pursuing the legal portfolio of the Ministry of the Attorney General in the context of the economy, so that we are pursuing misconduct and misfeasance anywhere and everywhere. That is why the HCU and the Clico commission of enquiry was established, and we see what is emerging in that commission of enquiry and action will be taken against those found culpable, but whilst I am at it, permit me to remind this population that the PNM, they paid little heed to the plight of the Hindu Credit Union depositors. They were concentrating only on Clico and it took the People's Partnership administration to say let there be fairness, let us be fair to all concerned and we will look after the Clico depositors, but we will also look after the depositors in the Hindu Credit Union. [*Desk thumping*] That is why the Minister of Finance and the Economy will distribute a further \$521.1 million to the Hindu Credit Union shareholders, those who have balances over \$75,000.

Madam Vice-President, I have three matters before the court concerning the Clico payout plan. The first one, where they challenged the validity of the plan itself and those depositors who have over \$75,000. They are saying look the people under \$75,000 getting back all their money. We were with the same institution, Clico, and you “telling we” take payment over 20 years and so on. That is their case and they are challenging that matter to say that the payout plan is unfair to them. We also have another one where they are challenging on the

same basis that it is discriminatory. And we have a third one, where they are challenging the statutory stay that we imposed via the amendment to the Central Bank Act to stay all pending actions which would have led to the collapse of Clico.

Now, those matters have been filed and are before the courts and if I lose any one of them—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: You resign?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: The cost to the Treasury is going to be \$20 billion. [*Desk thumping*] We have been managing and holding that state of ship together, because all of this was caused by one fundamental major blunder under the former administration which we must never forget. It is this, what the PNM did with Clico is to make a terrible misdiagnosis. I have done medical negligence cases. This is the worst misdiagnosis.

Sen. Singh: Financial misdiagnosis.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: It was a financial misdiagnosis. What they did, Madam Vice-President, was, they misdiagnosed the problem thinking that Clico had a liquidity problem without understanding that Clico's problems went far deeper and what it in fact had was a solvency problem. That misdiagnosis led to the wrong prescription, the wrong medicine and therefore did not get the patient any better. In fact, made it worse off. Because the initial bailout, they simply dumped it into Clico and what happened, all the agents paid out themselves and the poor man "eh" get no money. And we have to come now after that first bailout failed completely and miserably, we had to come now to do equity and justice, Madam Vice-President. And that is why we have received praise from all the international lending agencies about our handling of this Clico matter, Madam Vice-President, and we are very proud to say that what we promised we have delivered and now people are going to get, the latest score is 85 cents on the dollar. So people are signing on and accepting the bailout plan and people are seeing that the plan is working, and more and more people are signing on.

Madam Vice-President, I come finally to the PSIP in the Ministry of the Attorney General. I do not normally have a large PSIP, but I have been working on a few projects. The first is, I am of the view that the Government should try to minimize its rental bill. The same way you could find money to rent, you should find money to build. Because when you build and you own then you save the rent. And to that end, there are several quasi-judicial and judicial bodies that fall under my Ministry: the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Equal Opportunity

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Tribunal, the Industrial Court, the Tax Appeal Board, the Environmental Commission, and what I have been doing is that they all rent at great cost and we have located a place to site a court complex, a judicial complex. It is at Camden Road in Couva. It is on lands formerly owned by Caroni (1975) Limited and at the moment NIPDEC is developing the RFP for that. We wish to build that so that we will have that facility there.

My learned friend said we are emptying Port of Spain. The Leader of Government Business will deal with that. Port of Spain—we need to decongest it. He does not understand that and he says we are emptying Port of Spain. Port of Spain is overflowing. It is emptying itself and it wants to empty itself of the PNM. That is what is going to happen in two years' time. [*Desk thumping*] I am also about to receive permission from the Cabinet to build a south office for the Ministry of the Attorney General. This is going to be done next to Affan's Bakery by the old WASA building which has now been demolished. That is the site for it.

Sen. Hinds: Where is that, in San Fernando?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: In San Fernando. As I said it is a south office for the Ministry of the Attorney General. That means it is south. I know it hurts to hear the word south.

11.00 a.m.

Madam Vice-President, the DPP's office in San Fernando which will be housed in that building; it is on Independence Avenue. When people go to drop their children to school by Naparima Boys' there and you go to the hospital, the road is crammed because lawyers are struggling for a park—it is chaos. And we are building this so that we can put the DPP's office and give them a dignified space in south. We will have the services offered by the Ministry of the Attorney General in south; we will save rent; we will get away from the problem of lack of parking and I think it will be a signature building that will be able to service the needs of south Trinidad.

For my learned friend, Sen. Deyalsingh, who is pursuing his LLB—and I want to congratulate him on his recent success in the exam in part two of the LLB. [*Desk thumping*] Congratulations, my dear friend. The number of non-UWI LLB degree holders increases every year, and what we have done, Madam Vice-President, is, I have made available, through the kind permission of the Cabinet and the Minister of Education, an adjacent piece of land next door from the St. Augustine Secondary School, and at a cost of \$13 million the Hugh Wooding Law School is going to be expanded and it is going to utilize that, so that the student intake—its capacity—will increase. So, hopefully, when my learned friend graduates with his LLB, he will have a place to go. [*Desk thumping*]

So, LLB degree holders from the University of London, I am working hard to bring relief to you, and there will be an increase in the student intake. Continue to study and this Government will make sure that you can realize your dream of becoming a lawyer.

Madam Vice-President, the International Human Rights Unit in the Ministry, we have been on top of all our work. The universal periodic review which was done in conjunction with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we have received a passing grade. The working draft for the Country Report under the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women is completed, and we are now working with the OAS on the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women. We have completed that and it has been submitted.

The last thing, and an important footnote, Madam Vice-President, is that I have established a law museum. The Cabildo Chambers, which occupies a very unique and special place in the architectural and social and political history of Trinidad and Tobago, was left to fall into a state of disrepair, and having regard to what that building represented to Trinidad and Tobago, given the Spanish phase of our colonial history, I approved the renovation and restoration of that building, and I am pleased to say that on August of this year, that building has been converted and opened to the public as a law museum. It will now house works from all the previous Attorneys General, from the Parliament and, most importantly, from the Kingdom of Spain, and I would like to thank the Ambassador from the Kingdom of Spain for the recent donation of the digitalized paintings from Christopher Columbus for Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, that law museum—in Trinidad and Tobago, we do not chronicle the development of our history and our politics enough, and it is important that that law museum be developed so that we can record history for posterity. There are many Attorneys General who sacrificed—their history and their connections run even into the office of the President. At one time, Mr. Richards was our Attorney General.

So, Madam Vice-President, I am very pleased, outside of the normal cut and thrust of the litigation portfolio, to say that I have made a small but very important contribution to the architecture and the cultural heritage of the country.

Madam Vice-President, I shall continue to manage the litigation portfolio of the State to ensure that where the public purse faces attack and assault by those who wish to sue and think they will have an easy ride, I pledge to vigorously assert the

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rights of the State and defend the public purse. And where the public purse was under attack, and the subject of robbery, I pledge equally, with equal fervour and vigour, to pursue relentlessly and ruthlessly, and bring to justice those who plundered the Treasury of this country.

With those few words, Madam Vice-President, I thank you and I ask that we support this Bill.

Madam Vice-President: Sen. Hinds, just a minute. We have to revisit Item 3 on the Order Paper, “Announcements by the President” for the swearing in of temporary Senators.

SENATORS’ APPOINTMENT

“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. WAYNE ANTHONY MUNRO

WHEREAS Senator James Lambert is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of illness:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, TIMOTHY HAMEL-SMITH, Acting President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, WAYNE ANTHONY MUNRO, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence by reason of illness of the said Senator James Lambert.

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 17th day of October, 2012.”

“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

Senators' Appointment

Wednesday October 17, 2012

TO: MR. ALBERT WILLIAM BENEDICT SYDNEY

WHEREAS Senator Elton Prescott is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of illness:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, TIMOTHY HAMEL-SMITH, Acting President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, Albert William Benedict Sydney, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence by reason of illness of the said Senator Elton Prescott.

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 17th day of October, 2012."

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senators Wayne Anthony Munro and Albert William Benedict Sydney took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

**APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2013)
BILL, 2012**

Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. Madam Vice-President, during the course of his very fiery contribution, the Attorney General excited me no end. He said, in respect of the litigation that he has filed, "If I lose one", and I thought he was going to put his job on the line for it and he would go on to say, "I would resign", something that many people in the country would probably welcome, but he did not say that. He went on to say that—well, he said something else, but he did not say, and I was terribly distracted thereafter. I thought he was going to put his office on it, but he did not.

Madam Vice-President, what you heard was a lot of sound and fury from the Attorney General a moment ago. The highlight of his contribution was that he would cause the Minister of Finance and the Economy to institute judicial review proceedings, no doubt, against the THA in order to challenge the authority under section 51 of the THA Act to use the BOLT agreement in the circumstances as it has been used. That is a matter to be decided by the court, but for the immediate purposes, the attempt on the part of the Attorney General, no doubt, is simply to

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stymie the process in Tobago because elections are looming and they are upset to see the THA making serious progress, and this is a design to put an end to it and to give themselves some kind of advantage in Tobago, but they could wait.

He went on to say that he has passed—he instructed, as well, that he would pass the matter on to the DPP for investigation. The Attorney General ought to know that the DPP does not investigate anything. That is a matter for the police. It was the same kind of sound and fury we heard in respect of the state of emergency. The country remembers him well—he and the then Minister of National Security and the Prime Minister, ranting and raving about a state of emergency. The crime problem is still with us; 8,000 people were arrested, incarcerated, no evidence, no bail, and it took the very DPP and the courts to release them. So we are accustomed to the UNC sound and fury going nowhere, only for short-sighted, political purposes.

So, Madam Vice-President, we are not overly troubled by that, and the THA Chief Secretary has already placed on the public record, his willingness to open up for any investigation, and the lawyers will work that out. [*Desk thumping*]

I have heard the Attorney General today—and every time he gets an opportunity to speak with the same sound and fury about PNM corruption—eight years ago, 10 years ago, five years ago. You know he has never once spoken about corruption since May 2010? Not once! The only time the Attorney General made an intervention in this country was when a “bobol” contract in NP was about to be issued to someone who is a well-known friend of the Prime Minister. He made an intervention, and all that happened was that he cancelled the contract and did nothing else! But he comes here today, sound and fury about PNM corruption, and has not a word—not a squeak—to say about all the horrible things that has been happening through the state enterprise sector since May 2010.

Hon. Senator: The issue of shredding paper.

[SEN. DR. JAMES ARMSTRONG *in the Chair*]

Sen. F. Hinds: And spoke about shredding paper in UDeCoTT the night—I was present in the Lower House when we had that very powerful Motion of no confidence against the Prime Minister, and when the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East, Colm Imbert, raised potent issues about corruption in the Education Facilities Company Limited—we are aware—we got information that personnel worked that whole weekend, shredding papers out in Maraval Road, next to KFC by Kent House—shredding it! [*Desk thumping*] And we have been calling since then for a forensic investigation.

I am chairman of the Public Accounts Committee—called two meetings. Members of the Government, with one or two exceptions, abandoned the meetings so that we could not proceed—taking action to protect corruption in the State sector. So I do not wish to hear the Attorney General this morning, but I am obliged. I am a courteous man; I am here, so I heard him. And by the way, Mr. Presiding Officer, the contractor involved in that NP \$40 million scandalous contract—a friend of the Prime Minister, which required the intervention of the Attorney General to cancel it, and has not told us—

Sen. Deyalsingh: A party financier.

Sen. F. Hinds: Well, my friend has pointed out—he continues to get—he and his companies—plenty millions of dollars of work with this Government since 2010 all over the place. That has not changed. Only recently the Political Leader of the PNM, the Opposition Leader, pointed out to this country that as recently as about two months ago this Government issued a \$5 million contract to pave the car parks in Maloney to two students, one of whom is the daughter of Ishwar Galbaransingh, while the people of Maloney, the young men who you all pretend to talk about, unemployed; some of them unemployable still. They are right in the communities. No job for them! No contract for them, but a \$5 million contract to the daughter of Ishwar Galbaransingh and another university student—both being university students!

So what are you telling us here this morning? I am tired, myself, of this toing and froing about corruption. I am telling you the truth, as a Member of this House, and having stood in budget debates for the last perhaps—this is about my 15th budget contribution altogether. I am tired! “This do this; that do that.” It really raises a point Sen. Al-Rawi and Sen. Deyalsingh raised. It has to do with an improved procurement process for Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That should be the priority!

11.15 a.m.

All this political talk about who do this and who do that—my political leader made it very clear while he was a PNM Member of Parliament, that corruption is a business of opportunity. It does not matter who, once people, human beings, corrupt as we are, get an opportunity they will do it.

It is not only ministerial corruption this country has to contend with, it is right down the line. We have a problem and we have to fix it. A procurement process—and you all have spent little time on that. So you are downstream, throwing civil litigation at all kinds of people and you are not upstream to see how they are getting into the river in the first place—“doh make sense.”

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I want to say before I proceed, Attorney General. I have noticed unlike previous Attorneys General, when there was corruption, action was taken and criminal proceedings ensued, including against Ish and Steve and others well known in the national community—criminal proceedings.

[MADAM VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

After all your campaign talk about UDeCoTT, all the noise you and your Prime Minister and your colleagues made, not one single criminal charge has been brought against anyone for any alleged corruption so far. All you are doing—because you know what, you have no evidence—is filing civil suits to justify some kind of action, but nothing else. It is working its way through the court, on appeal, Privy Council, all of that. We do not know the outcome. By the time the matters are settled, you would be probably back in your private Chambers having a wonderful time. [*Interruption*] Expensive mud-slinging, as one of my colleagues described it. That is all.

Other administrations investigated corruption—lock up people. The same people who you all managed—[*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*—I am not giving way.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: On a point of order. No, no. He is misleading this Senate and he is misleading this Chamber. Madam Vice-President, no—

Sen. F. Hinds: Just now, wait. Madam Vice-President, I listened to the Attorney General—

Madam Vice-President: He is on a point of order.

Sen. F. Hinds: But he must say what the point of order is and that is the procedure. He has not done that yet.

Sen. Ramlogan SC:—34(b). Madam Vice-President—

Sen. F. Hinds: No, Madam Vice-President, you have to rule. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Vice-President: Kindly have a seat. Attorney General, you would like to have a point clarified.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes please, Madam.

Madam Vice-President: Sure—well, he has to give way.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes, I am grateful. My learned colleague knows very well—[*Interruption*]

Sen. F. Hinds: No, I am not giving way. I am not giving way. Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President, let me continue. You had your say. You had your sound and fury. I respect the fact that you had the right to speak, give me mine.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: I know you are misleading the Chamber, so you mislead. You know the Government “cyar charge nobody”. You know that—and you say your Government charge people.

Sen. F. Hinds: Madam Vice-President, once it was the same—[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. George: “He misleading the Senate.”

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “He misleading the Senate, man.”

Sen. Al-Rawi: This is injury time.

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, allow Sen. Hinds to continue in silence or at least reasonably so. Sen. Hinds.

Sen. F. Hinds: Did she say reasonably so? Madam Vice-President, you only want reasonable silence. I deserve total silence.

Sen. George: Misleading the public and the Senate.

Sen. F. Hinds: Madam Vice-President—

Sen. Singh: They had a “mongoose gang.”

Sen. F. Hinds:—it was the same action by a previous administration that landed about 47 people before the courts of Trinidad and Tobago which the DPP and the authorities were dealing with. It was the same Government that brought and proclaimed the section 34, which has run this country the risk of putting them at freedom and at large.

One citizen came to me recently and put it this way. “When under previous administrations, it was the State and the Attorney General versus X, Y or Z, today it is the people of Trinidad of Tobago against X, Y and Z; the Prime Minister, the Attorney General and the State. This is what is happening now. The tables have turned on the people. That is why they say what has happened recently with section 34 is worse than the attack on the Parliament in 1990 because the attack came from inside. [*Crosstalk*] The Minister of Justice raised section 34. I am only responding.

Madam Vice-President, I do not want to be distracted, let me continue. I am not proposed today—I am not an economist to run any subtle or esoteric economic analysis or excursions. I will leave that for all the economists in this

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Senate, many of whom would have already contributed and made good sense on the economic issues around this budget. I am not an economist. I am a simple, ordinary man. I am an honest man and I love honest people. I am a truthful man and I love truthful people.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “I eh sure yuh neighbour go agree with yuh.” [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Hinds: They will. What you can be assured of, for me, is that I say it from deep within my Caribbean belly. I say it as I see it and I express it as I feel, with dignity at all times. [*Interruption*]

Madam Vice-President, let me say from the outset, I do not trust or like this budget. I do not have anybody to congratulate. I do not trust it. I do not like it. As a matter of fact, if I could go further, I do not trust this Government and I do not like this Government—making that very, very, clear. I do not. There is a good reason why I do not. I do not like what this Government has done and is doing to our beloved country. I do not. I do not like the way they are dealing with our people and the way they are dealing with our institutions which they show little regard and respect for.

Look today, Madam Vice-President, and you see it in the budget figures, they are in Laventille today launching for the second time the Hoop of Life Programme. They launched it in Sea Lots some time ago. Brought Brother Shaq O’Neil from the US and today they are up in the basketball court in Laventille launching it for the cameras and publicity and electioneering all again.

They paid him \$10 million, they told us on the last occasion—lied around that too—the Government did not pay a cent and then came back and say it is three where Government departments that paying for it and the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. George: “What the PNM do for the people of Laventille?”

Sen. F. Hinds: So they are up there again today.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: That is the question.

Sen. F. Hinds: For years, I declared open already and participated in a basketball competition on the very spot they are launching today, sponsored by the Republic Bank to whom we give thanks, and that has been going on for many, many years, without any noise and fanfare.

They have a Life Sport Programme going on, Madam Vice-President, right now, where the idea as they told us was to get the community involved, business taking place around the sports, coaching taking place and all that.

Right now this Government is paying money to coaches and participants who come out to the LifeSport and have nothing to do because it was a big announcement with nothing in place, all for camera and publicity. Empty—and I think at a cost of about \$20 million. Madam Vice-President, that is how we do it. No training taking place, no activity taking place.

I see the Minister of National Security in his attempt to deal with crime, he got a \$5 billion allocation in this budget. He is inside of there now creating jobs. I hear “he tell them, all dey ha to bring is dey ID card. What kind of jobs you talking about”—and he will put them on work sites.

We put four secondary schools in the area. The Laventille Technology Centre—and there are many children of Laventille who today are professionals because of the educational opportunities we have made. [*Crosstalk*] I am not talking to you. I am talking to the people of Laventille. I want them to beware of this Government and know what is good for them and banish them. Whatever they bring, take it, but understand where barley grows and reject them.

All they are coming there today—you see, Laventille people, they believe, have something they want. They want sanitized criminal figures. There are elements in that Government who believe that all murder and all crime and everything wrong takes place out of Laventille. That is what they think. That is why they are there to launch the basketball programme today.

They do not understand 99.9 per cent of the people of Laventille are ordinary, decent, hard-working people. It is just a small crew like everywhere else. But, because they believe all crime starts and finishes in Laventille, they are up there with foolishness, and telling people about jobs and all you have to bring is your ID cards. They did not even ask for your resumé, bring your six or your eight O levels and let me get you a job and a contract with the Minister of Sport or the Minister of Public Administration or something. It is an insult.

It is an insult but the people of Laventille are no fools. They will work the thing out. Those who are attracted to that will go and the situation of the 99.9 per cent will continue, while you all butcher and brutalize people in this country.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: If a political paternity was in a lab, it would have tested positive for that.

Sen. F. Hinds: Madam Vice-President, I noticed the budget theme—what was the theme of this budget? I cannot remember what the Minister of Finance and the Economy said it was.

Sen. Singh: Stimulating growth.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Yuh doh read the budget.”

Sen. F. Hinds: Stimulating Growth and Generating Prosperity. I want to rename this budget, retitle it. I say section 34 all over again, a formula for deception. That is my theme for it because it is filled with the usual lies. I remember last year the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, year before last in the budget, telling us, we will launch and we will put in place eight CNG stations. I filed a question last year and asked him where it was. Two weeks after I filed the question, he and the Prime Minister and others went and turned the sod hurriedly all over the country. Nothing doing since then.

Criticizing rapid rail: any serious attempt to move from the gas subsidy and the burden that it obviously places on the Treasury must involve an efficient, reliable, dependable, secure mass transit system.

I lived in London for years. You could rely on the bus service, you could rely on the trains. Therefore, if you want to move from the gas subsidy, you have to put something in place that people could rely on. It is in that context that the rapid rail came to be thought of. It is a sensible thing.

On the other hand, the Member for Diego Martin North/East is engaged in a battle with the Minister of Finance and the Economy because he has correctly demonstrated that we had passed the Petroleum Levy Act—the correct name now escapes me—since the 1970s and for good reason, to protect the people from the fluctuating oil prices on the world. The idea in that debate, the purpose of the legislation was to ensure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago enjoy subsidized prices for every single energy product in Trinidad and Tobago and whatever the production cost with the subsidy, they should pay less. They decided in that Act to levy on the oil companies and that amount would be taken to provide the subsidy for the benefit of the people.

The idea always was that the people would pay less than the production cost of the fuel. He demonstrated beyond question that the \$4.75 we—and the Minister queried whether it was \$4.75. I will tell the Minister Energy and Energy Affairs to tell his Minister of Finance and the Economy that in a document published by his own Ministry—see if I could find it here—sorry, published by PricewaterhouseCoopers on this budget entitled, “Maintaining balance while striving for gold!” Budget Memorandum. At page 22 of that memorandum, PricewaterhouseCoopers quoted statistics which were drawn from the very Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs and demonstrated therein—it is right here Minister. You saw it? Good—that the production cost was \$4.73.

Madam Vice-President: Sen. Hinds, kindly direct your contributions or comments to the Chair, please.

Sen. F. Hinds: Yes indeed. The question that we raised was why in those circumstances they would put the price of premium at \$5.75? That was the question, because if \$4.75 is the production cost, the idea of the legislation was to ensure that it was less than the cost of production. It is now \$1 higher than the cost of production and as far as I am concerned, non-economist as I am, I see that as a tax of \$1 on the premium users on the people of this country, it is a tax. That is how I see it.

Sen. Ramnarine: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Hinds: Later. There is where we go. That is why I call this a formula for deception. I do not have time to go into more of the history of it but there it is.

11.30 a.m.

So you really have a good reason not to trust this Government. They tell you no new taxes and they are charging \$1 for premium more than the cost of production when we have legislation in this country, and the practice since 1974 to ensure that the people are saved from the vagaries of the oil shocks as had occurred at that time, requiring the intervention of Dr. Williams and a caring and strong People's National Movement, as we were then and continue to be.

We heard from the Minister of Finance and the Economy, both in the other House and here, and not a single word from him as to what happened in the last outing, the last budget. Last year we debated it, not a word of the report on the PSIP and those things. Nothing! What happened to the rapid rail? How much have you spent on land acquisition? Where are we? No report on that and this Government thinks that the people of this country are just foolish, but the society is becoming very agitated.

I left home day before yesterday, five minutes away from my home in Maraval I saw protest in the street, in the area of where Kappa Drugs was, leading to Fairways—what is that area there?

Hon. Senator: La Seiva.

Sen. F. Hinds:—La Seiva—protest, garbage strewn across the street, people with placards. As I came down St. Vincent Street, at Trinidad House I saw the people out there in heated protest. As I looked across the traffic light on the southern side, Independence Square South, I saw a long line of people waiting to

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go into the Revenue office. I never saw that before and I have been working in Port of Spain for 30 years. People are becoming restive in the society because the society knows that injustice and inequity is what is going down.

Hear the Attorney General boasting this morning, more big offices and projects for San Fernando, Couva, Penal and all of this. They are emptying Port of Spain, doing damage to the people of Port of Spain and I suspect deliberately, a scorch and burn policy, vicious, because—and let me just tell, I might be the bearer of bad news. Let me make it very clear so I would not be misunderstood.

Madam Vice-President, let me make it abundantly clear, racism is against the law of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*]

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

Sen. F. Hinds: Racism is immoral. I have suffered racism and I know how bad it is. Will never think or even practise it. I love everyone, respect everyone. That is our practice. I joined the PNM because that is the philosophy of the PNM. [*Crosstalk*] I want to tell you something, Madam Vice-President, for my friends on the other side to hear me say it here today. I might be the bearer of bad news. There are people in the country who are becoming restive and one of the things they say is that they believe that the Government is practicing racism, and I think you need to take note. [*Interruption*]

Sen. George: We have not heard that. I have not heard that at all.

Sen. F. Hinds: I think you need to take note. Take stock, the society is getting restive and a balance has to be met. [*Crosstalk*] We cannot deny our historical past, and Governments in this country have worked hard to bring the thing together and to create the nation, represented by the symbol that is above your chair, Madam Vice-President, our Coat of Arms.

Sen. George: “Ol’ talk.”

Sen. F. Hinds: But the fact of the issue is, people are reporting—a woman came to me last week, they butchered her job in the TTPost. She said for no other reason she is of the view, rightly or wrongly, that it had to do—in fact, let me show you something further. You see Minister Karim came yesterday—look at the headlines, “Ungodly”. He made a song and dance about Divine Echoes and quoted how people in there were getting \$70 million and \$80 million. [*Sen. Karim stood*] I am not giving way. My time is running. What are the facts? No, no, no, he said it.

Sen. Karim: Can I correct the—please?

Madam Vice-President: He wants to correct the statement. Would you give way?

Sen. F. Hinds: No, no, no, I am not giving way. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Vice-President: Senator, he has to give way in order for clarification. He does not wish to give way.

Sen. F. Hinds: Good! Madam Vice-President, I made contact with the leader of Divine Echoes, who sent me Cabinet Minute No. 1177 of May 13, 2010. What is happening here and the Minister does not know, is that the salaries he called out yesterday and the persons who he claimed in Divine Echoes were getting that to earn this headline, Divine Echoes—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Karim: I never said that.

Sen. F. Hinds: Those were persons employed by UTT.

Sen. Karim: That is correct. I never said Divine Echoes.

Sen. F. Hinds: UTT. Divine Echoes has nothing to do with UTT, except that some of the musicians from Divine Echoes attended school at UTT. I will give you an idea, Madam Vice-President—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Karim: Madam Vice-President, would the Senator give way, please?

Hon. Senator: Let him clarify. Oh God, Madam Vice-President.

Sen. F. Hinds: The salary structure for Divine Echoes, the highest salary for Divine Echoes from what I see in the list that Cabinet agreed here is \$14,000 for the band leader—the leader. Well, \$13,500 and they were proposing \$14,200. That is the highest salary—and all these young people had an opportunity to learn at the hands of the masters in music. Just as how Trinidad and Tobago employed the services of Leonardo [*sic*] Beenhakker, an expert in football from out in Europe, to assist our national team to get to World Cup standard, the idea was to tutor these youngsters to bring their musical skills and prowess and acumen to world class standards, but they come and denigrate that in the Parliament and misled the whole country, ungodly. It has nothing to do with Divine Echoes.

Madam Vice-President, may I continue? Let me continue. The Minister of Justice introduced the vexed question of section 34 in the debate. She said, among other things, having turned to that topic and I am quoting:

“Already, stakeholders within the criminal justice system, that is, the Judiciary, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre, are preparing for expected proclamation by building the internal capacity in terms of process...”

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I want the Minister to know that the thing has already been proclaimed. I know she just come, and she went on to say:

“Madam Vice-President, if necessary, we will briefly delay proclamation,”—it has already been proclaimed, Madam Minister—and stagger “implementation...”

Now, what I find curious about that, notwithstanding that she got the fact wrong, she is promising now to slow down, to delay proclamation and to stagger implementation. That, Madam Minister—and you do not know about this. You were not here then.

Sen. Karim: Madam Vice-President, may I invoke Standing Order 32(4) to a clarification on what the hon. Senator was saying, please?

Madam Vice-President: For the record, 32(4) identifies that:

“A Senator who has spoken on a question may again be heard to offer explanations of some material part of his”—presentation—“which he alleges has been misunderstood or misrepresented, but he shall not introduce new matter.”

And in light of the call of the Minister, I am going to ask that in my ruling, I would give the Minister, since he alleges he has been misunderstood or misrepresented, Minister, you have a very short time to indicate your point.

Sen. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. Let me just recap and say, categorically, I never called any salaries with respect to Divine Echoes. I was referring to a comment that Sen. Deyalsingh made and I said, “Let me tell you something about music.” I made mention of the fact that—and I read it: during the period 2007—2009, the then Prime Minister had begun the process of establishing a national orchestra. I never said Divine Echoes. The orchestra was to be made up of foreign qualified musicians and these things I am in agreement with. I called out the salaries and you will know, honestly, that these salaries cannot refer to Divine Echoes. Do not do that. These salaries refer to the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the national orchestra, and I wish to place that on record and to debunk that statement. It is not correct and I wish to correct it.

Madam Vice-President: Sen. Hinds, I will give you a minute injury time.

Sen. F. Hinds: One minute?

Madam Vice-President: Yes.

Sen. F. Hinds: Thank you. Madam Vice-President, you see the headline here: “Karim, foreign tutors for Divine Echoes cost \$1.5 million”. Then I am not the one—Is either he misled the *Newsday*—[*Crosstalk*] He should sue the *Newsday* then.

Hon. Senator: “Da is all yuh paper.”

Sen. F. Hinds: Not me. Then you should sue the *Newsday*. Madam Vice-President, may I continue? The Minister of Justice, when she made that comment yesterday—

Madam Vice-President: Members allow him to continue, please. He wishes to continue.

Sen. F. Hinds: When she made that comment about delaying the proclamation of the Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) Act of 2011, and saying she will delay it and stagger implementation—although it has already been proclaimed—I will tell you something, Madam Vice-President, that reminded me of the promise that the Government had made to the Members of the Lower House. They had promised that they would not implement it immediately and people trusted them.

I see a Senator here, Prof. Ramkissoon, speaking publicly on record in the papers yesterday, saying that trust was breached. The Government made the same promise and then breached it, and went in the dead of Independence night and proclaimed only the amnesty clause. Now the Attorney General is attacking another Independent Senator because she said that the *Gazette*, Vol. 51, No. 142 was only published on September 10. It was dated August 30, but it was only made public—and that is what I am sure she meant by published. It became available to the public on September 10. “Doh worry, we have questions filed for you all to answer in respect of it.” So we will get specificity [*Desk thumping*] on the matter, and the answers to those questions will demonstrate the nobility and the class and the character of the Independent Senator, which you all tried to impugn. [*Desk thumping*] Good!

So, Madam Minister, “ah know you now come”, but careful. The old people in Tobago have a saying, “Good horse in the wrong stable.” Watch it. Watch it. I have seen 10 of your colleagues from this Senate—“isn’t it?”—I have seen two-thirds of the Government Bench, 10 of your colleagues come and go over the last 10 years. We have the same strong, solid PNM team. [*Desk thumping*] Same strong solid PNM team. Yes! I have seen about seven of your ministerial colleagues—you see they demote you from leader and they replace you with your boss. “In ah lil while you too will be gone, Minister George.” [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: “And he didn’ even know he was getting demoted?”

Sen. F. Hinds: “Waatap, he look shell shock since he came here.”

Sen. George: I am happy to be relieved. [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Hinds: It is not you happy to be relieved, is we happy to be relieved. You made a mess of the Parliament. Is we! [*Crosstalk*] Madam Vice-President, I am being distracted.

Sen. George: Tired of facing you all the time. I rather face Deyalsingh. Manning put you out of his office—[*Interruption*]

Sen. F. Hinds: My colleagues in the other House complained bitterly, and for good reason, that this Government was acting in a discriminatory manner in relation to the sharing, the distribution of the resources of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. You heard the Attorney General, again, today, everything happening out of Port of Spain. They are leaving Port of Spain weak, empty, dishevelled and behind. It is as if the Government in their “scorced-earth” policy intends to ensure that the people of these communities do not have a chance to find their feet—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: You have no conscience.

Hon. Senator: Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. F. Hinds: Madam Vice-President, I told you that I would not be giving you any serious—I cannot attempt to run any economic analysis because I am not an economist. I am a lawyer, I am a simple man! But I will tell you one thing, since the Minister of Finance and the Economy read his budget, I saw several economists—I do not have to talk about economists today. They have all commented—Indera Sagewan; Dr. Harold Ramkissoon; energy expert, Gregory Mc Guire—Ronald Ramkissoon, sorry—Dr. Roger Hosein of UWI; Dr. Anthony Birchwood of UWI; they all said that the budget was vague, had no sense of purpose or priority. These are the guys, Mc Guire and Hosein and Birchwood of UWI, I think. There are others: Selby Wilson, a former Minister of Finance; a film producer called Paul Banseelal; Siparia Chamber of Commerce; lecturer Balraj Kistow of the Arthur Lok Jack institution, he said the budget will generate a backlash, protest and unrest, which I cautioned you a while ago, re: the fuel subsidy removal.

Hon. Senator: What is his name?

Sen. F. Hinds: His name is Balraj Kistow. I heard the executive Gervais Warner of Neal & Massy; Ernst & Young's Wade George; Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir, senior economist, criticizing the prospects. Just like my friend, Sen. Dr. Henry did when he responded on behalf of the PNM in this Senate.

This 1.2 per cent growth that the Minister boasted about was madness. Madness! It is a prospective growth. "Dat's what you call it?"

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Sen. Dr. Henry: Projected.

Sen. F. Hinds: Projected growth; no real growth. Madam Vice-President, with a long list of economists speaking in those terms, I really should not be commenting on economic matters here at all. The die has been cast! The verdict is in! This budget is a budget of deception.

You now see the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development going back on himself. The Prime Minister went on a pre-budget rally and said "VAT will be removed". The Minister of Finance and the Economy and all looked shocked!

Sen. George: I now see why Manning fired you! [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Hinds: VAT will be removed. They are struggling since then to find the list of the items on which VAT will be removed; struggling. Now, I understand that the Government is now considering returning the VAT to those items. "You all are a real confusion, yuh know." So that Balraj Kistow is right. [*Crosstalk*] You are creating problems in the society because your Government is run by "voops", "vaps" and vaille-que-vaille. [*Desk thumping*]

We saw the same thing with the SRPs. When they came to office in 2010, the police were carrying on with some industrial issues about money, about negotiations. In order to win their support no doubt, in order to get Ramesar and Seales and the police on their side, the Prime Minister just went out of the blue and announced that she would give a \$1,000 non-taxable allowance. We immediately responded and said, "But, look, the police work hard, they earn very little money, you need to include the \$1,000 in the entire negotiation package so that it will impact on their pension and their gratuity which is equally, if not more important." The Government has not done that. But somebody called the Prime Minister—"dey say she behaving like Mama Mia; giving gifts." I did not say she was; I said "behaving like".

Sen. Singh: Madam Vice-President, Standing Order 35(5).

Madam Vice-President: Sen. Hinds, I think you can withdraw those comments. I think that those are a bit offensive.

Sen. F. Hinds: I withdraw the suggestion that a citizen told me that the Prime Minister behaves like that.

Sen. Singh: No, you cannot come with a citizen telling you.

Madam Vice-President: I think, Senator, as you right—[*Interruption*]

Sen. F. Hinds: I withdraw.

Madam Vice-President: Thank you very much.

Sen. Singh: Citizens could tell me a lot of things about—you cannot do that.

Sen. F. Hinds: So that without thought, they announced that the police will get this \$1,000. Immediately, the prisons say, “But wait, we running risk inside of the jail too. We want the \$1,000 too!” The fire officers began to say, “But we running risk with fires and other emergencies, we want it too!” The SRPs, quite properly, doing the same work that the police do, they began to clamour and to demand it. Finally, the Government decided that they will give the SRPs. I now hear the volunteer regiment, members of the reserve regiment, saying, “We want it too!”

I am only showing you that this Government has put this country in jeopardy because of two things. One, we told you that this so-called coalition, we see the Government doing things to the detriment of the people of this country, all in an effort to maintain the coalition. So that you will get an incompetent person from one party holding office because that is a position that must be for COP or for TOP. So it does not matter about capacity, quality and ability, it is just that you happen to be TOP and we owe you one; you are COP and we owe you one. [*Crosstalk*] That is why we have argued, Madam Vice-President, that this country is a victim of their coalition’s internal meanderings. That is what it is.

The other issue that afflicts Trinidad and Tobago with this Government, the other issue that afflicts us in this country, is because this Government is constantly in election mode, doing things to please people like the \$1,000 for the SRP, and then it leads to a kind of domino effect that eventually lands up in the Treasury, and it is labelled “poor governance”.

So, Madam Vice-President, we demonstrated in the other place and here, my colleagues, that revenues continue to fall. PAYE take fell in the last fiscal; corporation tax fell; property tax nil; and I see that they are sneakily coming back with the

property tax. Again, another trait of the Government. Rejecting things and coming on another approach with the same thing. They have a new anti-gang unit in the police service now. They used to have one called ROP, Repeat Offenders Programme. “Dey mash it up!” And now they have established another one to do the same thing—this Government. That is how they do it.

In the last election and before in the run-up to it, everyone must agree that we had a state enterprise, one of 56, that was problematic, making itself large; one. Madam Vice-President, since this Government came to power, many citizens in this country did not even know about CDA as a state enterprise entity, all of these: T&TEC, WASA, EMBD, NAMDEVCO, CDA, NP, ADB, PSAEL—all of them having problems with poor governance and mismanagement of public moneys. All of them, Madam Vice-President, and that is the reality of the thing.

Madam Vice-President, let me give you an example. The AG told us about the budget he had to investigate corruption a while ago, and I want him to direct a little bit of that money to this, because this has to do with the Siparia market facility. I have some ties in Siparia so I travel that way from time to time.

Sen. Singh: What about the development that is taking place?

Sen. F. Hinds: Bids were invited for the Siparia market facility and the Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprise Limited, PSAEL as I have just mentioned, invited these bids. They took responsibility for the project. It was not an open and public tender, they invited three companies to bid, interestingly enough: TLM, Bull Fabricators and Super Industrial Services Limited, SIS; a company well-known to us, very well-known to us and to my friends on the other side, in particular the Prime Minister.

Madam Vice-President, the bids came in and it was obvious from the very start that TLM and Bull Fabricators could not make the trip. They were invited to bid but from the first assessment, TLM was awarded by the evaluation committee, a finding of fair, and Bull Fabricators, poor. So that the view must reasonably be that they were brought in to fail just so that they would beat the allegation that it was a sole selective tender. *[Laughter and crosstalk]*

Sen. Ramlogan SC: That is quantum logic.

Sen. F. Hinds: “Yeah, it is ah quantum leap!”

Sen. George: Quantum logic.

Sen. F. Hinds: Everything is possible with this Government and I will show you why. *[Continuous crosstalk]* I will tell you why. Well, why was it not open? *[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. P. Beckles*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. F. Hinds: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. In respect of the financial statements, the evaluation team reported as follows—I am quoting. In respect of SIS, Super Industrial Services:

“Fluctuating data suggest insolvency from 2006 to 2009 by irregular trends in revenues and profits, negative working capital.”—But it found—“Significant revenue increase in 2010”—Significant!—“However no Financial information was submitted to determine cause.”

I told you that this is a company well known to my friends on the other side; very well known.

“Poor, Submission was inadequate...the Conceptual Design did not meet all...Market requirements.”—At the end of the day, the evaluation team found that—“All bidders failed to follow general format requirements of the RFP.

All bidders failed”—all three eh—to present all submissions requested and to meet all critical Market requirements of RFP.”

And it went on that:

“SIS...failed to meet the minimum scores for the Technical Approach.

SIS had not acquired the minimum critical requirements in Section II of the Technical Evaluation...

SIS had ‘just managed’”—and that is a quote—“to attain the minimum pass score of the Technical Evaluation.

SIS has presented a conceptual plan for the Market site that houses less than the minimum required number of vendors...The area of concern lies with the possibility of...Cost Variation on Award of Contract by attempting to...expand design floor space...”—and it indicated by the Ministry of Local Government—“that cost is an important...and...parking facilities...”—was left out.

A host of things they found as to why they did not qualify. Do you know what they did? They removed that evaluation committee, a new one was brought in place, and they gave SIS an opportunity to correct the flaws that the original evaluating team found out.

Hon. Senator: “Nah man!”

Sen. Deyalsingh: “Dey wouldna do that!”

Sen. F. Hinds: Yes, they did it.

Sen. Al-Rawi: The AG checking that one out.

Sen. F. Hinds: I am asking the AG to investigate this. At the end of the day, the PSAEL—just to cut a long story short—they had estimated the project at \$36 million, the board of directors of the PSAEL granted this contract to SIS—a company well known to my friends on the other side—for \$49 million.

I myself received reports that when this company was doing work at a certain private residence in Philippine. [*Interruption*] If you are working in “big shot” people’s place and you are a little contractor, you are very happy for the world to know. But, when the media and other people went to see who was doing the work on the site of this residence in Philippine, they found, it was reported to me, that the logo—the company logo on the doors were sprayed out, on the trucks and everything. They were hiding the fact that they were doing work at a certain well-known, expensive mansion in Philippine.

Sen. Deyalsingh: So they insolvent.

Sen. F. Hinds: And this is what is going on—insolvent between 2006 and all of a sudden, millions of dollars in 2010. I want the Attorney General—and I have the company and the directors here so I could help him. I do not wish to call the names here but I have it. You see, the Attorney General called names this morning, I have it, it is right here, and I am prepared—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: The recommendation is 36 and the award is what?

Sen. F. Hinds:—to hand it over to you for your investigation. Right? “SIS doh only operate with the PSAEL, yuh know, dey in WASA too.” So when I tell you my friends over here—Minister George, “yuh see he gone!” He was the Minister of Public Utilities in charge of WASA and my friend on the other side will know SIS because SIS does a lot of business with WASA too, as it continues to do business with the occupants at Philippine.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Do tell!

Sen. F. Hinds: SIS. So, Mr. Attorney General, I want you to direct 1 per cent of your fury on things like this. One, okay? Insofar, well, like SIS, as I said, is omnipresent, everywhere you turn in all the State, they are everywhere.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Since 2010?

Sen. F. Hinds: Yes, since 2010. Madam Vice-President, a contract in WASA, SIS bid \$65 million; another company, TOSL, won out on the contract. But, they have some connections in the Government, deep roots, and I think “ah fella” by the name of “Sarran” and “Lola”—I am not calling names, I will pass the documents over to the hon. Attorney General; just giving them nicknames for the time being—they made arrangements and at the end of the day—this is a fact—they bid \$65 million but they got the contract in WASA for \$69 million.

Sen. Al-Rawi: “Nah man!”

Sen. F. Hinds: It took the acting CEO, one Dion Abdool, to come in and to cancel the contract. I want the Attorney General to investigate that. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Singh: Would the Senator give way?

Sen. F. Hinds: You will have your time.

12.00 noon

Sen. Singh: Madam Vice-President, I want to thank the hon. Senator for giving way. I want to indicate to the hon. Senator, when this matter was brought to my attention, I indicated to the board I wanted a report. The board has indicated that there was interference in the process because it is a cyber-interference and because they were using the analytical hierarchy system, which is a system that you are familiar with and that interference—and they have enlisted the services of Deloitte & Touche to investigate this matter.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes, well done.

Sen. F. Hinds: Madam Vice-President, I told you I am no economist. I am not a sophisticated man. I am an ordinary man. I am speaking in the language that the little man across Trinidad and Tobago will understand and the risks they are at with this Government. “Yuh see all he explained there, at the bottom line it was corruption, tief.” [*Desk thumping*] That is what it was.

I am submitting that they are murdering the taxpayers of this country in WASA, murdering us, and I say so without apology. There is some plan to divide WASA into five strategic business units and people in the know are saying they are already running their businesses through WASA and this plan is to create an environment that is more conducive to running their businesses through WASA. That is what happening.

For example, all aluminum sulphate valves—do you remember I spoke in a debate here some time ago and I spoke about bad valves? They have been getting a supply of bad valves, every minute they are bursting. Poor quality, brought in by a company called SEMCO and they continue to take them. I will be filing some questions about that. I put them on notice.

Ish Galbaransingh's company—I am not pulling any punches—he just rented 50 cars to WASA, ongoing contract, even while matters were pending. “Dey going in Laventille now, to offer people job and telling dem: ‘bring yuh ID card’”. That is all you need, not even a résumé as I said, no intention to create any meaningful, sustainable employment. It is make-work nonsense that they criticized. They are in Laventille this morning asking people to come by their thousands for jobs. But you know what? Creating big contract opportunities for their friends, all throughout the state enterprise sector and I want the Attorney General to look at that.

Most—I am reporting this and I want the Minister with responsibility to take note. I am not accusing anybody of anything. I am careful about that in the maintenance of the dignity of this Senate. It is said to me that most of the directors have businesses that are doing business and are inside with WASA, doing “dey” own business through WASA and murdering the taxpayers of this country and it is not only at the top, it goes right down, deep into the organization.

I would tell you this as I am about to conclude, I took care of my three children when they were babies. I learnt how to do it as a caring and loving father and anytime you see the baby just crying and you could see no immediate reason, you have to check the diaper. When you check the diaper, you would realize the baby is uncomfortable, soggy. “So, yuh know yuh gone and yuh change dat. Yuh powder up and thing. Yuh put back on yuh lil pampers and yuh cool.” I have found that the people who have responsibility for WASA, like bad babies, sit down in “ah” cesspool of filth and would not even cry or squirm, would not make a noise.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Analogy boy.

Sen. F. Hinds: Madam Vice-President, if you think—yesterday the Minister, Devant Maharaj came here and told this Parliament 1,000 untruths about the Agricultural Development Bank, about some boardroom with a cellar. It does not exist,

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and I was tempted to disturb him yesterday to get up and ask him if he ever saw it. I want the Attorney General to investigate this, no such cellar with no—no board office with a cellar exists. It is all a lie—[*Desk thumping*—]just like the—

Sen. Deyalsingh: Like the piano.

Sen. F. Hinds: Sorry, sorry, sorry, it is an untruth. Just like the piano that somebody misled the hon. Attorney General and he eventually told us it was hiding under a sheet; a big Attorney General like that, now Senior Counsel.

All the top-level managers, good, hard-working people whom they profess to love and care about, corporate credit manager, CEO, corporate secretary, manager recoveries, they torment them when that new board went in place. They are harassing people. You may not know Ministers, but some of your functionaries in the State, people are telling people whom they meet there: “Is we time now.” PNM people, once “yuh” African—they are doing that.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Oh, please. Oh, please. “Doh play dat race card in here.”

Sen. F. Hinds: Let me—I am telling you. You could say what you want. You could say what you want. [*Crosstalk*] I have—it has been—I am not saying I am there—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Do not resort to race man.

Sen. F. Hinds:—it has been reported to me. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: Reported to you?

Hon. Senator: By whom?

Sen. F. Hinds:—that they are being told by the Chairman of the Board, since you want to know.

Sen. Singh: Which chairman?

Hon. Senator: Which board?

Sen. F. Hinds: You want me to call his name?

Sen. Singh: Yes.

Sen. F. Hinds: At the Agricultural Development Bank.

Sen. Singh: He tell you that?

Sen. F. Hinds: Yes, tormenting them, running them away. Board member, Winston Rudder, right? Leslie Ann Williams and Nevan Maharaj, an attorney at law claimed they could no longer take the mismanagement and the rubbish that is taking place there. They resigned and they are gone. ABD is in a mess, like everything else.

The Chairman of the Board, let me call his name for you, Rudy Maharaj, involved in operational matters in the bank, interviewing staff alone, receiving résumés, he alone, behaving like an executive chairman, shortlisting people for interview, dictating things to human resource manager and loans manager about loans in the ABD. That cannot be right. That is poor governance. Those things are happening in the ADB. And to make matters worse, excessive expenditure, they budgeted \$6,000 for a product launch—sorry, they budgeted \$200,000. He oversaw \$600,000 expenditure on the matter. Independence decorations for 2012 cost the company \$400,000, ADB, when they had budgeted \$40,000. These are things I want you to investigate. All the printing for the bank is done by a printery owned by the chairman, via other companies. One such company is a company called Top Design. I have the statistics here, the directors, the names and again, I would not call the names here, but I am quite prepared to pass it over to you, Attorney General, for your investigation.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Pass it man.

Sen. F. Hinds: Hope I could get some energy out of you on that and you would not behave like the bad baby I just described.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Careful you is not the bad baby yuh self yuh know.”

Sen. F. Hinds: “Nah, nah, nah.”

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Yuh” sounding like one.

Sen. F. Hinds: A family day that was cancelled, Top Design took from the bank \$35,000, and hear what is reported to me—I am no racist, I hate racism.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: But that is all the PNM knows.

Sen. F. Hinds: You could say that.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: You said I was in New York and I was never even there.

Sen. F. Hinds: I love human beings. I am a loving man. I respect everyone.

Sen. Singh: You should demonstrate that.

Sen. F. Hinds: Yes. Hear what is being reported to me. Since that gentleman took over the chairmanship of the ADB, 33 people have been employed all of one race. I will say no more, but I want you to investigate it. And these things are troubling. I am the bearer of bad and awkward news. You will call me racist, I have no fear of that because I am a living man and I love truthful, honest and upful people and my God and the truth will defend. I have no fear whatsoever of that. But these things are causing a very debilitating effect in the society.

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And as I wind to my conclusion, I am going to ask the Attorney General yet again to pay some attention to these matters. As I conclude, I had promised you that I will not be able to make excursions into the esoteric business of economics. But, I hope that I have said enough today, in this my 15th budget contribution—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: Very poor.

Sen. F. Hinds:—to have demonstrated to my friends on the other side that the PNM will continue to be very vigilant in the protection of the public purse and the public interest and we will leave no stone unturned in so doing.

Madam Vice-President, with those words, I wish to thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Prof. Harold Ramkissoon: Madam Vice-President, we have had a stormy morning. The calm will now follow the storm. [*Desk thumping*] Let me thank you and fellow Senators for giving me yet another opportunity, this time to make a contribution on the third budget of the Tenth Parliament.

Before I do so, let me join others in welcoming the new Senators and let me also congratulate all those who have spoken before with their significant contribution.

Let me also congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy for his budget presentation, his first budget presentation, and for the calm manner in which he made the presentation, quite in contrast with the theatrics and the lectures of his predecessor.

Madam Vice-President, we continue to live in very uncertain economic times, with weakening economies in three major areas of the globe, the USA, Asia now and, of course, Europe. Some pundits are predicting that the light is not yet at the end of the tunnel, that we are going to see some hard times for another three years. Governments around the globe are introducing different combinations of austerity and stimulus package to weather the economic storm. Our budget, I think, does the same thing.

The US economy is limping along, encumbered by a political system that seems to be in dire need of change. Its political system, in my view, is its weakness. The Japanese are focusing on building infrastructure, although they have all the infrastructure they already need; building unnecessary infrastructure and running up debts of trillions of dollars. South Koreans are focusing and producing more goods for local consumption because the market out there for their goods is not that good. They have unveiled their fresh \$5.2 billion stimulus package. The eurozone continues to be a zone of trouble and problems.

India has lowered its growth expectation and so has China. During my recent visit to China, from my observation, China is still a country in motion, its people brimming with confidence. Its economy is expected to surpass the US economy in eight or seven years' time. Some recent headlines—and you may have seen them also: “World economy outlook still bleak says IMF” Chief; “British Prime Minister...: brace for more budget cuts.” That is a glimpse of the global picture. The question is: What about Trinidad and Tobago?

Let me start by saying that 40 per cent of our revenues come from commodities that we export. So, if prices are depressed and there is no great demand, then we have a problem. In other words, we are inextricably bound to the world outside. The economy for 2011/2012 was fairly flat. Unfortunately, we were not treated to a detailed analysis of the performance of the economy over the last year.

12.15 p.m.

Madam Vice-President, given the current global situation, the fact that we have had five deficit budgets over the last five years, that means we have been spending more than we have been earning over the last five years. We have no choice but to tread with care otherwise we will burden our children and mortgage their future. We must put country first and make sure we do not act in a manner that can be described as irresponsible. Nothing is wrong with borrowing, once you can repay your debts at the end of the period. The problem here is that there is no guarantee that we can meet our national debt commitment in the near future; revenues are in decline and we are short on ideas.

I want to make some general comments about the budget. A budget is a statement of intent, a tool to help us achieve larger objectives. It should be linked to a vision, a vision that the Government has of the country. We are yet to have an articulated vision for this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: True!

Sen. Prof. H. Ramkissoon: If not, Madam Vice-President, it becomes a simple exercise in arithmetic. Like any other budget this one has its positives and negatives. I want to congratulate the hon. Minister for a number of things: first, his attempt to bring closure to the Clico and HCU issues; secondly, for initiating efforts to deal with subsidies; thirdly, for trying to get ICT, information and communication technology, as an industry off the ground, his intentions to reintroduce land tax and revive the tax regime; and lastly, for trying to align education with development.

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Madam Vice-President, let me focus on some specific areas before I zoom in on science and technology, and if time permits, tertiary education. VAT-free foods; so much has been said about VAT-free foods, so there is nothing much I have to say about it, but I need to say something. This has not been thought through thoroughly. [*Desk thumping*] My advice to the Government is that when you are introducing populace measures think about the possible adverse consequences. [*Desk thumping*] No one will oppose helping the poor; in fact, we need to do more for the disadvantaged in the society, but how will this VAT-free facility help the poor?

I have been told that most of the basic items are already VAT-free. Some of the additional food items are not good for one's health—processed meat, and I ask the question, before this facility was made available, did the Government consult a dietitian? On the one hand you are worried about people's lifestyle, and on the other hand you are encouraging them to indulge in pancakes, French fries and bologna; some of the foods compete with the produce of our farmers. You are also taking the VAT off—is it fruit cocktails?—when we should be encouraging our population to subscribe more to the fresh fruits from our farmers.

Almost every Sunday my wife and I proceed to the Macoya market. We meet the farmers, try to understand the problem. Of course, that is not our main mission, but we purchase fresh vegetables and fresh fruits. We support the local farmers; this is what the Government should be encouraging the farmers to do—produce more fresh fruits and vegetables.

Madam Vice-President, let me talk about agriculture, what I call the least of the disciples. The love affair with agriculture seems to be cooling off. Aggressively pursued by the last Minister, and showing promise, it seems to now have been relegated to the back-burner. [*Desk thumping*]

Although the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy took pains to try and convince us that the allocation for agriculture is not actually \$1.3 billion, but a bit more, it is still not adequate if we are to significantly step up production. The Minister of Food Production is now mandated, I believe, to increase food production almost fivefold, from a worth of \$400 million to \$2 billion. I wish the hon. Minister of Food Production well. Let me remind us all, if you plant peanuts you will reap peanuts.

I have no delusions about feeding ourselves, and so I welcome the initiative by the Government to work and partner with the Government of Guyana; that I think it is a welcome move. What I envisage, though, is a parallel two-track

strategy: grow more food locally, while at the same time you facilitate the investment in Guyana by our private sector. We can also explore similar arrangements with the Government of Suriname, the Government of Belize; sizeable arable lands they have.

I do not understand. I am puzzled. I do not understand why our private sector cannot see that food production in the future is going to be big business. One of the consequences of climate change is more frequent and more intense floods and droughts. In addition, Madam Vice-President, we have problems at the present time feeding the population of seven billion people. By 2050 the population is expected to rise to nine billion people, and the question is, if we cannot feed seven billion people now, how are we going to cope in 2050, when the population rises to nine billion people? The point I want to make is food production is going to be big business in the near future. Venezuela is currently seeking more rice from Guyana. There is a demand globally for food.

I want to talk about the fuel subsidy. I think the fuel subsidy is a good idea. The subsidy for fuel is, I understand, \$4 billion, which is about 8 per cent of our budget, so one needs to do something about the fuel subsidy. However, the expected revenues from that subsidy is, I think, \$400 million. I do not think it is going to be realized for the simple reason that people now are shifting, moving away from premium, and they have gone to super or they are using a combination. I would have done things a bit differently with respect to the fuel subsidy.

I would have reduced the subsidy across the board at a lower level; that is what I would have done; diesel, super in addition to premium. You see, Madam Vice-President, what is going to happen is the following: with the increase in the price of premium, you are still going to have a ripple effect, and when you come later and you reduce the subsidy further on the other fuels, you are going to have another ripple. I would have introduced reduction in subsidies right across the board and have one ripple effect. I also, and many have said so before, would urge the Government to intensify its effort to set up the CNG structure and give people another option.

Madam Vice-President, I now want to turn to science and technology, and this is going to be the major area of focus for me. Let me start off by saying that the world of the 21st Century continues to be shaped by science and technology and in particular by three major technologies: information and communication technology; biotechnology; and nanotechnology. These technologies are going to shape the 21st Century.

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In fact, the industries of tomorrow will all be centred around these technologies; ICT is already a trillion-dollar industry. Biotechnology, which is any technological application that uses living organisms, is a multibillion if not a trillion-dollar industry. It has application in among other areas, health care, crop production and the pharmaceutical industry.

Madam Vice-President, during my recent visit to China, I attended a major science and technology conference, at which about 400 leading scientists from the developed countries took part. It was hosted by the Chinese Government, and it was officially opened by the President of China, Hu Jintao. With all due humility, I had the honour of chairing the first session of that meeting.

More importantly, this gave China an opportunity to showcase its science to the outside world and they took full advantage of that opportunity. One of the things they did was to announce the coming on stream of a major biotechnology centre in China, a state-of-the-art biotechnology centre, and you know what that means—they are going to be mass-producing vaccines and pharmaceuticals.

Now, I come to nanotechnology, which deals with the control of matter at the atomic level. Madam Vice-President, nanotechnology has applications in drug delivery, for example, delivery of drugs to specific cells using nanoparticles. It has applications in tissue engineering, cosmetic industry, textile industry; in fact, nanoproducts are already in the market. The industry is expected to grow phenomenally over the next 10 years.

The USA, in spite of its economic problems, is still the number one country in the world when it comes to innovation; it leads the world in nanotechnology. They have more nanoresearch centres in the USA than the next three countries combined: Germany, the UK and China. Madam Vice-President, where does Trinidad and Tobago stand in all of this?

I will deal with information and communication technology last, as it is an area of focus in the budget. Let us talk about biotechnology research. We do have some biotechnology research in Trinidad and Tobago. We have some of our scientists working in aquaculture and horticulture, and we are seeing applications of biotechnology at the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies.

However, to do sophisticated research in biotechnology calls for expensive equipment, and that is one of the problems I imagine the scientists face at the St. Augustine Campus. And what is the position of nanotechnology in the country? You would be surprised to know that this, which is most likely a trillion-dollar

industry already and is going to become a major industry in years to come, that for nanotechnology there are no courses being offered at our universities in Trinidad and Tobago. This is very, very surprising. This is an exciting emerging area.

Right here in the Caribbean, in Guadeloupe, we have a nanotechnology lab; in Venezuela, they are about to launch a masters programme in nanotechnology. As you can see, we are still not embracing 21st Century science and technology.

On a recent flight to Caracas I was sitting next to a gentleman, and he turned out to be one of our union leaders, a very knowledgeable individual, and I turned to him and said: what is your opinion about the status of science and technology in Trinidad and Tobago? You know what the response was? And I quote the gentleman: “markedly third world; underdeveloped.”

A bit on the harsh side, but I think the point the gentleman was making is that we need to take science and technology in Trinidad and Tobago to a higher level. Two fundamental questions arise as to why science and technology is not fully developed in Trinidad and Tobago. First, are we spending enough on science and technology and research and development? That is the first question. The second question is who drives the science and technology agenda in Trinidad and Tobago? These are the two fundamental questions we need to ask.

Well, let us look at the first question. Are we spending enough on science and technology and research and development in the country? Well, science and technology was, in the last reincarnation, under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education.

12.30 p.m.

Over the years, they received an average of \$2.4 billion, under the new arrangement where you have two separate Ministries now, one for tertiary education and training and one for science and technology. The Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, in the budget here, got \$2.4 billion and the Ministry of Science and Technology, \$286 million or one-tenth of what tertiary education got. The figure spent on research and development is not available, but I do not think it is anything significant.

Madam Vice-President, in my estimate, the total amount spent on science, technology, research and development is approximately a half billion dollars. What do they spend in other countries? Let me say it. The recommended amount that developing countries should spend on research and development, science and

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technology should be 1 per cent of the GDP of that country. What is our GDP? Our GDP is \$150 billion. If you take 1 per cent of that, it is \$1.5 billion. So we should be spending \$1.5 billion, the least that is, the minimum, on science, technology, research and development. What are we actually spending? Half a billion dollars instead of \$1.5 billion. Our conclusion is obvious. We are grossly underfunded when it comes to science and technology, research and development in this country. Grossly under funded!

Interestingly enough, the People's Partnership manifesto promises 3 per cent over 10 years. I am happy if we get only 1 per cent. The manifesto promises 3 per cent over 10 years, so the question is: what is the Government doing about science and technology in this country? And I want to warn the Government, if you do not invest in research and development; if you do not invest in science and technology, you are going to pay a price down the road, as we are paying the price for not investing in information technology much earlier. So I am asking the Government—let me rephrase that—I am pleading with the Government to spend what they should be spending on science and technology. Do not further neglect science and technology.

Now I come to the second question. The first was: how much are we spending on science and technology? Are we spending enough? The conclusion: no, and a loud no! The second question is: who drives the agenda? Who sets the agenda for science and technology? Certainly not the scientists! What I have found in this country is that the scientists are on TTARP; they are not on top. They are waiting for research grants; they are not leading the S&T effort. I think this is one of the reasons for the state of science and technology in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Minister of Science and Technology has said, in his contribution, that Niherst will drive the agenda; but first we need to take a closer look at Niherst and see how we can strengthen it. Niherst came into existence in 1984. In its history, it has had only two presidents. It has done well in promoting science, but in my view it has done well in nothing else.

Accountability: I was trying to get an idea of what the annual reports are saying. With the help of Parliament here, the Research Assistant, I got a document. What does it say about the report from Niherst? No evidence of annual reports received; all annual administrative reports outstanding; Auditor General report for 2003, yes, but the Auditor General's report outstanding for the period 2004—2010. I hope I am wrong, but if this is correct, it goes to show what can happen when you do not demand reports.

We have not had reports for six or seven years and, to me, Niherst should be doing much better. It is one of the failings, I think, of the country. We do not demand reports on an annual basis and in a timely manner. So the first thing I would say, Madam Vice-President, is that we need to do an assessment of Niherst. Look at its strengths; look at its weaknesses; look at its achievements to date and look at some of the reports it is supposed to be handing in.

Madam Vice-President, given the state of science and technology in the country today, I want to make some recommendations. The first recommendation is: spend more on science and technology and research and development. Before you do that, ensure that the proper structures are put in place; formulate a simple science and technology policy—and I have been asking for an S&T policy for the last two years. You need an S&T policy; it does not have to be a detailed S&T policy, but you need guidelines. Thirdly, as I said, get an independent assessment of Niherst—what it has been able to achieve, its strengths and its weaknesses.

I want to make one further recommendation. Science and technology is a fast-moving wave front. It is changing rapidly and it is very easy to fall in its wake. Given that fact, I would like to recommend that no president of Niherst should serve for more than eight years. I think that is a fair recommendation, otherwise we are going to be left in the backwaters of science and technology.

Another question that we need to ask is the following: I have talked about the emerging technologies, the technologies that we need to get into, and the question arises as to whether we are building sufficient capacity in nanotechnology, in biotechnology and information technology. If we are not doing that, then we are going to have a problem down the road.

The Ministry of Public Administration was kind enough to supply me with some statistics and I want to look at the postgraduate studies programme where students are given scholarships to pursue higher degrees abroad and even here at UWI. For the year 2009, 55 awards were made to do postgraduate studies. In 2010, it was 106 and, in 2011, 132. How many are in these emerging fields? How many of them? How many of them are in information and communication technology? One, Madam Vice-President.

Of all those scholarships given to do postgraduate work, one was given in the field of information and communication technology. How many were given in biotechnology? Two, Madam Vice-President. How many were given in the field of nanotechnology? These are emerging fields. These are the fields that are already shaping this world. How many were given in the field of nanotechnology? Not one, Madam Vice-President! Our future is not assured when it comes to science and technology.

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More than that, I wanted to find out where we are sending our students. If you are giving scholarships to your best undergraduates, you want to make sure they go to centres of excellence. That is what you want to make sure you do. Singapore did that; Brazil did that. Look at where they are today. You know what I found? Of all those postgrad scholarships given, not one went to MIT, the premier institute in technology. Not one went to Harvard; three to Oxford; one to Cambridge and the one that went to Cambridge is enrolled in a PhD programme in philosophy. I do not mind a PhD in philosophy. It is a good university. It is a very good university.

The programme in its present form cannot continue. It is not leading us anywhere and I want to make some recommendations as to how taxpayers should spend their money with respect to sending our graduates abroad to pursue postgraduate studies. This is my view. Education has to be oriented to development. We need to identify the areas where we need to build capacity. I mentioned the emerging fields. What we need to do is that our first class students and some upper class students—because there is a thin line that separates first class from upper second—some of these students, we should encourage to pursue degrees in the developmental subjects and send them to centres of excellence abroad.

The others who have done extremely well in their first degree, but not in developmental subjects, I have no problem with that, but make sure, when they go, that the person who is doing philosophy goes to first class institutes. Let me state, and I have stated this before, that if as a first class student, you cannot get into a top class university, then serious questions have to be asked. We cannot spend taxpayers' money to send students to third rate universities.

Madam Vice-President, I want to mention something that is related to this—capacity building and building for the future. The Minister of Health has complained about the shortage of specialists in a number of areas in the health system and that raises the question: are we doing any planning? If we are not doing any planning, may I appeal to the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development to come up with human resource needs for the next five years for the country. That would be my recommendation. If this is done, we would not find ourselves with a shortage of specialists in a number of areas in the country.

I now want to move to information and communication technology, something that has been mentioned in the budget. In my first budget contribution, I spoke of the wasted opportunities with respect to information and

communication technology. Our failure to ride that wave because of our obsession with oil and gas has cost us a lot. We should have used the revenues from oil and gas to build a solid ICT plank from which to launch our diversification programme and we have failed to do that.

We twiddled our thumbs for over 10 years while others were developing their ICT and knowledge-based industry benefiting from outsourcing and software production; but all is not lost, if we now do the right things, we can still carve out niches for ourselves.

I will make some recommendations; but first, in my last budget contribution, I identified one of the top IV companies that was doing extremely well, with a base here in Trinidad and a base in Boston exporting all their software production to the US.

12.45 p.m.

It is a company called Medullion. I am pleased to let you know, Madam Vice-President, that somebody was listening because I was told that the Government is now having a conversation with that company.

Madam Vice-President, in this budget the Minister of Finance and the Economy has signalled his Government's intention to build a competitive ICT industry. I welcome this. The hon. Minister went further to state that ICT policy is in an advanced state and that current ICT infrastructure is being evaluated. We welcome the initiative, but time is not with us. We need to move with a sense of urgency.

Let me, Madam Vice-President, as I said, let me be bold enough to make some recommendations with respect to ICT, how we should proceed. First, I make the observation: we are users and not producers of software and IT technology. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars purchasing software from abroad, software that we can produce right here in this country. The Ministry of Public Administration spent, I think, \$200 million in software and technology purchase.

For a number of years, Madam Vice-President, UWI has been offering BSc programmes, MSc programmes in IT, producing hundreds if not thousands of graduates. The problem is that there is a gap between knowledge and experience. That is the big problem that we face in Trinidad and Tobago. A significant gap between knowledge and experience which must be bridged if graduates are to enter the IT industry. My suggestion, Madam Vice-President, is that the Government seriously think about creating a software production unit, an IT software production unit on one of the campuses.

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That campus, in addition to producing software, should undertake a diploma programme in which we bridge the gap between knowledge and experience. So, we could offer a diploma programme which involves projects and experiences of companies that are producing software.

I firmly believe that we are capable of producing software for the licensing office, for pensions department, for our motorists, a database for our motorists. In fact, Jamaica, because it does not have the money and the cash, developed their database, their own software for motorists. I think we can do the same here in Trinidad and Tobago. One of the things is that if you produce a module, let us say for one area, you could modify that module and use it for another area. I think if we are going to get into information communication technology, we should focus on software production. I think that is an area of focus for us.

I also want to say, Madam Vice-President, when the ICT policy comes on stream you need people to drive that policy. Let us not make the mistake and get the wrong people to drive that policy. What you would need, in my view, is a multifunctional group of experts to drive your ICT policy, and if you do not have experts here in Trinidad and Tobago in a sufficient number, you could always turn to the diaspora. We have people out there—some of our brilliant young people who are working in Silicon Valley and a number of other places. Madam Vice-President, I commend the Government for their articulated intention with respect to ICT. Too often though intentions remain just that. Let us hope that in this case it will be translated into action.

I want to turn briefly to education. I am not going to spend too much time on education because much has been said about education. I just want to say that again I commend the Government for spending 16 per cent of the budget on education. I think we need to continue investing in education. I believe any developing country that wants to get out of the trap of underdevelopment should be investing heavily in education. So I commend this Government as I have commended past Governments for investing in education.

Madam Vice-President, we have to ask ourselves questions. I think two other Senators brought this up—the Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training—the question of, what are we getting back in return under this investment? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Karim: Value for money!

Sen. Prof. H. Ramkissoon: Value for money! We have to ask ourselves serious questions—value, quality, relevance—and we are not asking these questions. The time has come when we seriously have to ask these questions. In the final analysis, education must be linked to socioeconomic development. It cannot be viewed as something distinct and separate.

Someone mentioned the performance at the SEA level. Thirty-three per cent in 2012, I think, passed mathematics at the CXC level—oh, it is the CXC level—which meant, Madam Vice-President, that two-thirds of our students do not have a knowledge of basic mathematics. Forty-three per cent of our CSEC students obtain less than five subjects. In fact, the situation has gotten so bad that last week there was a news report which stated that there was going to be a meeting between Ministers of Education and CXC officials to discuss this situation, a crisis situation. It is my only hope that if that meeting is going to take place that pressures are not brought upon the CXC officials to lower standards but rather to deal with the root causes of the problem. In my view, there are two root causes of the problem.

One is that we are not recruiting and training teachers in the way in which we should be doing. Two, we need curriculum reform. I think Sen. Bernard identified these root causes also. Madam Vice-President, I want to read for you—I am running out of time—an article, in fact, in two parts written by Leonard Bernstein and Jane Bernstein. I would recommend this article for anybody who has an interest in education. They looked at our education system and came up with a number of observations. Let me quote what he has to say here about teachers. I quote now from the article:

“And my condemnation includes the teacher training system...the lack of value placed on teachers and the total inadequacy in the way and amount teachers are paid.”

Then what does the couple do? They looked at what is taking place in Singapore. How did Singapore solve this problem of having competent teachers in the schools? Let me quote from it again, Madam Vice-President:

“...the education system, in Singapore, teacher candidates are chosen from the upper one-third of university graduates with even further screening of certain qualities amongst those. In Singapore, teachers are very highly valued and respected, they are very highly paid and they stay in their jobs. Is this true of T&T? I think not.”

End of quotation!

Madam Vice-President, with respect to curriculum reform, I think we must undertake curriculum reform in the country and at both levels. At the primary level and the secondary school level, at the secondary school level we need what I call, radical reform. Let me give you an idea of what we should be doing.

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. Prof. H. Ramkissoon: Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President, thank you very much hon. Senators. Yes, I was talking about the reform of the curriculum at both levels, the secondary and the primary. I think the Minister of Education has started some reform. I want to look at the secondary school level.

I will tell you about a project that we undertook about two months ago in August in Barbados. We identified 10 of our brilliant young people from the Caribbean including Belize. We took them to Barbados, the Cave Hill Campus—this is the Caribbean Child Foundation in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of the West Indies—where we have our office, the Caribbean Science Foundation, and we exposed them to a one-month intensive programme on major courses.

What were the courses? Robotics, Biotechnology, Electronics and even Mandarin. At the end of that month, Madam Vice-President, we had projects being handed in and whatnot. It was a tremendous success. That experience would have changed the lives of those young people. That is what I mean by looking at the curriculum. We need to teach subjects that are oriented to development, and that are related to emerging areas of science. There is no reason why our high school students—even in the summer—cannot be given an exposure to biotechnology, nanotechnology.

In fact, we are planning to do this. CARISCIENCE is planning next summer at the UWI St. Augustine campus here, to offer a course to senior students at the secondary school level on genetics. Genetics is another big area. There is no reason why we should not be exposing them, giving them some basic introduction to these emerging fields. This is what I mean by looking again closely at the offerings at the CAPE—

Sen. Karim: At the tertiary level too.

Sen. Prof. H. Ramkissoon:—and at the tertiary level also.

Sen. Karim: A lot of these courses might be obsolete.

Sen. Prof. H. Ramkissoon: Yes, yes! Madam Vice-President, this is what I think I want to say about education.

Before I continue, I want to bring to the attention of the Minister of Finance and the Economy a concern of a citizen of this country. Okay, Madam Vice-President? And it is written out because I want to make sure I capture the concern. With your permission, I will read it out for the hon. Minister.

The 2012/2013 budget delivered by the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy states *inter alia* that survivor's benefits under the National Insurance Board will be increased to 1,500 from 1,300. According to a pamphlet issued by the NIB entitled *Survivors' Benefits*, claimants of this benefit are widowed—a widower whether legally married or common law, child, step child, adopted child, orphan, or dependent parent of a deceased insured.

The pamphlet states further that the dependent child, stepchild, adopted child would be paid until age 19 years. The question is the following: What happens in the case of a mentally or physically disabled child who is over age 19 years, unable to support himself or herself, in fact has been totally dependent on the deceased insured, unmarried and living with parents? The question is, should provision not be made in law if it is not yet done for such children to continue to receive survivors' benefits even though they have passed age 19 years?

So, hon. Minister I hope you have gotten the question and in your winding up you can probably give a response.

1.00 p.m.

Madam Vice-President, I wanted to briefly touch on the GATE programme. I have talked about the GATE programme before, and I am very happy that they are trying to bring some sanity to the GATE programme. You know, as I see it, we can still maintain the objective of the GATE programme. The objective is to make education accessible to all in Trinidad and Tobago who wants to access it and it is affordable. That is the objective. I think we can still do that and yet cut down the cost of the GATE programme. I ask myself the question, why are we funding education of the sons and daughters of the well-off in the society? That is the question, I am asking. [*Desk thumping*] I am asking that question.

Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight: They pay taxes.

Sen. Prof. H. Ramkissoon: That is not good enough. I have heard that argument, that they pay taxes. What taxes do they pay? We all pay 25 per cent taxes and some of the well-off—I could tell you, in fact, somebody was saying, some of the rich live off the poor, and there is some truth in that. The well-off people pay less tax than people like myself and others in the society. So, this argument about we all pay the same tax does not hold water.

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But, Madam Vice-President, I am simply suggesting the following, and this is done in a number of places: you come up with some cut-off point; a combined salary by both parents of say \$15,000 a month, anything above that, you do not apply for help—you are not going to get help, you could afford to educate your children. If you do not give them help, they would find the funds to educate their children because they know the importance of education. So, I think the first thing we should do is introduce that as phase one; come up with a cut-off point, help those in the society who really need help [*Desk thumping*] Those who can afford it, let them pay for it. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Madam Vice-President, I want to bring my contribution to an end, and I do so by making the following observation, that ours has been a history of boom and bust with no genuine attempt to create sustainable economic development and a unified cohesive progressive society.

The question is, but why is this so? Is it because we are a plural society, a tribal society? And the answer is no. You look at Malaysia, Malaysia is a plural society, and they moved away from the brink of disaster when they had race riots—I think it was in 1960—and today Malaysia is a success story.

You look at Mauritius; Naipaul visited Mauritius and wrote a novel on Mauritius called *The Overcrowded Barracoon* in which he wrote off Mauritius, a country with no hope, and today Mauritius is a success story. So it cannot be that because we are a plural society that we cannot be a successful society. The question then is what is the problem?

I believe that the late American Senator scholar by the name of—I am sure some Senators would know the name—Daniel Patrick Moynihan was very much spot on when he said, and I quote:

“The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.” [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, culture sometimes complex, is very important, and it can be changed, and that is the big question that confronts our nation today. Do we have the political will to change our culture, a culture of dependency on the State to inter alia educate us and on top of that provide jobs for us; a culture of poor work ethic and, as Sen. Dr. Balgobin said poor productivity; a culture of show and little substance; a culture of only wanting and not giving back to our society, and in its place create a culture that enables us to produce good disciplined productive citizens that compete in a global society. That calls for a strong Government; that

calls for good governance. I am afraid that if this is not forthcoming, the dark clouds of economic and moral crises will continue to engulf us all and destroy any chance of a bright future for our children. Changing our culture is the imperative of our times. I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is 1.06 p.m., I propose to take the lunch break and 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 the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Thank you, Madam Vice-President. I rise in support of a Bill entitled an Act to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on September 30, 2013. In doing so, I wish to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai, for his presentation, which has received national approbation and acclaim from the trade union movement, the chambers of commerce, the man in the street and the housewives. [*Desk thumping*] National acclaim! And he completed this task just a mere three months after taking his oath as the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

I further want to congratulate the hon. Minister for taking the brave and courageous step to enter the hurly-burly of political life in Trinidad and Tobago, having left the comfort of the pristine banking environment. [*Desk thumping*] But, Madam Vice-President, he came here with stellar credentials, and his budget and the others which will follow will, no doubt, bear the stamp, the imprimatur of his decades of experience in the financial services sector. [*Desk thumping*]

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the hon. Prime Minister for tasking me with the responsibility of a new Ministry, the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. [*Desk thumping*] And as I speak, you will recognize the genius and the wisdom of putting the component elements of this Ministry together. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Vice-President, 24 persons have spoken thus far. I want to congratulate the Independent Benches for their contributions, the incisiveness of Sen. Ramkhelawan, the cynicism of Sen. Corrine Baptiste-Mc Knight, the sincerity of Sen. Helen Drayton, the tell it like it is attitude of Dr. Rolph Balgobin, the scientist that he is of Prof. Ramkissoon and the earnestness of Dr. Wheeler. For the Opposition, I would analyze their contributions later in my contribution. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Sen. George: You raised their expectations there.

Hon. Senator: They were about to smile, “eh”.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Madam Vice-President, when you contemplate what is this Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, you have to contemplate it in the context of the relationship between man and his surroundings.

2.10 p.m.

When you look towards the sky and you see it is bearing cumulus clouds, encapsulating the hills of the Northern Range, and there may be rain-bearing clouds, but you may think that rain will fall but the meteorological services will tell you whether or not rain will fall—and the Met services is part of this Ministry. It has been allocated by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, a total including recurrent capital and IDF of \$30,000,401 for the fiscal year, 2012/2013, and I will continue with that fiscal year 2012/2013.

Madam Vice-President, so as the rain falls and it falls in the canopy of the trees and in the forest, it then cascades down to the earth and quenches the thirsts of the earth—and that is that forest cover 226,000 hectares—40 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago is forest cover. Madam Vice-President, and that, therefore, it tells you, immediately—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Ramnarine: Places like Cumuto.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: —places like Cumuto—well we have a lot of places. And within that forest cover and the canopy of trees you have the biodiversity and the wildlife habitat of Trinidad and Tobago—and I will come to that. But what is the allocation? The allocation for 2012/2013, Forestry Division is \$109,744,000 as recurrent, \$20 million as capital—together \$129,804,000.

For the National Reforestation Watershed Rehabilitation programme, the allocation is \$44 million. So this is where it is and I will talk later on about the carbon storage capacity of our trees and why these programmes are so important for the society because industry has created a carbon sink in Point Lisas, in particular.

Madam Vice-President, so as the water cascades from the trees and into the streams and into the rivers—there are over 300 rivers in this country, over 10,000 kilometres of rivers, then a further 20,000 kilometres of secondary ravines and watercourses, and the allocation for that is \$250,366,000, an additional capital, PSIP of \$32,400,000, and a capital further contribution of \$102 million under the IDF making it a grand total of \$384,000,766 for the drainage sector of this country.

But as this water flows in our rivers and streams, there is need for it to be harvested and it falls within the embrace of the Hollis reservoir, which captures a billion gallons of water; the Navet, 4.2 billion gallons of water; the Arena, 9.8 billion gallons of water and Hillsborough, 200 million gallons of water. Those are our principal water catchment to harvest this rainfall that flows through the system, Madam Vice-President.

And then you have within that system 31 rural intakes that provide water for the communities, and for that allocation for 2012/2013: WASA, \$1.9 billion, recurrent expenditure, \$52 million—I am rounding off the figures—for PSIP, \$145.4 million for capital IDF, making the sum allocated in 2012/2013 budget of \$2,196,383,000 for the water and waste water sector.

So as this water flows, Madam Vice-President, it then enters into the various swamps with the various Ramsar sites with the ecology to maintain that ecology, and then flows into the coastal areas and you have within that flow the various units: the EMA and the allocation for the EMA is \$47,339,000; for the Green Fund Executing Unit, \$4.6 million; for the Environmental Policy and Planning unit, \$7,000,499—these are all important. Because as the sun rays strike you, Madam Vice-President, you begin to contemplate that climate change is impacting upon us; that is heat being generated and that the noise that you hear and the air that you breathe is being polluted, so that there is need to fashion policies and solutions for these problems for the generations to come. [*Desk thumping*]

But as the water enters the coastline and you have the impact of that on our coastline—the IMA, the Institute of Marine Affairs dealing with the coastal zone—the impact of that on the fisheries and you will see, subsequently, the role of the IMA, and for that there is an allocation of \$41,650,000. Madam Vice-President—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: So when the “licks” coming?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh:—“licks”? If you used to get that you would have been much better. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] Madam Vice-President, trees in this country are the carbon storage experts. The total forest area of Trinidad and Tobago comprises 226,000 hectares or approximately 44 per cent of the total land area—80 per cent of that is owned by the state with the remaining 45,000 hectares being privately owned. These are managed by the Forestry Division. There are a series of accomplishments in that period.

Madam Vice-President, as I enter this area I want to congratulate the three Ministers who contributed, because all I do here, within the last three months is really embracing the work that they did. My good friend, the hon. Minister of Works

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and Infrastructure, in his previous incarnation as Public Utilities Minister, is responsible for the trajectory that WASA is in—best position ever. I want to congratulate the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure—[*Desk thumping*]
—the current Minister of National Security who had the responsibility for drainage and the Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs who had the responsibility for the environment.

Madam Vice-President, the Beverage Container Bill; the lighting of the surveillance bays on the highway, a “green” system, all responsible by my ministerial colleagues demonstrating that there is a continuum in government, and that wherever you are located, you continue, you build on that platform—[*Desk thumping*]
—and you carry the country in a certain direction. This is what the partnership politics is about.

In the forestry authority—a series of areas, but I just want to indicate, Madam Vice-President, that it is our intention in consultation with our employee representation that the key issue now beyond the normal day-to-day management is to develop a system in forestry, a new system, a new institution, and the forestry authority is something that we will be working on, building on the several years of hard work done by my colleagues. And, of course, I can point to a series of areas, but I have to get accustomed to the limited time in this arena, Madam Vice-President, and I have a lot to say.

In drainage there was some editorial dealing with drainage, basically saying, “Ganga, you know the answer, find a solution to the drainage problems in this country.” The *Sunday Guardian* editorial called upon me. Drainage—we suffer from a historical neglect. Drainage is intimately linked in this Port of Spain area with the sewerage system. Whenever there is heavy rainfall in Port of Spain the Beetham sewerage plant has to take out of the system 60 million gallons of water from Port of Spain, on a daily basis in order to get Port of Spain dry because there is significant storm water intrusion in the system. So there are real challenges in drainage and I just want to give you an appreciation, Madam Vice-President.

Under my colleague, the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure—it was then Jack Warner—there is a comprehensive national drainage study laying the basis for a drainage master plan, and I will indicate to you that you have six components of that study. One: the feasibility studies and design consultancy for the coastal protection works at Blanchisseuse, Matelot, Grande Riviere, San Souci and Toco, completed in December 2010; the north Oropouche river basin study, completed in November 2010; the Ortoire river basin study, 99 per cent completed; the feasibility study and detail design of the Caroni River, 40 per cent

completed with a projected completion date by August 2013—five: the provision of consultancy services for the feasibility study and conceptual design for Caparo river basin flood mitigation and water supply project, including the review of the existing Mamoral dam and reservoir design concept. I “doh” think anybody in this Parliament want to hear the word “Mamoral”, again.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “At all! At all! Da is pressure.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: This concept has been bandied about for so long.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: For so, so long—decades—that it seems that there was divine intervention and a big sink hole was created that would store 225 million gallons by natural means, and we are looking at that—taking the opportunity for that. There is a letter of award signed by Haskoning on October 02, 2012, and there is a feasibility study and design for the south Oropouche river basin, flood mitigation and water supply project; the award of contract is expected in November 2012. So this is laying the basis for the drainage master plan: hydraulic modelling, environmental issues and critical works to be excerpted in order to do it in the short term.

Madam Vice-President, I could list the 50 small drainage projects. I could also list the 49 flood mitigation rehabilitation projects. I could also list the three river desilting projects, but I want to talk particularly about the alleviation of the flooding in Port of Spain. You see, the hon.Member, Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds, talked about Port of Spain being emptied—well we are trying to empty Port of Spain of the floods. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: There are nine packages in order to do that. Each package covers an area that is hydraulically independent, therefore, this will mean that the completion of any one of the nine packages can be done in a gradual and natural manner, and with the overall drainage problem being addressed in that area.

2.25 p.m.

Package one: South Quay, Broadway Independence Square North; package two, Queen’s Park Savannah north east detention pond; package three: Woodbrook west; package four: Abattoir Pump Road; package five St. Vincent Street, Edward Street, Independence Square South; package six: Woodbrook east;

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package seven: upper St. Vincent Street, Park Street, Victoria Square, Frederick Street; and Belmont Circular; package eight: Eastern Main Road, bridge over St. Ann's River; package nine: temporary pond at South Quay.

So when these packages as they are let, and each one begins to do the works that is hydraulically independent of each other, there will be some discomfort in the area, but it is our hope that by the end of 2015, we will be in a position to cure the flooding problem in Port of Spain. Madam Vice-President, we have to link—and that is part of the genius of this Ministry, we now have to link—the hydraulic packages within Port of Spain with our national sewerage system within Port of Spain in order to cure that problem also.

The third area, Madam Vice-President, that it is necessary for us to begin our sites is the whole issue of climate change and the pursuing of a green economy, and there are series of issues. Therefore, we are dealing with the emissions of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases that are inextricably linked to economic development, and we have with the three sectors that are the major providers demonstrating increasing trends in carbon dioxide emissions: transport, power, and industry.

In fiscal 2011, the Government made a national climate change policy which speaks to addressing the greenhouse gas emissions in all major emitting sectors by using clean technology, cleaner fuels and renewable energy. In addition to increasing carbon sequestration capacity through carbon capture and storage, as well as increasing the forest stock through afforestation and reforestation. There is a series of collaborations with the United Nations Development Programme and the Inter-American Development Bank to deal with this area. The EMA is also progressing on an aggressive path to deal with this area, and we will talk about that subsequently, Madam Vice-President.

The fourth area I just want to give you an appreciation of is the Green Fund Executing Unit. To date, the Green Fund has certified activities, 10; number of certified activities completed, two; the number of certified activities under implementation, seven, and the number of certified activities to be initiated, one. Total commitment from the Green Fund is \$121,497,000; the disbursements \$28 million plus; expenditure \$12 million. The number of persons employed in Green Fund activities, 213, and then it gives you an appreciation of the remuneration.

With respect to the component of the Met services, we are doing in terms of the 2012—2013, completing the repairs on the doppler radar at Brasso Venado, installation of an automated weather observing system, and construction of the Met services building at Piarco.

This Ministry also looks after the wildlife habitat, and within the last three weeks, Madam Vice-President, we have made an intervention in order to begin to protect wildlife in this country because you have a very predatory approach taken to hunting in this country. We have the longest period, and we have hunters that are hunting in packs with only the dogs outnumbering, and therefore, the animals are coming in smaller and they are under stress, so we are looking at that, and we will create a national wildlife inventory, and we will also embark on a programme of consultation on a national wildlife policy in November next month in order to bring about change in this area. [*Desk thumping*]

Another area that concerns us, Madam Vice-President, is the area of turtle protection. We know about what transpired in Grande Riviere, and that was a misstep on the part because there was lack of sensitivity by personnel on that occasion, but we are embarking on a programme because we recognize— [*Crosstalk*] you see, Madam Vice-President, there are several species that nest in Trinidad and Tobago, [*Crosstalk*] and the leatherback turtle is a global asset. It is a global asset but we have local responsibility for safeguarding that global asset. Therefore, we would proceed with the appointment of a national sea turtle task force, and we will also be looking to designate five sea turtles, the leatherback, the loggerhead, the hawksbill, the green and olive ridley turtles, be designated environmentally sensitive species.

From protection of the turtle, we have another problem that we have to deal with, and particularly for Tobago and eventually in Trinidad. There is the invasion—well the sightings of the lionfish, and the lionfish is an invasive species. So we move from protection now, to the process of elimination, and the IMA has embarked on a programme like that. We have to take pre-emptive strike because from Bahamas, from Florida, Bahamas, down the chain, the lionfish, very invasive species—a very, very appetizing fish I understand, and that therefore, there is need for the capture of lionfish in Tobago, and we will be in fact, as part of our initiative, placing a bounty on the lionfish. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Very novel idea. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: They call him Bret Maverick.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Madam Vice-President, before I go to the water sector and waste water sector, you have a situation in this country where you now have a water demand of 262 million gallons, a water production of 224 million gallons, so therefore, a deficit of 38 million gallons. We also have low waste water coverage, 30 per cent and so on, and we have a whole strategic plan to deal

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with the sewerage sector, but I want to indicate that since 2010—you see that administration threw their hands up in the air. I recall the former Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, saying, “WASA worse than Caroni,” and they proceeded on a path of bringing in foreigners to take over the operations of WASA.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Same foreigners they bring to sing and teach people to sing and dance and thing.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: So that therefore, they had contempt for the local management of WASA.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Contempt. And I want to tell you within two years, this administration under the guidance of my colleague, hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure, in his incarnation as Minister of Public Utilities, WASA is now regarded by IDB, the Inter-American Development Bank, as the best performing institution in the Caribbean. [*Desk thumping*] The company was rated seven out of 10 by the IDB in working towards meeting the criteria.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: All praises to the CEO.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: WASA has achieved 97 per cent of its mandate to provide all customers connected to the network with supply of water a minimum of two days per week. [*Crosstalk*] The authority’s initiatives—“ah coming to that”. You see you and your scattershot approach reflects your Caroni background. [*Laughter*] “Pokney gun, pokney gun”.

Sen. Deyalsingh: I am proud to be from Caroni.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: The authority’s initiatives to improve customer care resulted in the MORI pole, Madam Vice-President, showing in May/June 2011, a 67 per cent customer satisfaction rating. This is a 30 per cent point increase over the comparative period from 2009—2010, 2010—2011, and a similar rating in 2012. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, WASA completed 460 water and waste water projects. The number of tenders issued 534; 534 tenders issued, with a value of \$905,851,678.84, and all the contribution of Sen. Hinds, at that point, could talk about, dipping in the diaper; dipping in the diaper. His diaper dip contribution is unworthy of this House; [*Desk thumping and laughter*] unworthy of this House.

It is now necessary, Madam Vice-President, for us to focus on the Opposition and the contributions that they have made in this honourable House. First, I want to deal with Sen. Hinds because he was last in line, so he has to be first up. [*Crosstalk*]

No, like sitting seagulls. [*Crosstalk*] Madam Vice-President, what came out of the contribution of the hon. Senator was hate and vitriol. Hate and vitriol! It seems that his hate in particular is directed against the hon. Prime Minister and her family. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: Indeed, indeed.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: He seemed so prejudiced with his hate against the Prime Minister. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Every time he talks.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Consumed by hate.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “He cyar bear the thought of she being the Prime Minister.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: And that therefore, now he is infecting his honourable colleague, Sen. Faris Al-Rawi, because I will demonstrate—[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes, yes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh:—by documentary proof that the hon. Senator was being less than honest in dealing with matters relating to the Prime Minister’s office.

Sen. Beckles: Oh, let us hear.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: You see, he indicated, Madam Vice-President, that he lived in London for several years.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes, he did say that.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: But he did not tell the country that he got a PNM scholarship, not on merit, on the basis that he was a member of the PNM and got a government scholarship.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Who? Sen. Hinds? Sen. Hinds?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Yes, Sen. Hinds.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Doh make joke nah man.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: So he went to study law—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Oh pa pa.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh:—on the basis of money that the State gave him, not on merit. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: “He run away from the Chambers?”

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “I thought he wuk and paying off ah student loan or something. I eh know is de taxpayers’ dollars.”

Hon. Senator: It was a PNM grant.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Yes, so he got a grant; is a slush fund; slush fund. So he is the beneficiary of that. So now you understand, he wants to put his hands once more—because Manning denied it to him.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Manning denied it, he said he was an apprentice.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Manning said he is an apprentice.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: He never made him a Cabinet Minister; unsuitable!

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “One good thing Manning do was not appoint him.”

Sen. Maharaj: Never made him a candidate.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Then he goes on to make allegations in his diaper dip contribution [*Crosstalk*] against Singh’s Auto Rentals, as they have demonized that family; demonized. But let me tell you the facts, Madam Vice-President.

Two contracts were awarded to Singh’s Rentals on the basis of lowest price, WTC 95 of 2011, 14 bidders awarded from 41. So there were 14 bidders for this public tender display procurement process; 14 bidders, and the lowest price was awarded and so on in January, 2012. So that for three years—and then another contract, similarly WTC 168 of 2011, awarded for 33 light vehicles; lowest contract, one year. So, what he is saying that you must deny people, that this statutory authority which has constitutional obligations, must tender out in their procurement process, must deny people on the basis of the—[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: So, it was an open tender?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Open tender, open tender, open tender.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: But the people must sue for discrimination.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: You see, and that is what it is that goes on. But you see—then he starts to raise issues. So, 530-something contracts, he raised that; 905 million, and he is saying, diaper dip.

He talks about SEMCO and bad valves; I do not know what that is about. He also spoke about the fact that Indians were hired—33 Indians in ADB. It seems that not only there is latent racism on the part of Senator, but—patent racism. [*Desk thumping*] And I will read it.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: The PNM trump card is racism. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: I have before me, Madam Vice-President, advice by the hon. Minister of Food Production. Individuals are hired by the ADB on the basis of qualifications and competencies. The Board is not involved in recruitment and selection, except at executive level. The racial composition of the ADB employee staff is as follows: 70 per cent African, 5 per cent mixed race—

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Wait, wait. How much?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh:—70 per cent African, 5 per cent mixed race and 25 per cent Indian. [*Crosstalk*]

You see when you have that kind of propaganda how you have to respond.

2.40 p.m.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Dangerous. “They reckless.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: They lower the quality of the debate in this Senate.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: PNM race card, dividing the country, dividing the country. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: And within the period in which he made this allegation of 33 persons, his information—[*Interruption*—it is so bad, you know, it is the kind of rum shop talk.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: And the scholarships slush fund, he “eh” talking about the distribution of that.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Out of the 35 persons employed during this period of this administration, 10 were East Indians and 25 other races.

Hon. Senator: “Ooh good.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: So I do not know—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “How he eh go before the Privileges Committee for that?” Last time—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: With respect to the other allegation that the bank spent \$400,000 on the 50th Independence Anniversary, the bank says that the figure is inaccurate, erroneous and untrue, and they went on to say how they procured.

Sen. George: Well done!

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: But you see that is what you come with, a kind of rum-shop mentally. [*Interruption*] The hon. Member does not drink. He does not drink, but I do not know what he imbibes, it is not water. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. George: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Senator: Herbs! Herbs! Herbs! [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: So, those are the key areas. I have to move on because I have to deal with each one of those spurious allegations; come and waste my time when I would rather be talking about water.

You see, Madam Vice-President, our good friend, Sen. Faris Al-Rawi [*Sen. Al-Rawi puts up hand*] made two stark so-called revelations yesterday and they were carried in today's *Express*: "BAD DEAL". Now this is a recycled allegation made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition in the Lower House.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: "Yeah, yeah, yeah, is a repeat; is a repeat."

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: So, leave recycling to me, I am in charge of the environment. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Nice one! Nice one! [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: You missed the fact that I said—[*Inaudible*] [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Madam Vice-President, I want to read into the record, because you see that is the kind of spurious allegation, just captured the headline, that lacks merit.

There was an offer for sale dated January 20, 2012 from Point Lisas Park Ltd to...Jearlene John...

It is there, we would put it into the records.

"...there was a request by—the managing director—for a valuation by the Commissioner of Valuations"—and this is what the Commissioner said in a letter dated March 06:

I refer to your letter to me with relevant documentation attached, March 2nd and an email from Peter Ford, consultant, requesting a valuation for your next board meeting on March 14, 2012. Presently, I am unable to provide you with my valuation until the end of March 2012. But in the interim for the purpose of your meeting after perusing the document supplied, I am of the view that the valuation done by Messrs. Linden Scott and Associates, is grossly understated, considering the current state of the development and under the assumption that all statutory approvals have been had for intensive residential use.

Hon. Senator: “Ooooh.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: So this is dated March 06—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: And the Commissioner of Valuations.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: The Commissioner—and then on April 26 he says—similar heading and so on:

Please be advised that a valuation of the subject parcel of land has been conducted on the basis of current open market value in accordance with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) International Valuation Standards.

Market value is defined as—and I quote—

“The estimated amount for which an asset or liability should exchange on the date of valuation between a willing buyer and a willing seller in an arm’s length transaction after proper marketing wherein the parties had each acted knowledgeably, prudently, and without compulsion.

As such, having considered all relevant factors, including evidence of comparable sales, I am of the opinion that the sum of \$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 subject to the following proviso list. [*Desk thumping*]

1. All statutory and other relevant approvals have been had.
2. The sewer treatment plant which serves the development is commissioned and fully operational.
3. All plots within the development are readily available for sale on the open market free from encumbrances.
4. The above estimate is in respect of the entire parcel of land as comprising 20 hectares inclusive of all road reserve, playground, retention ponds, nursery, school site and land reserve for community purposes as shown in the subdivision plans submitted dated October 12, 2011.

Kindly advise me of the price payable when an agreement is reached.

/s/ Commissioner of Valuation.”

Sen. Ramlogan SC: You told a half-truth.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: You see, when you come to this Senate, when you come to this Senate and you begin to attack senior public servants and question them without any basis whatsoever, bringing a private sector and then he refuted that private sector, you have to do better than that. [*Crosstalk*] You have to do better than that. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: By law we have to go to the Commissioner of Valuations. By law.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: All Government valuations, anything you are selling, must be done by the Commissioner of Valuations. So, absolutely no truth in—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: You should have commissioner of state land for the church.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: You see, he goes on, Madam Vice-President—see if you could find what he says about the Prime Minister? He comes in here, continuing this misogynistic approach taken by Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: “Ooooh.” [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh:—in which he now seeks to attack the Prime Minister about the office in Parliament.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Standing Order 35(5), Madam Vice-President.

Madam Vice-President: Misogynistic, is that the word you—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Most definitely, Ma’am. I am sure you would find that an abhorrent reference to a Member of this Parliament.

Sen. George: What is the meaning of that, Sir?

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senator, I think you can rephrase the question and withdraw that particular word. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Madam Vice-President, I was merely indicating, the hate that is shared by Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds against the Prime Minister is now being shared by the honourable—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Standing Order 35(5), Madam Vice-President. That is a downright repetition of a most horrible thing. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Vice-President: Listen, just kindly withdraw the statement.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: I withdraw the part about the hate. He does not share the hate. He is just trying to make political mileage.

Hon. Senator: Yes. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: And in doing so he scores cheap political points. [*Interruption*] You have—you know he gave the impression that the listing—the caption was for the Office of the Prime Minister.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Produce your documentation, did they say Office of the Prime Minister?

Sen. Al-Rawi: What you are talking about?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: No, no, no; what you read into—about the Office of the Prime Minister in the Lower House. You even crossed the barrier. You cannot question another Member of the House, but you crossed the barrier so I have to respond. [*Interruption*] I have to respond.

You see, UDeCoTT was awarded a contract—UDeCoTT awarded a contract for \$66 million to take care of the facilities. They built out all the offices. He came and read out as if the Prime Minister—he gave the impression that the Prime Minister ordered these things. UDeCoTT built out all the offices in this Parliament.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: All!

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: No, no, no, nobody HDC; UDeCoTT, UDeCoTT.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “They trying to lick up the Prime Minister.” You are attacking the Prime Minister of the country.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: I am saying, Madam Vice-President, it is UDeCoTT that had the responsibility and it is UDeCoTT that engaged in building out these offices. That is what it is.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Standing Order 32(4), Madam Vice-President.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: The man is responding to what you said.

Madam Vice-President: Standing Order 32(4), I have been advised by the Clerk, subsequently to the last ruling, that there is a procedure in terms of precedence. If you wish you can just give me a little note and I will do that. At the end of his speech you would be entitled to one minute to contribute.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Point of clarification, are we, therefore, striking the clarification by my learned colleague on the other side when that procedure was afforded to him?

Madam Vice-President: Certainly not. Have a seat. Actually, there was a procedural bulletin laid in the House of Representatives and it was brought to my attention subsequent to that ruling, so I am going to be guided now by the procedural bulletin. So after Minister Singh is finished, you would be entitled to one minute of your explanation.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Much obliged, Ma'am.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: So he continues that and he said, you know, it is a small breach in procurement, as if the Prime Minister had a hand in that procurement. It was done by an agency to look after the offices. Smallness! What I want to know, Mr. Speaker—Madam Vice-President, my apologies. *[Interruption]*

Sen. Ramlogan SC: He is saying “we emptying out Port of Spain.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: He is talking about our emptying out Port of Spain. I wonder if the—I want to alert hon. Senators of the rental values that we pay as a State. Rental value!

Sen. Ramlogan SC: We have to decongest Port of Spain.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Ministry of the People and Social Development 45A—45C St. Vincent Street; monthly rental \$159,000; \$21.9 million a year; the Ministry of Local Government, No. 1 Alexandra Street, monthly rental, \$752,000, total monthly rental, \$865,948.93. On an annual basis \$10.3 million plus, so that—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Papa, who getting all dat money?”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh:—\$10.3; \$2 million—*[Interruption]*

Sen. George: “Doh call no name.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Ministry of National Security, monthly rental \$356,000, total monthly rental \$40,900—*[Interruption]*

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

Motion made: That the hon. Senator’s speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. *[Hon. E. George]*

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: I want to thank all Senators for giving way. *[Desk thumping]* So, you see—and then you have the Ministry of National Security, monthly rental \$356,000; total yearly rental, \$4.9 million. And all of this is one family. One family!

Appropriation Bill, 2012

Wednesday, October 17, 2012

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “One family geh all ah dat?”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: One family! One family! So when they say Port of Spain emptying, is because of the high rental rate. [*Crosstalk*] It is the high rental rate. [*Interruption*]

I want now, Madam Vice-President, to deal—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “All dem Al-Rawi geh money.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh:—with an issue—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: “One hundred and sixty-three properties boy, doh worry.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: Ramlogan property.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: You see, they on that side. Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds said he is fed up of corruption; fed up of allegations of corruption. [*Interruption*] “Fifteen years he inside here and he fed up, but then he want to talk about dipping in the diaper.” [*Laughter*] You see, but let me tell you of what transpired under their watch in the Water and Sewerage Authority. [*Interruption*] This is massive corruption.

2.55 p.m.

Madam Vice-President:

“2009 June Frame Agreement between WASA and Mekorot Development and Enterprises of Israel—approved.

2009 September 02 Frame Agreement signed with Mekorot Development & Enterprise Ltd for a long term collaboration in the development and implementation of water services...

2009 November WASA representatives visited Israel.

2009 November WASA signed” an MOU.—[*Interruption*]

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Sen. George: “Mouth open tory jump out.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: “2010 January WASA advised of approval of the Minister of Public Utilities to enter into a contract with Mekorot Merhav Development (MMD).

The WASA Board approved the award of the contract to MMD...” and so on. “2010 April 12”—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: That was before election.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: “WASA signed the Engineering Procurement Construction (EPC) Agreement with MMD at a cost of US\$110 Mn.”

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Good Lord.

One month before the election, you know.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: “2010 May 10”, election 14 days away.

Hon. Senator: Man going to meeting every night.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: “WASA signs an undated Escrow Agreement with Merhav Mekorot Development...WASA required to deposit US\$25Mn into the escrow account.”

That is by May 14.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Ooh, papa.”

Hon. Senator: Who sign it?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Madam Vice-President, I want to read from a statement—so this matter has gone because you see in 1995 they brought in Severn Trent just before the election.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: That is right.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: In 2010, they attempted to bring in MMD just before the election. The leopard cannot change their spots. [*Desk thumping*] But you know what is the unkindest cut of all, is when you have the former Chairman of WASA giving a statement in the arbitration for the claimant.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: For the claimant?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: For the claimant, not for WASA. That is an act of political treachery.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: That is sabotage.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: But I want to read into the record, statement dated October 05, 2010, the ink “eh” even dry. [*Laughter*]

Item 3.3, Madam Vice-President, and it goes on to outline—[*Inaudible*]:

“The Prime Minister and my line Minister, that is, the Minister of Public Utilities, Mustapha Abdul Hamid”—hereinafter referred to as—(‘the Line Manager’) accepted my recommendation to appoint six (6) non-political professionals with experience in private sector management...”

And he goes on. So you understand the Chairman is saying the line manager and the Prime Minister is supportive of it.

“4.3 I cannot remember exactly how the relationship began with either Mekorot (the Israeli State Water Company) or Merhav (the private development company owned by Yossi Maimam) save to say that they preceded my time as Chairman of WASA. Around three or four months after I accepted the role on the Board, I was put in touch with persons of Merhav and Mekorot, and in particular Gideon Weinstein, who I understood had...a relationship (and a dialogue about the country’s needs) the previous year with the then general manager of WASA, Errol Grimes.”

But I want to fast track because time is against me.

“6.3 Shortly after the WATEC conference...”

So they went to a conference and they signed an MOU called the consortium and they brought together a state company and a private sector company. Can you imagine?

So they now are so good at mergers that they went to Israel and they brought about a merger inviting a private sector company and a state sector company to do business in Trinidad—brilliant.

“6.4 Throughout this time, WASA was giving consideration...”

Meaning he is in charge of the Board.

“...was giving consideration to funding the development, and invited banks to tender for the development loan. Citibank would eventually provide the USD \$110,000,000 required for the work. As I recall, the tenders were very competitive—people were very excited about the development and willing to provide these funds. I recall that Merhav and Mekorot also investigated financing on our behalf, in particular with HSBC, but we did not take it up because the Ministry of Finance”—required—“a sovereign guarantee.”

And so on.

[*Sen. Hinds returns to the Chamber*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Like you went to change the diaper, boy. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Madam Vice-President, but what is important—so this is not a tender that went out for public procurement. This is something that they created. There was no international bidding for this. Nothing, nothing, nothing, but look, 8.3:

“At this point, the Board’s role was to finalize the EPC contract and to conclude the financial arrangements in a manner acceptable to our Line Minister, the Finance Minister and the Cabinet. In the meantime, on the operational side of things were available, needing to be mobilized, and began the various feasibility studies required by the EPC contract...”

And this is important, Madam Vice-President.

“Throughout late March I was therefore coming under immense pressure from the Minister of Public Utilities to finalize the EPC contract, as he felt that the process was taking too long, and especially as there were continuous protests complaining about WASA’s inefficiencies...”

Sen. Ramlogan SC: The Minister was pressuring the Chairman to do that?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: The Minister was pressuring the Chairman, the Minister being Abdul Hamid, the Chairman being Shafeek Sultan-Khan.

Sen. Ramlogan, SC: “Oooh good Lord.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: So he then gave instructions on April 09—Mr. Manning advised the President George Maxwell Richards to dissolve Parliament resulting in a general election held two years sooner than was constitutionally mandated. The Chairman prepared a memo instructing the corporate secretary of WASA to sign the Escrow Agreement on May 14, 2010. So in the middle of the campaign they want to encumber WASA with a US \$110 million.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Oooh good Lord.” US?

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: And if you see the contract. There were no benchmarks, just free for all, free money. You only have to top up the escrow US\$25 million, US\$25 million. [*Crosstalk*] The Minister pressuring the Chairman, and the Chairman states so by statement dated October 05, 2010, in giving a statement against the Water and Sewerage Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: That is corruption.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: So you understand. They are talking about boards and corporate governance.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Those who live in glass houses, glass houses, do not throw stones.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Shameless, and do not tell me you do not know, this is part of the practice and the behaviour of the PNM and it is part of their DNA, it is beyond their culture. You see, this is what transpires—were it not for the election, we all would have been participating, wearing the necessary wear of the Israelis in Trinidad and Tobago, and they are very efficient people. But I want to tell you this very company denies the Palestinians water, and water has become a political weapon in the Middle East, and this company is a participant and this is what they were going to saddle the water authority with.

Without making any change, this Partnership Government, without firing anybody except for fraud—nine persons were fired for fraud—all those persons, we took the same local talent and today WASA has turned around, [*Desk thumping*] made the necessary interjection. Five hundred and thirty-four contracts, \$905 million and all you could complain about, and I want to talk about that because you see what has happened is that we have engaged Deloitte and Touche because it is a system, an AAHP system for procurement, and therefore you use cyberspace and there was intrusion and a breach interfering with the documents with Google doc or, whatever they call it.

So we have hired Deloitte and Touche to investigate that matter. You come and you talk about it in a flippant fashion. You see because you only content for the people of this country, 50 years and you would have placed a water utility in the hands of the foreigners. [*Desk thumping*] How much time do I have?

Sen. George: You have five minutes again.

Sen. The Hon. G. Singh: Madam Vice-President, I just want to congratulate Sen. Deon Isaac, and in his absence I did not mention him, but I was particularly happy to hear the passion and the enlightened delivery of Sen. Dr. Lennox Bernard and his realistic appraisalment [*Desk thumping*] of the education sector.

We are about building this country, we are about building institutions instead of tearing it down, and what you find on the other side is that they are not about that. This Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources with the golden thread running through it, its elements and it is linked because man and the environment have to exist in harmony. We will demonstrate that, because we are currently 96th in the environmental performance index, and it is because of our large industrial carbon dioxide production that we are there, but we are going on a coherent programme to focus—the Beverage Container Bill will be laid in this Parliament in the coming weeks. It is currently before LRC, and the air pollution rules will be laid in the coming months within this calendar year.

So we have a whole programme, a legislative programme, an institutional change programme within this new Ministry, Drainage Authority, Forestry Authority, we intend to deal with the wildlife policy, protect the animals, protect the environment and this is what we are about.

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

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, under Standing Order 32(4), Sen. Al-Rawi is allowed one minute to make his contribution.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. I wish only, Madam Vice-President, to correct that material misrepresentation by my learned colleague with respect to the claim that I was being misogynistic in my approach towards the issue of procurement of the furnishings for the Office of the Prime Minister here in the Parliament. I was very careful in my contribution to state, that the HDC in outfitting the Office of the Prime Minister in the Parliament here, had engaged in a procurement practice which I had concern with as being less than the best form that it could. Under no circumstances did my contribution lend itself to an interpretation that the office of the Prime Minister was engaged in something that was untoward. I was raising it in the specific context of procurement and I deeply resent the misrepresentation by my learned colleague, the Leader of the Government Bench, this afternoon with regard to that. Much obliged.

Sen. Dr. James Armstrong: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. I would like to start by congratulating the Minister for his first budget presentation in the Senate. I would also like to welcome the new Senators that we have with us, Sen. Christlyn Moore, Sen. Rollocks-Hackett and Sen. Isaac, all from Tobago. I have checked their coordinates and, Madam Vice-President, they are from very good stock. [*Desk thumping*] I know that Sen. Moore will be here for quite some time and I am sure that she would make very valuable contributions to our debates.

Madam Vice-President, I would like to start by expressing some concerns that I have with respect to budget presentations over the years. We keep hearing in each budget debate that the economy is doing well, the economy has been managed well and I have some concerns about that with respect to Trinidad and Tobago.

3.10 p.m.

We have had very good economic fortunes, and I do not quite understand when a Minister of Finance says we have managed the economy well, in a situation in which—and I am not referring to this Minister of Finance and the Economy, but I am saying over a number of years, judging the fortunes that we have had. Why do we keep saying that we have managed the economy well, when, in fact, we were sitting, perhaps gazing, and a lot of money just fell into our laps. I would understand if countries and economists and so on, really had to work and plan in order to manage the economy and in order to deliver the benefits that we expect.

We have a budget of \$58 billion for this fiscal year, and the question I am asking myself is: what did we get for the last amount of money that we spent? I was not really able to determine that from the budget presentation, and here we

are, about to spend another \$58 billion. I would have preferred, Madam Vice-President, to get some appreciation, some understanding, of what really happened with the money that we spent already, and to look at that from the point of view of value for money, to assess, really, whether we are making any progress, not simply, as I said in my last budget contribution, in terms of whether we have had an increase of 1.2; whether we are trying to get an increase of 3 per cent or whatever, but in terms of how well have we done, really, as a people. Have we achieved economic inclusiveness; prosperity?

Those are the concerns that I have. I had to go back to the medium term plan and the manifesto and measure what has been achieved—or try to measure what has been achieved—with respect to some of the things that I saw in there. In the medium term plan, as well as in the manifesto—and perhaps more so the medium term plan—reference was made to: prosperity for all; innovation for lasting prosperity; integrated development; stepping out of poverty; job creation; priorities with respect to land use; pillars, including people-centred development; poverty eradication; and this year we have a budget talking about, “Stimulating Growth, Generating Prosperity”.

I am also very concerned when I hear about a budget, again, trying to stimulate growth, as opposed to trying to achieve development. I think that is what we need to measure in terms of the amount of money that we have had in this country. I am of the view that we have spent billions and billions of dollars in this country and we have not been achieving development, whatsoever. I would like to, perhaps, stress that what I would be looking for in the fiscal year would be ways in which we are actually achieving the development that would be reflected in the well-being of the people.

I have also noted, Madam Vice-President, that the budget is supposed to stimulate the economy, and in order to do this the Minister has indicated that 4.5 per cent GDP of the budget—\$7.5 billion—would be allocated to the construction sector. I would like to support that strategy and the allocation that has been provided because it has been proven, in many instances, that in order to stimulate a stagnant economy, one of the fastest and easiest ways of doing that is through housing construction infrastructure.

There has been some debate in terms of those strategies over the past 30 years, but on all occasions that I have observed, the construction sector has proven to be very successful in terms of stimulating the economy. However, I would like to, again, caution, Madam Vice-President, that while we plan to spend \$7.5 billion on the construction sector in order to stimulate the economy, that we need to ensure that in so doing we really employ a number of the people that are not now employed.

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I had some discussions recently with some of the architects in this country and I was quite shocked. A firm of architects told me that they are working three days per week; had to get rid of a lot of staff. Another architect told me that he is working four days a week. Individual architects are actually out of work, “scrutting” as we say.

At the same time I see in the budget, and from the contributions made, that we are building a number of police stations; we are building a number of judicial centres. In the case of the judicial centres, it is my understanding that these were actually already designed, using a firm from Houston. Now, a judicial centre is not rocket science. All right? We have the experience here. We have architects in this country that have done work here with respect to judicial centres, as well as throughout the Caribbean and so on. So why are we bypassing our architects here in order to go somewhere else to get designs done? And they are discovering that these buildings are designed and that, you know, the process is ongoing and they were never even aware of it.

We have a number of health centres that we are talking about building. In the budget, I have seen allocations for municipal buildings. Again, it is not, you know, anything that is so difficult. We have a number of schools that are falling apart. We have the south campus, and, again, I want to stress, in that very university they are training engineers and so on; project managers, but still we are bypassing the technical expertise that we have here and going to foreigners. If that is the way that we are going, I cannot see, Madam Vice-President, how the Minister would be able to stimulate the economy in that way.

Another thing that the construction sector does, is that it easily lends itself to a range of other kinds of manufacturing activities, and if we bypass the expertise that we have, the capacity that we have here for manufacturing, again, how is this going to really stimulate the economy? How is it going to help us out of the hole that we are in? I would like to stress that any project that has not been awarded to any firm—and if it has been done without tendering and so on—that, again, it be investigated, but that as we go along, we keep in mind what is said in the budget, in the medium term plan, that what we are trying to do is to get our economy back on track.

Labour: The other thing that I think the construction sector can do is really to assist in developing certain skills and creating meaningful, sustainable jobs. This business of unemployment being down to 4.8—4.9 per cent or whatever, or below 5 per cent, I cannot see it. I do not know how we arrived at that. But even so—

Sen. Hinds: Only the Government could see that.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: —even so—the fact is that we have a number of people that are underemployed. One of the arguments used by a number of economists who questioned the extent to which the housing and construction sector, infrastructure and so on, can contribute to the economy—a number of experts advised us that, “Look, why not try to develop or expand the economy in other ways and leave the housing to the private sector?”

That may be possible in certain instances, but in a case where we have people who are underemployed in this country, I would think that the strategy we need to adopt is that the interventions that we make to the public sector should be targeted to absorbing some of the underemployed. I was very pleased to see that the Minister, for instance, is creating what—we used to call it a second window. I do not know exactly what it would be called, but the 2 per cent for housing, which I know we have tried this in a number of countries and we used to do it as a second window in order to not create a new institution because a 2 per cent spread, really, does not allow you to get very far in terms of maintaining the institution—the administrative and management cost. So we would normally do it through an existing institution—2 per cent through one window and you have your normal interest rates through another.

This is something that I would really like us to monitor very, very closely, because we have had problems in a situation like that, where people who should not really benefit from that kind of arrangement have been able to benefit. Nevertheless, I think that if we try to increase income, meaningful employment, coupled with a 2 per cent assistance to access housing, that we would be on our way to really enhancing the well-being of our citizens, generating wealth and assisting a number of individuals to access housing.

I want to say a bit more about housing as well, Madam Vice-President. We have no housing policy. There is no housing policy. We are just moving around aimlessly with respect to housing and, that, in my view, is creating a number of related problems with respect to land as well. The last housing policy, as I know, as a cohesive document, it must have been, maybe, about 12 years ago at least.

3.25 p.m.

So, I am not sure, what is guiding the housing sector right now. We are hearing about the demand for housing at 140. I said in this Senate already, that cannot be correct. The effective demand for housing cannot be 140,000. It is impossible. Where are they living now? One hundred and forty times 4.5—assuming that 4.5 would be the size of a family—what is going on? I am pretty sure it is more like 25,000. The people

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who really are in need of housing and who would need assistance—I am sure if you check that list, there are people on there that have a house, maybe the wife is applying, maybe the husband is applying or the boyfriend or whatever. It cannot be 140,000.

My understanding is that under the last regime you had about 17,000 houses built of which, if my information is correct, about 5,000 of those houses have actually been distributed or allocated. What is the problem with all these other houses that are vacant and for which I understand there is a significant bill with respect to security. Again, the information is that it is costing anything like \$4 million just for security. Sometimes you go and the toilets are gone or the windows have disappeared or whatever. That is another concern that I have really with respect to the matter of housing—very huge security bill. A number of houses are standing empty.

Land for landless policy: again, I talked about that some time ago and it is coming up again. I think that is a wrong policy. You cannot have a land for landless in a two by four island, where we only have about 10 per cent usable land.

I just heard the Leader of Government Business, for instance, talking about forest cover and so on. We need water. We have a number of other things to do with land. The people in agriculture are complaining, and we are still talking about land for landless policy. How that land is being accessed is not clear to me. Whether we have proper records on that, is not clear to me. The policy really should be shelter for the homeless.

So we do not necessarily have to emphasize land as such and just keep distributing land. Whether it is Caroni land, you go and change into housing which again, I think that was a bad policy too. Not with this regime, but the point is that we do not have that much land.

In the budget it is mentioned that with respect to agriculture, investments would be made in Guyana. Again, I do not see how that is going to work, but that is a clear indication that we do not have sufficient land here to really engage or become involved in agriculture beyond a subsistence kind of intervention, to one that would really contribute significantly to the economy.

So you go down to Guyana and you get involved in large farming down there, but then I would imagine there is a transportation cost to get your goods back here, to get your produce back here and so on. I am not sure where this is going. I am not seeing any strategy, any policy that says, you know, well—I want to see what is going to happen with that.

Squatting: talk about regularization. Many years ago, I became aware of the squatting regularization legislation in this country. My understanding was that it was going to be cut off, I believe it might have been 1998. I asked at the time, how are you going to do this? Use aerial photography and so on. That was 1998. We are still regularizing squatters now, who came on long after 1998. So again, vast tracts of land, people just going on to land anywhere and the Government seems quite prepared to—”well, we will regularize you.” These are not housing developments that took place after this legislation was passed. So that again is another problem that we need to look at, this whole business of squatting. I think it was 1997 actually, that we were supposed to have the cut off. Since then, I hear about regularization of squatters.

I also notice that the responsibility for land was moved to the HDC. Of course, that is a Government policy, so the Government is quite free to put these portfolios where they wish. Again, I do not quite understand. I always become a little concerned when an agency that is responsible for housing is also responsible for land. Where that exists, it does not work out too well, especially, again, in an island state such as ours. So, that sort of alerted my curiosity as well.

I am aware of the fact that the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development is involved in bringing about a land use policy and a land use plan. I am very pleased that, from my understanding, some progress finally is being made in this regard.

However, I am very hopeful that as this exercise is ongoing that we curb our appetite to use land in an unscrupulous manner, otherwise by the time the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development is finished with that plan, it really would not matter, because we would have no land really to—there would be no discretion really, in terms of what you can do or what you cannot do because everything would be used up already.

I also saw in the budget—and I quite liked the idea that there is going to be a new port, I believe in La Brea. I think that is a good idea. I think it is a very good idea. One concern that I had, and I would like to suggest to the Minister as well as to planning, is that, perhaps we should split the functions of those two ports. The one that is supposed to be in La Brea from what I understand is supposed to have both cargo and cruise. I am thinking that perhaps, we should move cargo to La Brea and the existing port down there, and consider whether we could not have a cruise port in the Port of Spain area. I say that because I believe I heard the Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment—I believe it was—talking about trying to get into the cruise industry in a big way.

I believe I also saw that there was supposed to be a ship registry that we are supposed to get into or to establish. I know we have competitors in that area in Barbados and Bahamas and so on, in the region. The idea that I have and I would like

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to share, Madam Vice-President, is that if we are able to do that, we can perhaps, begin to think differently about how we really deal with Invaders Bay which is something, as you know, I am very concerned about. Again, how are we going to use that land, which is the last vacant piece of land that we have and very expensive? I am hearing \$1 billion, \$1.2 billion.

Therefore, the investment that we make in that regard should really again generate significant income for us and assist in some way in diversifying the economy. So that is the concept that I am thinking of. I have often mentioned my displeasure with the structure that we are in now and where it is located. I am not talking about the space requirements. I am talking about where this space is located, in relation to a port that we already have, so that the use of this spot, that spot over there, and perhaps others across the road could have been used differently.

The only way I see that we can correct that is moving a little further west and still trying to use some of the existing port facilities that we have. If we are able to move what we have here now to La Brea, and come up with a new plan or a comprehensive plan I should say for Invaders Bay.

I heard it mentioned, I think it was Sen. Deyalsingh who mentioned that he heard the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development talking about linking Invaders Bay to Morvant/Laventille. I do not know whether the Minister is indicating that, but I know I have been indicating that for a while.

Again, I would like to elaborate on the concept that I have, and what I mean by that? We spent billions of dollars in Port of Spain and it was not linked, in my view to a local economy. People made a lot of money off of Port of Spain with what we did in Port of Spain. A lot of that money did not stay here. Right next to Port of Spain you have the greatest depressed area in the country and nothing happened there. I remember telling a Minister once, that it was a sort of development that was exclusionary. We were really excluding the people that we could have assisted. Nobody took me on because, you know, it just moved along.

I think we have the opportunity again. We have the opportunity again to link what we are doing in Invaders Bay and perhaps in relation to Port of Spain with east Port of Spain. We cannot draw a line around east Port of Spain and plan for east Port of Spain and expect that east Port of Spain as a growth pole is going to develop. It is not going to happen. It has never happened anywhere. It has to be linked to something else that would allow that backward and forward linkages as you say in economics, to really give it that impetus to grow.

Therefore, we can look at what Morvant/Laventille as a growth pole can produce. If we can increase the productive capacity of that adjacent area and really develop Invaders Bay properly, Invaders' Bay can then become the outlet for what we are producing in that area and other parts of the country.

3.40 p.m.

Where is the market? It has been indicated either you take your products outside, offshore, or, if possible, you bring in people who can purchase. Again, that is the strategy that I see, that if you can get three or four ships coming in here, each bringing in about 2,500 passengers and you really develop Invaders Bay properly, and you really get the people in Laventille—whether you want to put maybe four or five pan centres in Morvant/Laventille, that is where it came from. Develop pan properly. We are throwing a lot of money behind pan. Every year, we are throwing money behind pan and talking about, well, you know, it brings in money around Carnival time. That can actually assist us in diversifying the economy.

The other ideas that I have for that area, apart from the whole business of pan, I am thinking that Invaders Bay might also be able to accommodate our Carnival. I am not talking about Carnival on a Monday and a Tuesday, you know; I am talking about Carnival every day. If you have those ships coming in, if you will be able to develop the port, use the land properly, play mas every day because you now have about 10,000 people, if it is done well, who will be in and around. That is a possibility. I am not saying that it is the only possibility, but I think that is what we need if we are going to diversify the economy and really deal with what we call the creative industries as we have been talking about for so long in all the documents, and I am not seeing anything happening. That is something that we can look at.

We can perhaps also get into that area, a conference centre. We do not have a conference centre in this country. I am talking about a conference centre—I mean, we have conferences next door—I am talking about where you can do simultaneous translations and so on, that kind of thing. You have one in Barbados, you have one in Jamaica, maybe we can get that in there as well.

Fashion: you could have a fashion district there for clothing; theatres, dance, our artists can exhibit there; crafts. We can even look at incorporating sports because we have the Hasely Crawford facility across the street. So if we really go back and look at that land area properly, I think we would be able to do a lot more.

We can then also try to link that to the economy in Tobago. We can have packages where people can get over to Tobago, spend some time there, and also bring in products from Tobago as well. So I really would like to see that in terms of the land use planning and in terms of a sustainable city for Port of Spain, as we say, that these things are taken into consideration.

I want to also touch briefly on something that was mentioned here, Divine Echoes. A lot of people have been talking about that. I think it is a little unfortunate that the group was disbanded, because, again, if we are talking about pan and music and so on, quite apart from playing pan in that context, I think that these people really could have been used in a number of the schools, in a number of the communities and so on. Why let them go? They all play music. They know music. I really hope that we can revisit that and if we get them into the schools, get them into the communities, into little groups or whatever, where they can be used effectively.

I like the idea, Madam Vice-President, of the incentives that are also given for the film industry. I was wondering, in fact, whether a similar thing could not be done in terms of zero rating on art supplies for artists and that sort of thing, and equipment as well. That was not very clear to me, whether in fact that is going to happen. So in terms of diversifying the economy and particularly looking at some of the potential, that is something that I would like to look at.

Back to this business of growth poles at east Port of Spain. Again, I am not very clear. There are five growth poles that I keep seeing in the manifesto, in the plan and in the budget. It is not clear to me what is really happening with these growth poles. In fact, I am not sure that we quite understand what is meant by a growth pole. It seems as if we are looking at areas where growth is needed, but it does not necessarily mean that it is a growth pole in economic terms and development terms. I am not sure. I could not quite follow what that means, but, again, we have talked about east Port of Spain, Tobago east, we have talked about south-west, Chaguaramas, the north coast.

I really would like to see some sort of development taking place in these areas. We have been talking a lot also recently about things moving out of Port of Spain and moving into central, and as a planner I think it is something that we need to really rationalize. I agree that we have concentrated too much in Port of Spain, not in terms of the development or the space that we have created, but really the use to which we are putting the space. So that what we need in Port of Spain, we need some middle income housing in Port of Spain.

We need to get about 50,000 people into Port of Spain, living in Port of Spain, and then we can think about moving this and moving that. If we do not do that, then again we are going to go and pour concrete somewhere else and then say, "Oops",

because that is what we have done with Port of Spain. We have effectively underdeveloped Port of Spain with the notion that we were actually developing Port of Spain. So I do not quite understand the locations that we are moving some of these facilities to. What is the rationale? Maybe it is a reasonable move, but it is not something that I quite understand because when we look at the map that we got from the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development—I would like to, Madam Vice-President, really commend the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development for the human development atlas, because it is something that I have been talking about consistently in this Chamber. So I was quite surprised when it appeared.

The last time I spoke about it, the Minister was not here, so I would just like to quickly make an observation that I made the last time. I have been using this almost every day. I refer to it for something. I am reading the papers, I go back to it. The contribution that was made yesterday, by Sen. Bernard, I think also speaks to some of the concerns that I had in terms of really locating some of the problems that we have in a spatial context, and that was one layer. Sen. Bernard dealt, yesterday, with education where people are underperforming, where people are doing well and this is very, very instructive, and that correlated very well with what is actually in the atlas. Although he was using a different set and I think different municipal areas, but it correlated very well in here.

I have been doing something with this map. What I have been doing is using tracing paper, tracing out Trinidad and Tobago. I have my own set of indicators. I gave 10 in here, I have included 20 more. What I do is put on the indicator, look at what is happening, let us say, in three or four areas, and then I put a little pin through it. You have one layer, education. I put on some other layers—employment, things that I found in here—you draw it and you put a little pin through it, it is coming out in the same area. You understand what is happening. So that the problem of development is deep; it is several layers deep. It is not a one-layer thing. Where you have people underperforming in the schools, we are seeing it is going right through the system.

Water is concentrated in certain areas; poor housing, certain areas. Interestingly enough, although we are talking about unemployment down to 5 per cent or below 5 per cent, which economists will tell you, well, that is full employment, other indicators are showing that in certain communities it could be as high as 20, 25, 30 per cent, and if you drive a pin through it, it is coming out in the same areas. So you understand now why we have a crime problem and why it is going to take a long time to really deal with that because it is several layers deep and it has been there for years and years and years.

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So that this document, as a development planner, is very, very helpful, very, very instructive for me, and I think it is something that I hope that the Minister has distributed widely, so that in all the sectors, in education, in infrastructure development, whatever sector you are operating in, this should become the bible. But then you need to coordinate all the stuff, and this is why I have been saying, Madam Vice-President, that the engine room of all of this is the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development—it cannot be anywhere else. It cannot be anywhere else because you got to pull all the stuff together, sift it out and work it through.

Madam Vice-President, I want to talk about Tobago a bit and hope that I can—

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. Dr. J. Armstrong: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. I did not realize that—maybe I am speaking a little too slowly.

Hon. Senators: Nah, nah, nah!

Hon. Senator: “You going good.”

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: I want to talk about Tobago a bit, Madam Vice-President, and see if I can avoid the politics and deal with it really from a technical and development plan point of view. It is the first time that I heard so much happening with respect to Tobago in this Senate, and I think perhaps it is election season, so a lot is happening.

3.55 p.m.

However, I feel I need to make some observations. Madam Vice-President, as you are probably aware, my background—I came out of a design background, moved into development planning, and my entire career has been in the UN. That afforded me an opportunity really to—as I might have mentioned some time ago—work in about 100 countries around the world, and I have been able to visit about 140.

The work that I had been involved in required going to a country to make an assessment, in the first place, in my area, as to what was the situation, and you had about two or three days in which to do that. You had to do what we call a situation analysis, collect as many documents as possible, come back, read it,

write up something, and then you had to debrief your colleagues in about two weeks, three weeks, maybe bring in some experts—this is what I found, this is the impression that we have—and so on. I want to look at Tobago from that point of view, a sort of a situation analysis, and then get to a statement of the problem.

Tobago is in a very, very peculiar situation for a number of reasons, some of which Sen. Cudjoe adequately addressed sometime ago. A small island within a larger—a unity in which one partner is larger; limited markets, limited skills; need to travel to address a number of things and so on. So there are some structural problems in Tobago that really would suggest that it needs particular attention. Many years ago, I think it might have been mid-90s, late 90s, someone sent to me a plan that was being done in Tobago to have a look at it, and I did, and it was an excellent plan. It was an excellent plan!

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Development plan?

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: Yes. There were about five plans done in Tobago—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: NAR.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: Sorry?

Sen. Hinds: “She used to be ah NAR.”

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: There are five of them that I have looked at and I have them. One was the south-west Tobago development strategy, planning for sustainable development; that was in 1996, but done with the assistance of the OAS. Tobago development plan—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Yes, that is it.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: Tobago strategic plan. All right. North-east Tobago plan; you have a south-west. You have a recent one, a Comprehensive Economic Development Plan, which was from 2006—2010; excellent plans; very well done.

The problem that I always asked myself was: how do you really implement these plans? That was always the problem. So, I always looked through these plans to see really how you are going to finance it and I would see figures in there—in one plan I saw something of \$1.7 billion; another one, I saw \$1.6 billion, over a period of time. To my surprise, I came back and I found that these plans were not really being implemented, as good as they were. I have been involved in the development of many, many plans where we never had the money to implement and this is the point I was making earlier. With respect to this country, well, they have not been implemented in Trinidad either. All right?

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Therefore, I have always wondered about how would Tobago really implement these plans. I have to really agree with the observations made by Sen. Cudjoe that, one, there is really a need to give some special consideration to the needs of Tobago. Because, when you go back to the atlas again, as your figures indicated, we are talking about side by side and Tobago is still lagging in many areas.

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Bad management!

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: “Dats another story. As I said, I doh wanna really get into the politics too much.” So that I believe that we really need to sit side by side, and work this thing out properly, recognize that there are these needs. I think that there is sufficient to go around. I heard my colleague, Sen. Dr. Balgobin, saying yesterday that Tobago only contributes \$163 million and wants X amount. That is not the way to go. That is going to create problems; I can see that. That is not the way to go.

A lot has been said about BOLT. The only thing I want to say about that really is that in my view—and I have dealt with a number of these in different parts of the world really—it is indeed a very legitimate mechanism that allows you to access long-term financing, and that is a problem that Tobago has always had. You have a plan but “yuh eh have the long term financing to really finance it”. It is a problem, and we have to deal with it in a structural way, and I will tell you why. Because we are talking about “de politics ting, well, who—elections in January; whoever wins”, it is not about TOP, it is not about PNM, it is not about whoever, it is about Tobago and whoever is there [*Desk thumping*] is going to be faced with the same problem—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Isaac: Thank you.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong:—so you need to solve that problem.

Hon. Senator: Well said!

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: You need to solve that problem.

In terms of Invaders Bay, you either have to go with BOLT or—there are about 12 different combinations of that kind of financing—P3 as they call it in the industry—so that that in itself is not the problem. That in itself is not the problem.

There is something else I want to say that disturbed me a bit, Madam Vice-President, and that is in reference to the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly. I am very disturbed when we come inside here and talk about things reeking of corruption and so on. “I doh really like dat” because that is really—it is the seat of the Government in Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] and in the same way that, while there is no Standing Order that I can stand and say, “Well, look, you are imputing so and so”, we cannot do that here, but I think that we need to have a certain amount of—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senators: Respect.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong:—mutual respect. [*Desk thumping*] All right. So I really do not like when I hear—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: The truth is the truth.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: Well, I do not know because I think I would like to come in here and say things about my colleagues that—I really do not know. We do not allow it here, and I think if we are talking about side by side and whatnot, then let us start off on the right track. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: That is the biggest point—

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: That is something that is disturbing me.

Quickly, on the tourism fund, it is something that I appreciate, Mr. Minister; good idea. How it is going to work? I do not know. I also want to say something, I mean, we had a lot of talk going around that if—when you spend the public money, you have to be accountable.

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: Yes! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: All right. There are no two ways about that; I agree with that. But, I want to keep that separate from the things that I am talking about. The integrated campus for Tobago, saw that; it is a good idea. What I am not very clear on is where it is going to be located. Where that is located would have to be a self-contained—“I doh know”, I heard some talk about it going in the east because that is where the growth pole is. Again, it is an area that needs development, but I do not know if that is where it is best suited. It is not just that you have classrooms, you need to get the lecturers there, and getting from, whether it is COSTAATT, UWI or UTT to Tobago to the airport and then to the east and then back, it is not an easy—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Rollocks-Hackett: We will work that out.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: Develop the whole campus.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: It has to be the whole—yes, if you do that, then that is addressing—[*Interruption and crosstalk*]

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: Develop the whole campus.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: Right, so that is a growth. I can understand that because then that begins to serve now as a sort of a propulsive injection—[*Interruption and crosstalk*]

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: And you would build local capacity.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: Okay, fine, if that is—well, that is what I am talking about. So if that is where you are going, again I want you to sit and talk to the THA about it, please. [*Crosstalk*] No, no, I am serious about that.

I want to skip one or two things. GATE—I am a little concerned about the GATE thing. Again, I am concerned about GATE because looking at the atlas again, people are underperforming in certain areas. Madam Vice-President, what I am hoping is that we can address GATE. If even we, cut back on GATE, it is going to keep certain communities depressed.

Sen. Karim: GATE stays open.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: “It still open.” The problem is this, in 10 years’ time, and as a development planner, I am thinking long term,—I am not five years. I am thinking in 20 years’ time horizons. I see a problem in 20 years because a number of people, as you were saying, have bolted already. Right? A lot of people have benefited from this significantly.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: If you go back to the map, the people who are performing well at the SEA level and at the secondary level are in certain locations.

Sen. Karim: Has that changed over 30, 40 years?

Sen. Dr. Bernard: No, but you have to change it.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: No, but we have to change it. We have to start working with people where they are.

Sen. Karim: One of your colleagues said means test, the other one said, no, no—

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: The point is this, that if we are going to develop communities of which there are 520—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Karim: We are doing that for everybody to succeed.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: So you have to spend some of that \$9 million in education at the lower levels, start to build a lot of pre-schools. You have got to concentrate more money in that area so that they come through and then you have to go back and give some GATE in those communities as well, if you see what I mean.

Sen. Karim: Very good, Sir.

Sen. Dr. J. Armstrong: Procurement. I think I will try and end with that, Madam Vice-President. Again, a lot of the problems that we have talked about in this Senate have to do with procurement, and I want to, again, urge that we get that on the table as soon as possible, and it will resolve a number of the problems that we have. [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development (Sen. The Hon. Marlene Coudray): As I rise, Madam Vice-President, I want to thank you for permitting me to join this budget debate. I would start by congratulating the Minister of Finance and the Economy for presenting a growth-oriented, people-focused, development-centred fiscal package to this Senate that is determined to enhance the well-being of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, at the end of that presentation, I heard a leading Member of the Opposition cry foul saying that it is an election budget, so I think that really augurs well for the budget. I want to applaud his vision and thank him for demonstrating a real level of dexterity in managing limited resources in such a compassionate and yet deliberate manner. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Singh: Lyrics, man!

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: The focus on achieving the vision of our Prime Minister, hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, a secure and sustainable future, for all; a vision we all support and one by which we are all driven.

Madam Vice-President, I also take this opportunity to commend my colleagues for their sterling contributions, and particularly, my friend on my left for his most recent contribution here. [*Desk thumping*]

4.10 p.m.

Madam Vice-President, this is a moment of acute importance and I say importance because I am speaking on subject matters pertaining to gender, youth and children which have rested heavily on my interest and compassion for most of my adult life.

I want to thank the hon. Prime Minister, hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, for placing me in a vantage position to be part of a Cabinet led by such a visionary, such a very strong woman and for the opportunity to make a difference in the development of this country—[*Desk thumping*]—and, Madam Vice-President, I shall.

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I felt compelled at this stage to digress a little, but I think I would leave it for a little later in my contribution. Before I begin though, I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my predecessor, the former Minister for the foundation she laid, Mrs. Verna St. Rose Greaves and I also want to sincerely thank the Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Sandra Jones and all the technical and professional staff at that Ministry, for the work they have been doing and for really supporting me thus far.

In June of this year, I inherited a Ministry which was still undergoing a process of incubation and still is, given that the Ministry was only established in July of 2011. It was a Ministry configured from splinter responsibilities, previously under the purview of the Ministry of Social Development, Planning and the Economy, where gender came from and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and we got the youth affairs part of sport.

The hon. Prime Minister recognized the need to cluster responsibilities for gender, youth and child development in a single Ministry, to realize an enhanced matrix of synergies required for effective and timely implementation of strategies to improve the objectives of the People's Partnership Government, and these were all spelt out in the manifesto which is now public policy. And, in particular, I want to mention Pillar one, the people-centred development, we need everyone to contribute. Pillar two dealt with poverty eradication and social justice, preference for the poor and disadvantaged, and Pillar six, good governance and it spoke about people.

I say the work of the Ministry is critical because of the impact of gender, youth and child development on the economy, on our social progress, on the academic achievement and on planning for the future, and other colleagues dealt with different aspects and I think the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development will really create the link.

Since its genesis, the Ministry has been formulating and implementing strategies to achieve these objectives, with specific emphasis on gender equality, in terms of economics, education and corporate employment opportunities, on-the-job respect, strong and supportive families through improvement of parenting skills. The youth: mainly in the areas of opportunity to make meaningful contribution to national development, succession planning for leadership, equipment for meaningful employment, treating with intergenerational issues, anger management and tolerance, general preparation for adulthood. The third area of child development is contingent on a holistic approach to enable each

child to achieve his or her fullest potential and this requires parents, families, caregivers and teachers creating an atmosphere of healthy relationship to enable positive growth and processes, which will ensure a seamlessly wholesome transition from birth through youth to adulthood.

Yesterday, Sen. Dr. Balgobin made a very fundamental point, in terms of development. It is about people and not tall buildings, as we have seen in the past. [*Desk thumping*] For the sake of clarity I shall approach each area by highlighting the importance, as well as the policy approach and progress made to date. When I look at the time I have, I wonder if I should say like a colleague in another place, yesterday was yesterday and maybe move on to with what we plan to do with this year's budget, but I think I need to touch on some of the areas because, addressing this enormous task has not been without its serious challenges and I have deliberately chosen not to mention all of them, but it would be remiss of me not to mention that serious setbacks to the Ministry's optimal performance were occasioned by human resource quality constraints.

The limitations of the public service to attract and retain quality human resources are well known. In the circumstances, fiscal 2012/13, the Ministry intends to aggressively pursue innovative measures within the policies and procedures of the public service to address those shortcomings.

Madam Vice-President, notwithstanding human resource constraints over fiscal 2011/2012, the Ministry was able to implement an astonishing proportion of its projects and programmes under the PSIP.

I shall start with gender, and the immediate conception in the minds of many when we discuss a gender policy is centred on the rights of women, sexual orientation and same-sex marriages. But, I want to say to this Senate that the gender policy involves a great deal more than those and, in fact, when appropriately structured and deliberately implemented, must deliver equal access, rights and protection, opportunity to men, women, girls and boys in the development and advancement process.

I want to quote a little, with your leave, Madam Vice-President, the UN World Food Programme in its gender policy states, and I quote:

“Gender inequality is a major cause and effect of hunger and poverty: it is estimated that 60 percent of the world's chronically hungry people are women and girls; 20 percent are children under 5. Achieving gender equality remains crucial to reaching the poverty and hunger reduction goals of the Millennium Declaration.”

The reference is given.

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[SEN. DR. JAMES ARMSTRONG *in the Chair*]

As he introduced USAID's policy on gender equality and female empowerment administrator Rajiv Shah said, and I quote again:

“...Long-term, sustainable development will only be possible when women and men enjoy equal opportunity to rise to their potential. But today, women and girls continue to face disadvantages in every sector in which we work, and in other cases, boys are falling behind.”

In that same document, there is a quote from Senator Hilary Clinton, US Secretary. I am just saying all these things to give a snapshot, Mr. Presiding Officer, of the global context so that we can all appreciate the need for the work of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development and the purpose behind bringing together these critical areas under one umbrella body.

In taking forward its mandate in fiscal 2011/2012, the Ministry proposed to provide three safe houses, an institute of healing and two respite centres. The National Insurance Property Development Company Limited was assigned responsibility for project management and construction management service for the construction of these facilities. I am happy to report that the preliminary construction designs are complete. Site selection and final designs are expected to be completed in the coming months.

Mr. Presiding Officer, we know the urgent needs of many of our people out there will not wait for the bureaucratic process which I mentioned earlier and, therefore, as an interim measure, the Ministry is moving to provide temporary accommodation to immediately deliver these services.

The Ministry gave a commitment to address some of the long-term neglect of issues debilitating to woman with sole responsibility for raising their children, particularly in the rural areas. This project has been implemented. Six community caravans visited Cedros, Rio Claro, Chaguanas, Penal, Sangre Grande and the Maracas Bay area to provide the targeted women with information concerning the Government assistance which can be accessed from Ministries, state agencies and others.

In addressing issues of domestic violence against women, the Ministry has held some workshops, one with TUCO, established a National Domestic Violence Hotline, 800-SAVE and also community drop-in centres, which provide counselling support and referral services for victims and even perpetrators of gender-based violence. A lot of literature is being printed and distributed.

The review of the National Policy on Gender and Development for Trinidad and Tobago, which was commissioned by Cabinet in November 2011, is complete. It is now subject to the approval of the Cabinet and it is hoped that the document will be put out for public comments in the near future. Also as promised, over the past fiscal, the Ministry confronted the problem of the high rate of unemployment among women and poor, as demonstrated in welfare statistics in this country. We have delivered on this promise. Over that period, the Women in Harmony Programme conducted skills training for women who have little or no matriculation or skills, training 320 single female heads of household in the age range 26 to 45 years in areas like agriculture, landscaping, or care for the elderly.

In addition, 190 women between the ages of 18 to 50 years were trained in disciplines including electrical installation, plumbing, pipe fabricating, automotive repair, computer repair, welding, small appliance repairs, masonry, bricklaying, tiling, form work, construction and woodwork.

In the 2011/2012 budget debate, it was promised to this honourable Senate that the Ministry will design, organize and deliver special services and programmes to address men's critical gender issues, including health-seeking behaviours. Again, the Ministry has made good on its promise.

The Defining Masculine Excellence Programme has been implemented to allow males a safe place to discuss their issues. Some 114 males have accessed this programme and also a food preparation and management programme for males which engage men and boys in understanding and appreciating gender roles and norms in family life and that attracted 170 males in Trinidad. The Ministry, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund, designed and circulated brochures to men, in terms of reproductive health.

In keeping with its commitment to create an electronic knowledge-based platform in the Ministry to enable online collection and dissemination of data, the Ministry embarked on a programme to upgrade its digital library and commenced the process of establishing a central registry on domestic violence.

Mr. Presiding Officer, another critical area is the revision of the Marriage Act and it has been an issue for decades. This Senate was given a commitment that the conversation on this issue would be facilitated by the Ministry. That also was done and in January 2012, the Ministry met with leaders of the various faiths to arrive at a common position of the minimal legal age of marriage. A national consultation was held in November last year on the standardization of the legal age of marriage and this is now engaging the attention of the LRC at this time.

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Mr. Presiding Officer, I move on to another aspect on this continuum of policy, as we have indicated, that of the youth and the development of young people, and I really need to move on and say that when we speak of the economic diversification programme, we are not simply planning for today and tomorrow. We see that to diversify is to support, promote and drive the expansion of other economic sectors so as to broaden the base upon which our future prosperity stands. I am beginning to sound like the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development here. [*Desk thumping*]

This means that, among other things, of course, these sectors must be appropriately supported by skilled and confident young men and women who have been and continue to be beneficiaries of the State's active role in their progress. Sustainability, therefore, increases the prominence of youth development strategies and in fact places significant responsibility on Government to develop and implement the right policies and these are being done mainly by the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training and also the Ministry of Education and there are several Ministries, sport and others, coming together and we are collaborating with all of them, in terms of developing these programmes.

4.25 p.m.

At the same time, it places a great responsibility on our young people to plan their lives with greater care, with greater consideration for where they want to be, and with greater confidence that the State and that this Government is ready to support them.

This Government recognized very early that it could not set about building policy in a vacuum without the necessary input of the young people. We recognized that framing a youth policy with sufficient focus on education, training, human development strategies, specialized skill development and training programmes: sports, health care provisions and employment creation initiatives, would be of little value if we do not first understand the needs, the challenges, the ambitions and evolving goals of our young people. It is for this reason that we are approaching youth development in a manner that involves the young people of today, their thinking, as well as their ambitions for the future.

I turn to the youth development and apprenticeship centres, and this was proposed in 2011/2012. The proposal was to review that project designed to refurbish the youth development and apprenticeship centres, in order to improve the superstructure of all the youth facilities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The project manager—and I herein refer to the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited. [*Desk thumping*] I know it means something else in this Senate, yes—has been engaged to implement the refurbishment of two facilities.

The Ministry, however, has reviewed this project and is in the process of implementing the recommendations, to make the programme more relevant to the needs of young people today. The Ministry is mindful of the several bottlenecks in implementing construction projects and, therefore, intends to establish a project management unit to accelerate the delivery and monitor the implementation of these projects.

We had promised establishment of remand homes for male and female offenders, and these are the young people I am talking about. The funds were allocated to complete the planning, the feasibility studies and the identification of sites for locating these facilities. This process has been completed and a suitable location is now being selected based on some proposals given to us.

Outfitting of the St. James Youth facility—this is an area that a lot of people had been questioning—and I am happy to say that building is complete and a contract was awarded to the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago to outfit the facility which is expected to be commissioned soon.

Sen. Beckles: Which one is that one?

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: St. James Youth facility. I just want to take some time here to add one other point in the context of this youth policy. I think it was on Monday's *Guardian*, page 9, Mr. Presiding Officer, with your leave. I noted the comments of a former Minister in the previous administration, that was extremely telling, and I think I must take the time. One might even consider it an admission, and I quote:

“Former People’s National Movement (PNM) minister Rennie Dumas says the education system is destroying boys by treating them like girls. He made the statement during his address at the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA) Victoria District Teachers’ Convention held at the Marabella South Secondary School, Gopaul Lands, Marabella, on Friday. The theme of the event was Take a Stand for Teachers.”

The article goes on to quote, and the former Minister was also a Minister of Local Government while I served in that Ministry, Sir. And he is being quoted as saying again, and I quote:

““We are destroying our boys in this country. Our education system is not built for training men. Little boys cannot sit down, little boys cannot stay quiet, little boys have to take stands.””

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I do not know what he meant by that:

““They are different and we continue to treat our boys like girls.””

Mr. Presiding Officer, for almost 10 years of being in charge of policy development and implementation in this country, this is how a former Cabinet Minister talks about the education in this country. I, therefore, wish to assure the former Minister and the population at large, that the synergies this Government has developed, the focus we are laying on enhancing the life of children and young people in this country, and the policies we are developing and implementing with consultation, will fix all these problems they left behind.

Sen. Singh: “Dat is why he is before de courts.”

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: I now move to child development, and this is the other aspect of the continuum of policy and action by this Government. Trinidad and Tobago is a nation known for many great things. We have a century old energy industry. We have the greatest show on earth. [*Desk thumping*] We have the likes of Rodney Wilkes, Hasley Crawford, George Bovell III, Keshorn Walcott, Brian Charles Lara, Richard Thompson and so many others. [*Desk thumping*] We have a natural environment that attracts interests from around the world, although I see in this Senate and the other place, there is a concerted effort to change that. We have an economy that is rising once again, towering in strength, [*Desk thumping*] and there are many other great things about this country.

Over the years, however, Mr. Presiding Officer, as with many, if not all nations, a dark side developed. We recall reading about Amy Annamunthodo; Sean Luke, Roshan Ramrattan, but I want to focus on Akiel Chambers, that was the start—my recollection—and the horrific, terrifying and deeply tragic circumstances under which these lives were lost. Particularly with Akiel Chambers, I think we need to call for a reopening of this case. [*Desk thumping*] There are many in this country who have information and I think we owe it to our children. [*Desk thumping*]

We will also recall moments when we buried our faces in our hands thinking, wishing and shouting this will never happen again. This is why the People’s Partnership Government has taken the approach of not simply talking about this, and remembering those beautiful children in sorrow. Our approach seeks to ensure that every policy, institutional and action-oriented measure, is taken to protect young lives and give them every opportunity to grow, to protect their lives and to excel, allowing them to excel in an environment that supports their emotional and psychological development, and fosters a belief and confidence that they are cared for, provided for and that they are safe.

To achieve these goals, I will now highlight some specific measures. One of them is the construction of three interdisciplinary child development centres; the repairs and restorations of homes, and this was started in 2011; the St. Michael Homes for Boys after it was destroyed by fire; facility upgrades at the St. Mary's Children Home; refurbishing [*Desk thumping*] of the St. Jude's School for Girls; the St. Michael's School for Boys project, which constituted completing outstanding post-fire repairs, that has been completed; the St. Mary's Children Home project is intended to upgrade facilities. This is complete except for some plumbing, electrical and some minor works still to be done by the contractor. All these projects are in some stages of near completion.

The refurbishing of the dormitories of the St. Dominic's Children's Home, and based on the quantity surveyor's report, that is approximately 86 per cent complete; provision of financial assistance to the Credo Foundation for Justice, for reconstruction of the Credo Drop In Centre, [*Desk thumping*] Cabinet recently approved, based on the \$7.2 million estimate, Cabinet has agreed to put almost 50 per cent of that cost. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me now turn to the Children Act. Mr. Presiding Officer, Trinidad and Tobago has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and agreed to take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures. These measures will guarantee the rights of the child, and protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, abuse or neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse while in the care of parents, legal guardian or other persons who have the care of the child.

The Children Bill, 2012 was passed on June 15, 2012 and assented to on August 06, 2012. Recognizing that the operation of the Act is only possible with the proper manpower training and infrastructure in place, the Ministry has prepared a holistic plan for the implementation of the Act. In tandem with the Children's Authority, the Ministry is now engaged in addressing the human and structural resource needs of the Authority, to look at the standardization of the residential children's homes and nurseries, and the foster care arrangements, and the Adoption Act which are meant to fall under the remit of the Children's Authority, and that is being addressed as well.

Critical to the success of this plan is the need for widespread training and awareness building, on the shift in policy which gives rise to the Children Act, No. 10 of 2012, and the new offences thereby created. This plan began with a Train the Trainers Workshop, which was launched on September 25, this year,

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which brought together various stakeholders, and several other workshops will be scheduled over the next six months in the 14 districts in Trinidad, and one in Tobago to inform the stakeholders, and soon to follow an island wide campaign at the community level for sensitization of the population.

Mr. Presiding Officer, this Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development has addressed every commitment it gave to this Senate in the 2011/2012 budget debate. [*Desk thumping*] Moreover, over 80 per cent of the projects promised have been delivered. [*Desk thumping*]

These achievements have taken place, even though handcuffed by human resource constraints as I indicated earlier, and notwithstanding that we are operating in an environment where we face many challenges based on an archaic public service system and implementation processes. Fiscal year 2012/2013 projects, programmes and initiatives: the mantra of this Ministry for fiscal 2012/2013 is accelerating the climb. The People's Partnership Government took office on a manifesto to cause our nation and our people to rise. Specific to the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, "rise" means climbing to the plateau of gender equality where men and women, boys and girls will respect each other and draw nigh [*Desk thumping*]—differently abled.

4.40 p.m.

Mr. Presiding Officer, "rise" has the meaning that stairs will be provided to facilitate the climb of the youth to corridors of participation in decision making, where fears and doubts of civic belonging are left behind and where they understand that regardless of background, they are the immediate future of this country.

Mr. Presiding Officer, the important question is: who should teach the youths and provide the stairway for them to climb? We will endeavour, over this fiscal year, to institute measures to encourage parenting in a manner which will enable decisive protection, nurturing and respect of the rights of the child as far as possible within the context of the different configurations of the family. This cuts at the heart of a new parenting model centred on creating an environment where children are given optimum opportunity to reach their full potential.

We have several child development projects and programmes: development of the national development policy; establishment of a national child register; development of the national parenting policy and programme and they are all listed here. I think, in the interest of time, one of the things we aim to do is to establish community parenting centres; set up parenting groups; establish a parenting hotline; provide counselling for parents, including referrals for further intervention and provide response home visits.

The Ministry has been engaged in terms of all the crises we have seen on the newspaper; all the unfortunate incidents with women, children and young people. The Ministry's professional staff has been on the field providing services in collaboration with the Ministry of the People and Social Development. We just do not put our clients in the newspapers and all that; we respect their privacy, but I assure that the statistics are in the Ministry and they speak for themselves.

Again, I want to thank the—

Hon. Senator: Sitting between those two gentlemen—

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: Again, I want to thank the—you cannot distract me, Sir. Again, I want to thank the staff of the Ministry—Minister Karim and all the other Ministers—who have been collaborating and providing support to this Ministry.

After school centres will be established in a national heritage, archiving and exchange programme; skill enhancement and social education; vacation camps, we will continue those. We have the Gatekeepers Programme and on this one the Ministry has partnered with the Toco Foundation in the social intervention programme, the Gatekeepers, approaching governance from the standpoint of social action, building responsibility in the male personality.

This project trained a number of young men in communities and the two targeted ones—Covigne Road in Diego Martin and Upper and Lower Santa Cruz—in the area of social ethics and leadership skills in order to assume the roles of community exemplars. This project will be extended to the other areas in our country, in particular, those challenged with a high occurrence of youth crime, drug abuse and gang-related activities.

The National Volunteerism Policy, which came on stream in the last fiscal year involved, in the first instance, a combination of young people and other stakeholders working together to draft the National Volunteerism Policy, which outlines a guiding philosophy and national framework for volunteerism. In this fiscal year, the website will be launched, giving our young people open access to learning more about the programme and pledging participation in areas of interest to them.

Youth leadership training, youth development and apprenticeship centres: in the other place, the Member for Laventille West made strong inference about youth camps. When this Government took office, it was confronted with a youth camp programme which was providing training that was absolutely irrelevant to

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the 21st Century Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry, therefore, commissioned a study which is now complete. The study recommended a rebranding and reconfiguration of youth camps into youth development and apprenticeship centres, based on a new business model which related training to the national development skills needs.

The Government, through the Ministry, proposes to implement the first phase of YDAC in this fiscal year. [*Desk thumping*] Again, I want to cite Minister Karim for the support that he is giving to the Ministry in this.

We intend to construct interdisciplinary, child development centres. We will do the planning, but the construction will not start in fiscal 2013. Owing to the limited funding available, we have to reorganize our priorities and ensure that the most critical areas get the priority attention.

A model children's home will be established in this fiscal year. A safe house for victims of domestic violence will be established in the course of the fiscal year as well; two respite centres, one in north Trinidad and one in south will be established during fiscal 2012/2013. These facilities will provide a range of services that would enable caregivers to get temporary relief on a planned or emergent basis from performing the work of caregivers, and we know what that entails.

An institute of healing will be established in south Trinidad purposed on providing leading edge services of trained professionals in terms of individual healing, group counselling and other healing therapies to individuals and groups who have experienced violence and trauma. On that, I rely on the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs to assist in providing the site for us and we are engaged in discussions on that one regard.

Four assessment centres will come on stream during this fiscal year and these will be used, we hope, by the Children's Authority to assess complaints of abuse and to make referrals. Two transition homes will be operational in this fiscal year to provide community-based settings for use between the ages of 16 and 18 years.

We spoke about the remand homes for young female offenders and the Minister of Justice, in her contribution, alluded to same and we are collaborating on that one in terms of how we deal with these young people in our country.

The Government will be promoting day care centres with CBOs, NGOs and other civil society groups. The Government will pursue, through this Ministry, the full implementation of the Children's Authority Act and the Children Act.

Sen. Al-Rawi: When?

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: The Government will commence—I am talking about fiscal 2012/2013, Mr. Presiding Officer. Upon completion of discussion and training on gender-based budgeting, we will be rolling out this programme throughout the public service and it will also commence this fiscal year and gender-based budgeting is designed to ensure gender-based equity.

The Ministry will continue to partner with the Ministry of Legal Affairs in revising the legal age of marriage in Trinidad and Tobago—I spoke on that before—and it will intensify its training programmes in non-traditional skills for men and women and a lot of the national youth policy will also come on stream during the course of this fiscal year. I have spoken a lot in terms of what the Ministry intends to do and I said that we will do it in collaboration with NGOs, CBOs and others in terms of our budget limitations and we intend to do just that.

As I am on the issue of children, we have an overarching responsibility for policy in terms of gender, youth and children and this relates to other Ministries and departments, private sector and other NGOs and CBOs.

I said that we are reviewing certain aspects of our mandate and operations. In order to do so, we have to reduce waste, mismanagement, expenditure and a lot of Senators spoke about that during the course of this debate.

Some of our operations seem to be steeped in maintaining a status quo that is no longer relevant to today's requirements. One example is the youth camp; a lot of expenditure and nothing happening. It is empty, but some people want us to continue to operate these youth camps. Sometimes there are a few people, not even worth keeping them open. So we are looking at how we do business and, in order to realize some savings, one critical issue came to my attention in the course of my collaboration with our stakeholders, and one is the Children's Authority.

Members on the other side sat here and tried to decry this Government in terms of expenditure and waste; but something jumped out at me when we were doing the draft estimates and that is the Children's Authority was asking for the sum of \$7.5 million for rental of its premises—one year's rental, \$7.5 million. I became very, very curious and when I checked the records I realized that this transaction took place in May 2010.

I have two leases here; I do not know why they are dated March 2010. Somebody sought to tie up—we cannot talk; we cannot come and talk about expenditure of funds and savings and exorbitant rent when, we are saying for a Children's Authority that was put in place to deal with unfortunate children, we are committed to paying \$7.5 million. Somebody has tied up the Children's Authority like a Sunday crab into a lease to pay \$7.5 million a year rent on a building that they had to spend money on to outfit.

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Therefore, I want to ask why this was done just before the last general election and why it was for a period of 12 years? [*Crosstalk*] The lease states that the first opportunity to exit is in 2016. This is wickedness! Mr. Presiding Officer, when I look at the documents in terms of the children in this country, we took over from the Ministry of the People and Social Development, grants to children's homes; so one children's home which was dealing with unfortunate children and children put on the streets that the social workers take into these homes, the grant to that home is \$25,000 a year and the homes are being told, "We do not have enough money; we do not have money to pay you. We cannot give you any more." That is \$25,000. That cannot even pay one caregiver for the year, but that is the extent of the grant; yet we find money to tie up the State, \$7.5 million a year in a rental and we sit over there and we talk, just before a general election.

I have given instructions to the Permanent Secretary to get us out of the lease. [*Desk thumping*] Somebody mentioned it is a very oppressive lease. When you examine the lease, the building has no Town and Country approval; it is built on lands owned by the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. Yesterday, my friend over there was talking about investigate. I think this is one to be investigated. [*Desk thumping*] I think it is wicked, oppressive and everything else in terms of what this Government is saddled with.

That is not the only one. I was in another Ministry. We know about 1 Alexandra Street, nobody has ever moved into that building, yet the State is paying rent in terms of these lease agreements that we have been tied up in. So people must not come here and make deals in anticipation of what have you. People come into this Senate and they are all over the streets in Port of Spain; all over the place, talking about this is a hamper government; trying to ridicule this Government. I will say, take the money, buy hampers; feed the poor; give the children toys. [*Desk thumping*]

They criticize the Prime Minister for buying toys for needy and unfortunate children, but we can pay \$7.5 million, half of which went to an empty building and somebody is coming in April 2012 to tie up—

Mr. Presiding Officer: The speaking time of the hon. Minister has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Minister's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: Thank you. [*Desk thumping*] So during this budget debate, Mr. Presiding Officer, what we saw was a most incredible level of acrimony, bitterness against this Government given with the intention to damage and malign and to create doubt and mistrust in the population.

I just want to digress a bit in terms of something that happened here this morning. The hon. Sen. Hinds—

Hon. Senator: Where is he? Never in his seat.

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray:—spoke about—and this is what the PNM does every time they are in Opposition. [*Crosstalk*] I rise, again, to address the many unfounded and empty accusations laid against the People’s Partnership—racial profiling and racial discrimination against the Government—as put forth by the Opposition.

[MADAM VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

We are celebrating 50 years of our country’s independence and this Opposition continues to insist on dividing the people of our beautiful nation, along racial lines. [*Desk thumping*] It reminds me of the novel by VS Naipaul, *The Suffrage of Elvira*, where Mr. Harbans, one of the electoral candidates, is interested in recruiting people along the said religious and racial lines to ensure that he gets 6,000—8,000 votes. What strikes me, as I reflect on that storyline, is that the novel was published in 1958, four years before the Independence of Trinidad and Tobago and yet the Opposition seems resolute in cementing us in this pre-independence consciousness each time they inject their venom by bringing race into the political arena. [*Desk thumping*]

4.55 p.m.

Madam Vice-President, as we in the People’s Partnership Government said, Government should not be based on ethnic patrimony, and we have shown that. I have some figures here that I want to—you know, I know those on that side so well. When they are in Opposition they try everything to discredit the Government to cause distrust and disharmony with the population, and I asked someone to do some research for me. The data, I would like to read some of it because—and it went back to the start of the PNM rule in 1956, a Cabinet that attempts—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: She was waiting.

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: “I know dem!” You have to be ready. [*Desk thumping*]—to reflect the population of Trinidad and Tobago with a ratio of 7:6 Indians to non-Indians in the Cabinet.

Sen. George: He used to work with Manning, you know.

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: “Doh bother with him!”

Sen. George: “With Manning, yuh know, yuh understand that?”

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: While this ratio is not a perfect 1:1 scenario, it is the closest to a perfect scenario that we have ever gotten in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. But what is more important is what this blatant bias in ethnic origin of the Cabinet under the PNM Government meant to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

With the marginalization of Indians and other ethnic groups in this country, other minority groups during the PNM rule meant that their political philosophy was embedded in barefaced racial bias against people of Trinidad and Tobago in none. This serves to explain the years of neglect in many of the Indo-Trinidadian communities in our country, as well as the inequitable distribution of state resources. Some of my colleagues, we have been going into the areas, there is rural neglect. This is the rural neglect we all talk about. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, if you go out there you will see it is absolutely horrifying to see some of the conditions that some of those people in those communities live, and they have been virtually silenced as there was no possibility of anybody lobbying for them in the Cabinet, for such communities. Go back in their history and see the composition of the Cabinet. So I would want to ask Members on the other side to reflect on their own actions before they make wild accusations that they examine, introspectively, their own role in propelling racial discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago under their rule. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Singh: “Penny is not like dat.”

Sen. George: No, at all!

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: And like everything else we have some bad ones. We have some bad Africans, we have some of those—but we can do nothing for that.

Madam Vice-President, I am very concerned and alarmed because I know their track record. To me it is an act of desperation to continue in this most malicious way, especially when they are in Opposition, to fan flames of racial disharmony in this country. I condemn them for that.

With the limited time I have, I would like to just state that it is malicious falsehood and they are whispering it all over, and openly saying it all over the place. You know they, PNM, pay lip service to this race thing because I have been among them in terms of my associates—[*Desk thumping*—and would hear them. They laugh in your face, and make some very disparaging remarks, and they are the ones who create it. This is not what we are about in Trinidad and Tobago. This is not what this Government of Trinidad and Tobago is about. [*Desk thumping*]

Under the PNM regime there were 81 state boards. They are talking about state boards. Do you know that of these 81 state boards 75 of them had more non-Indians than Indians; that is 92.5 per cent of all state boards under the PNM Government had more non-Indians than Indians. Furthermore, of the 75 which had more, 10 of these had absolutely no representation of the Indo-Trinidadian community in them. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, people like me who grew up in south where everybody lived as one, it is difficult to really come to terms with some of these things. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Great city of San Fernando!

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: The statistics are here and I can pass them on. In a country such as Trinidad and Tobago where nearly 50 per cent of the population is of Indo descent of the 646 members of the state boards under the PNM Government, 508 of those persons were non-Indians, while 138 were Indians. I hope it really calms you down and you really stop the nonsense and really get on to governing this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: We have to ask Hinds not to raise that again.

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: In trying not to be unfair, I was looking at the data, and I thought it was important that we point out the merits of the—I was looking for some merits because I did not want to come here and condemn.

Of course, I saw—“oh yes”—“yuh” had three boards with an equal number of Indians and non-Indians on them. When I further examined this data I realized that this was so because there were only two people on those boards. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: “Oh”, the chairman and the vice-chairman. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: They must not hurl accusations, you must not do that. We have children and grandchildren who live in this country. They go to school, and when you come with these things it really, really creates disharmony. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Vice-President, how am I going for time?

Sen. Singh: Six more minutes.

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: Six? I would want them to leave the dirty politics and you know, please respect the fact that this Government has won a mandate of the people and is here to govern this country till 2015. [*Desk thumping*] I want to urge and encourage you to take the time and try to build rather than destroy this nation.

Hon. Senator: Yeah! True!

Sen. Singh: Change the game!

Hon. Senator: Should have never pulled the race card! That bad!

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: That is what they do all the time to gain advantage. [*Inaudible*]*—*people are very fickle, you know. They tell them things which they—you know, Madam Vice-President, as my time draws to a close, I trust that I have delivered and I digress because it was really important for me to make this statement.

You know, some of them look at me and say I am a “stupid African” and all that. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Beckles: What?

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: I do not want to sound like my friend.

Hon. Senator: No, no, no!

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: Yes, they do, PNM people! Yes! I am saying to you—yes—but you all say it!

Sen. Deyalsingh: No, no, no!

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: PNM people say it! I am not ashamed. I stand here representing the United National Congress Government—[*Desk thumping*]*—*and I really did not want this to take away from the work that the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development is doing and what we propose to do—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: On a point of order, Madam Vice-President!

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray:*—*I am not giving way! What point of order?

Sen. Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President, I am so sorry to interrupt the maiden contribution of the very distinguished Member, but that was a very unfortunate 35(5) comment, I do not wish for that to stand on the record if you could consider it.

Madam Vice-President: I will consider it. I mean the first thing is that you are correct; this is her maiden contribution as a Minister and a Member of this Senate. I think really and truly she is wrapping up. I would not have expected you to rise on a point of order, but however having risen on a point of order, I think there is no improper motive that she ascribed to any one Member. [*Desk thumping*] She simply said it was a name that she was called. Minister, continue please!

Sen. Al-Rawi: Sorry, Madam Vice-President!

Sen. Singh: “Nah, nah, nah!” You cannot argue with the Chair. What is the matter with you?

Sen. Al-Rawi: On a different point, Madam Vice-President.

Sen. Singh: Which is that?

Madam Vice-President: Could you tell me your point please?

Sen. Al-Rawi: Yes, Madam Vice-President. I am looking specifically about the—*[Interruption]*

Madam Vice-President: Sen. Al-Rawi, I believe you are not prepared.

Sen. Al-Rawi:—35(4)! Madam Vice-President, I am very well prepared. Are you ruling before I speak?

Madam Vice-President: You stand and say—no, you stand! You have taken advantage of the situation.

Sen. Al-Rawi: I have not!

Madam Vice-President: She is just about two minutes to completion. I made a ruling on your last point of order, you were on your legs, you simply want to remain on your legs to talk about a next point of order. I do not think you are even prepared for a next point of order. Minister please.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President, on a point of order.

Sen. Singh: Take your seat!

Hon. Senator: Sit down!

Sen. Al-Rawi: 35(4), Madam Vice-President.

Sen. Singh: She used no offensive language. “What foolishness yuh talkin bout!”

Madam Vice-President: Minister please.

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: Madam Vice-President—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Al-Rawi: “Stupid African” is not offensive?

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: I quoted! I am not calling you that, Sir

Sen. Al-Rawi: I take offence to that. How can you say “stupid African”?

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: I was not referring to you.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is a horrible statement to make.

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: Madam Vice-President, I also hope that this contribution I have made, I just want to, in terms of the Senator Baptiste-Mc Knight’s contribution when she said there were only three lines for the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development and she thought the Ministry was

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dissolved. [*Crosstalk*] I just want to point out that the Senator referred to the PSIP. I want to tell you there is a book called the *Social Sector Investment Programme*, SSIP, in which we have all—but we have a social sector. This is 2013, and I want to say that all the programmes and proposals are outlined in this document and—“um-hmm”.

Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight: A point of clarification!

Madam Vice-President: Sen. Al-Rawi, I am hearing you in a crosstalk and I would like to identify. But if you are so incensed Senator, at the very start of your Standing Order you would have actually quoted the correct Standing Order which was 35(4), and not 35(5) because in the first case, your Standing Order 35(5) does not talk about the way you were incensed. If you were incensed because it was offensive that is 35(4). But I allow the Minister to continue.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Madam Vice-President, I have a repertoire of Standing Orders that I can call into aid on a point of privilege. I do not know that it lies within the heart of the Vice-President to tell me that I can improperly move a Standing Order under privileges because I have that under Standing Order 84 as well.

Madam Vice-President: Senator, please! You are grasping at the end of her contribution.

Sen. Al-Rawi: I am exercising my rights. You cannot say that.

Hon. Senator: Is it that a poor point of clarification—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight: Yes, Madam Vice-President, the point that I was making was that there was no coherence in this document. The document at paragraph 203 on page 71 identifies all that your Ministry is doing. Then when it talks about the next fiscal period at 4:27, all of these very things are placed within the Ministry of the People and Social Development. It gives your Ministry absolutely nothing to do for the period of the budget that we are dealing with. That is only the point that I am making. It is laid out in the book. Thank you.

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: Madam Vice-President, I hope my contribution here in terms of our proposed work for 2012/2013 would have cleared up all that.

Sen. Al-Rawi: You should apologize!

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: While the Senator on the other side is incensed about whatever, he asked for some investigations, I would like for him to add to that list the land on which NAPA south is built. I want him to ask about that. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Singh: Investigate that?

Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray: Investigate that, as well as the Children's Authority. [*Crosstalk*] The land on which NAPA south—let us find out how the State acquired that land and also all the other buildings in Port of Spain that somebody tied up this Government with prior to the 2010 election.

Madam Vice-President, the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration at midterm has proven that it can and will go beyond the talk despite all the naysayers. We are here to serve all without consideration for race, religion, gender, location, party affiliation or culture. We are a Government for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Vice-President, I thank you.

5.10 p.m.

Sen. Penelope Beckles: Thank you kindly, Madam Vice-President—

Sen. Al-Rawi: “Stupid Africans!”

Madam Vice-President: Senator, just kindly allow me to take the opportunity to congratulate Sen. The Hon. Marlene Coudray on her maiden contribution in this honourable Chamber. Congratulations! Congratulations! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. P. Beckles: Thank you kindly, Madam Vice-President, for allowing me the opportunity to join this debate on the budget 2012/2013. I must say, over the last three days, there were some contributions that I enjoyed; some contributions that certainly continued my education and then there were others that I could have certainly done without. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, I always believe that whenever I stand in this august Chamber to make a contribution, one of the things I make an extra effort to do is to ensure that I have my facts. I just do not talk for the sake of talking, and I do not get into mudslinging.

A statement was made earlier—I would like to say my good friend but, as I said earlier, when I spoke about him, the hon. Minister Ganga Singh, he spoke about Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds in a manner that caused me some great distress and disappointment because there is a distinction between when we want to throw picong, when we are on the campaign trail and when we are in these august Chambers. I know very well that when Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh said that Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds' education was paid for by the PNM—[*Crosstalk*]—well did you mean the UNC Government, the NAR Government? [*Crosstalk*] The PNM Government right, the PNM—that was totally and absolutely false. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Absolutely shameful!

Sen. P. Beckles: Not only because Sen. Hinds is like a brother to me, because I know personally the kind of sacrifice that he made when he went to England. I do not know—if it is that there are things he had said with which my friend disagrees, I know he is one of the more seasoned politicians.

Sen. Singh: We have the record.

Sen. P. Beckles: You have the record, well then you should have brought the record.

Sen. Singh: About his London stay.

Sen. P. Beckles: Not only did I get this information from Sen. Hinds, but I know and I accept what he has said to be true. If it is that Sen. Singh has information otherwise, then I hope he will produce those records [*Desk thumping*] and lay them for public scrutiny.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Absolutely!

Sen. Hinds: He has my permission.

Sen. P. Beckles: You know, I will tell you something. We make statements in the Parliament from time to time and very often—let me say that when those statements go on *Hansard*, people use those statements for historical purposes; they use them very often to try and destroy and discredit you—

Sen. Al-Rawi: Exactly!

Sen. P. Beckles:—and they know very well that those statements are false. Okay! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: As this one was.

Sen. P. Beckles: Let me just say that Sen. Hinds started in the police service. After he took his time to get his subjects, he then became an insurance agent. He saved his money and went to England with his wife, and they stayed in England for almost about seven to eight years. He went to the University of London and obtained his degree. He was called to the Middle Temple Inn, and whilst they were there they had three children. He worked many jobs—

Sen. Deyalsingh: And his wife.

Sen. P. Beckles:—and his wife, including being a cab driver [*Desk thumping*] and a waiter [*Desk thumping*] to pay his fees—

Sen. Al-Rawi: Cheap politics!

Sen. P. Beckles:—for cheap politics—

Sen. Deyalsingh: That is shame!

Sen. P. Beckles:—to come and suggest that a person who went to England in all that cold, and stayed there and made sacrifice and, for cheap politics, to say, that the PNM Government paid for his education, that is really, really upsetting.

Sen. Al-Rawi: In 1987 was the NAR!

Sen. P. Beckles: You see, when he want to England, he got to England in 1987, and the NAR Government was in office then. I mean, how far do we go?

Sen. Deyalsingh: “Talk nah!” That is shame!

Sen. P. Beckles: And they have the record. I mean, if you get up and provide the record, fine, but that is unfortunate. He returned to Trinidad in 1994, and then he became a candidate for the PNM in 1995 and served the constituency of Laventille East/Morvant with distinction. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Absolutely!

Sen. Hinds: I never failed an exam.

Sen. P. Beckles: The point about it is that he attended the same University of London similar to that of the Attorney General. They both did the master’s programme at the University of London.

Sen. Hinds: In one year.

Sen. P. Beckles: Sen. Hinds is not like myself and Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh, because both of us had the benefit of assistance from the PNM Government—[*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senators: Ohooo! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: He did not say that.

Sen. P. Beckles: I could say that because I was in class with him—

Sen. Hinds: But he took nine years!

Sen. P. Beckles:—and so too did the hon. Prime Minister have benefit from the PNM Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Theatrics!

Sen. Hinds: And he took nine years to get his LLB. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. P. Beckles: So let us not go there. [*Desk thumping*] I am not going to—you know there are times—you know in life we always have choices. We have choices when we stand and speak, what level we want to go to. [*Desk thumping*] There are choices. When we stand and speak, we can stand and speak and decide to speak the truth or we could stand and speak untruths. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: “And threaten people all yuh want, we will never be afraid.”

Sen. P. Beckles: I do not want to spend all my time talking about what was said about Sen. Hinds, but I am not happy. I am very disappointed in my friend, Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh, very disappointed. Let me move on.

Sen. Deyalsingh: He failed to apologize.

Sen. P. Beckles: That is for him to do. He said he is going to provide the facts, and I am going to stick to that and I am going to ask him for it over and over until he provides the facts. I remember when there was the first budget debate in this term, and the hon. Attorney General stood and talked about the fact that \$84 million—Sen. Hinds—

Sen. Al-Rawi: Ten lawyers received \$84 million.

Sen. P. Beckles:—and Sen. Faris Al-Rawi; those two names. It turned out that Sen. Hinds got one brief and Sen. Al-Rawi got none.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Zero!

Sen. P. Beckles: But the front page of the newspapers—

Sen. Al-Rawi: And he refused to apologize.

Sen. P. Beckles:—was that they got \$84 million in briefs.

Sen. Al-Rawi: And it is on *Hansard* record without an apology.

Sen. P. Beckles: Without an apology, but let us move on.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Lie! Untrue!

Sen. Hinds: Do not use the word lie; just say UNC or clause 34.

Sen. P. Beckles: There are couple things that Sen. The Hon. Marlene Coudray spoke about—

Sen. Hinds: It is synonymous!

Sen. P. Beckles:—and I am happy to know that there are a number of NGOs and there are a number of projects that would be either completed or started in this fiscal year. The hon. Minister mentioned quite a few: St. James facility, St. Dominic's, assistance with Credo Centre and others, and those are some areas that I raised in the last two budgets.

I must say, though, that I think that credit must go to her former colleague, at the time, Sen. Verna St. Rose Greaves who I know, to a large extent, was very passionate about these issues and would have started the work, ensuring that some of these projects come to fruition. I was hoping that the hon. Minister would have given some more information about the irrelevant programmes that are being conducted at the youth camps.

Madam Vice-President, I think we all know that, from time to time, it is necessary to revisit and review curriculums. What I know is that when those camps started many years ago—whether it be Presto Praesto, St. George, El Dorado—those camps were very valuable not just to young people, but to the country. If it is the time has come to review the curriculum, I do not know that anyone can disagree with it but, certainly, the reasons and so on for setting up those camps were very laudable. I think a number of persons that have passed through those camps would be testimony to that.

I would still like to say that when one looks at the total figure of NGO subsidy, if I might use that word—that may be the correct word—we are looking at some \$69 million for all those multiplicity of organizations, and they fall under the category of services for persons with disabilities, children's homes, industrial schools, socially displaced and so on.

When I listened to a number of the speakers and, I think, particularly Sen. Prof. Ramkissoon and Sen. Dr. Armstrong and others, we are looking really at almost \$1 billion that is allocated between CEPEP and URP, and over the last 10 years there was always an argument as to whether that is money well spent.

I would want to suggest that when we are talking about the issue of crime and solution, a number of these NGOs that are underfunded and are really doing a lot of good work for the society—a number of young persons who have passed through those institutions, when they get to the age of majority, they actually have nowhere to go. Many of them end up on the streets. Sometimes the organizations may keep them for a year or two, but my point is that there are a number of victims of domestic violence and crime, and there are a number of persons who end up in these institutions. The situation is very complex. Some of them need a psychologist, a psychiatrist and social workers. The truth is, the majority of those institutions like St. Jude's and St. Dominic's, the Boys Industrial Home and St. Mary's, they really simply do not have the funds.

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I am saying that when we look at the \$69 million and when we look at probably the \$3 billion that is allocated to that Ministry—I am not talking about the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, because I think that Ministry is underfunded when you look at the work that has to be done in that Ministry. I believe that it is necessary for us as a society to understand the value of the work that is being done by a number of these NGOs, and we need to think very seriously about increasing the allocations.

Some of them have been consistent maybe for the last 20 years, but the truth is that when you compare a lot of other countries in the world—the United States and a lot of countries in Europe—Governments and the societies value the work that is being done by those organizations, and they have actually realized that they are saving the Government money. In many instances, they are doing the work of the Government.

So, whilst these allocations have been consistent, I think that if we were to listen to the whole issue of underperformance—whether it be young males or whether we look at the issue of juvenile delinquency—if we were to do the data and the analysis, we would realize that if we invest a lot more money in those homes, the likelihood is—I am not saying that I am any scientist and I have all the answers—that a number of those children coming out of those homes would not get into what we would call negative, or probably criminal, activity, or activities that are not productive.

5.25 p.m.

When we deal with the very difficult and sensitive issue of productivity, we need to go back to basics; to go back to the whole issue of early childhood centres and, again, the primary schools, the secondary schools and exactly what is happening. I know that on the Government side they are expressing absolute surety that they are going to solve the problem; that all the problems they met they are going to solve the problems.

The problems that are taking place in Trinidad and Tobago are not exclusive to Trinidad and Tobago. In the United States and Britain there are commissions on the status and the underperformance of the young male, on crime and juvenile delinquency; so that we do not always have to reinvent the wheel. There are a number of other countries that have some of the challenges that we have and they are dealing with those matters. I also want to suggest that areas of sports and culture are two other ways that we should look at a little closer, in terms of trying to solve some of our social problems.

Madam Vice-President, I looked at the allocation in the *Social Sector Investment Programme*, under the Ministry of Sport—I had to seek the assistance of my colleague, Sen. Lester Henry, because I was not too sure if I was reading what I saw correctly. I saw that so many of the organizations that applied to the sporting company in 2012 got no allocation: Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation, volleyball, athletics, sailing, cricket. I saw that the Ministry of Sport’s total subvention was some \$22 million, and the subventions payable in 2012 was \$4 million; so the request was \$22 million and only \$4,164,152 was paid.

Then I went to the financial assistance for sporting organizations; when I read at page 66, I saw where the Ministry dispersed in excess of \$4 million to eight national governing bodies. Then:

“In fiscal 2012...200 sport clubs, community sport leagues and sport-serving associations received approximately TT \$5 million...”

I am saying that \$5 million and \$4 million is \$9 million; something seems to be wrong because if you take \$5 million and \$4 million which is \$9 million, and “Shaq” got what \$10 million?

Sen. Hinds: Ten million dollars, “yeah,” in one pop.

Sen. P. Beckles: Madam Vice-President, I do not think I need to say to this Senate the importance of sports to the development of not just young people, but the country as a whole. We understood, very well, that in 1990, when Trinidad and Tobago almost qualified, the unity that football brought to Trinidad and Tobago. It does not seem to be that way now, but even as the West Indies won the world cricket championship a couple weeks ago, we saw something close to what used to happen a couple of years ago, that there are still sporting activities that can unite the West Indies. Therefore, if it is that what I am reading is correct, I really hope that the Government will review the assistance given to sporting organizations and other sporting clubs and associations, certainly, in this fiscal year and in the future.

Madam Vice-President, the hon. Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development also referred to a call for the reopening of the case of Akiel Chambers. All I would say to that is that I would think for that to happen, it would simply be a situation of her making that request to the Attorney General. I do not think there is anybody in Trinidad and Tobago who does not want to know exactly what happened in that situation. [*Desk thumping*] So, I am hoping that the hon. Minister would whisper into the ears of the Attorney General so that situation can, probably, be finally put to rest.

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Madam Vice-President, I was intrigued by the contribution of Sen. Dr. Balgobin as it relates to the whole issue of productivity. I know that is a matter Sen. Tewarie would discuss from time to time: why is it that we seem to be very clear that Trinidadians are not productive; at least, some of us. It is something that we hear all the time. Maybe at some point in time somebody—since we are always doing so many commissions of enquiry and what have you, maybe we would have to do a commission of enquiry into why Trinidadians are not productive, since it is a statement that so many of us make with such certainty. Maybe that might help us to make some policy decisions and move forward and be a productive country, but I do not think it is good for us to continue to keep saying that we are not productive and we are not doing anything about it.

It is very interesting to me that whenever we talk about non-productivity, the focus, to a large extent, goes to the CEPEP and URP workers. I am interested, and I would like the Minister to explain exactly what he means when he says that:

“I propose to provide each company which elects to employ CEPEP and URP employees with an employment allowance uplift of salary 150 per cent for tax deduction purposes.”

I would really like an explanation of that statement because I do not quite understand what it means.

As far as I know, since this Government came into office, they have doubled the number of persons employed in CEPEP. Now the manufacturing sector and the agricultural sector, everybody is complaining that they cannot get employees and they are blaming CEPEP for not being able to get employees. I wondered, before CEPEP came into being, who were they blaming? Because as far as I understand, shortage of employment in the agricultural sector, for example, has been something that has been existing for quite a while.

I think those of us who understand the complexity of the agricultural industry—that is not unique to Trinidad and Tobago—would realize that the issue of labour and the shortage of labour is something almost worldwide in a lot of places. Canada sends to Trinidad and Tobago, and all over the Caribbean for workers, yet still, Canada has unemployment. Yes, the unemployment is very low, but there are many countries in the world that send for persons from other places to work, especially, in the agricultural sector because a number of persons feel that the level of profit—the moneys that you are making from agriculture just is not encouraging, so that some countries have incentives and so on.

So, I would really be happy if I can find out exactly what the Minister means by that. Does it mean that they are working part CEPEP, part URP and then with the manufacturing? Does it mean to say that CEPEP is going to come to a closure? What exactly is it? I would love to know.

Madam Vice-President, I listened with great interest to the Minister of Food Production, Sen. Devant Maharaj and the Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment, Sen. Vasant Bharath and they were both extolling the virtues of this Government as it relates to its performance in agriculture.

Madam Vice-President, I really looked very closely at this great performance that they were talking about and, of course, they were at pains, as usual, to mention that the PNM did nothing for agriculture. The normal thing that you hear every year—in 50 years the PNM has not done anything—as though history has not recorded that it was the PNM that set up Wallerfield, Esmeralda, Carlsen Field and Caroni. [*Desk thumping*] But, you know, the *Review of the Economy 2012* was not written by the PNM; because, you know, sometimes when you read things, they say it is the PNM and then other times, when it is not the PNM, it is a misstep; it is a mistake; it is a misprint. So, I do not know which of these, this will qualify for. It says at page 21:

“The agricultural sector is expected to contract by 4.9% in calendar 2012, a further weakening from its relatively flat performance of -0.1% in calendar 2011.”

Then, on the other page, it talks about the fact that even when they talk about an increase in production of eddoes, yam, dasheen, patchoi, melongene and so on. They went on to say that:

“However, weather, pests and disease negatively affected crop production, and competition from imports, labour shortages and rising costs of inputs continued to constrain the sector.”

[*Interruption*] Yes, competition from imports. [*Desk thumping*] So, I am trying to understand the logic because, as I say, this is not anything that I wrote. So, you are taking off VAT from imports but, according to your own document, you said:

“However...competition from imports, labour shortages and rising costs of inputs continued to constrain the sector.”

That is how they improve agriculture. I want to read again:

“Domestic Agriculture

Cassava production decreased by 36...%...In addition, sweet potato production declined by 10.9%...”

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Again, in contrast:

“...declines in the production of sorrel (89.0%), cucumber (42...%), cauliflower (38...%), tomatoes, (50.0%)...”

All these are declines.

“dasheen...(35...%), sweet pepper (33...%), hot peppers (8...%)...bodi (7.0%)...ochro (10.0%).”

Orange production decreased by 51%. Copra declined by 54%. Broiler meat fell by 46%. [*Interruption*] You know, they are standing here and saying how well they performed. I am amazed. [*Desk thumping*]

“Live pig sales declined by 30...%...Pork sales declined...by 1.9%...

Goat meat production decreased by 23...%...”

All of these are misprints, you know. [*Crosstalk*]

“Mutton production declined by 13...%...”

I could continue, but I do not want to go on too long, but I have to read—

Hon. Senators: Go on, go on.

Sen. P. Beckles: “Honey production...decline by a 10.0%.

Weaker economic conditions in the European export market caused a decline in cocoa exports by 38...%...”

I do not want to read any more.

I am trying to understand the logic with all what I have just said. The removal of VAT on all food. [*Desk thumping*] and they are saying that agriculture is doing well. They say the PNM did nothing for agriculture; misprint. I would tell you how well they are doing for agriculture.

Sen. Hinds: Everything just collapsing.

Sen. P. Beckles: Madam Vice-President, Cabinet Note 2003, August, 2011. This is what Cabinet agrees:

To a reduction in the standard of agricultural leases from a 30-year period. Now, the PNM put in place an agricultural lease for 30 years. This is what this Government that cares about the farmers did.

Sen. Hinds: Are you serious?

Sen. P. Beckles: No, wait—

A five-year period renewable at five-year intervals up to a maximum of 30 years.

So, they move from where you had a consecutive 30 years and they are now offering you a five-year period at five-year intervals.

Sen. Hinds: This Government? From an agricultural background?

Sen. P. Beckles: This Government, caring about agriculture.

A 10-year period renewable at 10-year intervals up to a maximum of 30 years. That the parcel of land be non-transferrable for five years to a reduction in a minimum parcel of state agricultural land from five acres to three acres.

They did not only reduce the years of the lease, they reduced the portion of land.

Hon. Senator: That is a misprint, man. [*Desk thumping*].

5.40 p.m.

Sen. P. Beckles: And then they go on to say to a change in the use of the market value approach in determining the annual lease rental values for state and agricultural land to that of a size of parcel farming activity approach as follows:

Short term crop, \$400 per acre; livestock, \$400 per acre; medium to long term, \$200 per acre; commercial leases, \$500 per acre.

Right. It means that every time you renew the lease, you know what happens? They noted that:

It is envisaged that the aforementioned changes to the agricultural land policy will have a positive outcome in terms of increasing the availability of land, increasing food production, increasing the country's food sovereignty, reducing the national food import bill.

Now, this is what you call caring about farmers, but that was not all, you know. You know, Madam Vice-President, they are claiming that they improving agriculture. You know, what I find interesting, Madam Vice-President, is this, that they have told us and they campaigned, no new taxes. [*Desk thumping*] No new taxes. Can you believe that? But, quietly, the farmers did not even know that they sat in Cabinet and increased the taxes. I will tell you how much, the revised terms of a standard agricultural lease went up as much as 7,600 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] And anybody can get up and deny it, you know, because I will sit down.

Sen. Hinds: But look the Minister is there.

Hon. Senator: Agriculture is here.

Hon. Senator: Give way to them.

Sen. P. Beckles: And on farms—listen to this—on farms of short-term crops and livestock production, as much as 9,500 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] I tell you what, you know, they wrote to the hon. Prime Minister, complaining of lack of consultation. Remember, this is a Government of consultation. This is a Government of consultation, but they just drop it on the farmers. No consultation, you know.

They wake up one morning and then they get a letter of offer, so they started writing them:

The State has agreed to grant you a standard agricultural lease for a parcel of land.

Such and such a place. The term:

A lease to be a term of ten years. An annual rental to be determined upon the completion of service.

You now have to go and survey because they reduced it and you have to pay for the survey.

The parcel be cultivated in an efficient manner that makes optimum use.

Prior approval to be obtained in writing from the relevant authorities for the erection of any building on the parcel of land.

The leases are not to be assigned, sublet.

All minerals for the state.

The land is to be used in a manner that does not degrade natural properties.

All legal expenses to be paid by the lessees.

Farming, they love farming.

Sen. Hinds: That is for Tobago too?

Sen. P. Beckles: Is Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senator: So the farmers know about that?

Sen. P. Beckles: They found out like a thief in the night, when they started to get letters. And, you know, I must read, Madam Vice-President, from this document: Prosperity For All Manifesto 2010, People's Partnership, page 60.

One of the things that this Government will do is:

“Effect a National Land Use Policy that specifies and protects land to be used exclusively for agriculture.”

As soon as they got in office, they bulldozed pineapple gardens. Bulldozed, for what, for housing?

Hon. Senator: A big yellow tractor.

Sen. P. Beckles: This is a Government that told us that all agricultural land would be for agriculture. [*Desk thumping*].

You see, when you look at the PSIP, crime and law, 13 per cent; health and care services, 8 per cent; economic growth, 35 per cent; poverty reduction, 27 per cent; facilitative priority initiatives, whatever that is, 8 per cent. Do you know how much is agriculture?—6.3 per cent.

Sen. Hinds: I am wondering what the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development has to say about that.

Sen. P. Beckles: You know, Madam Vice-President, I must tell you this—I must say that I am really amazed that this Government is coming with this very exciting position, you know. I got some very important information from my colleague here in Dr. Lester Henry, Volume IX, No. 2, Economic Bulletin from the Central Bank. It says:

“Supply constraints appear to be a major issue affecting food prices. The high inflation in the food sub-index continues to reflect large increases in the prices of vegetables (42.1 per cent, on a 12 month basis to June 2012)...”

Hon. Senator: Wait. How much?

Sen. P. Beckles: It is 42.1 per cent.

“Fruits, (31... per cent) and fish, (11...per cent)...Supplementary information on individual commodities showed that some price changes were substantial even at the wholesale level.”

So they gave us the idea of the year on year per cent change, sweet potato. What is the year and year per cent change 86.7 per cent. This is from the Central Bank, not a misprint. Increase in price—

Hon. Senator: It cannot be the CSO, right.

Sen. P. Beckles:—June 12th. Cassava, 89.1 per cent; dasheen, 28; eddoes, 23; cabbage, 31; calaloo, 7; tomato, 6; sweet pepper, 24; christophene, 4; watermelon, 57; pineapple, 55; Cornflakes gone down, what it is they say? Pancake mix, gone down, the syrup gone down.

Hon. Senator: Let them eat cake.

Sen. P. Beckles: Every day I am hearing on the radio, parang, parang, yes, we are so happy, the removal of VAT. We will have a good Christmas, the Government did a good thing, they removed VAT on food. They better read these.

And, you know, Madam Vice-President, I know you go to the grocery because I have seen you in the grocery. I do not know how many of my colleagues—I do not know if the Minister of Finance and the Economy goes to the grocery but I must let him know that as soon as the Government announced this increase in VAT, there are some groceries that used it as an opportunity to increase the price of grocery products.

Hon. Senator: And they have been doing it.

Sen. P. Beckles: So you would have gone—before the Prime Minister made this announcement, and some of them decided since we are going to lose 15 per cent, let us add on. And, Madam Vice-President, I know you know I am speaking the truth. I mean this is amazing. I would like to find out what has become, for example, of what we used to call the Price Control Officers. I do not know whether they still exist, but if this Government is serious about dealing with the reduction of the price of food, Madam Vice-President, I want to recommend that the Price Control Officers—whatever has become of them—and the Consumer Department of the Ministry of Legal Affairs, become a lot more active.

I remember that under Minister Peter Taylor they would publish the prices of food almost every week so people will know. [*Desk thumping*] It does not matter where he is now, he is still around, he is still around. But the bottom line, Madam Vice-President, is that, that is what needs to be done. I note that when I looked at the issue of access roads, I was disappointed really, when I saw the amount of money being spent on access roads. It is necessary that they revisit the amount of money that is being spent on access roads. But since today we seem to be pulling out all this information about corruption and what have you.

You know there is a trace called Soogrim Trace. You know, they spent \$65 million, Minister Singh. It was not even a mile—you do not know where Soogrim Trace is in central?

Hon. Senator: There is a Soogrim Trace in Cunupia.

Sen. P. Beckles: Good. You would check to see if that is the trace that they just paved at the sum of \$65 million, no tendering, you know.

Hon. Senator: For one mile of road?

Sen. P. Beckles: It is less than a mile. As I move off of agriculture, I want to say that there are two areas again, I want to mention in agriculture. One has to do with NAMDEVCO. I saw a while ago that the Integrity Commission was investigating NAMDEVCO. I want to ask the new Minister of Food Production to look very closely into NAMDEVCO, because the Chairman of NAMDEVCO goes to work there every day. He goes there as though that is the only thing that he has to do. A lot of the projects, no tendering, a lot of the hiring even when somebody has come first and somebody has not even been interviewed, they are getting the jobs. I want to ask the Minister to look very closely into what is taking place at NAMDEVCO. You saw what Minister Dr. Bhoë Tewartie had to do. Minister Dr. Bhoë Tewartie has to be congratulated. [*Desk thumping*]

You see, there are not many Ministers who would do what Sen. Dr. Tewartie did, which is to say that you are not happy with the board. They are not performing properly, they are too contentious. I listened to him last night. You see, because a lot of Ministers will stand up and protect their board and protect their Chairman and say, “Everything is good until de mark buss.”

Hon. Senator: “Is not he board.”

Hon. P. Beckles: He said, it is not his board. I only hope when he gets his board that they are not going to do what this board is doing. You see, it is amazing when a reporter from the *Guardian* can find out that the CDA board members have been allegedly looking into their records, and who from the staff members have been calling.

Now, what I found amazing is that the CDA board put out a press release and they say, they were not really tapping any phone, they were just checking the staff records to see who they were calling. Could you imagine that, Madam Vice-President? I mean, I am asking myself, if a board is putting out a press release, could you imagine that? Now, how many other boards are doing something similar? They are not tapping your phone, they are just checking to see who the staff members are calling. You tell me, you are supposed to be dealing with policy, and you spending—so is it that in the board meeting they are checking through the records, the phone records? Could you believe that? No wonder Sen. Dr. Tewartie wants to change that board.

You see, Madam Vice-President, I said there was one other thing I wanted to talk about before I close on agriculture, and that has to do with the European Union Grant. The European Union Grant, if you recall, that was one of the big issues of the campaign in 2010, because this Government was saying to the

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farmers, the PNM does not want to give you the money. The PNM owes you that and whatever. The Minister at the time, Minister Tesheira was saying, “Look, yes, we have gotten the grant, we are going to access the grant, but it is for certain things.” At the time, the UNC was saying, “No, we will get the money for you. It is for the cane farmers, you will get it.” Lo and behold, two and a half—it is your money, they do not want to give it to you. They do not like cane farmers. Lo and behold, two and a half years later, when they have found out what the grant really was about, they do not know what to tell the cane farmers.

I remember when Sen. Seukeran-Tambie, was appointed in 2009 as a temporary Senator to talk on this issue. The same Senator Seukeran-Tambie today is begging the Government give us the grant, give us the money that you said you were going to give us. But you know what, they are ashamed. They knew very well they were speaking an untruth. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: That is their wont.

Sen. P. Beckles: Madam Vice-President, what I find amazing about this Government, with all their love for agriculture, and all the problems that is in agriculture and all the decline, do you know last week they increased the price of feed? Do you know the price of feed went up, for the second time for the year?

Hon. Senator: It is an input into the whole thing.

Sen. P. Beckles: Yes, that is a misprint, it is a misprint. I do not mind sitting so that Sen. Bharath could stand and say that is not true. Or Sen. Maharaj? “Yuh going and tell meh is not true, the price of feed ain’t gone up?”

5.55 p.m.

Sen. Bharath: No, I am not going to tell you it is not true, Sen. Beckles.

Sen. Hinds: Well, then, sit down.

Sen. Bharath: What I am going to tell you is that it appears that the management of national farmers took a unilateral decision to do so and I am having it investigated. I spoke with the board today and I will have a report on my desk tomorrow morning.

Sen. P. Beckles: Sen. Dr. Tewarie, another board.

Sen. Hinds: Another board.

Sen. P. Beckles: Another board. I mean, what is happening to these boards that this Government has appointed that they are not even consulting with the Ministers.

Sen. Hinds: The lunatics are in charge.

Sen. P. Beckles: Not the board, the management. So you mean the management is not even listening to the board?

Sen. Hinds: Elections, call elections now! Call elections now! The lunatics have taken over. The lunatics are in charge, call elections now! Things are falling apart.

Sen. P. Beckles: Oh, boy!

Sen. Hinds: Things have gone haywire.

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. F. Hinds*]

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Vice-President: Sen. Beckles. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. P. Beckles: Thank you. Now, the Sen. Vasant Bharath that I know, I would expect him very soon to rescind that increase on the price of feed. Madam Vice-President, Sen. Bharath was one of those Ministers, those persons, who was extremely committed to agriculture. As a matter of fact, the farmers were very happy with his performance.

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. P. Beckles: I do not know, I do not know why they moved Sen. Bharath from agriculture. It may be that he was performing too well. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: He was encouraging locally-grown rice.

Sen. P. Beckles: Madam Vice-President, I was hoping—Madam Vice-President, I am hoping that the new Minister of Food Production, together with Sen. Vasant Bharath, is going to investigate this complaint that I have had recently from someone who is involved in the School Feeding Programme that they are instructed to buy expired chicken—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: No, “doh say that.”

Sen. P. Beckles: Listen, listen to me. Can I make my point? You know, I told you I am not—now I said I got a complaint and, you know, Madam Vice-President, Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh, you would remember last year on the front page of the *Guardian*, the head of the—well, I think it might have been the Chicken Farmers Association—was complaining, so just in case my -complaint is not valid. You remember him complaining that expired chicken is coming into Trinidad, and is being sold cheaper than locally grown chicken, you remember that?

Sen. Hinds: Yes, “Dat is right.”

Sen. P. Beckles: Well, good, so the complaint—

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. P. Beckles: No, that is the same thing, you understand. So that we need to investigate the fact that a lot of chicken that is expired is being dumped in Trinidad and Tobago with no VAT, and that a lot of our children are eating that expired chicken, and if the children are not eating it, the adults are eating it. Because when they come in here expired and “they selling, who buying it”? Do we really know when we buy a lot of the chicken that is not expired? I mean, it looks nice and pretty.

Sen. Hinds: I am a vegetarian and I find that repulsive.

Sen. P. Beckles: You see, because, Madam Vice-President, that same article that I am referring to from last year in the *Guardian*, Madam Vice-President, that was the container where the marijuana came in.

Sen. Hinds: Yes, oh. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. P. Beckles: You all forgot about that? You all forgot about that?

Sen. Hinds: Oh, I now understand.

Sen. P. Beckles: Yes, I mean, I said already, you know, I am not standing here to say anything that is not true. But, you know, the hon. Sen. Ganga Singh is an attorney-at-law, and maybe, maybe now that he is in the Cabinet, he may also get SC next to his name.

Hon. Senator: Just now.

Sen. P. Beckles: Maybe. But the point is he knows very well that if he brought in a container of chicken, or anything else with marijuana, they would not have allowed him to say that only the chicken is mine and the marijuana is not mine. [*Desk thumping*]. Sen. Dr. Tewarie, you would not have gotten away with that either, neither Sen. Bharath. But that gentleman got away with it, you know. He got away with it, a container with his name on it. [*Interruption*] I did not have to tell the police, it was all on the papers, everybody knew. Everybody knew, that is public knowledge. This is not anything I make up, you know, all right.

Sen. Hinds: “Doh take on Sen. Coudray, yuh know.”

Sen. P. Beckles: Everybody knew. This was all on the papers, the news, but he was able to get away.

Hon. Senator: Al-Rawi? You “doh” have to tell the police, only Penny Beckles.

Sen. P. Beckles: Right. But, you know, before I say my few comments to the Minister of Finance and the Economy, I want to say that there are two areas for which I have some concerns, one is disaster preparedness and the other one is local government and bridges.

I looked at all the corporations, Madam Vice-President, and I see they have all been allocated \$300,000 for disaster preparedness. Now, when we look at today’s *Newsday* and we look at the front page, and this picture here and then they say go to raging river, this is the Maraval River. Then you go to Caura, then you go to central and, Madam Vice-President, \$300,000 to the city of Port of Spain for disaster preparation—my colleagues, I would like, please. Thank you kindly, good.

[*Desk thumping*] I mean everybody, you know, I mean everybody. I said colleagues. I said colleagues. [*Crosstalk*]

Yes, Madam Vice-President, [*Crosstalk*] Madam Vice-President, this is a very serious matter, disaster. You know, in Trinidad we have a way of saying “God is ah Trini” and, therefore, you know, we had a hurricane coming a couple years ago, people had hurricane party, they were fêteing all on Frederick Street, “say hurricane would not come, earthquake would not come”. But, you know, we are seeing evidence that we need to take these matters a little more seriously. We saw what happened in the west, how many hundreds of people lost their homes, their cars and Sen. George who was Minister of—you were Minister of Works and Infrastructure already, right? Yes—can attest, both by being a resident and having been a Minister, to what happened.

Sen. George: And being out there at six o’clock in the morning.

Sen. P. Beckles: And being out there many mornings and right through.

Sen. George: While all of you were sleeping.

Sen. P. Beckles: But the point I am making is that we need to have a fund specially allocated for natural disasters. We cannot wait and then people are going to interview people, they are going to find money here, find money there. We have seen it in central, in Cedros, in San Fernando, in Port of Spain, in the west, in the east, everywhere it is happening and I would like the Government to think a little seriously and that \$300,000 is not sufficient [*Desk thumping*] for any regional corporation.

Madam Vice-President, we are seeing that a lot of bridges are collapsing, a lot of roads are collapsing. I just want to make a recommendation, all right. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: The Government is collapsing.

Sen. P. Beckles: Well, I am going to make a recommendation. If you listen to my recommendation, right.

Madam Vice-President, a lot of the roads that have been built many years ago and the bridges that have been built many years ago have not been built for the type of trucks and the type of traffic, right. And the money that is being spent by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure now to repair those roads, I want to recommend that the Minister of Works and Infrastructure gives serious consideration to putting weigh scales and to taxing a lot of those trucks and vehicles for using those roads.

Hon. Senator: “Tax fee; tax yuh say, yuh know.” [*Inaudible*]

Sen. P. Beckles: I said tax, that is what I said, and this is not the first time I said it, all right. Yes, I said tax.

Hon. Senator: But today all of you said that we should not be taxing people.

Sen. P. Beckles: And I said that because—

Hon. Senator: Shut up.

Hon. Senator: No, you shut up.

Sen. P. Beckles: Madam Vice-President, I am making a very serious point, and I am saying that this is not an unusual thing in many parts of the world where people, where you have trucks that are destroying the roads and those trucks are making, those companies are making millions of dollars going to quarries and other places and they are using those roads that cannot take those trucks. And that is why a lot of the bridges and the roads are collapsing. And the Minister talked yesterday about fixing the Blanchisseuse and other roads, and I am saying that in the next couple years, or if not less, because of the amount of traffic—because that is where all the quarries are—those roads are going to be destroyed. And, yes, I said tax and I believe what I say, and I think I am very frank about it.

Madam Vice-President, there are two quick areas I want to ask the Minister— if anybody thinks I am “doublespeaking” with that, this is the third time I am saying it. Oh, good, nice.

Hon. Senator: No, no. I am talking to my colleague.

Sen. P. Beckles: And I am very serious about it. There are two areas, very quickly. I want to ask the Minister of Public Utilities—no, the Minister of Water—

Sen. Singh: Environment and Water Resources. I always get confused with your portfolio.

Sen. P. Beckles: Environment and Water Resources with responsibility for WASA—there have been some appointments of persons in the last couple months, and the salary increases have been substantial and some of them would be getting backpay, as much as \$232,000 and \$300,000, and so, and I really hope that it is not going to be a situation similar to the NFM management, where they have not informed you about these new appointments where these persons have moved and they are going to get, at least, 100 per cent, 200 per cent increases in salary. Now, maybe it was negotiated, but you need to check it out.

Hon. Senator: It was part of the collective agreement.

Sen. P. Beckles: Oh, well, if it is a part of collective agreement for somebody to move from that to get that kind of increase, I think we are due for something similar.

Madam Vice-President, the Attorney General made a point earlier in relation to the Tobago House of Assembly and he referred to Section 51. Section 51 says:

“The Secretary may—

- (a) with the approval of the Assembly, borrow by way of overdraft such sums as the Assembly considers fit for the discharge of its functions, or
- (b) with the approval of the Minister, borrow sums by way of term loans...”

Now, the hon. Minister said, the Attorney General said that he was going to use that clause in order to take the THA Chairman to court. I just want, I really hope that the hon. Minister has read this because the Chief Secretary did not borrow any money, and this section is very clear. So he did not have to ask for any approval of the Minister, all right. There was no overdraft, he did not borrow by way of overdraft, and he did not borrow any sums where he needed any approval from the Minister. So let us please not mislead either Tobago or Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to close by saying this to the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, because I agree with the hon. Sen. Ganga Singh that when Sen. Howai was appointed Minister of Finance and the Economy, I heard very few people disagree with the appointment. As a matter of fact, the majority of persons were quite happy—

Sen. Hinds: “I did not.”

Sen. P. Beckles:—and congratulated the Government. But I want to say to the hon. Minister, if whilst you were there in the bank, and a client came to you and told you of plans to spend \$58 billion on projects and so, and forecast revenues of \$49.7 billion, and asked that you lend them \$8 billion for a shortfall, would you not ask them some serious questions? Where is their income stream? What is the time frame for payment? What is the cash flow statement? [*Desk thumping*] All right, when are you planning to break even? I suspect that Minister Howai would ask them if they are dreaming. As a matter of fact, I am pretty certain that Minister Howai would not lend them any money, you know; he would run them out of his office. And the reputation that he has built over the years as a very effective, efficient and “prude” manager—be careful that they do not destroy your reputation [*Interruption*] prudent. Be careful.

I said the same thing to Minister Dookeran, you know.

6.10 p.m.

And you know many of them here stood up and told many of their colleagues; Minister Sandy was the greatest Minister of National Security Trinidad ever had “yuh” know; Minister Mary King was the best Minister of Planning “yuh” know; Minister Verna St. Rose Greaves was the best Minister of Gender “yuh” know; Nicole Dyer-Griffith the best Parliamentary Secretary “yuh” know; Minister Nan-Ramgoolam was the best Minister of Public Administration; Therese Baptiste-Cornelis was the best Minister of Health—be careful when they call you the best Minister of Finance. My last statement, Madam Vice-President, is I want to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy to pay—

Madam Vice-President: Senator, you would be winding up because—

Sen. P Beckles: Yes, I am winding up. I just want him to pay close attention to what the *Guardian* editorial had to say to him. This is what they said:

“It is unfortunate that Minister of Finance Larry Howai, a newcomer to government, is behaving as if he is hiring an attorney in his private capacity to look after personal matters, rather than performing a public function utilizing the resources of others, and doing so through a public office in which he has to be accountable.”

Madam Vice-President: Senator, I think it is 3 minutes now, kindly—

Sen. P Beckles: Yes. And they told him that he should not adopt—[*Inaudible*] Those words ought not to be associated with the Minister of Finance and the Economy, and they have asked him and reminded him that this Government came to office promising transparency and accountability and advised the hon. Minister that he should do precisely that. I thank you, Madam Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

PROCEDURAL MOTION

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

Question put and agreed to.

**APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2013)
BILL, 2012**

Sen. Sherry-Anne Rollocks-Hackett: Madam Vice-President, I rise in support of the budget statement for fiscal year 2013 presented by the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, the hon. Larry Howai. Madam Vice-President, please allow me to start by saying that I feel compelled to first say thanks to you and every Senator of this honourable Senate for the warm-hearted and gracious way I was received as a new Senator, albeit temporary. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, I want to also congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy, Mr. Larry Howai, for producing such a cogent, people-friendly budget given the global economic circumstances of today. [*Desk thumping*] In the field of education we usually speak of the child being at the centre of all that we do: all innovations, all interventions and all training would be done with the child's interest as priority. I therefore declare the 2013 budget statement a true people's budget as it reflects the interest of the people in all its segments. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me now, Madam Vice-President, also say thanks to the People's Partnership Government under the distinguished leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, for affording me this opportunity to serve in this honourable Senate; to share in this rich parliamentary experience, and more so, to contribute to this debate on the 2013 fiscal package. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, as agreed, it is now 6.15 p.m., and we will take the dinner break until 7.15 p.m. This sitting is now suspended until 7.15 p.m.

6.15 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

7.15 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Madam Vice-President: Before we left for the dinner break, Sen. Rollocks-Hackett was on her legs, and by my count you have 35 minutes remaining.

Hon. Senator: Of the first batch.

Madam Vice-President: Of the first 45 minutes.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: Thank you, Madam Vice-President. Let me now, Madam Vice-President, also say thanks to the People's Partnership Government under the distinguished leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, for affording me this opportunity to serve in this honourable House and to share in this rich parliamentary experience, and more so, contribute to this debate on the 2013 fiscal package. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, it would be remiss of me if I also do not extend my heartfelt gratitude to the longest serving member of the Tobago House of Assembly, the only one among the twelve representatives to have had the privilege to be mentored by the distinguished son of the soil, His Excellency, ANR Robinson. [*Desk thumping*]
Madam Vice-President, I speak of no one other than the political leader of the Tobago Organization of the People, Mr. Ashworth Michael Jack. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, this occasion provides me with a glorious opportunity to lay bare before this Senate some of the facts and issues associated with the governance of Tobago and its socioeconomic development experiences over the last 12 years, under a PNM administration led by the hon. Orville London. This will be done against the backdrop of the national budget and the allocations made to the Tobago House of Assembly.

Madam Vice-President, in my contribution tonight, I will be addressing issues relating to the total budgetary allocation to our island: the tertiary education plans for Tobago, the issue of BOLT, and finally, our quest for internal self-government.

Tobago received its largest budgetary allocation to date in fiscal year 2013: \$2.356 billion of which \$2.006 billion would be for recurrent expenditure, and \$350 million for capital expenditure.

Furthermore, Tobago is said to receive an additional \$874.9 million under the various other heads of expenditure; all in all, representing, according to the Minister of Finance and the Economy's calculation, a 5 per cent allocation of the national budget—a quantity that falls well within the minimum range of 4.03 to 6.9 per cent of the national budget stipulated by the dispute resolution committee.

Madam Vice-President, I have, however, become extremely concerned about the most recent rantings that I have heard coming from segments of the society whenever the budget is read. It seems like the sole meaning of the national budget for Tobago and Tobagonians has now become, "what share Tobago got". And let

me state here, I am not suggesting, at all, that Tobagonians should not keep a very close eye on the central government to ensure that it receive its just due and equitable allocation. I simply highlighted the issue to say that the national budget for Tobago cannot and should not stop at Tobago's allocation as a percentage of the budget.

I would submit, that even more critical must be the fortitude to meet the urgent developmental needs of Tobagonians and the demonstrative capacity of the island's Government to effectively and efficiently utilize the moneys it received to service these needs and, by extension, its ability to account to the people for the said moneys spent.

This is to ensure that the management of the programmes and projects embarked upon redound to the direct benefit of the island and its people. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Vice-President, let me state at this point that as a Tobagonian knowing where we are along our development trajectory and where we ought to have been at this point in our history, I would be among the first to say that the \$350 million allocated to the THA for capital development programme is insufficient. But I am afraid any government awarding additional moneys to the current administration of the THA should take note of its track record with respect to the shrewd management of the island's funds.

Madam Vice-President, when I heard of the demands from the current executive of the THA for more funds, I immediately reflected on their inability to do the following: one, properly account for the moneys allocated to it; two, spend moneys it received to the benefit of all Tobagonians; three, complete projects on time and within budget; [*Desk thumping*]—and four, the ad hoc manner in which projects and programmes are implemented by the PNM Executive Council. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Vice-President, at this time in our history Tobago is seeing a lot of projects springing up all over.

Hon. Senator: Election time!

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: It is as though the administration that we currently have was asleep over the last 12 years, and they have now recognized that they have to deliver to the people of Tobago, so we are now seeing projects after projects, after projects in Tobago.

Hon. Senator: Busy.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: Now, the issue of unfinished projects has been well ventilated. We have the Scarborough library; we have the cultural complex, and there are many other unfinished projects that have been spoken about. But, Madam Vice-President, as we speak to the issues of accountability and trust, may I remind you that

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in 2001, Tobagonians voted the PNM in office on a platform promise to provide transparent and accountable governance. This was against the backdrop of the ADDA and Ring Bang debacles of the Hochoy Charles era. [*Desk thumping*] The PNM then presented itself to the people of Tobago as the very epitome of fiscal integrity.

Hon. Senator: Hear language.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: Madam Vice-President, our hon. Chief Secretary in the closing remarks of his first budget speech gave Tobagonians the assurance that there will never be another ADDA or Ring Bang under his watch.

7.25 p.m.

He went on to promise Tobagonians that he would in fact account for every penny of our money spent. That promise, we have all sadly come to recognize, started with talk and ended with talk; [*Desk thumping*] hot air, Madam Vice-President.

Sen. Maharaj: Promises Never Materialized—PNM.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: I have the copies of the Auditor General's report here which I believe is a direct indictment against the THA fiscal management history. Madam Vice-President, permit me to present you an analysis of the official fiscal management records for the PNM/THA administration as presented by the Auditor General's report for the period 2003, 2004 and 2005. One could only deduce from the contents of these reports that the PNM/THA lacks the competencies required to effectively account for the people's moneys.

Sen. Maharaj: Read that again.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: That is what the Auditor General said after looking at the THA accounts of 2003, 2004 and 2005. They are not my words. In 2003, the Auditor General said that the Orville London administration could not account for over \$350 million of Tobagonian moneys.

Hon. Senator: Plenty money. Wow!

Hon. Senator: How much?

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: In 2004 it goes on, the Auditor General again reported that the London administration could not account for hundreds of millions of our moneys. The report also highlighted the following: THA moneys were used to settle a loan guaranteed for a private company in the amount of \$840,201.63. [*Crosstalk*] Eighty-eight point nine four million was withdrawn from the fund account without warrants to show where the moneys went, and for what purposes, contrary to section 32(1) of the THA financial rules 1990, and I have a copy of that document here, Madam Vice-President.

Hon. Senator: Very well researched.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: Five million invested in a bankrupt company called the Decipher Caribbean Limited.

Sen. Maharaj: The syphon Caribbean. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: In 2005, \$29.2 million simply not accounted for, they cannot find it.

Sen. Singh: How is that possible?

Sen. Karim: It gone to London.

Hon. Senator: Just repeat that. How much?

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: Twenty-nine point two billion [*sic*].

Sen. Maharaj: Twenty-nine, just disappear.

Hon. Senator: That is plenty money.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: Moneys collected by the THA were also not deposited into the fund account, again in violation of section 141D of the Constitution, and section 40 of the THA Act which clearly stipulates that all moneys must be so deposited.

The Attorney General also noted that the London administration transferred on November 10, 2004, \$8 million from the fund account to the contingency account prior to the determination of surplus at the end of the financial year, again in violation of section 34(1) of the 1990 financial rules.

In addition, they concluded that there is general lack of proper accounting for the billions of dollars allocated to the THA. I want to make reference to my friend on the other side when she presented, Sen. Cudjoe who is not here, and she said in her contribution, I am reading from her contribution, *Hansard*:

“This budget comes at a time when confidence and trust in this Government is at an all-time low.”—quoting Sen. Cudjoe.

Now, if we are talking about trust and things being at an all-time low, I think that the hon. Senator really needs to examine what is happening in Tobago. As far as I am concerned what is at an all-time low is our tolerance in Tobago over the current THA administration, but, Madam Vice-President, we the people of Tobago know what to do about that. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Change the man.

Sen. Maharaj: Call election.

Hon. Senator: Change the man.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: In Tobago we do not stick, we get the job done [*Desk thumping*] and come January 2013, we will send a comprehensive statement to this current THA. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Bye, bye London.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: Madam Vice-President, never before has the THA finances been so “ramsacked” and criminally assaulted. [*Desk thumping*] Ring Bang and ADDA pales in comparison to this, [*Desk thumping*] and, Madam Vice-President, this is just the tip of the iceberg, as there are several years of audited report that are not yet available for public scrutiny. The evidence is clear, fiscal discipline and this PNM/THA do not go together. [*Desk thumping*] So, I declare that the PNM has no moral right to speak in this House about fiscal accountability. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: True.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: And it gets worse, Madam Vice-President.

Sen. Maharaj: How could it get worse?

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: Permit me to now spend some time to present the true facts concerning unspent balances.

Hon. Senator: Tell us.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: Now, I looked at a sample of the unspent balances from 2004 to 2008 [*Crosstalk*] and the figures are very, really scandalous. Madam Vice-President, [*Crosstalk*] between 2004—2008, the London administration accumulated unspent balances totaling an amazing sum of \$1.3 billion.

Hon. Senator: Wow! That is plenty money.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: Madam Vice-President—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: One point three billion.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett:—what we must note here is that this summary only represents five years of the 12 years Tobago has had a PNM administration in charge of the public purse. Seven years, yes, seven years are still to be accounted for, and yet the figures are astoundingly alarming.

So, when my friend, Sen. Cudjoe, stated in her contribution that unspent balances were used to build schools, health centres, pavilions—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Where?

Hon. Senator: In their minds.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett:—the Black Rock pan theatre to name a few, she failed to tell this honourable House a number of things, for example. What was the total sum of unspent balances? [*Desk thumping*] How were the unspent balances arrived at? [*Desk thumping*] And how much of the unspent balances were expended on the projects identified? [*Desk thumping*] And what is the balance on the unspent balances? [*Desk thumping*] If any?

Madam Vice-President, it is not only in this House that such important information concerning the unspent balances and their usage were not provided to the people of Tobago. I do not know what kind of accounting you call that. If it is secret accounting—I am not in economics, I do not know what to say; no transparency.

Hon. Senator: London accounting.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: It is certainly worth noting here however, Madam Vice-President, that in spite of the numerous cries of Tobagonians for transparency and accountability in relation to unspent balances of the THA, the London administration has never, to date, properly accounted to the people for these unspent balances. All around Tobago people are lamenting the horror over this situation.

We bemoan the handling of the public purse in Tobago. Madam Vice-President, against the backdrop of this unaccounted for unspent balances, let us soberly examine whether the London administration of the THA has any genuine need to borrow, and hence their new affinity to the bold concept. [*Desk thumping*]

It is clear from the four years summary of unspent balances that the PNM, THA failed to create the requisite institutional capacities and capabilities, over the years, needed to effectively and efficiently utilize the moneys allocated to them. Hence the gigantic amount recorded in billions of dollars in fiscal surpluses. [*Desk thumping*] Yes surpluses, because in reality that, to me, is what the unspent balances represent.

Madam Vice-President, where in the exercise of good fiscal discipline and judgment, a Government that is enjoying fiscal surpluses would want to engage borrowing in the open capital market? I believe we would have to get that answer from our doctor of economics who is in charge of the Department of Finance in Tobago.

Madam Vice-President, I have no doctorate in economics, but I am aware that moneys ought to be spent on one's needs. [*Desk thumping*] I wonder if there were unaddressed needs of Tobagonians while the THA was saving money allocated to

be spent on the young people of our island—needs in education; needs in sports; culture; infrastructure; needs that obviously were not taken care of because the THA was operating as a bank. Madam Vice-President—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Bank of London.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett:—permit me at this point to take a short historical look at the PNM administration’s request for permission to borrow, and that is a big thing. It is said that you know, they have all sorts of developmental projects to engage and embark upon, and the amount of money that they are receiving from the Central Government is not sufficient, so they need to borrow. Let us see if that is a valid request. Madam Vice-President, as you know, from 2001 to May 24, 2010 we had a PNM-controlled central government, and a THA controlled by the PNM. This gave us a nine-year period during which the hon. Chief Secretary was marketing to Tobagonians his ill-advised and politically naive philosophy, that the best model of governance for Tobago was a PNM-controlled THA, and a PNM-controlled central government.

Hon. Senator: “Yeah, but he backing back on that now.”

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: We got all sorts of bravado talk about what Tobago wants, Tobago gets.

7.40 p.m.

It was their PNM colleagues, in the Manning-led central government that first denied them their request to borrow. One can only deduce from this that the PNM-controlled central government then, had no confidence in the financial submissions and management ability of the PNM executive council of the THA. That is why I believe the Manning administration never acceded to the request from the THA for approval to borrow on the capital market.

Now, they come to this honourable Senate crying discrimination that the central government is denying their requests to borrow. I hear words of slavery and enslavement. I do not know where that came from, when, for nine years their own PNM partners would not entertain their requests. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, the fiscal situation gets even worse, when we examine what the PNM administration attempted to pull on the unsuspecting Tobago public—I speak of the so-called BOLT arrangements. Before I get into the specificities of the so-called BOLT arrangements, I would state categorically that the TOP and the People’s Partnership Government have no issue with the concept of BOLT. [*Desk thumping*] We accept the principle of BOLT as a legitimate financing mechanism for public/private partnership as was enunciated by the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy. [*Interruption*] They all know it.

The so-called BOLT arrangements, namely, the agricultural administrative complex (Milshirv) and the Bacolet Aquatic Centre (ZOIT), entered into by the PNM administration, reeks of “bobol”, corruption and back room deals as a deliberate attempt by some to give away Tobago’s heritage to their partners and financiers, [*Desk thumping*] and they claim to be protectors of Tobago’s heritage.

Madam Vice-President, as I speak, thousands of Tobagonians at home and across the world are still asking themselves, “How could our Government—the people we have elected to do good and clean business on our behalf—take \$12 million of our moneys and purchase three acres of land from the Rahaels; lease back the lands six days after to the same persons for 199 years at a mere \$10 a year; agree that the same Rahaels will build a building on the lands; agree that the THA would lease the building from them for the agriculture administrative complex for 20 years; agree to place \$21.5 million of Tobagonians’ moneys in an escrow account at First Citizens Bank as security to get the funding to fund the project?” They agreed that the THA would pay the Rahaels \$14.4 million a year plus VAT. They agreed to pay all the taxes, maintenance and insurance fees; and, worst of all, they agreed to give back the building to the Rahaels at the end of 20 years, according to a clause (u) of the official lease agreement, if any breaches to the contractual agreement occurred. [*Desk thumping*]

What all of this means, Madam Vice-President, is that after Tobagonians would have paid over \$500 million to the Rahaels over 20 years, we could end up with nothing—absolutely nothing—to show for all the moneys expended. [*Desk thumping*] What kind of deal is that?

Hon. Senator: A PNM deal.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: A disgrace; a betrayal of trust; [*Desk thumping*] a heartless assault on the psyche of the Tobagonian.

I remember David Rudder has a song, *Chant of the Madman*.

Hon. Senator: Yes, yes. Sing it, sing it.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: I cannot sing. “Vote for me, I will set you free.” [*Interruption*] All right, we are taking note of that.

Madam Vice-President, these are the undisputed facts about the so-called BOLT associated with the now infamous Milshirv project. How could my intelligent young friend—she is not here—come in this honourable Senate, in the face of all of this, and say that this arrangement—I quote her—“would save us rent moneys”? I do not understand that one. [*Crosstalk*] There is nothing to be had from this deal for Tobagonians, much less savings. Let us admit it, BOLT is a bad deal and the PNM/THA should try to extricate us from it immediately. [*Desk thumping*]

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In fact, the current PNM administration of the THA has pulled their own clause (u) on the people of Tobago. We, the Tobago Organization of the People, therefore support the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, in her suggestion for the projects to be stopped and thoroughly investigated. [*Desk thumping*] I was also very heartened this morning when the hon. Sen. Anand Ramlogan, our Attorney General, indicated that he will send the whole matter to the Minister of Finance and the Economy and the DPP for further investigation. Excellent! [*Desk thumping*]

Before I close on this BOLT “bobol”, I want to inform this Senate that I took the suggestion of Sen. Cudjoe—my family, as she indicated to all—and sourced a copy of Peter Ford and Company’s evaluation report on this very deceptive arrangement; because she actually said that, you know; that they do things above board and if we have questions then we should go to Peter Ford and find out from them exactly what is happening there. I am trying to get her actual words but I have the document here, the evaluation document that was presented to the THA, Peter Ford evaluation dated April 19, 2011.

Madam Vice-President, having read the Peter Ford report on the Milshirv project, I came to the inescapable conclusion that the Senator has never read nor seen this report. [*Desk thumping*] In the report, Mr. Ford took pains to advise the THA against two fundamental issues: one, purchasing of the land upfront and two, the need to invite public competitive tenders on the project. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me spend my remaining time on the issue of the Green Paper on Internal Self-Government for Tobago. We in Tobago are proud people.

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Sen. Sherry-Anne Rollocks-Hackett has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: Thank you most graciously. [*Crosstalk*]

In the People’s Partnership’s manifesto of 2010, the commitment was made to bring to the Parliament a Bill to amend section 75(1) of the Constitution so as to give the THA executive and legislative authority for matters under the Fifth Schedule and others matters incidental thereto. This is our quest for internal self-government.

I would start with the bold pronouncement that the Tobago Organization of the People, in partnership with the People's Partnership Government, would deliver internal self-government to the people of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] I want the PNM to take note of this commitment. This mission is unstoppable, unshakeable and unmovable. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, it was alluded in this honourable Senate that the people of Tobago rejected the Green Paper and that the PNM collected 6,000 signatures in support of their stance on the matter; but, let us do a little math here. Tobago has a population of over 58,000; in the 2010 election, the PNM got just over 12,000 and lost the two seats to the Tobago Organization of the People. What this signature story is telling us is that the PNM could not even get all the persons who voted for them in 2010 to reject the Green Paper. [*Desk thumping*] We must take note of the fact that the Tobago Organization of the People got about 15,000 votes in the 2010 election. How could Tobagonians have rejected the Green Paper when even the Chief Secretary himself participated in the public consultations on the very Green Paper, according to section 50 of the Ghany report? [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, Tobagonians are well aware of the PNM's record of denying us our right to internal self-government. [*Desk thumping*] We have the records of the 1976 attempt by ANR Robinson and Dr. Winston Murray on how the PNM then disrespected Tobagonians. [*Desk thumping*] It is the same PNM that now claims to be protecting our heritage, that has denied Tobagonians their right to self-determination via internal self-government.

The salient question, Madam Vice-President—and I want to look at this whole concept of protecting our heritage. I want those on the other side to say to us, tonight, from whom are you protecting Tobago's heritage? Who are the threats to the heritage of Tobagonians?

7.55 p.m.

I believe that this is another attempt by the PNM to play the race card—[*Desk thumping*] a stillborn approach to electioneering. In this election, I want you to know it would not work. [*Desk thumping*]. And you know what, some people have been talking about racism and discrimination, and so forth, but you know it has been bandied about in Tobago, people are going to people's houses and asking them all sorts of questions, and they are saying if the hon. Ashworth Jack wins the election that Indians would come and take over Tobago and all sorts of things. Racism all around.

But I want to ask my colleagues on the other side, the Tobagonian, Mr. Isaac, since when Indians have become the major problem besetting the people of Tobago?

Sen. Isaac: I have plenty Indian friends.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: This situation of the race card is extremely vexing to the people of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]. Hypocrisy, racial profiling, and you know, I heard they are asking people a question, “How would you feel if there is an influx of a particular race in Tobago?” And, you know, someone said we must ask the people of the other race on the other side that question. But, we have just celebrated 50 years as a nation, as an independent nation and our National Anthem speaks to “Every creed and race find an equal place.” [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Get a copy of the anthem, stop dividing the people. We will send you a copy of the anthem. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: And there we have the current political leader of the PNM, Dr. Keith Rowley announcing a few days ago that the PNM would not collaborate in the Parliament with the central government on any matter requiring a special majority. This means that once again, the PNM, which claims to love us in Tobago, is positioning itself to deny Tobagonians their right to internal self-government. It is like history repeating itself. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Vice-President, it is left to be seen what they would eventually do. Tobagonians are waiting to see who really has Tobago’s interest at heart. [*Desk thumping*]

But I want to send out a warning to the PNM, be careful what you do on this one. The desire for internal self-government by the people of Tobago, and you know, Mr. Isaac, is deep down in our bellies [*Desk thumping*] and we would not allow it to be snatched away from us by the PNM. Generations of Tobagonians would never forget you for that. Be careful. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Put you back in school, in Speyside High School.

Sen. S. Rollocks-Hackett: I want to move on to the contribution made on tertiary education. Madam Vice-President, I would like to laud hon. Minister Howai for his foresight in allocating the largest chunk of his budget in education. [*Desk thumping*]

And I am particularly proud about the plan to develop, to construct an integrated campus in Tobago East. [*Desk thumping*] If you ever journey to Tobago East, Madam Vice-President, you would understand that this campus can do a lot for the economy of the constituency and Tobago as a whole. I have been

an educator all of my life, working both at the secondary and the tertiary level, and I am resolutely confident that this venture will change the socioeconomic landscape of the island. This budget surely underscores the fact that education is the single most critical component for moving an economy along. We, in Tobago, anticipate the construction of the multi-campus university and the creation of a university town, with accompanying opportunities that would stimulate the local business sector. [*Desk thumping*] Those persons providing housing, operating supermarkets, restaurants, cafes, entertainment, all stand to benefit from this initiative. [*Desk thumping*]

The university would also bring the potential for education tourism, where students from other countries could opt to come to Tobago to study. Here, Madam Vice-President, is a novel opportunity for us to use education for foreign direct investment. [*Desk thumping*]

There is also the academic impact that this campus will undoubtedly have on the Tobago space. There is need for this campus to engage Tobagonians in the preservation of its performing arts. This integrated campus must work to preserve Tobago's marine habitats, revitalize the island's agricultural economy and its listless tourism sector.

But, Madam Vice-President, this campus is needed, if for no other reason, than to alleviate the plight of Tobago's students who have to travel on a weekly basis to and from Trinidad to further their education. That trek is profoundly tiring and, therefore, a campus would allow for part-time study in addition to full-time study on the island. So, Madam Vice-President, we in Tobago anxiously await the start of construction of this critical institution.

Madam Vice-President, I wish to conclude at this time, but before I do, one last point, I also want to remind the people on the other side that the People's Partnership is delivering to the people of Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and part of that delivery has to do with the construction of the Roxborough gas station [*Desk thumping*] and that is far advanced; far advanced, and we really want to continue partnering with the People's Partnership and the Government of Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and we know that the people of Tobago will get their just due in time.

Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Members, it is, indeed, my honour to congratulate Sen. Sherry-Anne Rollocks-Hackett on your maiden contribution in this Chamber. Well done. Sen. Tewarie. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Thank you very much, Madam Vice-President, hon. Members of the Senate.

Madam Vice-President, I start by congratulating the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy on his first budget presentation in this honourable House. I particularly enjoyed his very, very focused and businesslike presentation, and I also enjoyed the measured tones in which he presented the budget. And I think, in general, what we have had is a very, very positive response to the budget, and there have been criticisms, of course, but by and large, the criticisms also have been criticisms that were respectful of the budget. That is a major achievement and I want to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy on his first budget and on a really wonderful performance in the role of Minister of Finance and the Economy. [*Desk thumping*]

This is the third budget of the People's Partnership Government, under the very, very able and astute leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. And I want to take this opportunity to also congratulate and thank the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs for his able stewardship during the two budget presentations in the years that he was Minister of Finance, laying the foundation for hon. Minister Larry Howai to build and to go forward. And, of course, our Prime Minister, able leader that she is, and very, very democratic in inclination and spirit, very consensual in terms of her operational game, so to speak, in the management of her people, she has played a tremendous role in a coalition situation of really harnessing and guiding the process of the development of this coalition.

And I want to say that I really enjoyed this Senate debate because of the point at which I am speaking, I got a chance to listen rather attentively, and it was an enjoyable experience. I enjoyed the tremendous presentations of everybody in the House. Some of the presentations particularly, I would say struck a chord and others, of course, in the toing and froing of the political environment in the Senate, I mean, there were high points and low points, but I think all in all we have had a wonderful debate here, and I do want to take the opportunity to say a special welcome to the hon. Minister of Justice, Sen. Christlyn Moore, and to congratulate her on her maiden presentation. [*Desk thumping*] And to Sen. Sherry-Anne Rollocks-Hackett for her very able presentation just made. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to say also congratulations to temporary Sen. Wayne Munro for being here in the House today. [*Desk thumping*] And, of course, I could not forget the Member on the opposite side Sen. Dion Isaac, who also made a very, very good contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, this Government came into office in the midst of a global financial and economic crisis. [*Crosstalk*] That crisis is not over, and many uncertainties remain in the context of the global environment. But there has been a concerted attempt by this Government to take very careful note of what is transpiring in the United States of America and in Europe, but also in India and in China, and seek to forge economic trade and investment links that are stronger and more mutually beneficial with those countries just beyond our West Indian borders, that are close to us, and that are at relatively similar levels of industrial development. Countries such as: Panama, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Chile, Guatemala, and some of the bigger, nearer countries, such as Brazil.

8.10 p.m.

We are building and strengthening relations in a wider regional neighbourhood, you might say. At the same time, we have kept faith with our Caribbean family on matters of mutual interest to us in the world and matters of common concern to the region. In bilateral relations within Caricom, we are very solution oriented, and for the good of the region, we bend over backwards for peace, for security, for harmony and general good relations.

The People's Partnership Government came into office in 2010 in the midst of an economic plunge at home, in terms of energy prices, in terms of a real estate slump, and exacerbated by a crisis at home in the insurance sector. As a result of these developments, economic decline was registered at minus 4.4 per cent. For 2012, growth is projected at 1.2. The point is that we are headed in the right direction, after continuing declines in 2010 and 2011. We are moving out of decline now, into growth, and prospects look better in 2013 than in 2012, and 2012 was better than 2011. In 2013, our country will do better than 2012.

To any reasonable person, this would represent progress any way you look at it. Things look hopeful and positive. The time has come for our country to pull together and move forward with purpose. Not only are we in a position to make it, if we try; not only are we in a very good position to do better, but we are truly at a critical juncture where, if Government, labour, business, civil society, and our people can come together and find our respective niches in mutual support of the national good, great strides can truly be made, and good things can be achieved for Trinidad and Tobago as a country. It will take some time to get to pre-2008 growth levels, which continued in this country in an unbroken run from 1993.

When the People's National Movement lost office for the first time in 1986, it took the NAR Government a full five years to get on to a growth track and it took the country 10 years to begin a recovery. It is important to remember that and to understand it. It has taken us now, the People's Partnership Government, three

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years to stabilize this country and to get things on a good track, after their last eight years in office, the Opposition. We have begun the process of recovery though, even though we still have a good way to go—we do not deny that.

Let us take, for instance, the energy sector. It is true that plants are down now. There are some who are saying that the energy sector is in decline and is in crisis. They are down for servicing, but these will be up and about and producing again shortly in the energy sector. Let me explain what I mean. The down time in plants is not a permanent condition. The Kapok and Dolphin fields will be back in action at the end of October, the end of this month. The seven plants out of the 25 that are now down will be able to step up production once more, so the energy position is looking up. When we take into account the recent Petrotrin oil find, the recent successful bid round and the pending investments by companies that now drive the sector that exist here, foreign companies here for many years, things are hardly as bleak in the energy sector as the Opposition and the other naysayers would like to make out.

If one takes into account the infrastructure projects that were announced by the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy in his budget statement, and here are some examples: the extension of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway from Cumuto to Sangre Grande; the dualling of Rivulet Road leading from the north/south highway to Point Lisas; additional access from Cocorite to Chaguaramas; development of the Brighton, La Brea and Galeota ports, both of which are ongoing; and new public sector finance construction public assets such as the Debe campus of the University of the West Indies; 18 police stations across the country; a children's hospital with a burns unit in Couva; hospitals for Arima, Point Fortin, Chaguanas and Sangre Grande; sporting complexes, such as the national aquatic centre; the national tennis centre and the national velodrome, it seems very straightforward that there will be a significant stimulation of the construction sector and, inevitably, services support for this sector.

So, yes, we have been an economy in decline, and we understand why, and we understand both the local and the international crisis, but we are rising up as an economy and country from that. In addition to which, the fiscal incentives to boost the housing stock, and to stimulate land development, should result in growth in construction and real estate sectors. This will impact on other related sectors. So, yes, we have been an economy in decline, but we are moving up from that.

Look at what is happening in the services sector, for instance. The services sector of the petroleum sector has registered growth from 13.8 to 21.3 per cent and services is the one area in which there has been growth in the economy. In the food and beverage sector, there has been growth from 13.7 to 19.7 per cent; in

wood and related products, from 3.1 to 31.9; in the distribution and restaurant sector, a modest 8.4 to 8.9, but headed in the right direction; transport, storage and communication from 4.2 to 14.5; education and cultural services, from 1.7 to 12.0 and personal services from minus 2.3 to 8.7. All of this augurs well for the services sector. Anticipated growth in construction, real estate, restaurants, distribution and hotels and guest houses, will supplement this and should strengthen growth in the sector over the coming year.

Let me indicate, Madam Vice-President, hon. Senators, that all of these numbers come from the *Review of the Economy 2012*. That is on page 58.

I have noticed a tendency to discredit Government performance by discrediting the numbers. Yet, in order to support arguments about negative performance, statistics from the very documents are used in order to whip up a climate of negativity. Well, you cannot have it both ways; you cannot use statistics to paint a negative picture and then seek to discredit statistics from the same sources which gave a more positive picture of the economy. In addition, it makes little sense to discredit institutions which have been under our charge for two and a half years, and which have been under the jurisdiction of the Opposition for decades.

The truth is that a lot has to do with the way you see the world, the disposition you bring to things. If you have an investment in negativity, you will see the world in a certain jaundiced way. Objectivity and facts will be undermined in the process. Some people always see the glass as half empty, and criticize the glass for not being full. Some people see the glass as half full and work to fill the glass bit by bit until it is eventually filled. [*Desk thumping*] Even when the glass becomes full, there are those who will say, it is not full enough, or that it only seems full, and if it were really full, it would overflow. Then there are those whom you can always rely upon to say, “Yes it full, but it take too long to full.”

I think many people who think like this sit in the Opposition Benches of both Houses. [*Desk thumping*] They create fiction, they create pain, they manufacture crises, they promote and provoke an atmosphere of distress and market a psychology of victimhood and suggest that we are on the brink of a precipice, year after year, month after month.

Let me give you this very clear perspective. We are on the right track and we are heading in the right direction. Little by little this People’s Partnership Government will fill this glass, working side by side with the people. [*Desk thumping*] The vision of the People’s Partnership Government is prosperity for

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all. We stress that through our own creativity, by collaborating with each other and, by being innovators, by innovation, we shall prosper together. These sentiments are articulated in our manifesto of 2010, and in our *Medium Term Policy Framework of 2011*.

A great deal of collaboration went into this budget. Within the framework of the limitations set, we can see a fair amount of creativity at work and the entire budget is focused on how to unleash the creative and innovative capacity of our people, to impact on the various sectors of the economy.

What the mission of our Government is, is articulated in the medium term framework. It is to achieve economic inclusiveness with greater equity with more meaningful participation, and a rising tide of prosperity for all in Trinidad and Tobago. We see the context for all of this, as an innovation driven growth economy, which is what, as a Government, we are all seeking to build, in partnership with the key stakeholders and institutions of our country.

This is the reasoning behind the geographically spread growth poles, which for the first time is being modestly funded in the budget. A lot of people ask about the growth poles. The reason they could not get off the ground is because they never had any ownership. They were announced, but they were not aligned to any Ministry, and, secondly, in two budgets, one after the other, even when they were assigned to the economic development board, they got no funding. So it was very, very difficult to get that going.

I want to say that I quoted from the manifesto, and this is our framework for policy, this is our framework for sustainable development policy. It is important to understand that there is a connection between the manifesto philosophy, the framework for sustainable development and the strategy deployed here. This is captured in the Medium Term Policy Framework 2011—2014, *Innovation for Lasting Prosperity*. Here the seven pillars are articulated, but no priorities are determined. In here the priorities, the five of them, on which the entire Public Sector Investment Programme was based, and on which the entire budgetary allocation was based, are included in this particular document.

I want to say something about my hon. colleagues who spoke here today and who would have spoken in the Senate earlier, which is that when you hear their contributions you hear how proud they are of what they have been able to achieve, what they have been able to do. They have not been doing this by guess, I want to say. They have established a strategic plan in their Ministries, which they are following, each one of them.

8.25 p.m.

Each one of my colleagues knows that in Ministry X, or in Ministry Y there are targets to be achieved in a particular year in a certain area, and they are working towards those things. Not only did they do that, they report quarterly on performance, on the strategic plan, and that is collated, it comes to Cabinet, and we are able to see what each other is doing and we are then able to make an assessment of where we are. This year for instance with the PSIP in the last year, the last fiscal year, what we did was that about just after midterm we looked at the PSIP and we did a significant reallocation of funds for particular Ministries, and that was on the basis of actual performance and on the basis of need, people who were doing things for which they did not have the funding.

So, I want to say that and I make the point about the growth poles because it is important to do that. This is also—I was making the point that this is the reasoning behind the geographically spread growth poles which is being funded, as I said, for the first time. This is the reason for the emphasis on decentralization and devolution of greater powers and more responsibility for local government. Those documents are now being presented to the country for comment—the devolution of power to local government.

This is the reason for the spread of projects for development across the country, and I will mention some of them and I mentioned some of them earlier. And this is the reason for an expanded roads network to the far reaches of the country. So, think of it. Trinidad and Tobago, you have an entire road network being developed across the country; you have five growth poles across the country; you have a decentralized local government system with greater devolution of power, and basically what you are talking about is a transformation of the country, both in strategic, administrative and organizational terms, in terms of economic intervention and, of course, you have the whole business that Sen. James Armstrong raised, which was the business of land-use and the custodial use of land for instance for strategic purposes.

Let me emphasize, therefore, where we are headed, and the Minister of Finance and the Economy said it: growth, economic inclusion, spreading development geographically, keeping an eye on equity, prosperity for all. Through creativity, collaboration and innovation, we shall prosper. That is just another way in the knowledge age and in the age in which innovation drives all achievement in an economy in which science and technology begin to impact and creativity is important, that is just another of saying this is how we translate, “Together we aspire, together we”—shall—“achieve”.

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I thought the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy presented to us a sensible budget which did things that had to be done, which initiated the process of addressing things that needed to be done, and identified where we are headed. I heard him say growth, I heard him say jobs, I heard him say a balanced budget in four years by a 1 per cent reduction every year. Henceforth, what could be clearer than that? Against this background, I will focus on a few aspects that have to do both with policy and action, and I will spend a few minutes on them.

I am dealing with—the first thing I want to do is deal with the Public Sector Investment Programme, and this is important, and I want to explain why I am dealing with it. I am dealing with it because the way the Public Sector Investment Programme is structured, is a little different in its emphasis than—[*Hon. Senator passes book*] look it is here, and what we have in this document is an accounting for 2012, everything that was done, that we said we would do, and we have a projection of what the Ministries said they wanted, and ultimately, by discussion, by consensus, by collaboration, we agreed on what would be the programme for 2013. So, the public sector programme, therefore, is a very, very critical programme in all of this.

Last year we introduced the *Medium Term Policy Framework 2011—2014*, which articulates direction and priorities for government policy. The hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar saw it fit to assign the responsibility for the PSIP to the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development. Over time it has moved from one Ministry to another. Ultimately, it found a resting place last year in the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development. Last year we had very little time between assignment of the PSIP and determining the budget allocation and trying to align the PSIP to the medium term framework, because for the PSIP to be effective in furthering national development, it must be tied to Government's policy direction.

It is important in any country that policy should drive the allocation of resources. So that the outputs and outcomes of expenditure produce goods and services that advance the policy objectives of Government. Last year the PSIP was \$7.614 billion. We have actually utilized \$7.489 billion or 98 per cent of that over the last fiscal year. [*Desk thumping*] I have a list here, I would not read it, but I have a list here of every Ministry and institution, and there are many Ministries here that have performed at 100 per cent and there are some Ministries, because they got additional allocations, which have performed at the level of 108, 120, 170 as the case might be. Of course, some performed less than 100, but by and large you have a 98 per cent performance on the PSIP 2012.

Now that could not be a bad performance by any standard, and yet we hear criticisms of implementation and execution. Now, I am not saying there should not be criticisms and I am not saying that execution is perfect, but I am saying that a lot has gone on, the learning curve has begun to arrive at the point where execution is now possible with greater effectiveness and efficiency in the Ministries, and this is a tremendous achievement for the Government after two and a half years. But we press on, and if one takes a careful look at the PSIP report for 2012, it becomes evident that much has been achieved. This year \$7.5 billion has been allocated, which is less than last year, not much less, but a little less, 1.5 per cent, I think—in 2008/2009 the allocation was \$9.1 billion plus, so this year's allocation of \$7.5 billion is relatively modest.

This year having aligned the PSIP to policy last year, we have now introduced the three-year PSIP, and that, again, is an important thing. What we have done is basically introduced the PSIP as a rolling allocation plan itself that is aligned to the budget. Now, next year's allocation, when we come, will not be exactly as it is in here, but this will be the base from which we start, and therefore, the level of effectiveness prioritizing and the level of capacity for execution, because you know what is coming now, is going to be a lot better, and that is going to make a difference as well. This did exist before. There used to be a three-year PSIP before, because the PSIP was started, I think, in the year 1988, if I am not mistaken. But somehow it was abandoned, but it is still very good practice, and so we have reintroduced it in our planning here.

I can safely say that putting the PSIP on a three-year cycle calls for capacity building within the public sector, especially with regard to forward planning and always with regard to implementation. But we also hope to see all Ministries and institutions this year making the kind of adjustments and adaptations the three-year cycle planning, and a high-performance standard for execution require, and they are taking steps to do it. Within the Ministry of Public Administration, for instance, they are working with the various Ministries in order to strengthen their planning and their monitoring and evaluation unit.

My colleague Ministers and Ministries have been most cooperative in the face of many needs and limited resources to be shared around, and I thank them for their understanding, and especially, for their hard work. I must say that when one looks objectively at the performance report on the PSIP, every Minister and every Ministry in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago of the People's Partnership, under the leadership of hon. Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, has performed. [*Desk thumping*]

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My sincere congratulations to all my ministerial colleagues, and the very, very able permanent secretaries and public service officers who support them. This year's PSIP of \$7.5 billion consists of \$3.371 billion from the Consolidated Fund and \$4.129 billion for the Infrastructure Development Fund. The total is divided proportionately among the five strategic priorities of the medium term framework 2011—2014. The priorities for the PSIP are a little different from what obtains in the recurrent expenditure budget. What do I mean by that? The priorities are the same but the approach to allocation is different.

You would have heard in the budget that the highest receiver of allocations was education; the second highest was national security, et cetera, and I want to explain what I mean by this. The highest proportion of the PSIP budget is for poverty reduction and human capital development, and out of the \$7.5 billion, it is \$2.561 billion. And it is about the same amount, \$2.556 billion, are for economic growth competitiveness and job creation and innovation. So, the focus in the PSIP, because it consists of projects, is focused on human capital development and poverty reduction and on growth, competitiveness, job creation and innovation. So, almost \$5 billion of \$7.5 billion allocation has been deployed for people impact projects and growth and economic stimulus projects, and that constitutes about 65 per cent.

So when the hon. Prime Minister describes the 2013 budget as a people's budget, she is on the button. The entire approach of the People's Partnership Government is to make a difference in the lives of people and to make development from below happen. How are other areas supported in the PSIP? Well, crime and law and order in the PSIP allocation gets \$727.8 million; agriculture and food security gets \$423.2 million and health and hospitals gets \$662.2 million in the PSIP. This is roughly equivalent in proportions, in percentage terms, to the allocations given last year. The whole purpose of the PSIP is to stimulate growth and development and create national and community assets, such as roads, hospitals, community centres, playgrounds, drainage and other forms of capital that in turn provide infrastructure and facilities that provide services that a Government must produce for its citizens.

Here are some of the things that we will do this year: under poverty and human capital development, alleviating poverty is a primary concern of Government. Accordingly, the priority area of poverty reduction and human capital development received the largest share of this year's PSIP allocation of 34 per cent. This year we will complete 20 early childhood care and education centres, and we will begin construction of four more. Additionally, we will begin

construction of 20 primary schools in communities spread across Trinidad and Tobago, and will continue and complete work on several more. Aside from physical construction work, there will be efforts in improving the management and performance of the primary school system, so that issues related to quality are also addressed in addition to access and physical plant. Seven secondary schools spread across the country will be completed this year, and construction is slated to commence for at least six more.

8.40 p.m.

In tertiary education, the University of Trinidad and Tobago received \$101 million for upgrade and construction at several sites including Tobago. The UWI will receive \$160 million for construction work at south campus, faculty of law, student housing, the seismic research centre and also at the Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex which houses its medical school.

The National Library and Information System Authority will continue its activities in fiscal 2013 with an allocation of \$106.2 million. It will focus on: completion of the Rio Claro, Mayaro, Couva, Chaguanas libraries. The hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training mentioned that in his contribution. Commencement of construction work on libraries in Toco and Siparia; upgrade and expansion of existing public library facilities at San Fernando, La Brea, Tunapuna; improvement of security at all libraries; restoration and refurbishment of the old Heritage Library on Knox Street to house the Heritage Library Special Collections which include, special collections connected to the leaders of our country, including the Rt. Hon. Dr. Eric Williams; equipping the preservation conservation laboratory according to acceptable international standards.

I will not read all of them; if I read community centres, I can mention 20—25 communities. The new centres, I can mention another 10 communities. There are 37 centres for upgrade; I will mention though, for Tobago, \$20.6 million is provided for upgrades and construction of community facilities.

In housing, \$718 million will be appropriated for development of the housing sector. Focus will be on satisfying the needs of citizens by addressing the overwhelming and increasing demand for housing, developing infrastructure and housing settlements, and providing assistance for emergency home improvements and repairs. The HDC will be doing a number of things and housing is an important part.

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So when you look at it: higher education, secondary schools, quality of curriculum and the quality support for the education sector, primary schools, community centres, libraries and hospitals; these are the things that we are focused on. It is dealing with the social sector needs of a population, addressing the issue of development of the people.

Economic growth, job creation competitiveness and innovation: that got the second largest allocation and I will mention some of the things. The sum of \$10 million to be provided for the innovation financing facility. Now, this will support innovative projects and the programmes emanating from the second i2i Innovation Competition. Out of that last year, we did not use quite all of the \$10 million, but what happened is that we were able to identify 50 innovators.

One of them has just been called to an international festival. He will get an opportunity basically to showcase some of his products. I think that that has the capacity for internationalization, and it is a very simple thing. Right now he operates out of a house. It is a very simple thing. You can build an entire production centre to do this kind of thing. Everything that is made out of it is indigenous, except one part of it which is imported; every single thing, all from design, all the way to the end product.

So we are encouraging these kinds of things taking place in the country. We will support innovative ideas, intellectual property, investigation, document preparation, export regulatory and standards compliance for all of these innovative ideas that come up with products and services.

This year 2012, led by the Council for Competitiveness and Innovation and well supported by CARIRI, we initiated this project and my own feeling is that now that people know about it, we are likely to get much more interest and with the greater interest you are likely to get much more innovative products. One of the things about last year is that people were afraid to put their ideas, because they were afraid they would be stolen. But they now understand that when you do it in a public place like that, your idea is almost immediately copyright because everybody knows what it is and therefore it is impossible to steal. Therefore, I feel out of that we are going to get tremendous innovative ideas.

Now, the growth poles are under the jurisdiction of the Economic Development Board. For this year, for the first time, they have been provided with about \$13 million, and they are now in a position to begin to make some impact because it has taken us time to mobilize resources and to get this thing going. The Economic Board hardly has more than a small secretariat working with it. We are

now trying to get, together with the board members, the capacity to be able to do something. But pretty soon they are going to land a few very important investments here. We are likely to see progress from that, and more than that they can now take their own initiatives.

Now, various parts of the growth poles are earmarked for different things. You have one of course in the east part of Tobago, and you realize now—I just want to take a moment to explain how these growth poles work. If you have an integrated campus on the east side and therefore that becomes an attractor which has the capacity for business, and to build sustainable capacity that is now linked to the process of growth and transformation of the human capital stock, eventually that side of Tobago itself which is pretty isolated from the western part of Tobago, and cut off, as somebody pointed out, you then have an attractor which gives you the capacity to do other things, to intervene economically in different ways. [*Desk thumping*]

You also can begin to use these beautiful assets which are virtually untouched still, which are, Speyside and Charlotteville. Only the people who really know Tobago know about Charlotteville or Pirate's Bay; only the people who really know about Tobago, know about Speyside besides for the diving. Therefore, you now have the opportunity to link agricultural production, tourism, the use of the marine resources, a high level education sector, because you are now in tertiary, you can now build research capacity that is linked to the industries that you are building and that is how you create the capacity for a growth centre, a growth pole. So that is just one example.

In the centre of Trinidad, what is going to happen once you dual Rivulet Road and you build a hospital with a burn centre in Couva, you have Couva on one side, Chaguanas on the other, Charlieville on the other, you have Carapichaima, you then have that whole centre—when you put a swimming, an aquatic centre there, when you put all of these things together and you have Point Lisas right there, you begin to see now how the capacity begins to exist for interventions to create a growth pole.

In the north coast, when you go over there—and you see you have five communities: Toco, Matelot, Maracas, Las Cuevas, Blanchisseuse, you have five of them. All of those are fishing villages, but they are underdeveloped, they are disorganized. If you make an intervention and you simply move in there, work with the community, build a jetty in each community, you begin now to develop the fishing industry. You have a number of Ministries working together, marine resources; you deal with food production and the land, you deal with the community development, et cetera, and you begin to do that, and you have private sector investors now that come in and put in “bigger” money and are involved in

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hotel and resort development, et cetera, but also linked to the community. So you do not leave the community out as you make big development, you integrate it, so they become now suppliers to the big industries; you begin to see how you can do something with a growth pole. And our business of development is not to build from on top and not to build skyscrapers. Our view of development is that if you miss the people in the development you miss the development paradigm altogether. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President: The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Thank you very much, hon. Senators; thank you very much, Madam Vice-President. I just want to use one more example. In the south-west peninsula, for instance, which extends from Debe to Cedros, what is going on there now—you have a rehabilitation of the cocoa industry. You have other agricultural industries that are there, that have a capacity for developing. People do not understand, because we never go to Cedros, what kind of coast we have there. That is one long beautiful coast from which you can see another country.

In addition to that, if you develop the port of Brighton and you can bring goods there, remember there is a big "Panama Canal" that is taking place—we have so many ports, we have to rethink the whole business of port design in terms of the new strategy for development here. If you begin to develop the port in Brighton and you bring at least one big industry into that La Brea area and you begin now to connect the dots, the sea coast, the Venezuelan reality—you are going to have to deal with security and so on, because that is a reality—the agricultural production, the road going through to Point Fortin, the highway, you begin to see now how this growth pole has a capacity and a potential for taking shape. So this is what we are talking about in terms of—what does it mean for Trinidad and Tobago? It means, therefore, that you now have centres of economic growth that are spread out across the county.

What is the state of the country? Eighty-two per cent of the businesses are on the western side of Trinidad and 92 per cent of the population is on the western half of Trinidad; 8 per cent live on the eastern side and 18 per cent of the businesses exist there. That is why when we take this atlas [*Senator holds up book*] we begin to see underdevelopment in real human terms and why it is

happening. You know why? Because you have nothing there; because you do not have enough people there, you do not have any infrastructure there to support their lives and therefore, it leads to debilitation. The only way you can do that is that you have got to create centres that will allow you to create attractors that will then make development happen and then you can develop your housing policy, et cetera, a strategy in order to spread out beyond the ribbon into the country. Therefore, we have to look at that very carefully.

I am very alert to the issues of land that you mentioned. Thirty-three per cent of our land is now in agriculture, 53 per cent is now in forest and related conservation activities, and I know that out of that window—53 and 3, 56 and 30, 86—what we are talking about is 14 per cent of our land for development. Do you know what that tells you? It tells you, you cannot go so; it tells you, you have to go so [*Gestures*] and it tells you if you go so, you have to begin to rethink what the development is about, how it is developed and you have to plan very carefully how it is developed. I am very alert to that.

I thank you for your contribution. I know that your contributions are always thoughtful and very committed to the development of this country because you care and because you have lived all over and you have seen the good, bad and ugly, and because of that I value what you say. I simply want to say in the case of Tobago, that the pattern of allocation in the PSIP is very much like the pattern of allocation in Trinidad, that is to say, poverty eradication and human development first, and then for competitiveness, job creation, building of industry, et cetera, in Tobago.

8.55 p.m.

In addition to that, the Ministry of Tobago Development has a series of projects under its belt to execute either on its own or in collaboration with other Ministries as well, working together, because the Ministry of Tobago Development is a coordinated Ministry for Tobago. It has to be, in areas where the House of Assembly does not have total jurisdiction, because the idea is that you want to develop Tobago, both with central government support and House of Assembly autonomy. That is what we try to do, and marry, and these things need not combat with each other because the idea is that if you do development and you do it in a way that is sensitive to the needs of people and their communities, the people will benefit; the communities will benefit and Tobago will benefit, and when Tobago benefits, Trinidad benefits.

More than that, Tobago itself, as an economy, begins to benefit because it has more to offer. It already has so much, but in terms of relative development and sophistication, it has more to offer in terms of choices and diversity inside the one beautiful little island.

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I only have a few minutes more, and I just want to say a few important things. I want to say that competitiveness—the Minister of Finance and the Economy flagged as a very important thing for the country, that we want to build a competitive economy. I want to say that in CARIRI, for instance, which is an instance of applied research—and I want to say that the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training shared with me a document of support for research in UWI, for instance, and we spent nearly \$50 million—about \$47 million—in research. That is, research grants over seven years at UWI.

But in dealing with competitiveness and innovation, you have got to make the link between research and applied research, and this is where it is critical. The only institution that we have like that, which really serves the country and sometimes the region, is CARIRI, and they have been involved in some wonderful things. They have been involved in helping the manufacturing sector, for instance, to move up the value chain in those manufacturing institutions that actually exist now.

More than that, they did a survey of 31 countries to find out how well disposed they are and how much they are doing in terms of innovation. We are now in a position to work with any, or all, of those 31 companies to try to build the innovative capacity; to try to build the competitive capacity.

The diversification is another key area. I would touch on that for a minute, but I want to say something about the competitiveness council which is linked to the EDB in terms of competitiveness. What they have done—the competitiveness council—again, these are new institutions. They were established in 2011. They have hardly had time to get off the ground, to breathe. They are now beginning to take stock of themselves. They have to get the information.

You cannot do anything in this world without data and information. What they have done is, they have identified the top 20 exporting companies in Trinidad and Tobago outside the energy sector. They have identified the top 10 products outside the energy sector that have the capacity for competitiveness, and they are working with those 10 products, those 20 companies, trying to do something with them that would make a difference in terms of export expansion, in terms of growth at home and in terms of the potential for development and investment in those companies.

So you have to deal with the macro picture; you have to deal with everything in the country; you have got to deal with a strategy for the future; you have got to address the issue of spread and equity, but you also have to deal with the reality of today. Your companies have to compete; your companies have to innovate. Your exports have to grow with what you have, and yet you have got to get new

investment in the new growth poles in all the diversified areas, and we have identified seven. You have heard them over and over: finance, IT, tourism, food, maritime—what am I missing—creative industries. I missed something.

Hon. Senator: Film.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: No, film is part of the creative. There is another one; I forgot. But, anyway, there are seven of them and the idea is to go after those, because all of them have spinoffs. Because when you go into creative industries, you are talking about fashion; you are talking about music; you are talking about film; you are talking about a number of things. When you go into maritime, you are talking about what I talked about, like the port, but you are also talking about dry dock; you are talking about yachting—yachting is linked to the tourism industry—and you begin to see how the clusters create the synergies. But these things do not happen overnight and they really, really, have a capacity to cohere once you begin to stimulate the thing.

I have about five minutes more and I do want to say one more thing, really. I want to say that in addition to all these documents that we have, we also have a compendium of investment incentives for every sector. All right. All the investment incentives are here, and we got new incentives this year that are going to be added here.

This has been done together with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment and ourselves. We did it when we had the diversification conference, to try to get a consensus behind the seven areas that we are going. This is the diversification strategy.

I want to close by mentioning just two things. In order to complement the fiscal incentives that the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy has announced on behalf of the Government, in order to stimulate the housing and construction and land development sector, we have begun to do things in the Ministry of Planning at the Town and Country Planning office.

The first thing that we have done is that we have established a plan for quick execution in order to eliminate the entire backlog in all the areas of Trinidad and Tobago for applications that are before the Town and Country Planning office. [*Desk thumping*]

The second thing that we have done is that we have set up a new capacity for all the new applications coming that are simple applications. So you separate the backlog from the new applications.

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The third thing is something that we have always had but we have strengthened it. All the Government-related approvals that need to be given, we have a committee dealing only with that.

The fourth thing that we have done is that we have done a similar thing for the private sector. So when a man comes to you and he says, “I want to develop 500 acres of land and I want to do so and so and so,” instead of telling him, “Go and do a plan and send it for us and we will tell you whether we agree”, we say, “Come in. Let us discuss it; let us do the plan from the start together with your people, and then when you do it, we can have an understanding that what you are doing is what we are prepared to allow.” And we are doing that also. [*Desk thumping*]

The other thing that we have done is that all the approvals that we have given, we are asking people to come in now to try to get to the point where they can begin to break ground and start construction. The other thing that we are going to do, which has nothing to do with the expansion of land, is that we are going to develop a policy across the country—it is here. I wanted to do it today but I think it would be better advice to go to Cabinet with it, rather than announce it first. What we are going to do is, wherever people are—if you live on a lot of land or two lots of land, or whatever you live on, in all of these areas across the country which we have already identified—we could start with your education city because of what is happening there—we are going to—if you have it and you have a house and you want to build two apartments or you want to expand the house or whatever, we are going to give you two opportunities.

One, we are going to say, “Yes, you can build a multifamily house. You can build more units in your existing house on the same lot provided you cover not more than X amount of land in it.” So that would give you the opportunity to expand and develop and help to stimulate the construction sector, and it will also bring families together. It will also bring the possibility of income.

But the second thing is that if you built a house and it was not approved and you want to do this, you will have to come and get it approved. So we will, kind of, facilitate you without being negative about it. We will try to regularize the approvals in the country—in the living centres of the country—both in Port of Spain and outside of the city.

The final thing that I want to say is that—I wanted to say something about the East Port of Spain development and sustainable cities, but I will say that at another time. What I do want to say, though, is that we have before Cabinet now, a National

Performance Framework, 2012—2015: From Performance to Results, which will measure everything that we do. We already have the measurement. These are the bases on which these things are going to be measured. So we have one document.

Secondly, we will have the performance report. We already have it for 2012, but it is not ready yet because Cabinet first has to look at it and approve it. But when we have that, it means that every year for everything that we say, everything in the medium-term framework, everything in all of our documents in the budgets, we are going to be able to account for it and to say, “We did this; we exceeded this; we did not make this; we have a gap here”, or whatever it is. We are going to be able to assess it.

I want to say that this is revolutionary. There is no government that I know in any part of the Caribbean—and probably across the region—that does this on a consistent basis, and we—

Madam Vice-President: Minister, if you have a few words again, just to finish off.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: Thank you, Madam Vice-President.

We are going to bring this performance-driven kind of development and monitoring and evaluation in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): [*Desk thumping*] Madam Vice-President, this has been a long but stimulating debate. I would like to recognize the stamina and endurance of Senators who, out of respect for this Senate, have stayed to hear my closing remarks. Thank you everyone. [*Desk thumping*]

I must say, it is refreshing to be part of this Upper House where we have an Independent Bench which, clearly, speaks its mind and which I think says what many in the society would like to say themselves and, therefore, where I believe the Independents play a suitable role in representing their views.

I would also like to compliment Senators on the other side for their useful contributions to this debate. Perhaps I could, in rounding off, perhaps reiterate our thinking and philosophy, as well as some of the theoretical underpinnings that informed the budget. I am sure my friend, Sen. Dr. Henry, would probably appreciate some of this.

As I said in the other place, a study done by Krugman and Layard looked at the performance of 173 countries throughout the world which had implemented austerity measures, and in most cases these austerity measures had led to severe economic contraction. The IMF, actually, in a technical article issued last week, says that

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“austerity may not achieve its goal of reducing debt within a reasonable amount of time”. They claim that most forecasting models, including their own, underestimate the multiplier effect of fiscal contraction on GDP. In fact, they think that the multiplier is somewhere between 0.9 and 1.7, which means that if, for example, you had a fiscal contraction of \$3 billion, you would have a GDP contraction if the multiplier is 1.5 of about \$4.5 billion in terms of GDP contraction.

One writer actually, on page 15 of the *Financial Times* of October 15, has said that if one assumes hysteresis, the idea that ensuing recession will cause long-term damage that will not be reversed in the ensuing recovery, then the negative effect can be long-term. For example, cyclical employment could be transformed into structural employment, which could take decades to reverse.

As Sen. Dr. Armstrong has pointed out, the context within which our theme was framed: Stimulating Growth and Generating Prosperity, is really in the context of achieving development. I thank him for pointing that out because, in a sense, that was not very clear, I think, in the context of what I was saying.

9.10 p.m.

It is something that worries me that, you know, perhaps we could stimulate growth which results in absorption and exhaustion of foreign exchange earnings but does little by way of long-term sustainability. Therefore, it is very important that in stimulating growth, we really achieve development. So, thank you, Dr. Armstrong for pointing that out.

Now, I want to be careful, in that, while I speak of stimulus, and our intention is to stimulate the economy, so we can build on the growth momentum that we are starting to see, there are risks to stimulating the economy. For example, an overdose of stimulus can lead to acid bubbles, and we know what acid bubbles have done, in terms of the 2008 financial crisis. It can lead to, for example, raising debt to unsustainable levels. That has been pointed out ad infinitum almost, by Sen. Ramkhelawan. It could also encourage waste, mismanagement and inefficiency.

Therefore, we are very concerned even as we proceed with a stimulus package, that we carefully monitor what we are doing, to ensure that we do not generate the risks that I have just pointed out.

So, both austerity and stimulus have their risks. Our role is to understand the pros and cons of each alternative path and to understand the context in which we are doing what we are doing. I am very confident that the context in which we are doing what we are doing is the right context because we have strong financial and economic buffers at this time.

I would like to reiterate the macroeconomic indicators for the purpose of confirming to the national community the strength of our economy, but before doing so, I want to make a little comment on the data and methods of collection of data by both the CSO and the Central Bank, because in many instances we get different figures.

The CSO collects its data through an extensive survey which includes all sectors. It estimates the nominal value of the GDP and adjusts it by a deflator to arrive at the growth rate. That deflator is really the change in prices between years. The CSO is the official source for GDP data.

The Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago on the other hand undertakes quarterly estimates of GDP. It does so by sample surveys, not by an entire continuous survey. It does so by sample surveys of some sectors, and then they utilize indices for other sectors. So what they do is a rough estimate of what GDP is. Therefore, that is why we tend to use the CSO data more so rather than the Central Bank data.

Of course, Central Bank does regular consultation with the CSO and eventually the numbers are reconciled. If I could turn to the *Review of the Economy*, you would see where in 2008 the numbers are about the same, \$175 billion for Gross Domestic Product at market prices, whereas in 2011, the Central Bank data shows GDP at \$144 billion and the CSO shows GDP at \$155 billion.

So, there is a significant difference between the two set of numbers, which, of course, is of concern to me, because it does increase the risk of wrong policy decisions, based on the fact that the numbers could be questionable.

Therefore, it behooves us to move rapidly to take the necessary measures to eliminate these discrepancies in the future. One of the things that perhaps, I should also comment on at this time is what has happened with the information on the agricultural data which is in the *Review of the Economy*. In fact, what I am told, there are areas where of course, production has increased and there are significant areas of decrease as pointed out by the hon. Senator, but I am told that declines in availability recorded were only at the northern wholesale market. They do not reflect total production countrywide, so that the information that we have here, really refers to only the information in the northern wholesale market.

Additionally, it is not normal to include distilleries as a subsector in agriculture which declined by 13 per cent and which negatively affected the decline at the NAMDECO market.

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So, I think clearly, what it says is not so much the point of who is right and who is wrong, as much as the fact that we have to do something about ensuring that the data is correct and is available, so that we can make the right kinds of policy decisions going forward. [*Desk thumping*]

I wish to highlight some aspects of our current strengths as an economy; to reiterate our unemployment level at 4.9 per cent, our debt to GDP at 46.6 per cent, our growth that we project to expect to see of 1.2 per cent, our foreign exchange reserves at US \$9.8 billion, external debt at 22 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Vice-President, I would like to also quote the CEO designate of BG Global, Mr. Martin Houston who, speaking a few days ago on BG's role in the economy and I take this from the *Daily Express* of Tuesday, October 16, 2012. He asked rhetorically:

“...am I confident about a future in Trinidad? Yes I am.

...I have every faith you will play a crucial role in the evolving landscape as we move into the new phase.” [*Desk thumping*]

So, Madam Vice-President, I think we here tend to—when I say here, I mean in Trinidad and Tobago, we have a tendency to talk ourselves down. I think that we have to change our language and our thinking. We need to focus on our strengths and on the opportunities that are before us for building a successful, vibrant and prosperous society.

Now, Madam Vice-President, I am in no way suggesting that we should bury our heads in the sand, but rather as the Hon. Dr. Tewarie was saying, if we see that the glass is half empty, that we see, that this gives us the opportunity, to fill it to overflowing.

As a nation we have done very well, and notwithstanding the concerns about which we all are aware, Trinidad and Tobago continues to outperform many countries in the world—[*Desk thumping*—and we enjoy a level of prosperity that is the envy of many.

Madam Vice-President, I turn now to the fiscal framework. I have targeted the achievement of a balanced budget by 2016 and I have set a goal of the reduction of the deficit by 1 per cent a year. We have no illusions that this would be an easy task. It requires our deficit to be \$6.5 billion next year, assuming all our assumptions are met.

The return to a balanced budget will reduce the increase in the debt which some Senators have identified as a worrisome trend. This side is not oblivious to this, but we recognize that to do otherwise, and move to a balanced budget in a faster

time frame would significantly dislocate the economy. Imagine, Madam Vice-President, a motor vehicle driving at 100 miles an hour, trying to stop immediately, it would spin out of control and the damage would be more severe than trying to stop right away.

So apart from 2009, the level of the deficits have been very manageable with the 2012 numbers still being finalized, but we expect the deficit to be about a billion less than forecast coming in at \$6.6 billion as opposed to the \$7.6 billion that we had projected last year.

You see, Madam Vice-President, one of the difficulties that we face is a capacity constraint in the economy, the old law of diminishing marginal utility, which is why the reform agenda of this Government is so important and it needs to transcend political lines, as I suspect it does.

I suspect both sides of the political divide understand what needs to be done. I am hopeful that notwithstanding the political cut and thrust, that there would be sustained effort on both sides to achieve our goal of making our economy more globally competitive.

Madam Vice-President, one of the challenges I faced when preparing the budget, was how much detail to include, and how wide a span to give to its contents. Choices had to be made. I am aware that the estimates of revenue and expenditure are available to the public, and that individual Senators were all going to be speaking.

In addition, many of the documents such as the Human Development Atlas, the Social Investment Programme, the Public Sector Investment Programme, and a number of such documents are all made available with huge amounts of data which provide the information somewhat ponderously, that adds clarity to the presentation by the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

In light of that, I thought that the focus of budget should be elsewhere. Nevertheless, Madam Vice-President, we shall seek to address the concerns expressed by Senators on both sides of this honourable Senate and in the media on this matter in future presentations.

Madam Vice-President, there were several fiscal initiatives in the budget and the estimates of lost revenue were not identified. This was principally because no commitments were made with respect to existing revenue apart from two specific matters.

The incentives in the budget such as those for the energy and construction sectors related to prospective activities in these sectors. The two areas where income will be foregone are in the area of value added tax on food items being zero-rated and the incentive to train new employees given to private businesses.

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I believe that the matter of the removal of the VAT on food seems to have been subject to some misinformation in the media today. I just want to say there has been no change in the Government's position regarding the removal of VAT on food items, with the exception of luxury food items and alcohol. The estimated loss of revenue as a result of the removal of the VAT is \$400 million.

In the case of new hires, using the reskilling allowance or the training allowance, has been estimated at \$45 million. Regarding this, our experience on one pilot project in the cocoa industry, where CEPEP workers were used over the past year has been quite good and we expect to accelerate this trend this year. The cost of these two initiatives will be funded by reduced transfers and increased dividends from the State enterprise sector.

Madam Vice-President, as with any budget, there are several risks that need to be addressed. We do not have what I would consider a good capacity for scenario analysis in the Ministry and some of the elements of risk assessment still need to be worked out. Our preliminary estimate is for debt to GDP to reach a level of 49 per cent by year end, other things being equal. Our current scenarios put debt to GDP at between 56 to 58 per cent by 2016, when we expect the budget to be stabilized and thereafter for a continued downturn in debt levels. At all of these levels Trinidad and Tobago will continue to meet global benchmarks and best practice benchmarks in terms of debt to GDP.

Our expectation is that the output from the energy sector will improve from 2014, when most maintenance work is out of the way and improved revenues will come from the sector from 2018, when some of the new fields begin commercial output. We also expect a marked increase in revenues from current efforts to diversify the economy over that time frame.

Madam Vice-President, the next 10 years are very important to this country. This is probably the last opportunity we have to leave a lasting positive legacy for future generations. Over this coming period, we must expand the energy sector, diversify the energy sector further downstream to output such as melamine, DME sodium methoxide, (DME) dimethyl ether which is a substitute for diesel, to increase employment and revenue generated by each molecule of gas that we produce, bearing in mind that the global gas industry is undergoing a global restructuring.

We must also implement a reform agenda that would improve output and productivity in the public sector and at every level of the economy. We must also streamline Government expenditure and properly implement the diversification strategies that we have identified for the economy.

9.25 p.m.

Another big issue raised by Sen. Ramkhelawan is the matter of the unfunded public pensions. This is a significant liability that needs to be addressed. All I can say at this time is that the matter requires further study and a way must be found to begin reducing this liability over time. This number has not been factored into our medium-term fiscal framework.

Sen. Prof. Ramkissoon had enquired whether the survivorship benefit given by the NIB could be extended for disabled survivors beyond age 19. This is a matter that requires further work by the actuaries to determine the effect of this cost on the fund, but I would advise the hon. Senator, or the hon. Senator should note, that we have increased the disability allowance in this budget, and we hope that it could, to some extent, ameliorate the effects of the matter that he had raised.

I have also received a response from Caribbean Airlines to the issue raised by Sen. Deyalsingh regarding the two B767-300 ER aircraft. It is true that the global positioning navigation systems need to be installed. Caribbean Airlines plans to install these GPS systems on the aircraft while they undergo major maintenance during the latter half of 2013. In the interim, they will be doing a memory upgrade using the Pegasus system.

A firm order proposal was requested from Boeing to generate the required service bulletins to modify both aircraft with the GPS system. This proposal is expected to be ready in two weeks, during which time, the lead time to generate the required service bulletins would be provided. Once these service bulletins are issued by their manufacturer, all of the required kits would be procured and the system installed on each aircraft. The manuals provided by Boeing have been updated and subsequently approved by the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Do you know the cost of those GPS?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: No. I do not have that.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Will the board be held accountable?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: We will discuss that further with the board. [*Crosstalk*]

Procurement legislation update: Madam Vice-President, the report on procurement outlining the policy was unanimously agreed by the Joint Select Committee. This is now before the Legislative Review Committee along with other documents referred by the hon. Prime Minister. Draft legislation will be prepared and will be forwarded through Cabinet and eventually to this Parliament before the session comes to an end.

With respect to transfer pricing, preliminary work has begun on the transfer pricing regime. Workshops and internal training have been undertaken within the Board of Inland Revenue by an international accounting firm, and we have also held a private stakeholder workshop. The staff of the Board of Inland Revenue has been exposed in an overseas meeting to the new taxation legislative environment that will be required. The full scope of what is required in terms of a specialized transfer pricing unit within the Board of Inland Revenue will be part of the tax policy and administration review to be conducted under the technical assistance project to be implemented during the course of next year.

I turn now to the cat cracker. The FCCU upgrade works, or the cat cracker upgrade works officially started in 2005. The project was part of the wider Gasoline Optimization Programme which also includes construction of an isomerization unit, a continuous catalyst regeneration platforming unit, an alkylation unit/acid plant, upgrade to the existing cat cracker and construction of off-sites and utilities.

It should be noted that the procurement method used was a cost reimbursable contract for construction, and this proved to have an unfavourable cost and schedule outcome. This led to cost escalation and schedule slippage. The cost estimate by the project manager, BECHTEL, in 2006 was \$173 million with completion in October 2008. This cost estimate was revised upward by BECHTEL in 2008 to US \$266 million, and finally, in 2010, to US \$439 million.

In December 2011, mechanical completion was declared and the contractors were asked to vacate the site. There were still extensive outstanding works and Petrotrin, in order to minimize their cost, undertook to complete the works under a commissioning team which was activated in November 2011. At present, despite some recent setbacks, final commissioning activities are in progress and full commercial production is expected in November 2012, as was stated by the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs.

I turn now to the question of LNG. Madam Vice-President, the matter was raised at the LNG, the LNG exports by the National Gas Company was actually started before. I happened, in my previous capacity, to be the Chairman of the NGC, [*Desk thumping*] and I could say that at no time, certainly up to—I started in late October 2010, and by June of 2011, I had not yet received any formal recommendations from within the NGC. I made a decision at that time that we will establish a 12-month timeline as required under the contract, and I had set the 12-month timeline and I said that we will achieve that 12-month timeline, and the measures were put in place for us to have the first shipment sold by the NGC on the spot market and that is what they did. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Well done! Well done!

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Madam Vice-President, I now bring my contribution to this debate to a close. The maintenance of stimulus will underpin our growth dynamics which are being anchored on an increasing private sector involvement in the economy and improved competitiveness. We shall focus on consolidating the gains so far achieved and on our reform agenda, as well as our plans for diversifying the economy.

There are huge challenges but also great opportunity. Trinidad and Tobago, as I said, is better placed than most countries in the world and there is no reason we cannot achieve our goals.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Madam Vice-President, in accordance with Standing Order 63, I beg to move that the Bill not be committed to a committee of the whole Senate.

Question put and agreed to.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be read a third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Madam Vice-President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Madam Vice-President: Hon. Senators, before I put the question, I wish to sincerely thank all Senators for their commitment and dedication shown here in this debate. In particular, I would like to register that it was indeed an honour to have presided over the Appropriation (Financial Year 2013) Act, 2012.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 9.35 p.m.