



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Debates of the House of Representatives

4th Session – 10th Parliament (Rep.) – Volume 27 – Number 34

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE WADE MARK
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE NELA KHAN
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Wednesday 25th June, 2014

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(TYPESET BY THE HANSARD STAFF, PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT PRINTER, CARONI,
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO— 2022)

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*Leave of Absence**Wednesday, June 25, 2014***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Wednesday, June 25, 2014*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following hon. Members: Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon, Member of Parliament—*[Interruption]* Hon. Member, could you have your seat quickly and I must advise Members, when the Speaker is on his legs, Members ought to either stand still or not move.

Miss Mc Donald: “And he want tuh be ah leader!”

Mr. Speaker: No, I am not asking for help.

I was saying hon. Members, that I have received communication from Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon, Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, who is out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period June 23—27, 2014. Also, the hon. Vernella Alleyne-Toppin, Member of Parliament for Tobago East is also out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period June 23—26, 2014. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

Hon. Members, I have a statement that I would make a little later on in the proceedings under “Announcements”.

PAPER LAID

Bankruptcy and Insolvency Regulations, 2014. [*The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai)*]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS**(Presentation)**

**Government Ministries, Statutory Authorities and
State Enterprises (Group I)
Housing Development Corporation**

Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West*): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following report:

Ninth Report of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament appointed to inquire into and report on Government Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State

Joint Select Committee Reports
[MRS. MC INTOSH]

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Enterprises (Group 1) on the Administration and Operations of the Housing Development Corporation (HDC).

Insurance (No.2) Bill, 2013

The Minister of Transport (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following report:

Fourth Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee on the Insurance (No.2) Bill, 2013.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

First Report (2013/2014 Session)

(PRESENTATION)

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following report:

First Report (2013/2014 Session) of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of 2014 appropriation.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, may I ask that questions Nos. 96, 147, 148 and 149 be deferred for two weeks, please, and the Government will answer the rest of questions.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Just a moment, please.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Speaker, this is the second time that question No. 147 is being deferred on the judicial centre. It is a very simple question.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We know that. That is why it is written here.

Mr. Deyalsingh: It is a very simple question.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah, but we will answer it.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Clearing of Watercourses

(Details of)

96. Could the hon. Minister of the Environment and Water Resources state when the following watercourses will be cleared of vegetation and debris, deepened, widened as well as reinforced with concrete channel walls:

- i. Lake Canal in La Brea;

- ii. Brea River in Vance River;
- iii. Lorensotte North River;
- iv. Los Charos River;
- v. Salazar Trace River; and
- vi. Palo Seco/Erin River? [*Mr. F. Jeffrey*]

**Construction of Judicial Centres
(Details of)**

- 147.** With regard to the four judicial centres being built or going to be built in Carlsen Field, Siparia, Trincity and Sangre Grande, could the hon. Minister of Justice state:
- a) the name of the design architects;
 - b) the cost of their employ;
 - c) the estimated costs of the four centres; and
 - d) the approximate date of completion of each centre? [*Mr. T. Deyalsingh*]

**NIBTT/NIPDEC Purchase of Properties
(Details of)**

- 148.** With respect to the property located at the corner of Cadiz Road and Queen's Park East currently occupied by the Apsara and Tamnak Thai Restaurants, could the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy state:
- A. Whether the NIBTT or NIPDEC has purchased, or has agreed to purchase this property and for what purpose?
 - B. If the answer to part A is in the affirmative:
 - i. What was the agreed purchase price?
 - ii. Whether an independent valuation was obtained by either NIBTT or NIPDEC prior to the agreement to purchase;
 - iii. What was the amount of the valuation for the property and who conducted the valuation;

- iv. What is the land area of the property and what is the floor area of the building on the property? [*Mr. C. Imbert*]

**Point Fortin Highway Project
(Aggregate Used)**

- 149.** A. Has the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs received any report(s) that aggregate used on the Point Fortin Highway Project has been mined or acquired from State or private lands without the necessary approvals from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs?
- B. If the answer to part A is in the affirmative, when were these reports received and what has the Ministry done to address this problem? [*Mr. C. Imbert*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

**East Port of Spain
(Construction of New Housing)**

- 144. Miss Marlene Mc Donald** (*Port of Spain South*) asked the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development:

Can the Minister state when will the construction of new housing begin in East Port of Spain to alleviate the housing shortage in that area?

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In response to question 144, the Government has before it a comprehensive programme of urban renewal. In keeping with its stated commitment of maintaining Port of Spain east as a strategic priority and with considerations of population land use, conditions of existing buildings, the registry of buildings within the area, circulation on roads, drainage, water, sewerage, electricity, communication network, social and educational facilities, the vision, as expressed is to create a sustainable high quality environment within Port of Spain east, which can fully contribute to the functional life of a capital city, while, at the same time, providing the highest quality of life to its residents, city users and, indeed, the national population.

The Government has also developed very city-specific strategies and interventions for east Port of Spain. The basic concept, as illustrated in the plans for Port of Spain east, creates a series of neighborhood units based on the existing block pattern of the city.

The Board of the Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation has before it a preliminary concept plan complete with an accommodation schedule, which earmarks an initial pilot project area to serve as a demonstrative block for the purpose of developing detailed plans. The area chosen is the two blocks of the area bounded by the St. Ann's River on the east, George Street on the west, Duke Street to the north and Queen Street to the south.

The block is intersected by Nelson Street, which runs north/south, from Duke Street to Queen Street dividing it into two city blocks. The area lies within the city district of Port of Spain east and covers two city blocks, stretching from the St. Ann's River to the east and George Street to the west. It is bounded to the north by Duke Street and the south by Queen Street.

This covers an area of approximately two and one-half hectares, and like the rest of Port of Spain east, the area is virtually flat and is less than 6 metres above mean sea level.

Each block, 14 hectares in area, is planned to create a neighborhood unit of approximately 250—300 housing units and accommodates a full range of facilities, which would support and create a high quality living environment for its city residents. Each will have a mix of housing, proper parking, landscaping, retail, civic, education and other facilities, consistent with the creation of quality living.

Each block will also be centred on adequate open green space and recreational spaces. The intention is to create a series of these blocks, each of which will be interconnected, both through the existing street pattern, but also through a series of pedestrian pathways and lanes, which allow both the resident and the visitor to have retail, dining, recreational and other experiences while traversing the city. It would also provide a much needed fillip to the city, not only in terms of its beauty and facilities but also in terms of the new economy, that is the proposed influx of new and more affluent residences, which this will create.

Additionally, it is intended to create an open area adjacent to the St. Ann's River on the site adjacent to the mosque and riverside park and community service area, which would give access to the proposed riverside parkway to be created along Piccadilly Street.

The preliminary concept plan is underpinned by specific principles of the framework for building a sustainable community through design and advocates:

1. that residents be provided with adequate access to affordable housing options, employment opportunities and a high level of social and community facilities and utilities;

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2. that there should be social and economic balance within the community;
3. that there should be a high level of aesthetic design within the neighbourhood;
4. that the neighbourhood be designed in keeping with an adequate standard for crime prevention;
5. that neighbourhood design incorporates a set of design and building standards based on economy of space and efficient use of resources; and
6. that every existing resident of the area would have the option of being relocated back into the area.

Mr. Speaker, the Housing Development Corporation has informed that they are currently undertaking the fieldwork to ascertain the number of residents to be relocated and to undertake relocation of persons within this area, and they would be in a position to begin construction of this new development in the fourth quarter of 2014. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Mc Donald: Supplemental. Mr. Speaker, question to the Minister. Minister, you said that the fieldwork has been undertaken, at least has started, talking to the residents with respect to this pilot project, can you tell me which area has been covered to date?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I did not walk with the information but I would certainly get the information for the hon. Member. Thank you.

Miss Mc Donald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Are you asking the question for the Member for Point Fortin?

Miss Mc Donald: Oh yes.

Point Fortin Hospital (Construction of)

151. Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*) on behalf of Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Could the Minister state:

- a) Why did the Government not commence work on the Point Fortin Hospital in the first quarter of 2014?

- b) When does the Government intend to initiate the construction of the Point Fortin Hospital?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Dr. Fuad Khan): Mr. Speaker, the question asked:

- “a) Why did the Government not commence work on the Point Fortin Hospital in the first quarter of 2014?
- b) When does the Government intend to initiate the construction of the Point Fortin Hospital?”

Mr. Speaker, it is necessary to understand the reasons why and how hospitals are constructed. Unlike the Member for Point Fortin who believes that these things tend to materialize out of thin air, I will try to explain the process in developing a hospital for a chosen area.

Initially, a need has to be recognized, that is, a need for the size of the hospital and the volume of patients that this hospital will serve. In Point Fortin, which has been neglected for a very long time, we of the People's Partnership will be building the Point Fortin Hospital. [*Desk thumping*]

Not only do we have to deliver a hospital to Point Fortin, but we must be assured that it has the capacity to accommodate the services for the people for approximately 50 to 60 years from today, or maybe 100 years.

1.45 p.m.

These services must be significant and they must allow for new technology to be added on, and with new beds, et cetera, to take into consideration the total volume of the population as time progresses. The world, Mr. Speaker, is on a pathway to decrease hospital stays of population. This is being done, Mr. Speaker, by addressing the NCD epidemic worldwide, and as you are aware, the non-communicable diseases are responsible for the multitude of deaths, and also hospitalization and utilization of hospital beds, service, et cetera. This must be borne in mind when developing the Point Fortin Hospital.

Hospitals, Mr. Speaker, must have adequate land, adequate drainage, adequate parking, et cetera. This will take the form of a properly designed user brief. Hence, Mr. Speaker, I wish to indicate that the first step in developing this hospital is the development of a proper user brief, which is the map and pathway for developing that hospital, or any hospital. In this brief, it will speak to the

number of floors of the building, the number of beds, the elevators, the outpatient clinics, the operating theatres that we desire, the positioning of the operating theatres, the areas for surgical, gynaecological, obstetrics, orthopaedics and paediatrics services. It will have to also develop proper kitchen facilities, proper disposal systems, proper waste water systems, and where the positions of operating theatres will be, the positioning of clinics, and a host of ancillary services.

Mr. Speaker, the Member has asked why work has not commenced. That in itself may show a lack of understanding of how government development works. Mr. Speaker, after this user brief has been done—and this sometimes takes a very long time to get it right—there are various levels of correction and all these corrections are done to develop a hospital that will properly service the people of Point Fortin. After this user brief has been accepted, it must be quantified with an estimate for costing, et cetera, for development, and that is long before the document for tender evaluation takes place. Prior to all of this, Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet must be comfortable with the cost, the site, the need for environmental impact analysis, et cetera. Then after all this has been done, it may or may not be accepted initially. It is then relegated to an agency to begin the process.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health is responsible for leading the health sector. The service provision aspect of the public health care has been devolved to newly created entities, the RHAs. The responsibility for the provision of health care services in Trinidad and Tobago, was devolved from the Ministry of Health to the Regional Health Authorities, with the passing of the Regional Health Authorities Act, No. 5 of 1994. While the Ministry of Health does not directly run these health facilities, it is required to play a key role in ensuring that they are properly run, by setting policies, goals, targets for regions, based on assessment of real health needs. This is the main role of the Ministry of Health. The Ministry also allocates resources to the RHAs to finance the operations.

The Ministry of Health is shifting its focus to concentrate on policy development, planning, monitoring and evaluation, regulation, financing and research. Citizens can access free health care at public health facilities, Mr. Speaker, where health insurance is not required. However, the Government is developing the National Health Service, in which a package of services will be determined as well as a financing strategy.

The South-West Regional Health Authority, Mr. Speaker, is one of the five existing RHAs, established by the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, Act No. 5

of 1994. It is responsible for the administration and management of the San Fernando General Hospital, the Chancery Lane Teaching Hospital, the Area Hospital Point Fortin, which is now being refurbished, the Princes Town District Health Facility, the Couva District Health Facility and 33 health centres scattered throughout the region.

The boundaries, Mr. Speaker, of the South-West Regional Health Authority cover more than one-third of land surface of Trinidad and Tobago, extending from Couva in the north, Icacos in the south-west, Moruga in the south-east and Tabaquite in the north-west. The population of this region, Mr. Speaker, is approximately 500,000 people.

Point Fortin General Hospital will serve the local community in providing outpatient and inpatient services, and emergency services, women and children services, diagnostic and imaging services in Point Fortin.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware and I previously indicated, there is a rising level—a global rising level of hypertension and obesity, and it is recognized internationally with the connection between genetic, our society and ethnic groups. Trinidad had the same concerns and is in the largest target group in the Caribbean for diabetes, and associated cardiovascular diseases with a burden of US \$500 million per year.

The top 10 causes of mortality in Trinidad and Tobago (last available data 2006):

- Diseases of the heart
- Malignant neoplasm
- Diabetes
- Cerebrovascular disease
- Disease of the respiratory system
- Disease of the digestive system
- HIV/AIDS
- Disease of the nervous system
- Disease of the genitourinary system

Mr. Speaker, the scope of the project of the Point Fortin Hospital was to combine the state-of-the-art technology, with a clinical know-how of experts

providing preventative health care methods. It has to have diagnostic treatment and care for paediatrics and adult outpatients and inpatients with a unique experience for every single patient, Mr. Speaker.

The philosophy of the project shall be to provide a service that is focused on relieving the stress to the patient, of a health care environment, and to provide a clinical service or treatment which reduces the time for the patient within the area of treatment, and contributes to the overall well-being of the patient.

Treatment process that is based purely on the function of the business or the traditional methods of providing clinical care is discouraged. The staff, the patient, visitors, all their behavioural patterns in receiving treatment, care or information are based upon and linked to technology levels in equipment and methods of delivery from established practices. These practices, Mr. Speaker, can be based upon an imperfect building and process.

Patient care and perception of care, and success of care is managed throughout the system, through the use of colours, the use of sounds, the use of audio, at proper departmental layout and managing the patient connections with these senses. It is encouraged to develop the health care facility which uses the senses in a clear, obvious and demonstrable way. Traditional methods of providing sensory stimulation are then discouraged.

Mr. Speaker, provision of a new civic amenity to serve the community of Point Fortin, increases the availability of health care, knowledge and the awareness and promotion of self-help to the users of these health care facilities, and the public within the Point Fortin area. Car parking within the complex for the patients and visitors, together with integration into the main hospital transport, will be that of a strategy.

The project management, which is design, planning and execution, will provide the following outcomes:

- (1) Health and functional planning services will be engaging the South West Regional Health Authority and the Ministry of Health, to determine the clinical requirement for the Point Fortin General Hospital.
- (2) It will provide architectural and engineering designs.
- (3) It will provide execution and project management expertise to deliver these designs.
- (4) It will provide financing of the project in partnership with the Trinidad and Tobago Government and the Government of Austria.

The principles for the project, Mr. Speaker, would be:

- Key adjacencies shall be used to minimise the movement for patients, staff and other professions.
- Opportunities to minimise infection and improve the management and control of infections will be encouraged.
- Each room will be used in the pursuit of patient care, patient treatment and diagnosis; the purpose will have the priority of clinical functionality and can be measured in operational and quality markers of meeting this requirement.
- There will be provision of storage throughout the health care facility to remove the practice of accommodation on the corridor, lobby, rooms, et cetera.
- There will be provision of material and waste storage accommodation to improve the clinical environment.
- It will be increasing the natural light—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Minister? Minister, can you give way, please? Mr. Speaker, I am lost because I really do not know whether the Minister is addressing the question, which is—the burning question is: When does the Government intend to commence construction of the Point Fortin Hospital? I am not getting the answer. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, the first part of the question is: Why did the Government not commence work? I started off by saying, Mr. Speaker, that [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] to do proper work—you see, Mr. Speaker, it is no longer—in 2010 when people voted for change, they voted for change to do things right. So I am saying that we have to have a proper user brief, and I am indicating to the honourable House why the Government did not commence work, because we are preparing a proper user brief. I will go on to the second part of the question when I have finished the first part, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] So I will try my best to accommodate you.

You see, Mr. Speaker, these are the principles of the project that was taking place. You see, when—Mr. Speaker, when you look at it, where in these hospitals of today other than the Chancery Lane Teaching Hospital, do you see natural light being used rather than artificial light? We sit here for hours in artificial light. It makes you tired. It gives you a problem with your eye strain. It gives you a whole host of discomfort. I have heard the Members on the other side and this side, when we leave this area, we tend to be more tired than if we sat in a natural light.

So what we are doing with the hospitals, Mr. Speaker, is developing hospitals and making sure that they are environmentally friendly, and utilization of natural light and external atmosphere and air. These are the things that we have been putting in the user brief. I would really like to share it with the population of Trinidad and Tobago. As you see, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Point Fortin has given me this chance to share with the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and for that I am grateful. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we are developing the user brief to increase patient privacy and the dignity during the course of treatment, and the pathway. You see, Mr. Speaker, you may have heard complaints that there are too many people in one ward and patients do not have their privacy. So what we are doing is utilizing what they call, the four-bed system, the four-bed room. So that is in keeping with international best practices. They will use, as I said before:

- Natural ventilation and improvement of energy use and management within the facility, with a view to reducing the consumption of materials.
- The interiors I mentioned before, will instil a sense of quality, care, restfulness and cheerfulness that work to create a healing environment.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the majority of healing is based on visual and auditory.

- The patient and the clinical areas are sized to increase a sense space and it will remove overcrowding as we spoke.
- There will be an optimization of the waiting area accommodation, and management of the waiting room patients.

Mr. Speaker, there will be:

- The focal point for visitors, patients, staff and public for key accommodations, including that of reception, registration areas and nurse bases.

Mr. Speaker, they will have:

- Secure facilities that provide a sense of security, both personally and for possessions and equipment using non-threatening and invasive measures.

Mr. Speaker, we have also taken into consideration the physically challenged, because there will be:

- No barrier access to all patients using the facility, including as a minimum and not limited to the partially sighted, non and assisted ambulant, multicultural language consideration will be given, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the hospital will have:

- Internal medicine beds
- General surgery beds
- High dependency unit
- Burns unit
- Gynaecological unit
- Obstetrics unit (for the antenatal and postnatal) and nursery
- Neonatal unit
- Paediatric and adolescent unit
- Psychiatric unit.

They will also have:

- Accident and Emergency departments
- Surgical Services.

The outpatients will be:

- Paediatric
- Adult
- Women health
- Physiotherapy
- Day surgery
- Functional diagnostics; and
- Pharmaceutical delivery.

It will be like hospitals with:

- General X-Ray
- Fluoroscopy
- CT scans
- General ultrasound
- Mammography

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- Lab services; and
- Endoscopy utilizing the PSCS system.

There will be:

- Inpatient and outpatient pharmacy
- Central sterilization unit
- Laundry
- Kitchen
- Maintenance and housekeeping
- Clinical engineering facility
- Proper morgue
- Proper dietician service
- Proper Administration Service
- On Call facility for doctors and nurses; and
- A proper Incinerating Facility, which is lacking in today's hospital.

Mr. Speaker, not only will they have things for clinical, but there will be a:

- Conference Room for training
- Multipurpose Training Centre
- Health Science Library
- Dining Hall
- Staff Lounges
- Gymnasium
- Day care facility for nurses, et cetera.

2.00 p.m.

There will be a religious and faith area, a tuck shop, family room, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, I can keep going on and on. The people of Point Fortin will be so happy when they get this hospital.

Mr. Imbert: Which year?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: This year.

Mr. Imbert: You said that in 2013 and 2012 and 2011.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: You all have been saying that since 2001. “We saying it for four years; you saying it since 1020”.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the construction equipment of the new Point Fortin Hospital was approved by Cabinet in August 2013 and will be financed by a modality of government-to-government arrangements with the government of Austria, in accordance with the framework agreement between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the Republic of Austria on industrial cooperation in the health sector.

The process required significant coordination and inputs by various line Ministries and included the completion of a due diligence exercise by UDeCOTT, the nominated contractor. The Government of Austria subsequently advised that VAMED Engineering GmbH & Company has been nominated by the Government of Austria for the execution of the project.

The Ministry of Health, together with the South-West Regional Health Authority held a series of meetings with the nominated design/build contractor VAMED Engineering GmbH & Company in February 2014. The contractor presented the functional concept and architectural concept for the new Point Fortin Hospital. The major outcome was the completion of the final version of the Point Fortin Hospital, a clinical user brief with space programming, these schedules to inform the detailed designs and functional work-flow arrangements together with the zoning of the new hospital.

Geotechnical reports, cadastral and topographic surveys have been completed for the current site. Application for a Certificate of Environmental Clearance has been submitted to the Environmental Management Agency. The Ministry is in the process of reviewing the comprehensive master list of medical equipment for the new hospital.

Further to negotiations, Mr. Speaker, VAMED Engineering GmbH & Company has since submitted its cost proposal to UDeCOTT as the project developer for approval by its board. Once approved by the board, Cabinet’s approval will then be sought for the total estimated project budget for construction and equipment.

Mr. Speaker, subject to Cabinet’s approval of the total estimated project budget, it is expected that the contract for the nominated contractor VAMED Engineering GmbH & Company would be executed by July 2014. Typical detailed construction designs development for our hospital is usually done

between four to six months or sometimes as long as eight months. Construction work can then be initiated in the last quarter of 2014 or possibly 2015. [*Desk thumping*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jeffrey: Supplemental. Hon. Minister, can you state definitively where the location of the new Point Fortin Hospital would be located?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: It is a part that was previously owned by e Teck; it has now been transferred to the Ministry of Health. I think it is opposite the Dunlop area, that large piece of land there; not on the old hospital site as was previously thought.

Mr. Jeffrey: Further supplemental: hon. Minister, are you saying that that site opposite the Dunlop thing there, definitively, that is going to be the site? I understand that there is—

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Well, as far as I am standing here today it has not been changed and that is the site we are working with.

Mr. Jeffrey: Hon. Minister, at the Point Fortin Area Hospital, medical equipment is in a state of disrepair. Are you aware?

Mr. Speaker: That is a new question. Diego Martin Central, please.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I will answer it. Medical equipment has been in a state of disrepair, but it is being used. What has happened is that medical equipment does not deteriorate overnight. If you buy medical equipment today, you have a four-year warranty period before you even look for servicing.

If you look back, we have been in Government for four years. We did not get any new equipment. This equipment has been there from before that. So what I am putting in place right now is service contracts when you purchase equipment to make the manufacturer as well as the service provider responsible to make sure there is no down time. That is what I am doing with the equipment.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Minister, for all this information. My concern is the staffing for the new hospital. Could the Minister give a sense as to where the staff will be drawn from for the departments of this hospital? Is he in a position to estimate the ratio of local to foreign staff when this hospital is opened?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, it is a new question, but I will try to answer it. The staffing should come more so from, hopefully, local staffing. We are in the process of training approximately 2,000—3,000 nurses as in the El Dorado

Academy. The Ministry of Health has also embarked on a nurse training programme with specialized nursing training as we speak.

I am hoping to have specialist doctors, et cetera, through a movement with the University of the West Indies and if they do not take it up, the University of Trinidad and Tobago, where all hospitals in Trinidad and Tobago will be utilized for specialty training and exams will be written either by the University of the West Indies or the Royal Society of Medicine in London. They will produce the exams in such a manner as they do in the FRCS, SCM, RCP where training is taking place, the curriculum is done and you go and do your exam.

At present, it is not like that in the University of the West Indies. I am hoping to generate a large amount of specialists in that area. The other part of it, I cannot give you an exact ratio to foreign.

**Water Taxi Service
(Point Fortin)**

152. Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*) on behalf of Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*) asked the hon. Minister of Transport:

Could the Minister indicate when will the Water Taxi Service become available to the people of Point Fortin?

The Minister of Transport (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Mr. Speaker, in answering that question re. the water taxi service out of Point Fortin, in 2008, the water taxi service was developed and, of course, we know the short history of the water taxi service, especially when it comes to the *mv Su*, et cetera.

What I saying is that from the start of the water taxi service, there were some inherent problems. The problems were that the original service was supposed to be carrying upwards of 4,000 people every day between the various terminals. However, the two terminals that were actually built were the terminal in San Fernando and the terminal in Port of Spain.

There was an additional service eventually that was added to Chaguaramas. The issue of Point Fortin and the water taxi service is that I see where proper studies were never carried out as to how the water taxi service would operate in the Point Fortin area and also the Waterloo/Couva area because of the geography of the area. They have done detailed studies; they have done bathymetric studies, which were undertaken by Atlantic and, basically, what it says is that the seabed is very, very shallow there and goes out for many, many metres and, therefore, to be able to build terminals in Point Fortin and in the Couva/Waterloo area will be extremely expensive to do that.

Oral Answers to Questions
[HON. S. CADIZ]

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I visited with the Member for Point Fortin the actual area and really and truly there is no natural harbour where the water taxi terminal could be located. So besides the very shallow depth of the water, you would have issues of an open coastline, which would mean additional breakwater systems, et cetera. So that is being studied now. NIDCO says that in the 2015 budget, they will have funds available to do a detailed study, finally. Of course, these detailed studies should have been done in 2008, but that was not the case, so we will do that in 2015 and determine the suitability of those areas for a water taxi service.

Mr. Jeffrey: Supplemental: hon. Minister, if depth of water is the problem, then La Brea should be a natural selection. Is that not so?

Mr. Speaker: Would you like to answer the question?

Hon. S. Cadiz: No.

La Fortune Housing Project (Distribution of Units)

153. Miss Marlene McDonald (*Port of Spain South*) on behalf of Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*) asked the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development:

Could the Minister state:

- a) How many units in the La Fortune Housing Project in Point Fortin have been distributed to date?
- b) The date(s) of such distribution?
- c) How were recipients selected?

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, in response to question No. 153; the response to part (a), 19; the response to part (b), June 07, 2014 and June 14, 2014, respectively.

Miss Mc Donald: Is it possible to get the (b) part?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The (b) part: June 07, 2014 and June 14, 2014, respectively.

The answer to part (c), pursuant to Cabinet Minute 675 of March 11, 2004 and Cabinet Minute 2713 of September 25, 2008.

Precursor Chemicals Bill, 2014

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PRECURSOR CHEMICALS BILL, 2014

Bill to provide for the monitoring of prescribed activities and the prevention of the diversion of precursor chemicals and other chemical substances used, or capable of being used, in any type of illicit transaction involving narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and other drugs or substances having a similar effect and for purposes connected therewith [*The Minister of National Security*]; read the first time.

**FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION)
(FINANCIAL YEAR 2014) BILL, 2014**

Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation (Financial Year 2014) Act, 2013 [*The Minister of Finance and the Economy*]; read the first time.

Motion made: That the next stage be taken later in the proceedings. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*]

Question put and agreed to.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT

**Insurance (No. 2) Bill, 2013
(Extension of Time)**

The Minister of Transport (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Mr Speaker, having regard to the Fourth Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Insurance (No. 2) Bill, 2013, I beg to move that the committee be allowed an extension of four weeks in order to complete its work and to submit a final report by July 18, 2014.

Question put and agreed to.

**CONDOLENCES
(MR. SIEW RAMADHAR)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, if I could probably revert to Announcements before I go to Public Business. Hon. Members, on behalf of all hon. Members of this House and on my own behalf, I express deepest condolences to the hon. Prakash Ramadhar, Member for St. Augustine, and his family over the sad passing of his beloved father, Mr. Siew Ramadhar.

Hon. Member for St. Augustine, we know this is a great loss to you and your family. No one can ever replace a parent. We, therefore, pray that the Almighty

Condolences (Mr. Siew Ramadhar)
[MR. SPEAKER]

Wednesday, June 25, 2014

will provide to you and your family the strength and comfort needed at this time. The entire Parliament joins me in sending our deepest sympathy to you, hon. Member.

2.15 p.m.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
(ADOPTION)**

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai):
Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that this House adopt the First Report (2013/2014 Session) of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2014 Appropriation.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives met on Monday, June 23, 2014 and agreed on a number of proposals with respect to the 2014 appropriation. Members would have received details of responses to questions which were asked on Monday. I would like to certainly congratulate the staff of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy who had to work very arduous hours to ensure that the information could be provided to the Members of this honourable House within such a short period of time.

The information, in all cases, would not have addressed every single issue, because of the time constraints, but hon. Members who will be speaking in the debate no doubt will have an opportunity to supplement the answers which were given, and to answer in instances where the information may not have been immediately available, given the shortness of time within which quite a significant number of questions had to be answered.

Mr. Speaker, the matter submitted for the consideration of Parliament is the provision of Supplementary Appropriation in the sum of \$3,820,601,879 to fund urgent expenditure to September 30, 2014. The Bill also includes variation of both recurrent and capital expenditure. Mr. Speaker, before I get into the details of the report, allow me for a few minutes to, perhaps, elaborate on the current economic environment within which the request is being made, and within which the budget is being supplemented.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I could begin with the overall global environment which continues to strengthen, and we expect will continue to strengthen over the medium term. The outlook is becoming more positive for advanced economies,

particularly the United States which seems to have come out of the great recession, as they called it, of 2008 perhaps faster than many of the other advanced economies.

Despite some sluggishness in first quarter results of the US economy, activity is expected to increase over the course of 2014, but there are two issues which, on the international scene, have impacted on us in recent times, and the first relates to what is happening in the Ukraine conflict—the Russia/Ukraine conflict, and the second is the insurrection in Iraq. I would just like to mention these briefly, because of the potential of these conflicts to impact the supply of, as well as the price of petroleum, natural gas and their derivative by-products. The fact is that what is happening there has resulted in a spike in prices, and some prolonged increases which have impacted positively on our overall fiscal position, which I shall report on during the course of this presentation.

Mr. Speaker, the Russia/Ukraine conflict, which started in early 2014, has added a dimension of uncertainty to the global economic outlook. Russia supplies the Euro area with essential energy products, and is also an important market for European goods and services. The conflict in Ukraine also has implications for global agricultural commodity prices as both Russia and Ukraine are large wheat producers that can affect global supply, demand and prices. Severe weather conditions in several key agricultural areas in the US have already resulted in higher agricultural commodity prices, thus far, in 2014. Nevertheless, in Trinidad and Tobago, prices have continued to remain relatively subdued for agricultural products and their derivatives, notwithstanding some of the price increases that we are seeing on the international markets.

These events, along with the prolonged drought in the US, posed, as I said, upside risks to global food prices, especially if there is a disruption to supply in wheat from Russia and Ukraine. The insurgency in Iraq underlines the volatility of that part of the world, and together with the events in Russia and the Ukraine, would probably result in continued strong prices for oil and natural gas over the remainder of this fiscal year to September 30, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, in emerging market economies, an export rebound was the main driver behind better activity, and domestic demand generally remained subdued throughout most of the emerging markets, except in China. This has contributed to continued positive economic activity in some of the advanced economies which export to these countries. Final demand in advanced economies expanded broadly as expected with much of the upward movement in growth due to higher demand from inventory, and the running down of inventory stock.

Mr. Speaker, financial conditions in advanced economies have eased since the release of the October 2013 World Economic Outlook by the IMF, and there has been little change since the announcement by the US Federal Reserve on December 18, that it will begin tapering its quantitative easing measures. This includes further declines in risk premiums on government debt of crisis at euro area economies. As a result, we expect interest rates in the developed world to remain low. That has certain implications for Trinidad and Tobago, because as interest rates rise in the wider global economy, in Trinidad and Tobago there would be no option but to increase interest rates to ensure that there is no undue outward flow of foreign exchange, that certainly persons will look to be arbitraging the higher rates that exist in other countries.

So, the outlook which we have seen so far, which suggests that there will be continued low interest rates in the developed economies is good news for us here in Trinidad and Tobago, and for the continuation of the Government's economic policies as far as that is concerned. In the merging market economies, however, financial conditions have remained tighter, notwithstanding the US tapering announcements in May 2013. Equity prices have not fully recovered, and many sovereign bond yields have edged up, and some currencies have been under pressure.

So, Mr. Speaker, the small amount of volatility that we are seeing in global markets is beginning to impact some of the capital flows in some of the emerging markets, and I therefore add that as a caveat to my previous point about what is happening in advanced economies with interest rates remaining relatively low. So, it is an issue that we have to continue to monitor; we have to continue to pay close attention to, as we move forward during the course of this year, and it will have implications for monetary policy and even for fiscal policy.

Turning to projections, as I said, the United States is expected to grow by 2.8 per cent in 2014 up from 1.9 per cent in 2013, and this is expected to be carried on the back of a strong final domestic demand, supported in part by a reduction in the fiscal drag as a result of the budget agreement which was arrived at by the US Congress earlier this year. But the latter also implies a tighter projected fiscal stance in 2015, as the recent budget agreement implies that most of the sequester cuts will remain in place in financial year 2015 instead of being reversed as assumed last year. So, as a result, while for this year, as I said, the US economy is expected to grow by 2.8 per cent, and that is good news, not only for the US, but also for us where here in Trinidad and Tobago, we do quite a significant amount of trade with the United States, and for the region as a whole, tourism from the United States makes a major impact on regional economies.

So, notwithstanding that 2014 would be better, as I said, the recent budget agreements and, perhaps, the tightening that may occur—the fiscal tightening that may occur—has resulted in our current understanding of projected growths for the US for next year coming down slightly from where it was originally projected at 3.4 per cent to the current expected projection of approximately 3 per cent in 2015.

In the Euro area, we are starting to see movement in interest rates on the negative side. The European Central Bank has actually moved the discount rate to -0.1 per cent, and that reduction in interest rates to such a seemingly unheard of level is, perhaps, likely to continue for a little while. This is intending to continue to stimulate the growth that the Euro area has been seeing, and while recession risks have abated somewhat in the Euro area, what is happening, the events in Ukraine and in Iraq are likely to, once again, increase the risks that the European Union is likely to perhaps not show much growth this year, and the projections with which we are working suggest a 1 per cent growth this year for the European area and a 1.4 per cent in 2015.

We expect, Mr. Speaker, that certain economies in the Euro area will continue to be under stress—Spain would be one of them—and we expect that this will hold back growth in domestic demand, and that holding back of growth in domestic demand will result in, perhaps, downside risks again to what is happening with respect to our projections for growth in the European area. The United Kingdom is the only one that seems to be moving gradually into an area of growth.

So, Mr. Speaker, the implications of that for us in the region, particularly for our neighbours north of us, is that the economies of the neighbouring islands are likely to remain under stress; they are likely to continue to have fiscal challenges; and they are likely to see continued low demand for their tourism products, particularly from the European area. It is hoped that some of what is taking place in the US will provide an upward fillip to the dampened expectations for tourism growth in these islands, but over the next couple of years, in the medium term, we do not expect to see any very significant improvements.

2.30 p.m.

This, of course, has some implications for our local manufacturers who export into the region, and we have already put in place an initiative which is designed to provide very competitive rates for manufacturers who seek to borrow funds from the Eximbank to export to countries outside of the Caricom region. So, Mr.

Speaker, we have to start the process of reorganizing how our manufacturing sector does business as we seek to grow the economy and as we seek to make our manufacturing sector much more, perhaps, competitive.

With respect to the local economy, investor confidence remains high, both locally and internationally. In fact, we were ranked sixth in Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of foreign direct investment for 2012. All sectors of the economy continue to grow despite the setback that we faced in the energy sector in the third quarter of last year and, again, in the first quarter of this year when significant maintenance work led to very large and extensive downtime in the energy sector. Notwithstanding this, by the end of this year we expect that the economy will grow in line with the forecast given by Moody's Investors Service and the IMF, which have both projected growth somewhere between 2.5 and 2.9 per cent.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if I may be allowed to quote from the IMF Article IV Consultation which was conducted earlier this year, and I think it is about now being released, the IMF had this to say, that we looked for the economy to register real growth of near 2.5 per cent in 2014 after subpar growth of around 1.5 per cent in 2013. This is due to revival of growth in the energy sector as significant maintenance outages of recent years appear finally to be in the past. Growth in the non-energy sector was fairly buoyant in 2013, and the IMF is saying we look for that to continue through 2014.

Moving forward, reduced slack in the labour market may start to become a binding constraint, and we expect growth in the non-energy sector to settle around its long-term potential which we estimate at 2 to 2.5 per cent per annum. The energy sector should also grow at potential of around 1 per cent per annum over the medium term—and this will be in real terms over the medium term. Beyond the projection horizon, the recent pick-up in the energy sector investment due to a revamped energy sector fiscal regime may begin to bear significant fruit, especially if deep-water exploration proves as productive as hoped. Core inflation has been relatively quiescent but has recently picked up from 2 per cent at the end of December to 2.7 per cent in February.

Now, this is the IMF's view concerning what is happening with respect to growth in the economy. It has been echoed also by Moody's, who have projected a slightly higher rate of growth for the economy than has the IMF and, than even we have projected. Moody's in their report of April 14, 2014, on Trinidad and Tobago, indicated that they expect the economy to maintain its positive

momentum and a forecast growth of 2.9 per cent in 2014, further picking up to 3.2 per cent in 2015. As a result, Moody's has retained the sovereign credit rating at Baa1, which they say is supported by relatively high income levels driven by the country's large and diversified energy sector.

The sovereign credit profile also benefits from a moderate and affordable debt burden and a very strong external position anchored by a sizeable foreign exchange reserves buffer. In addition, the Government's balance sheet includes the country's Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, a core fiscal institution to manage oil sector revenues, which has accumulated a balance in excess of 20 per cent of GDP.

So, Mr. Speaker, by and large, the international rating agencies, the IMF and our own computations support the view that the economy has returned to growth and we expect this growth to continue to accelerate over the short term. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, our projection for GDP at the end of this year is that the total GDP of Trinidad and Tobago in money terms would have grown to approximately \$175 billion. [*Desk thumping*] As I said, across the board, all sectors of the economy are growing strongly; the non-energy sector has grown by approximately 2.5 per cent on average over the last six quarters. In the third quarter of 2012, the non-energy sector grew by 2.3 per cent; in the fourth quarter it grew by 1.9 per cent; in the first quarter of 2013, 3.6 per cent; the second quarter of 2013, 2.6 per cent; the third quarter of 2013, 1.9 per cent; the fourth quarter of 2013, 2.4 per cent and this year it continues to grow at the same rate.

So, there has been a continuous growth in the non-energy sector and we expect this momentum to continue in 2014 and, as a result of the initiatives which we are putting in place, we expect this growth to accelerate towards the end of 2014.

Mr. Speaker, if I may just touch briefly on the unemployment level. The other macroeconomic indicators continue to perform exceptionally well. The labour market, the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development has advised that the unemployment rate is now 3.7 per cent, [*Desk thumping*] the lowest level in the history of this nation. This has been to a large extent, as a result of a strategy adopted by the Government to focus on the remedying of infrastructural deficiencies across a wide swath of Trinidad and Tobago. In several parts of the country many infrastructural projects are ongoing, utilizing a number of small

contractors who have been hard at work in remedying many of the infrastructural deficiencies which exist in many parts of the country.

So this, combined with the current continued expansion in all sectors of the economy has resulted in some pressure in the labour market, but at the same time it has resulted in a reduction in the unemployment level.

Mr. Imbert: That is why we have so much crime.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: The data from the Ministry—the Minister of National Security, I am sure, will answer that in due course—of Planning and Sustainable Development has also revealed that over 13,000 new businesses were registered in 2013. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: How much?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: “13”. We recognize that all new businesses created will not necessarily result in job creation. There are some businesses that are registered as SPV, Special Purpose Vehicles, and so on. But I only raise this, Mr. Speaker, to say anecdotally that there is support for the continuing expansion of business activity here in Trinidad and Tobago.

So, Mr. Speaker, I was moving on, but perhaps I better also deal with the issue of inflation, because the increase in prices is a critical issue that has to be addressed, and I have to say that there has been considerable success in bringing inflation under control. I have to say, though, that it is part of a worldwide phenomenon. It is not simply something that has been created here in Trinidad and Tobago, but nevertheless given the stubbornness with which inflation has defied so many expectations over the years, we are very pleased to see the downward movement in prices. The latest figure for February—and I should say, Mr. Speaker, that this downward movement in prices is occurring in a tight labour market. And in a tight labour market you would expect prices of certain commodities to rise, including the price of labour and, in spite of that, we are seeing that the figures for February show a decline to 3.9 per cent, with core inflation, which excludes food and energy, which have decelerated to 2 per cent at the end of last year, maintaining that momentum.

Food inflation, which dipped to an annual low of 3 per cent in September last year, was the main impetus behind the reduction in the rate of growth of headline inflation. I should add that that, of course, has gone up since that time, but the fact is, overall, the level of inflation remains well controlled. Consumer spending, of course, is a major contributor to inflation, and it is an area that we continue to

look at very closely as it has that impact on the overall level of pricing. Motor vehicle sales based on the last data I had, suggested that this had gone up by 25 per cent. In fact, I am told that the figure may be slightly higher than that, and sales of cement, an indication of construction activity, continued to increase robustly towards the end of last year.

These are things that we need to look at very closely because the impact of prices can have a dislocating effect on the economy and, also, we need to consider the effect that some of the higher levels of demand can have on the level of the international reserves of our country, and we need, therefore, to pay close attention to that. As I say that, perhaps I could just touch briefly on international reserves, and I know that the issue of the foreign exchange market is something that, perhaps, may interest Members of this honourable House and, I would probably later in my presentation make a brief comment as it relates to the foreign exchange situation here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the country's balance of payments continues to be healthy, registering a surplus of US \$227 million—\$226.8 million—for the first nine months of the year, last year, and is estimated to have closed the year with a much larger surplus of \$786.3 million for 2013. [*Desk thumping*] As a result, gross international reserves have climbed to over US \$10 billion, equivalent to 12 months of import cover. [*Interruption*] In addition—and I will come back to the foreign exchange market, hon. Member, shortly—we note that the foreign currency deposits in the banking sector have grown to over US \$3 billion; the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund has also grown to \$5.5 billion—

Hon. Member: US.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: US \$5.5 billion, and Standard and Poor's have continued to maintain their rating for the country and our overall debt profile continues to be well managed. [*Desk thumping*]

Our total debt including guarantees amounted to 43.6 per cent of GDP as at March 2014. Our expectation projections to the end of 2014 is that debt to GDP will remain in the region of 44 per cent, reducing, once the CL Financial debacle is settled, to somewhere around the mid-30s some time during the course of next year as we start to realize on the proceeds from the disposal of assets which would be done in a structured way. And, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, at a later time in my presentation, I would like to be allowed the opportunity to, perhaps, make a statement or to make a short comment on CL Financial and what is happening as far as that particular matter is concerned.

2.45 p.m.

So overall, Mr. Speaker, our macroeconomic indicators remain sound, the fiscal position remains strong, inflation is well-contained, employment is at record levels, foreign exchange reserves is at [*Crosstalk*]—employment is at record levels—foreign exchange reserves are at historic highs, and the debt profile of the country remains well-managed. We are well poised as a nation to continue the growth trajectory that we have been experiencing over the past couple of years, and to accelerate that growth trajectory, and the momentum of that growth as we move forward. I know that the nation as a whole looks forward to the continuing strength and buoyancy of this economy, and its continuing expansion makes us one of the most vibrant and dynamic economies in the western hemisphere.

So within this context, Mr. Speaker, I would want to place some of the initiatives which were in the budget of 2014 and which now require supplementary allocation. Perhaps I should start with our overall fiscal position so that there is a clear understanding of where we stand at the moment.

Last year, Government's fiscal operations resulted in a deficit of \$4.2 billion equivalent to 2.6 per cent of GDP. This resulted mainly from the settlement of outstanding wage negotiations for the period 2008 to 2010 which this administration had inherited. However, data for the first quarter of this current fiscal year shows a surplus of \$4.2 billion which was 46 per cent higher than we had originally budgeted, and resulted from the inflow from the sale of shares in the First Citizens IPO which brought in an amount of \$1 billion, as well as from increased dividends from state enterprises which have now been mandated to ensure that they make their own contributions to the Exchequer. In addition, most categories of revenue for the Government came in above budget reflecting the continuing expansion of the economy. Thus far there has been an increase in expenses by 6.6 per cent, but this has been more than offset by the growth in revenues.

Mr. Speaker, before going into further details, I would just like to focus on a couple of other areas of the economy that perhaps is worth mentioning because of its impact on GDP, on revenue, and on the sustainability of Government's fiscal position. I just want to touch very briefly, Mr. Speaker, on foreign direct investment. Mr. Speaker, the economy of Trinidad and Tobago as alluded to, as I indicated earlier, is robust, and investors maintain their confidence in this economy, and this has been reflected in the movement in foreign direct investment.

Mr. Speaker, while overall foreign direct investment inflows to Central America and the Caribbean fell by 17 per cent in 2012 compared to 2011, foreign direct investment coming into Trinidad and Tobago grew by 38 per cent over the same period; according to figures from the World Investment Report 2013 released by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Mr. Speaker, the total FDI flowing into Trinidad and Tobago in 2012 was US \$2.5 billion, the highest since 2008.

Hon. Member: US?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: US \$2.5 billion the highest since 2008 when RBC of Canada reacquired RBTT for US \$2.2 billion. So if you will exclude that you will see the very significant growth which had taken place.

Foreign direct investment flows into Trinidad and Tobago in 2011 totalled \$1.8 billion—and this would be in total, not just the energy sector—it was \$549 million in 2010, \$709 million in 2009. The pre-crisis annual average for Trinidad and Tobago according to UNCTAD was \$884 million between the period 2005 to 2007. Our projections for next year from the reports that we have from the energy companies and from the data that we have collected from those companies, suggest that inflows for this year would be in the region of about US \$3.3 billion, a significant uptick in contributions by these energy companies in our economy.

I think it is very important for us to know that, Mr. Speaker, because these companies are also retrenching in many parts of the world. Some of the major players in Trinidad and Tobago are, bp, BG, BHP and these companies, while they continue to rationalize their operations throughout the world and continue to rationalize their operations sometimes even in their own home country, have committed to expanding their investments here in Trinidad and Tobago. Bp has indicated to me that their intention over the next five years is to spend in the region US \$5 billion. BHP has also indicated that Trinidad and Tobago remains one in the jewels in the crown, in the BHP crown. [*Desk thumping*] And British Gas which has been having its own challenges in Australia, and which has had to make significant adjustments throughout the world, has indicated that Trinidad and Tobago remains a place in which it intends to keep a solid long-term presence.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is very important to make this point because it has very significant impact on the ability of the Government to sustain itself—and for the economy, and for our country—over the long term.

Mr. Speaker, there were a couple of issues that I made passing reference to when I did the background on the economy just now. I would just like to make a few comments on a few of these matters, as I know that they are matters of importance for the national community, as well as Members in the honourable House. The first relates to the development of the capital market.

Mr. Speaker, despite the negative publicity which eventually surrounded the First Citizens IPO, it cannot be denied that the IPO was a financial success. The Government's divestment of approximately 48.5 million shares in an eager investment climate, generated over \$1 billion in revenue. Additionally, the demand created by the IPO had the effect of significantly increasing the worth of the rest of the shares which the Government held in the bank. The initial share price was \$22, while currently the price of the share stands at around \$37 as at earlier this month. [*Crosstalk*] Thirty four dollars today is still much higher than \$22. At the time of the First Citizens IPO when the shares were offered at \$22, Government's stake in the bank, its 80 per cent stake, was valued at \$4.3 billion. Today, that shareholding is worth approximately \$7 billion. That, Mr. Speaker, amounts to over 100 per cent or close to 100 per cent increase in value.

What is more and indeed, Mr. Speaker, in my view more importantly, some 12,000 citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are now shareholders in the bank. That is 12,000 citizens directly benefiting from the Government divestment and its sharing of some shareholding in the bank.

Mr. Speaker, you are no doubt aware that there were some issues with the IPO, particularly you know—and I would not want the actions of one or two individuals to sully what has been a very, very successful enterprise by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the Pricewaterhouse investigation into this matter was completed, and as I have indicated a report was received. This report was provided to the Attorney General who in turn provided, forwarded his findings to the DPP. The Attorney General following consultation with the DPP has advised that the report cannot be tabled or publicly and widely shared until the investigation is complete. The Attorney General has advised that it would be unwise and perhaps unfair to the investigation to do something like that.

The report from Pricewaterhouse, Mr. Speaker, has also been shared with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Mr. Speaker, the SEC itself is conducting an enquiry into the alleged improprieties in the First Citizens IPO. That investigation had begun in April and is still ongoing.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there is a perception that the SEC's investigation is taking an inordinate amount of time, but I wish to point out that investigations of such complex financial transactions do take time.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if I may be allowed to refer to a recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* of Thursday, June 19. The article related to the Rajaratnam Insider-Trading case, where it is said and I quote:

Mr. Rengan who is the older brother of the other Mr. Rajaratnam, who was actually sentenced. It is being alleged that he "...either worked hand-in-hand with Raj to corrupt insiders at public companies,..."—or may have been in complicity in the crimes of which "...his older brother was convicted in 2011."

So although—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Minister, for giving way. Mr. Speaker, through you, if I could ask the hon. Minister, the Pricewaterhouse report, the initial terms of reference, I would imagine, would have covered the Phillip Rahaman sale. Does it also cover, what has since come to light, the Vetseeram Seeteram, Chanka Seeterram deal? Does the Pricewaterhouse report also cover the second fiasco out of the Seeterram transaction? Thank you.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: No. The report actually—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, if I may. I have a question filed in this House on this matter which the Minister has not answered, and I am wondering if this is a roundabout way of answering the question, or whether in fact, you know—there is a question filed on this matter, and the Minister is aware of it. It came up for answer and he did not, and now we are having questions and supplemental and he is trying to dodge—I think, Mr. Speaker, something is wrong here.

Mr. Speaker: There is a question on the Order Paper, as you are aware, on this matter and I would urge you not to go into details until the question is properly answered. Okay. Continue.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: All right. Well perhaps, Mr. Speaker, let me stop at this point. I would not proceed any further on this matter. Let me stop at this point and we will answer the question as we are required—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: I will appreciate that.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai:—and what I would just say is that, and perhaps let me move on from this. I am just trying to get my bearings here, Mr. Speaker,

because I just want to move away from perhaps seeming to answer any issue in relation to that until we deal with the question, as you have guided me, Mr. Speaker. I am, of course, grateful for the guidance. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I wish also to mention that the Government is even now moving to strengthen the Securities Act, 2012. A select committee which convened to review the Act with a view to tightening any loopholes is nearing the end of its deliberations, and would soon make its recommendations to the Senate.

3.00 p.m.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, in response to the point which was made by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, I wish to say that there was no intention for us to avoid answering that particular question. It will be answered and we do, in fact, have the answers available to respond accordingly. So I also would like to apologize to the Member if, in fact, I may have done something that, perhaps, could be deemed or treated as being less than respectful in terms of addressing the issue that the Member had raised.

Let me say that the IPO that we did is but the first of Government's strategic steps to continuing the development of the capital market and, perhaps, intensifying the level of activity which can be taken and can be had in the capital market, as another way of providing investment outlets for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

I would say that we are also considering other IPOs, including the Phoenix Park Gas Processors, as well as we had mentioned some time ago the merger of the TTMF and the Home Mortgage Bank with a view to a possible listing. We are also considering partners for four other state enterprises which were not considered as strategic, and for which we think that, perhaps, private sector partnerships would enhance the executing capability, the efficiency and effectiveness with which these enterprises perform their duties.

I will also just want to add a couple of very quick things here, Mr. Speaker. It relates to the fact that we had identified the financial services sector as an area for growth in the economy, and diversification of the economy. And as I had indicated previously, last year we had investments of about TT \$250 million coming into the country in the area of back office processing. We have currently executed a number of MOUs with insurance companies that are considering establishing their operations in this environment.

As part of our growth of this sector also, if I may add in passing, that we are also looking at positioning Trinidad and Tobago as a dispute resolution centre for

capital market activities in the region. We have had meetings with a number of investors who have expressed the fact that Trinidad and Tobago can, perhaps, exploit this particular niche because of the difficulties being experienced in a number of other jurisdictions.

So we are laying the foundation for the further development of our financial sector, and we have introduced a number of new legislative initiatives. We continue to strengthen our AML and CFT regime. The issue really is not, as many people have said, just a question of putting new laws in place; it is also an issue of the effective implementation of these pieces of legislation. I have to say that we have started to focus on that particular area. In the last two months I think you would have seen two orders issued by the court against two organizations. We have had a number of other charges being laid, which we expect will accelerate this process of ensuring that Trinidad and Tobago is seen as a centre in which, not only are there laws, but these laws are enforced.

As I said, we are strengthening our Securities Act. We have the new insurance legislation coming on stream. We have the new credit union legislation. We have just recently passed the Procurement Bill as well as the Planning and Facilitation of Development Bill, and we have, in fact, moved to operationalize the Insolvency Act. This legislation which had been passed by the House in 2007, had not been proclaimed, and we move to have the legislation proclaimed on May 23 of this year, having put all of the arrangements in place, so that we could start the process of moving Trinidad and Tobago as a destination in which persons from outside can come and operate, understanding that there is a legislative framework that will fully facilitate this.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make a short comment also, if you will allow, on the Auditor General's report which was recently issued. Over the past two years we have been initiating different exercises to strengthen the Auditor General's Department, the office of the Auditor General, additional resources have been put in. Additional technological and operational capability has been built in, and we have seen that the Auditor General has been able to bring a number of the audits up to speed a lot sooner than had been the case in the past. In particular, I recognize the fact that the recent Auditor General's report had identified a number of errors and omissions which had not been properly addressed during the course of the year by the accounting officers in the various Ministries.

Now this points to a number of problem areas. Our systems and procedures within the various Ministries; the training capability and the training which has been given to these public officers; the culture of performance; the technology

and the sense of accountability are all sources of concern and are areas that have to be addressed if we are going to find ourselves in a place where some of the errors and omissions, which have been identified on an ongoing basis—and this goes back for many years—can be eliminated.

Mr. Speaker, I have met with all of the Permanent Secretaries. We have identified things that we need to do in order to strengthen the capabilities of the Ministries. We have identified ways in which, perhaps, we can change the culture of accountability in these Ministries, and we have received feedback on what we can do to strengthen the institutions and build capacity within the Ministries and departments of Government.

Mr. Speaker, we are comfortable that we are on the road to significantly improving the culture which had been in place previously, and which, over the years has resulted in so many breaches, and so many apparent breaches and, perhaps, the lack of urgency in many parts of our public service, and we expect that going forward we should continue to see improvements on an ongoing basis.

One of the areas that I just wanted to touch on, recently as I said, is the foreign exchange situation. I think it is important to deal with it, although it does not speak directly to the report in front of us. But I think that it is important for me to touch on it, simply because of the importance which foreign exchange has for the economy of the country as a whole.

As I indicated previously, the country has 12 months of import cover. Notwithstanding this, the market has been experiencing tightness in the availability of supply. Now tightness is not the same as crisis. I think it is important to recognize that over the past 20 years, there have been these periods of tightness in the market on an ongoing basis, which have had to be addressed as we go along, so it is nothing new.

From the time we switched from the fixed exchange rate to the managed float, we have to deal with this particular issue. As I said, the situation that we have today I describe, not as a crisis, but simply as the tightness in the market—a tightness in the market.

I understand that business people who want to get their money today, do not want to know. As far as they are concerned it is a crisis, so I accept that. But I am saying from a macroeconomic point of view, if you have \$10 billion in reserves there is no question that there is a crisis. A crisis would be if, for example, you had no foreign exchange reserves and people were looking for foreign exchange, then that would be—*[Interruption]* Well, perhaps, it is a calamity, perhaps

synonymous with crisis. But the thing is that over the past few years the foreign exchange reserves of this country have grown from 2010 from \$8.9 billion from late 2009 early 2010, to \$10.3 billion today. [*Desk thumping*] So there is foreign exchange coming into the country.

Mr. Imbert: Where is it?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: The issue for us is how do we manage this in a way that continues to ensure that there is, perhaps, confidence in the system, and people can have confidence that when they need the funds they would get it, or if there is a delay, it will not be a significant delay in obtaining the funds.

I know that the Central Bank has met with the banks, and I know that the Central Bank had made some changes to the system and, to some extent, some of those changes may have impacted and resulted in the situation in which we found ourselves.

We have, together with the Central Bank, discussed the matter, and the Central Bank has met with the banks. I believe that following the last meeting, the banks were all very positive about the fact that they expect that the funding will be made available. The Governor assures me that during the course of the next week or so, significant conversions are expected from the energy sector and these conversions will improve the supply of foreign exchange in the market.

I think many of the purchasers of foreign exchange have become, perhaps, very upset and agitated, over the fact that when they come into the bank they do not get it right away. But as I said, the issue of queues in banks, for foreign exchange, is not a new issue. The issue is, perhaps, that the length of time to settle the queue may have gotten longer in recent times, and the Central Bank is working and has given the assurance that they will do what is required to ensure that the funding is available. I know that they have revisited the formula that they have put in place, to ensure that, perhaps, we can get ourselves out of this particular situation which has created the concern that, perhaps, people may not be able to get foreign exchange when they need it. Therefore, it is something that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy will continue to monitor very closely as we move forward.

I just, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, want to make one final point before I get into some of the details of the appropriation. That point relates to CL Financial, because I did say that the overall level of debt of the economy is likely to be ameliorated, to some extent, once we can start recovering the amounts due from CL Financial, as a result of the bailout that occurred in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

First of all, I think there has been a number of statements about the sale of assets. I want to assure the population and the Members of this honourable House that, in fact, there is no fire sale or no significant sales of assets taking place at this time. In fact, what I did is that I asked both the Chairman of CL Financial, as well as the Governor of the Central Bank to advise on what the status was of any sales that may be taking place within the CL Financial group, inclusive of Clico.

CL Financial wrote to me actually this morning, and I would like to quote, Mr. Speaker:

“Further to our report dated March 26, 2014 in which the details of all major asset sales of CL Financial...were outlined, I wish to indicate that the Board of CLF has not sold any additional assets nor is it considering or in the process of the sale of any other assets, save and accept...(Colfire)...”—which had commenced last year, with the engagement of PricewaterhouseCoopers.

So this is the only asset which, in a sense, had been identified, and which had been identified more than a year ago, Mr. Speaker, in 2013.

In addition, the Governor of the Central Bank also wrote to me confirming that with the exception of the “W” Hotel, which I understand the lenders were moving against, in order to realize their assets, the Central Bank thought that it was wisest that the sale take place not under a Chapter 11 type of arrangement, but perhaps it takes place in a more normal environment. They have put arrangements in place to consider the sale of the W Hotel, but apart from that, the Central Bank has indicated that there are no other assets which have been put up for sale by Clico.

3.15 p.m.

So, I just wanted to make that point because I think there has been quite a number of statements being made publicly about what is happening with Clico and CL Financial, and I want to say very categorically, as at this morning, both the Central Bank as well as CL Financial have confirmed that there are no sales taking place as far as the assets of the CL group are concerned with the exception of those two matters which had been—to which I had referred.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are two other activities which are currently taking place, which will have a significant impact on CL, which I would just like to mention. These are the arbitration involving Methanol Holdings (Trinidad) Limited and the valuation of Clico by the Central Bank which is taking place by Towers Watson, the actuarial valuator, and I think coming out of that we will

then be in a position to much more clearly identify what is likely to come to the Government as far as the liquidation of the outstanding loans which have been made to the group are concerned.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have, sorry?

Mr. Speaker: You have until half-past three.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Okay. There were a couple of other areas that I wanted to refer to, but perhaps I need to get to some of the areas in relation to the revenue and expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, one would recall that the 2014 budget projected a fiscal deficit of \$6.357 billion or 3.6 per cent of GDP. For the purposes of administration of the budget, an overall deficit of \$2.768 billion was projected for the period October 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014. Based on actual revenue received and expenditure incurred, the central Government's fiscal operations recorded a surplus of \$247 million in the first six months of the fiscal year. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the revenue was higher, notwithstanding the fact that there were lower than anticipated receipts from taxes on income and profit, taxes on goods and services and unemployment levy and Green Fund. Those areas which had lower than anticipated receipts, they were offset by higher than projected receipts under taxes on international trade, other taxes, non-tax revenue and capital revenue.

Mr. Speaker, the lower than projected performance of taxes on income and profits was primarily due to a lower take from oil companies, mainly because of the late payment of current liabilities by one state-owned company, and the late collection of taxes from production sharing companies and other companies as well as in withholding tax. This resulted mainly because of the industrial action at the Board of Inland Revenue. I should add that these taxes have since been received and should we continue during the course of this month with no further disruption, we expect that this quarter would show a much better picture than last quarter.

With respect to taxes on goods and services, the lower than projected receipts under value added taxes were in the areas of exploration and production in the energy sector and from the impact of higher VAT refunds and excise duties. Now, what tends to happen, Mr. Speaker, is that the VAT refunds are netted against the VAT inflows, and because we made a decision earlier this year that we would clear

the VAT backlog, the netting effect of that would have impacted negatively on our VAT figures for this year.

So, the end result is that we are hearing less complaints from the business community regarding the refund of VAT, simply because we have been very proactive in dealing with this particular aspect of our tax position. With respect to recurrent expenditure, actual expenditure in the first half of the fiscal year was approximately \$1.3 billion lower than projected, and the primary contributors to the shortfall came from personnel expenditure, other goods and services and interest payments.

Mr. Speaker, I would not bother to go into all of the details of all of the reductions, where, for example, some of the lower expenses were incurred. I expect that this information would be made available when we publish the accounts. I would just say that in the case of interest payments, domestic interest was down by \$153 million due to Treasury Bills discount being less than projected. However, this was partially mitigated by higher expenditure on external loans which was mainly due to the commencement of a new loan and fluctuations in exchange rate.

Mr. Speaker, these supplementation and variations which we have before us, came about as a result of a mid-year review of recurrent expenditure and capital expenditure. During the course of the debate, the proposals contained in the report will be addressed by various Members of Government, but I would just wish to draw your attention to some of the big ticket items on the list. The total expenditure that is being requested is \$3.8 billion. Of this figure, some \$1.02 billion goes towards the payments of salaries, NIS, COLA, allowances, stipend, travelling, subsistence and arrears for public servants, and includes the settlement of the collective agreement for over 20,000 daily-paid workers.

One point six billion is carded to go towards infrastructure development, including such major projects as the Diego Martin Highway and the Point Fortin Highway, which is aimed at bringing relief to hundreds of thousands of commuters on a daily basis. The difference of \$1.2 billion will be spent on the various needs of Ministries, particularly the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources and, of course, the Ministry of National Security.

Mr. Speaker, the supplementary funding is mainly in respect of personnel expenditure, goods and services, minor equipment purchases, current transfers

and subsidies, current transfers to statutory boards and similar bodies, debt servicing and the development programme, all of which cannot be avoided.

The three largest Heads of expenditure, I will just touch on these in the few minutes that I have remaining are: the Ministry of Finance and the Economy; the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Health. During the period under review, several Ministries have utilization rates of 30 per cent and above in terms of their expenditure. These Ministries include the Ministry of Housing, which recorded a utilization rate of 64 per cent with expenditure of \$461 million out of an allocation of \$718 million, and as well, the Ministries of Education, Local Government and the Public Utilities.

The projects for which we are seeking to have additional allocations relate as follows: in the Ministry of National Security, the allocation is to be increased by \$78 million to meet contractual obligations with AgustaWestland Incorporated for four twin-turbine helicopters. The Ministry of Food Production, the allocation is increased to \$20.7 million for the Food Basket Road Programme and 15 large commercial farms. For the Ministry of Education, the allocation is increased for the following priority projects: eight primary schools scheduled for completion by June; improvements, refurbishments and extensions to 14 primary schools and 17 secondary schools under construction, as well as for the procurement of furniture and equipment.

For the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, the allocation is increased for the dualling of the Diego Martin Highway from Acton Court to Victoria Gardens; for the award of the construction of the overpass at the Curepe interchange under the Port of Spain East/West Corridor transportation project; emergency repair works, where landslips have taken place at Upper Christian Drive, Pleasant Park, and Iere Village, Princes Town; in addition to the continued bridge reconstruction programme.

The Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources has received an allocation to facilitate the multi-phase waste water rehabilitation programme in Malabar and San Fernando. The Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training has received an increased allocation to meet financial obligations for certain high-priority projects, such as the construction of the drilling school in Ste. Madeleine, the UWI south campus, the UTT main campus and open campus in Chaguanas, the construction of the administration headquarters for YTEPP and the NTA, and the training facility at Woodford Lodge in Chaguanas.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development has had their allocations increased to continue construction of the Couva children's hospital and training facility as well as for the residential lots programme and acquisition of lands. For the Ministry of Health, the allocation is increased for the national oncology centre in the capital development programme as well as being increased for—well, the recurrent budget is increased for allocations to the RHAS to provide much needed relief to persons who access these particular facilities.

And finally, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs also received an increase in allocation to make phase one of the Galeota Port, which has been in construction for some time, to make this particularly available.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are some of the main areas as far as the development programme is concerned and as I indicated, with respect to recurrent, a major part of that relates to payment of salaries and wages, as well as the settlement of the collective agreement.

There are quite a few other areas which I would like to touch on, but I see I have three minutes, so what I would seek to do is, I know that Ministers will address a number of areas in their contribution, and to the extent that I may be able also to address some of the requests or some of the concerns during the course of the debate, as well as in the winding up, I will seek to do so.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to emphasise the continuing strength of our economy, our position of prominence and pre-eminence in the region and the international recognition which we have as a nation, something which we lose sight of too frequently. Our economy continues to grow; our economic buffers in the HSF and in our external reserves are strong; inflation is well contained; debt levels are manageable and more people are employed today than in 2010. Of course, there remains much to be done in improving efficiency and effectiveness at all levels within our society and much improvement is required in the quality and timeliness of services offered by all public bodies. While unemployment is well managed, underemployment remains a challenge, and new approaches for dealing with this, as well as for dealing with crime, are required. Many of these problems represent the inheritance of generations of inaction and cannot be cured overnight, but they can be fixed with the right results and with persistence. Our economy today remains the best performing in the region and the envy of many of our neighbours. We need to build on these successes as we enter this new phase of growth and expansion and seek to ensure that the wealth generated is equitably distributed for all.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

3.30 p.m.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a few comments and observations on the matter before us and the presentation of the Minister of Finance and the Economy. Mr. Speaker, good news is always welcome news, and in this House it is probably a good assessment that my colleagues on that side of the House are the good news bearers and those of us on this side might be the bad news bearers. But the reality is that one expects the Government to tell us all the good news, and today the Minister of Finance and the Economy has attempted to do so.

But we are not here of recent vintage, and we are not here in isolation, and I simply want to comment on some of the things the Minister of Finance and the Economy raised in the context that the budgetary process, much as it is based on estimates of expenditure, and revenues, of course, today's exercise can be seen as a continuation of the budget that was presented. I say that because the Minister of Finance and the Economy is here today, asking us for \$3.8 billion of additional funds, and when one looks at what these revenues are to apply to, a simple question arises: could not these have been taken into account at the presentation of the budget? [*Desk thumping*]

The answer might be, no, they could not have been because they were unknown and unexpected. But would that be a true reflection? Because when one looks at the major components of this \$3.8 billion additional revenues, one would see, as the Minister has just told us, that they relate to four projects: the Diego Martin Highway, which was under construction when we presented the last budget for this House's approval; the Point Fortin Highway was well under way at the time as well; the settlement of the industrial relations considerations for public officials—that was also known to us—and, of course, the Galeota Port was under way.

So then, Mr. Speaker, if the budgeting process was as complete as it could have been, we could easily have factored in known expenditure for these projects in a way that these appropriations which we are addressing today, could have been taken into account because we knew that they were coming up. Unless, of course, the Government is prepared to tell us that what provisions were made were insufficient, and surprisingly so, so we are now asking for \$1.2 billion here, another billion there and so on, and so on. But I know that would not be correct.

It was just that we were dealing with a budget with a deficit—a very large one, \$6.1 billion, and had these items which we knew were coming up, had they been factored into the budget, the deficit would have ballooned to \$9 billion or

\$10 billion. [*Desk thumping*] And if that were so, a different kind of conversation would have taken place at the time of the budget, and that conversation would not only have been confined to us here in this House and in this country, but also with the IMF and others. Because there is a game being played about managing this deficit, and once you keep your numbers, your estimates when you are in deficit, then all is well and the public servants outside, and the World Bank, and so everybody is happy because you have managed to somehow not express the real situation.

I make these observations so that the population could know that when you hear the good news from the Minister of Finance and the Economy and the Government, that is not the whole story. [*Desk thumping*] And I am not saying this, accusing the Minister of anything underhand, I am just talking about how the process works, so that if you are hearing a report on the process, how to take it. Because this is how the budgeting process goes on from time to time. I do not think the Minister has invented this. But when you get the good news, just bear in mind that there is something else that you need to pay attention to. So these projects which were all known to us, in simple language, provisions for them were left out of the budget, knowing full well that we will come to it sometime down the road, and here we are today.

Now, the Minister of Finance and the Economy went on to talk about low interest rates, and he said that the fact that low interest rates are being experienced outside of Trinidad and Tobago is good for us here, where the interest rates are also still very low, and as long as it stays low outside, we should feel good in here. Correct. But something bothers me here, Mr. Speaker, and that is, we had low interest rates, so there is no attraction, there is no pull factor to foreign exchange leaving Trinidad and Tobago and going outside.

But the way the Minister of Finance and the Economy presented this good climate of low interest rates and what it means for us, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy—and he may want to respond when he winds up—whether he is concerned that there might be significant leakage of foreign exchange outside of Trinidad and Tobago even at this time when interest rates are low outside. Because if the answer is yes, when interest rates begin to rise outside—as they will—then that problem of the flow of foreign exchange out of Trinidad and Tobago could become more acute and become a very real problem.

Because as the recent problem arose with respect to the unavailability of foreign exchange, one saw interventions, like responses from the Central Bank

responding to public pressure on the outside in a way that it had not been done for a long time. It is true the Minister of Finance and the Economy said, “Oh, we always have the position of tightness”. In some quarters, tightness is a good thing. But, Mr. Speaker, what we experienced recently is not the normal tightness; it was more like closure because the Government—well, I dare say the Minister of Finance and the Economy speaks for the Government and the Governor of the Central Bank—they are deliberately turning away from responding to the causative factor of the recent tightness. If tightness is something that occurs periodically, which did not result in the loss of confidence that happened recently, then one has to identify that something happened, and, in fact, the Minister of Finance and the Economy alluded to it when he said, “What happened recently, they are managing it”.

But the bottom line is, what happened recently? What happened recently is that the Central Bank changed the arrangements, maybe with all good intentions, maybe not. But the bottom line is that they changed the arrangements. And what I expected the Government to do, and the Central Bank to do, is to tell us how the new arrangements were meant to improve the situation. You added additional traders. Okay, you are the experts—you and Central Bank. You have done that. It has had the effect of creating a very serious problem. In responding to the outcome of your actions, you talk about everything else, except telling us what was the intention of the expansion of traders.

Maybe that is something the Minister would want to address when he winds up and put us in a position to either say, “Yes, we understand”, or “No, we do not accept it”, but we cannot keep skirting around it. Because one of the things they did is to make traders of users of foreign exchange, and those users are, in fact, trying to become traders, and they do so by trying to harvest customers from where the customers are in the existing commercial banks.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right. “Dey poachin.”

Dr. K. Rowley: And, in effect, that has created some disturbance in the marketplace. And you see, with banking and confidence, you can lose it very easily, and then it takes a long time to be restored. So right now, even as the Central Bank is pumping money into the system to ensure that there are no long lines and no long wait, you have to ask yourself: how long is this going to go on for, before the lines disappear out of the consciousness of the users?

Because, mark my words, Mr. Speaker, it matters not what the Minister of Finance and the Economy says, or the Central Bank Governor says, the population knows that if you have foreign exchange in your control right now,

you do not give it up, because if you give it up, it is very likely that it would not be available as and when you require it on call. That is the situation which was generated by developments within the system. So I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy to come clean and tell us, what was the intention, what was the expectation, of expanding the number of traders. What did we expect to happen?

You see, Mr. Speaker, I want to raise this in the context of the Parliament because we had done something a while ago which I am honestly hoping would work for this Parliament and this country, and that is, we have changed the Standing Orders in the Parliament and we have created a number of committees that will come into effect sometime in the next term—I am not told; we expect it will happen—I am hoping that the Parliament will move to a position where, in a situation like this, where this problem exists, where there are known situations which we need to address as a Parliament, that instead of waiting to hear the Governor of the Central Bank go down Westmoorings and talk to somebody at their luncheon, that that officer, and similar officers, can come before the Parliament and be addressed, and address the Parliament on matters of this nature.

I am hoping that we come to that state very soon because, really, I would have liked, and my colleagues would have liked, and you would have liked, to talk and hear from the Governor of the Central Bank, what was the purpose of doing this. And he would have said to us, “We intended to do this because if we had done that, it would fix this problem; it would create this condition”, and so and so. And we could have a control of the situation and be properly informed. Except that the Parliament and parliamentarians like myself and like my colleague here, we have to wait to read the papers about what the Governor of the Central Bank said to somebody at lunch in Westmoorings, the Parliament being irrelevant. Mr. Speaker, I honestly hope that very soon we will come to a situation where the committees of Parliament could summon before this Parliament, officers who have public business under their purview. [*Desk thumping*]

Something else attracted my attention, Mr. Speaker. It was the Minister’s comment about the PWC report, which has gone to the DPP, and as a result of that, it and its issues, cannot be dealt with in an appropriate way by the Parliament. It is my view that if a matter comes before the Parliament, the Parliament should be able to deal with it in such a way as not to prevent, circumscribe, or stall other actions.

It happens all the time. I watch US parliamentary matters; I follow British parliamentary matters, and on many occasions, there are matters in the hands of

the police, there are matters under investigation, but they are actively being pursued in the Parliament by parliamentarians. The people's representatives are to ask question as and when they see it fit as early as possible.

It reminds me, Mr. Speaker, of the professional advice that we get. A few years ago, when the whole question of the Piarco Airport scandal was attracting our attention as a newborn scandal, I was a Member of the Opposition and I was prosecuting that matter of wrongdoing at the Piarco Airport, and eventually we got into Government and I was a Government Minister then. By that time, individuals were charged for matters relating to the Piarco Airport, but the Government was saying that there will be an enquiry into the Piarco Airport—Commission of Enquiry—and those who were charged, hired some of the best lawyers in the country, a very prominent lawyer, well known to me.

I met the lawyer for these gentlemen at a private function and he gave me very free, scolding advice, that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the Parliament—in fact, it was the Government, not the Parliament. The Government was quite wrong to put in place any enquiry into the Piarco Airport until such time as the legal difficulties of these individuals, who were by then charged, were concluded in the courts. I said, “Well, what is this story about the Government cannot act until your clients’ private business ended in the court?” And he said, “Well, if the Government proceeds, my clients will go to the court and stop the enquiry.” And I said, “Well, you do what you have to do and Government will do what it has to do.”

3.45 p.m.

The Government proceeded to have the Bernard enquiry. There was an enquiry into Piarco Airport and a report was done. Those cases are still going on. According to that legal advice, that advice that I was given, that is, by this expert in law, had we taken that advice it meant that up to now there would have been no enquiry into Piarco Airport, because I was being told that it was improper for the Government to have a commission of enquiry while there were charges against people and the persons’ rights would have been abridged, and that there would have been double jeopardy and all kind of nonsense. Big perfect senior counsel advice.

So I say this, Mr. Speaker, to tell the Minister of Finance and the Economy that there is absolutely nothing that stands in the way of you telling the Parliament, bringing the Parliament into the picture with respect to what happened at FCB. In fact, you are duty-bound so to do, because I understand that the success

of FCB, which I claim some responsibility for incidentally, will put us on path to another IPO. If the Parliament wants to get involved in knowing more about what happened at FCB, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has a duty to let us know that and challenge it, and learn from it as we go or before we go towards further IPOs. So I do not accept from the Minister of Finance and the Economy, that because a report has gone somewhere for other action that the Parliament is cut out of it. This Parliament is supreme with respect to the business of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

To subscribe to that, Mr. Speaker, is to say that, get a report, bury it somewhere and wait for the matter to die. That is what we are being told. We cannot accept that, and that is why I took objection to the Minister answering the question in a roundabout way. Because had I allowed that to happen, when the question comes up for answer in the future, my colleague—the Member for Oropouche East is a brilliant young man—would say, “The answer is already in the public domain, and therefore, there is no more to be said”, and I would have been deprived the opportunity of speaking to the Minister and putting questions to him in supplemental. You understand, Mr. Speaker? So there is a reason for the Standing Orders of this House.

So I want to advise the Minister of Finance and the Economy that the report that has gone, wherever it has gone, ought not to have gone so far away that the Parliament cannot look at it and treat with it, especially in the context of the broader problem. Not being specific, not interfering with investigations, not accusing anybody of anything, but the Parliament has to play its role and it is a role that has to grow in this country in the way that the budget is growing. This budget is growing by leaps and bounds and the Parliament is going further and further away. It has to be the other way around notwithstanding what the SRC says.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister spoke about the wonderful considerations that exist with respect to the country’s financial condition but, you know, maybe we should accept that even in our attempt to treat with the economic structure of Trinidad and Tobago, that the more things change the more they remain the same. This is a Government that had a Minister in it, who was an expert on the offshore economy versus the onshore economy—Minister Mary King. She wrote a lot and she still writes about this aspect of our circumstance, and she always wrote about our reliance on the offshore economy and rents earned from the offshore economy.

What the Minister of Finance and the Economy has done today, is to give us a report on how the high prices in gas and oil—which we are thankful has prevailed

because at one point it looked as if things could have been really bad in the gas market. But for circumstances beyond our control, we have for the last 36 months, 48 months and it looks like for a little while longer, oil prices have remained well over \$100 a barrel, and gas prices have remained substantially above what we have been budgeting for. That has resulted in significant revenue flows to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and all of us should be happy about that.

However, that is not a basis to congratulate oneself with respect to the condition of the economy, because when one drills down into the economy, you will find that there are serious deficiencies and, in fact, we are probably now—I am going to wait until the final figures come in at the end of the year, which are coming very soon and the budgetary conditions will come in, in those documents. We may very well find that we are more dependent now on the energy sector, more dependent now on the rents from the external economy, and that there has been no significant transformation of the economy, and this Government undertook with an expert in this situation to make those changes. Well, Mrs. King did not last very long, but the policy remained if I am to understand the Government, and the policy has not delivered anything substantial in changing the economic structure of Trinidad and Tobago. We are now more reliant than ever on oil and gas even as we talk about foreign direct investment.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Hear the wonderful statement: \$2 billion in foreign direct investment. It is oil companies revenues, not the drilling programme. That is what it means. Has done nothing in Diego Martin, nothing in Arima, nothing in Carapichaima, but it is happening in the energy sector, and I will tell you what. I am hoping that there is success in the drilling programme because if the drilling programme is not successful, that big amount of FDI would have had no significant impact on Trinidad and Tobago. If we find oil and gas, then it continues to be sustained and then it brings some growth in the future.

So, I say all of this so that listeners could understand when you hear the Minister of Finance and the Economy talking, he is only telling you one side of the story, the Government's version of it. [*Desk thumping*] You know, Mr. Speaker, I remember when former Prime Minister Patrick Manning spoke about full employment in Trinidad and Tobago. In economics—[*Interruption*] Leave your MP alone and be grateful for good representation.

Mr. Speaker, in economics, one regards unemployment below 5 per cent, 4 per cent, 4½ per cent, 3 per cent. When you are in that situation of unemployment,

it is referred to as full employment. It does not mean that every single body in the country has a job. It means that those persons who are looking for jobs, except the 3 per cent, the 4 per cent, the 5 per cent, who are not really interested in working—because you have those, eh, for whatever reason—that you really have your economy fully staffed with workers and you are going good.

When that was set as a target, Mr. Speaker, I remember some of my colleagues here laughed the idea out of the town because at the time unemployment was 17 per cent. It went down to 14, then to 11, then to 10. So when it was projected to go to full employment, we in the Government of Patrick Manning, were viewed as jokers following a dream that could not be realized. But now, we are being told as a matter, of course, with no by your leave, that unemployment is now 3½ per cent. Question: is that true, is it real, and does it include people who we just discovered we have?

I want to ask a question and I hope I get an answer from the Minister of Finance and the Economy. There was a time when the country would get quarterly reports from the CSO, so we did not have to wait for a Government interpretation of the circumstances. We will get our quarterly documents and we will be able to track employment and unemployment and other statistics. Why is it that the Government has now taken it upon itself to be the sole recipient of this good news data on unemployment? Why is the CSO data not available to us all on a quarterly basis as it used to be? [*Desk thumping*]

We have just discovered, Mr. Speaker, that there are persons in this country, who by virtue of being labelled as criminal, they qualify for a salary and food. I want to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy if such persons are counted as employed persons in the scheme of things in Trinidad and Tobago. Because you see, anybody with a job, whether you are painting the road or you are painting stones, these people who get this \$1,500 a month, are they in fact categorized as workers? I would like a definitive answer from the Minister of Finance and the Economy on that matter.

I will you tell you why, Mr. Speaker. Because you see, when people hear we have 3½ per cent unemployment, they must know that some of those people who are employed there qualify purely on the basis of being engaged in criminal conduct—qualify, that is a programme in the Government. So, we got good oil prices, we got good gas prices. We started out with a deficit of \$6.1 billion. We are told that we had significant inflows to wipe off that deficit. I am not sure— [*Interruption*]

Hon. Howai: Half year.

Dr. K. Rowley: Half year? Is it that—let us put it at half year. So half year, 3½ billion would have been—\$3 billion would have been half year. Is it that we have wiped out the \$3 billion deficit and we are adding now an additional expenditure? Because if you started out with \$6 billion in deficit and you got \$4 billion more in revenues, you should really be now talking about a deficit in the order of \$2 billion as you project going forward. Or is this additional expenditure outside of the provisions of that \$6 billion deficit? It is not clear because if you had a deficit and you had provisioned for funding that deficit and you got additional revenue, then what we should be dealing with is simple virements.

Hon. Howai: May I?

Dr. K. Rowley: Yes.

Hon. Howai: You are quite right, hon. Member. In fact, as a result, because of the increased revenues the projection for the end of this year is that—even after you bring these additional expenditures in, the deficit will be less this year than had originally been projected in the budget. I do not know if that clarifies what you are asking.

Dr. K. Rowley: But how much? I expected a more accurate arrangement, because if we set out to have funded a deficit of \$6 billion and we got \$4 billion more or whatever the figure is in revenue, then we should be clearer as to what our deficit is going to be, and what you should be dealing with is virement from where money was to where money should go. Have I made myself clear?

Hon. Howai: Yes. I now understand what you are saying. Well, first of all, the total deficit, yes, will be less. We expect that it would probably be—if all of the expenditure that is projected to take place for the remainder of this year, we will end up with a deficit of about \$500 million less than the original deficit that we had originally projected. But, however, that will not be sufficient to allow this virement to take place because part of it is that between Ministries we will not be able to vire, nor will we be able to vire from certain Heads in PSIP to other Heads. It means that you basically leave that where it is and you have to create a new line item to take the additional expenditure.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am just going to wait until the end of the year when all the numbers are in and we will have a look at that.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Government came into office having been very critical of a previous Government which was embarked upon a major development programme. It matters not whether they liked the programme or not, but the last Government had a major development programme going on and these colleagues of mine had a problem with the national expenditure level. Let me repeat that: notwithstanding the fact that they also did not like items in the development programme, they had an argument that the level of expenditure in Trinidad and Tobago was too high, and, in fact, it represented profligate spending, and, in fact, should be replaced by more savings and less spending. My colleague, the Member for Tunapuna, leading a challenge of new politics, was in the forefront of that argument. He is still here with us. [*Crosstalk*] I am saying that was the argument. It crystallized an election campaign and a movement from one side of the Parliament to the other side.

However, what I am observing—[*Interruption*] Sure.

Mr. Dookeran: Thank you, Member. May I clarify the misunderstanding of the argument of which you spoke about? It was not an argument of excessive spending, it was an argument of overheating of the economy generating inflationary pressures and therefore, at the same time, reducing income levels and high expenditure, and that is not the condition here today. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: That is—you call that revision. Mr. Speaker, they call that revisionism. It was an argument that we were spending too much money.

Miss Mc Donald: Exactly. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: We were setting out to do too many things, and in fact, they were also saying that the things we were doing were things that did not benefit people at the community level, they were things about structures and the cityscape and things like that. So now people hearing that revisionism but the average man in the street understood that we were getting a lot of money and the Government was spending too much of it in too short a space of time. So I hear you but I do not accept it.

This Government has embarked upon the largest budget in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and even as we have deficits at budget time, the Government proceeds to overspend additional moneys in projects and programmes outside of the budgetary review, and that cannot be hidden or explained away by idiosyncratic explanations of economics of one kind or the other. [*Desk thumping*] Not fooling me with that, right.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has to explain to us now the relationship between projects, funding and social conditions, because outside of this Parliament, unbeknownst to us, this Government initiated a programme called LifeSport. We understood it, or heard about it, or knew about it, to be \$6 million. Nobody made a big issue of that. If the Government has an idea that you could spend some money and generate some activity for the good, nobody will make an issue of it.

But, Mr. Speaker, we would have been shocked to find out that somewhere in the corridors of authority in this country, for which the Minister of Finance and the Economy is responsible, that programme would have grown from the \$6 million to somewhere in some unknown figure. Because I have seen two figures in the public domain: one of \$113 million and one of \$200 million. I do not know what to believe. I have also seen the report of the Auditor General. But what it all tells me is that in a situation of deficit spending, the Government is not restrained in any way in generating what basically is a make-work programme, but in this case, specific to targeting a particular group of people.

I raise this, Mr. Speaker, because certain developments have come out of it. Even before us now, if we look at Head—on page 39, the Government is asking for \$8.8 million which accrued for a 2012 bill. Why is this only coming before us now? If this LifeSport Programme was conceived in 2012, why is this coming for us now in 2014 and why is it coming in this way? Is it that this was a loan that is only now being brought before us for funding from the central funding? And then, below that is a \$24 million to meet anticipated commitments for the operations of the programme.

Mr. Speaker, we have reached the stage in our history of this country where \$24 million sounds like chicken feed, but this is \$24 million. And if, in fact, the programme has grown to \$113 million or more, this is a programme that you have to ask yourself: who was funding this? The Minister of Finance and the Economy must tell us: what was the arrangement for funding this LifeSport? Is it that the Minister of Finance and the Economy was just authorizing the Ministry or the Sports Company to go and borrow money in a bank, and the Minister underwrote it by virtue of a letter of comfort or was money being transferred from the Treasury to fund a programme of questionable ilk?

Out of the programme came some very disturbing news recently, and I have seen some comments coming from no less a person than the Prime Minister and others that we are—I want to get the exact words. In other words, we are

overblowing the negatives assigned to this programme and those are my words. Mr. Speaker, I do not know that we can accept that as easily as the Government wants us to accept it. The bottom line is, in a situation of deficit funding, the Government finds money to fund a programme like this, and do it in such a way that it may have caused more problems than it solved, and when the problems become very real and confront us, instead of facing up to the problem, we begin to pretend it is not there. So what do we see?

While the Parliament does not know about the funding, while the Minister of Finance and the Economy is yet to tell us how the funding has been flowing, we have public officials—I saw a headline in the *Express* recently on this programme that we are now being asked to fund to the tune of \$32 million, I saw a public official, in the current scenario of this LifeSport, saying to the country that the Leader of the Opposition is conspiring with the *Express* to bring down the Minister and the Government. Now, I find that to be effrontery of the highest order, and I want to call on the Government to restrain public officials from engaging Members of Parliament in that way.

You see, I saw it before where the Minister of National Security, in referring to this programme of trouble, spoke about criminal conduct associated with the programme. This is the country's Minister of National Security. Whatever side of the hall he comes from, it does not matter; whether you like him or not, does not matter, he speaks as the Minister of National Security in Trinidad and Tobago, and he makes a definitive statement that there is criminal conduct associated with this particular programme.

Mr. Speaker: I do not want to stop you in your flight, but I want to remind you, and all honourable Members, under Standing Order 38(2), there is a Motion that has been approved that is on our Order Paper dealing exactly with this matter. So, do not anticipate on this. Focus on the \$8 million and the \$24 million, do not go to this Motion that deals with criminal conduct and what the Minister of National Security said. Just as how the Minister was attempting to answer a question and you rose, it was wrong.

I am advising you, and you would agree with me, this is a matter that is on the Order Paper, it is going to be debated very shortly, I would imagine, so let us be very careful that we do not anticipate a matter that this House is awaiting debate on. So, the \$8 million and the \$24 million, try to deal with what that is for, in terms of the future. As far as I am concerned, do not go into the criminal conduct aspect of the programme.

Dr. K. Rowley: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was not my intention so to do, and I am glad that you reminded me about that because I had not even paid any attention to that, and I am not anticipating that Motion. I had gone past that to the point of making a comment on the conduct because money is being spent on a programme, and an officer involved in that programme, Motion or no Motion, has seen it fit to take issue, publicly, with the conduct of a Member of Parliament who makes reference to the programme.

I was going on to say that that happened before, and I took note of it, when the Minister of National Security had made a comment and another officer, in the same programme, accused the Minister of National Security of speaking out of the figment of his imagination. I raised it so that the Prime Minister, and the Ministers involved, could and should know that this is not acceptable. Public officials are not to engage Members of Parliament in this way. It has nothing to do with the Motion, and I personally take objection to being engaged in this way by an officer funded by this programme in this way. And whether the Prime Minister, if you are not aware of it, I am telling you, right, it has happened on the front page of a newspaper. So, I will just mention that, Mr. Speaker, I was not going—[*Crosstalk*] You will have your turn to speak. [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*] You could clarify whatever you want.

Mr. Roberts: What, you clapping now, I have time to speak.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, it appears as though we are not concerned about any restriction in expenditure because when something happens, one expects that we learn from it, especially if you make a big deal out of it. [*Continuous crosstalk*] We sat in this House before and heard a lot from the Government about the *MV Su*.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, no crosstalk between north and the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, please.

Dr. K. Rowley: We heard a lot about the *MV Su* where, when we initiated the Water Taxi Service, we bought certain vessels, one of which was called the *MV Su*. When it came to Trinidad and Tobago, it was discovered that it had engine problems and the problems were more serious than they thought, and the boat was parked up in Chaguaramas for a while and could not be put in service. And the expense of repairing it turned out to be an embarrassment and eventually this Government sold it as scrap, and that became a big thing here, and this Government actually raised the *MV Su* so often that one of its Members became known as "Su", [*Laughter*] and one would have thought that we, as a people, would have learnt from that.

So, last Easter, I wanted to go to Tobago and I was very happy to hear the Minister of Tourism, at the time—or is it transport? You cannot keep pace with the Ministers where they are these days. But the Member for Chaguanas East, in whatever portfolio he was, just before Easter, indicated quite confidently, welcomed news, that this new vessel, a larger one, with improved capacity and so on—the Galecia—was arriving here at a particular time, and in time to take people to Tobago for jazz weekend and so on. Like myself and others, we kind of said, “Well, great, because Tobago, here I come”. And then the days and the weeks passed, and there was no boat for jazz, there was no boat for Tobago, and I asked the Minister, later on, what has happened with the boat that was supposed to come in, and then he told me it is coming on a particular day and so on and so on. No problem, sometimes you do not keep deadlines and you do not—but I was surprised that when the boat did not show up for Easter—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. Mc Donald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

4.15 p.m.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saying, so the boat did not turn up and then I asked about it and I was told that it was going to be here at a later date, and so on. But now, I am seeing in this document that we are spending, what is being asked for this, \$51 million for a boat that they contracted since April. So it means that we are incurring expenses since April for this boat that did not turn up, which has since turned up and, strangely enough, like the *Su*, it is hidden somewhere in my constituency.

Because, Mr. Speaker, I am now discovering that we bought a boat with no place to bring it into port.

Mr. Deyalsingh: A new boat?

Dr. K. Rowley: Yes. I am advised that the boat that we bought was bought without proper consultation with the harbour master, not bought, I think it is leased. Now that the boat is here, it can come into port in Scarborough, because Scarborough has the facility, but it cannot be brought into port in Port of Spain

because there is no facility in Port of Spain to bring it into, until certain serious infrastructural works are done. So we are paying April, May, June, US \$1½ million a month for a boat that we cannot use. And I am asking myself: did we learn anything from the *Su*, or is it that every time something is done you say the PNM do that too? We have a boat now which we are paying US \$1½ million a month for and it cannot pick up anybody in Port of Spain because it cannot be brought to the port in Port of Spain to take up anybody. I am saying, how could this happen? Because these were the same people who made a story, a song and a dance about the purchase of the *Su*.

At least with the *Su* you could say you had experts involved but the expert advice was not satisfactory or it turned out to be what it was. In this case, I am told that the relevant authorities in the Port of Port of Spain were not part of this arrangement. I was told that they were not—and the next thing you know whoever did it, bought a boat that cannot be used. So we now need \$51 million for infrastructural work so as to allow this boat to come to be used on the Tobago to Trinidad arrangement. Who is responsible for that?

How did this happen? And in the meantime, and you see it is joke you know. For them it is a big joke. As far as they are concerned, it is a big joke. We are so wealthy in this country that \$51 million is no big thing, \$34 million is no big thing. Right? They could tell us—on a \$6 million programme—somebody got \$34 million for delivering nothing and nobody is interested to find out who and under what circumstances. And when we are told that there is criminal conduct they laugh at us.

But let me say something, Mr. Speaker, before we go, and I am saying this for Members of my colleagues on both sides of this House. I have been here before you all and I know a little bit more than you do. So when you hear government programmes are associated with criminal conduct, it is not something to laugh about. It is not something to take lightly. It is not something to be dismissed. It is something to take very seriously, because the reality of it is such that the truth of that should be of concern to everybody in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) is subject to abuse and has generated certain kinds of criminal activity, and for those who believe it is too far-fetched to believe that the criminal activity associated with these make-work programmes is something that is beyond your imagination, let me tell you what my own experience has been as Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West. My constituents will tell you I do not encourage my constituents to look to URP for their daily bread. [*Desk thumping*] Go and ask them, they will tell you

that. That is my stand in the matter and I also do not encourage wrongdoing in the programme. So whenever I know of wrongdoing I would not provide any support or succour.

And what happened? I was Minister of Housing at the time when the State security services came to me. Special Branch came to me twice in 2005, I think it was or thereabouts, or 2006 or somewhere about. Twice, as a Minister of Government in this country the State security services came to me, once in my Ministry and once in my home, to indicate to me that I was the target of a hit, because I had interfered with corrupt practice in URP in Diego Martin and on one occasion they actually brought the picture of the hit man and said to me: if you see this man this is the person who has the contract.

Mr. Speaker, for months—you see they could laugh—as a Minister of Government in Trinidad and Tobago, I had to be responding to that in where I go, where I pass, who I meet with, and so on, and the State had to intervene to ensure that additional security was put at the office on George Street because of that kind of threat.

My family, Mr. Speaker, met officers in my house talking to me about that and when my wife asked me: who are these people? I told her security officers and she asked me: what did they come here for? And I could not tell her because I did not want to put my family through the stress of knowing that I was in the street every day with a hit on my head as a Minister of Government in Trinidad and Tobago. So those of you who want to laugh and make a joke of it, make a joke of it if you wish. Dismiss the current allegations. But I say this for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago who should know that sometimes the State intervenes to solve problems and the solutions become bigger problems and I want you to understand that it is against that background that the current conversation about Lifesport should be taken. I do not take these things lightly. For the Minister it is a joke. He does not even know himself when he sees him.

Mr. Speaker, we are spending a lot of money and what I would like to see though is that because we are into deficit spending, I would like to see the Government being able to say that we have restrained ourselves so as to fall more within our earning capacity. Fortunately, the earnings have continued to be of a certain level. I do not know if the next budget will be a deficit budget, but I tell you one thing, we cannot take for granted that because we have been able to weather recent storms, that we are not vulnerable. We will make a mistake if we believe that because we have \$10 billion in foreign exchange that if things go south in the marketplace outside, that it will take long for us to have a foreign exchange crisis.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy spoke about inflows of foreign exchange, but I do not know if the Minister of Finance and the Economy, again, has been very forthright with us, because he spoke about the methanol shares as a horizon of inflow of return on moneys that were used to underpin the Clico bailout, and I think the Minister of Finance and the Economy knows a little bit more than he is letting on. Because the Minister of Finance and the Economy should know that the arbitration with respect to the methanol shares is complete and that instructions in those arbitrations are available, and that in fact the Government has to sell those shares. If I know that, the Minister of Finance and the Economy should know that, unless, of course—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Howai: Perhaps, if I could clarify that. Thank you, Member. Yes, the arbitration was completed last year and the arbitrators had agreed that we should meet, both parties, with a view to settling the matter and with a view to arriving at a position with regard to the sale of the shares. The deadline date given was January 31. Unfortunately, at that time, we could not, both sides, come to an agreement regarding what the price of those shares should be. As a consequence, the matter went back to the arbitrators. The arbitrators listened to representations made by both sides and that exercise finished somewhere around May.

The arbitrators themselves now are considering the representations made by both sides and it is our expectation that we will get a decision by about July, with respect to that aspect of it. So, the information may be a little bit dated from that point of view but that is the current position. We expect that a decision should be communicated by the arbitrators, hopefully before the end of July. We hope that they do not come forward and say that they need more time, but the deadline we are working with is next month.

Dr. K. Rowley: My information, Minister of Finance and the Economy is not dated. In fact, it is very current. That was always the situation. The instruction at the conclusion of the arbitration was that the Government was forced to sell the shares. You were asked to come to an agreement on which the price should be set and if you do not do that, it will be set by the arbitrator. Now that you are confirming that no agreement has been met, it now falls to a price to be set by the arbitrator. That is how it was from the beginning.

But the point I was making was not that. The point is this, that a sale is imminent and that will bring a significant inflow of foreign exchange into the country and that might allow us to continue this limp and pump, limp and pump

foreign exchange into the system, and it will take us for a while down the road. But is that something that we can sustain, to be spending foreign exchange in a way as if we are saying we do not have a foreign exchange problem? I think it is dangerous for Trinidad and Tobago to begin to think that we do not have a foreign exchange problems. And as we sell shares like the methanol plant and money comes in, we sell RBTT, money comes in. These are one-off arrangements which will not put us in any situation for any long-term comfort of foreign exchange supply to Trinidad and Tobago, especially if you are taking the position that there is no leakage out of the country.

I am not saying you are taking that position, but I am saying I am not hearing that you are concerned about leakage because as Central Bank keeps putting money into the system and it is being taken out for a variety of purposes, especially if there is fear that hoarding is taking place, I am simply marking that there could be a situation where, for a short period of time, there is an abundance of foreign exchange, the appetite grows for it, the appetite is retained for it and then, when there is no more of that nature of inflow, we suddenly come to a serious problem and the Minister of Finance and the Economy should be aware of that and should make it part of the national conversation.

4.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have 15 more minutes. I do not know if you want to wrap-up in five minutes, or we take tea at that time, and you resume after tea. Do you need five more minutes?

Dr. K. Rowley: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, continue, hon. Member.

Dr. K. Rowley: I thank my colleagues. I will just take five minutes, because I am on the same subject, and it is the subject of the Clico matter.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we would like to hear the Minister talk policy with respect to what will happen to Clico. You see, he read two letters from the people who are managing the Clico portfolio, saying that they will not—nothing has happened with respect to this, and nothing happened to that, but they were very silent on what he just told us. What I just extracted from him should have been information that should have been voluntarily given. And that is why I want to hear policy about the rest of the portfolio, so that when the managers decide to do something, it will be done against a policy to which the Minister of Finance and the Economy is committed.

For example, part of that portfolio is Angostura shareholding. There is the Angostura shareholding and there is the bank, the block of bank shares, these are huge portfolios both of which are on the stock exchange. Put aside FCB and all that carries on there and we want to learn about that too, but it is our view that if any decision is taken as it might very well be taken, to dispose of the shareholding of Angostura and the Republic Bank shares, that they not be left to the whims and fancies of the appointees, who are now managing those Clico assets on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and that they be subjected to the wider access. So that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago can by their ability, obtain those shares by way of purchase offers properly structured, so that Angostura shares do not fall into the hands of some monied individual or agency, or en block who now becomes the owner of Angostura, but on the other hand, if an IPO is made available, the people of Trinidad and Tobago from Charlotteville to Cedros, whoever they are, could now buy into them, and own a piece of these shares in a way that they could say, well, at least we bore the pain, and we now have some ability to share the gain.

We are not supporting any arrangement that makes these gems available to the fortunate few who can come in with billions and super billions, and by virtue of their billions become the owners. Those with hundreds and thousands should be given the opportunity to also participate. I would also like to hear the Minister of Finance and the Economy establish and say what Government policy is, which binds the Government and binds the managers of the Clico portfolio to any disposal of these major assets. We do not want any surprises, and certainly, we do not want any sweetheart arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, I will want to wait until all the numbers come in before I conclude in marking the Government's paper. I simply am concerned that the Government thinks that all is hunky-dory, and they could spend and spend and spend and spend, because they are on their way out of office, and it does not matter what happens after they are gone, it is somebody else's problem. I do not want their problem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Hon. Members, it is a good time for us to suspend for tea. This sitting is now suspended until 5.05 p.m.

4.34 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Prime Minister and Minister of the People and Social Development (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): [*Desk thumping*] I thank you very much, hon. Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to contribute to this debate today. I must say I am a little disappointed that the hon. Member for Diego Martin West has not returned to the Chamber, because I did intend to address some of the matters he would have raised in his contribution, but I am sure the Member for Port of Spain South will brief him accordingly.

So, Mr. Speaker, why are we here today? And what is the purpose of this Bill that is before this honourable Chamber? The Bill itself is very clear in its explanatory note as to what it is we are being asked to approve, and that is to say, that we are doing two things. One, we are varying the appropriation that was approved by this honourable Chamber in the 2013/2014 budget, we are asking for a variation of those amounts; and secondly, we are asking for a supplementation of those amounts, and that will take us then to an increase in the moneys that have been appropriated.

This number, Mr. Speaker, we are looking for an increase of \$3.82 billion, and that is disaggregated as follows: that is to say out of the \$3.82 billion, we will spend on recurrent expenditure \$3.4 billion, under the PSIP about \$369 million, but if we look at the recurrent expenditure, we can break that down further, because that is made up of transfers into the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, for construction projects under the IDF, the Infrastructure Development Fund, which will be about \$1.2 billion.

It also deals with a very important item, Mr. Speaker, and as we were sitting here, I was reminded of Mr. Panday's statement sometimes, when money Bills came to the House, he would say: what does this have to do with the ordinary man? Is it you speak about the employment rate and you speak about foreign exchange, and you speak of all these matters that are very theoretical. What does it have to do with the man down in Barrackpore, or the lady up in Diego Martin or in Laventille or in Toco or in Arima, in Cedros? What does it have to do with them? Will it help them? Will it improve their quality of life?

So whilst we look at all the nice theory and the numbers and the economics, and how do you define full employment, as the Member for Diego Martin West was suggesting. All these things are important, yes, for the macroeconomic and microeconomic framework, but at the end of the day whatever economics there is, and whatever finance there is, and whatever appropriation we are making of moneys in this House, the bottom line has to be, will it help the ordinary man, woman and child in Trinidad and Tobago to improve their quality of life?

And, Mr. Speaker, that is where I would want to spend some time in this debate, to show that this \$3.8 billion is being sought—the increase is being sought to really continue the work we started, in terms of delivery and performance in our efforts to improve the quality of life of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. That is why it is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that at least one-third of the increases in this budget—in this supplementary appropriation, that is about \$1 billion, that is going to pay wages and salaries, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] One billion dollars to pay wages and salaries. And I will come back to that, because we must congratulate the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, and others [*Desk thumping*] who has worked extremely hard to improve the pay package, the compensation package of workers in this country, a very important factor.

So yes, it is \$3.8 billion, out of which over \$1 billion will go to pay daily-rated workers in the THA, at to central government level, and to the various municipal corporations. Included in that \$1 billion will also be the revised packages for persons falling under the revised Salaries Review Commission Report, Mr. Speaker. So we will look at those a little further when I come to the whole impact with respect to workers. So about \$1 billion for salaries, wages and COLA and so on, and another, therefore, \$2.8 billion we will see how that is spent. PSIP, \$369 million, and for the IDF as I said, \$1.2 billion. So we will be spending two-thirds of the moneys being appropriated on development projects, construction projects, and that is very important.

We have seen, Mr. Speaker, and it is something we have to continue to improve upon, that when we do appropriation Bills in the budget, that the majority goes to recurrent expenditure, that is to say, wages and salaries which is important—we need income packages, everyone, in order to survive—but at the same time the development projects are vital, because they do two things. They will give you sustainability in your country and in the economy, and at the same time, we create further jobs. So if it is that you are building a school, a hospital or whatever it may be, these construction projects will give you indirect benefits for workers as well as to employment. And, of course, the whole multiplier effect which takes us into a growing and buoyant economy. So there we are. We have ample authority for bringing this.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition talked about, we should have known these expenditures would have accrued prior to coming here today and should, therefore, have put it into the budget when we did the budget. I really would like to respectfully debunk the suggestion that what we are doing here cannot be done

today. Mr. Speaker, if we go back, you will see constitutionally we have the authority to do what we are doing today. And we could look at section 113 of the Constitution which is, in fact, your blueprint for governance in the country, 113 tells us very clearly that:

“The Minister”—of Finance will bring and—“shall cause to be prepared and laid before the House of Representatives before or not later than thirty days after the commencement of each financial year estimates of revenues and expenditure of Trinidad and Tobago for that year.”

So that is what we did last year in the budget debate. But thereafter section 113(2) says:

“The heads of expenditure”—will be put into estimates, and then we go to 112(3):

“If in respect of any financial year it is found—

that the amount appropriated by the Appropriation Act for any purpose is insufficient or that a need has arisen for expenditure for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated by the Act; or

that any moneys have been expended for any purpose in excess of any amount appropriated for the purpose by the Appropriation Act or for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated by the Act, a supplementary estimate showing the sums required or spent shall be laid before the House...and the heads of any such expenditure shall be included in a Supplementary Appropriation Bill.”

And that is what we have under constitutional authority, allowing us to do what we have to do today. But I go even further, there is ample precedent in this House, I think anyone who has sat in this House as long as the Member for Diego Martin West, would well know—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: He boasts about it.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, of course—that not only do we have constitutional authority, but the former Government for the past decade, has every single year brought Supplementary Appropriation Bills, Mr. Speaker.

And not only did they bring those Bills, in some years they brought two Bills, and in some other years they brought three Bills. That means to say, that on three occasions they came back to increase the appropriation through supplementary appropriations.

I do not want to spend too much time on that, Mr. Speaker, because the records are there. I do have them all here. I could tell you each year, which year was one and which year had two and so on. But what I am more concerned with, what is the difference in what we are doing here today? Yes, they have done it for 10 years, and years prior to that. The only year they did not do it was in 2002 because there was a hung Parliament, if you recall 18-18, there was no sitting of the Parliament. That is how the Parliament escaped getting one, two or three Supplementary Appropriation Bills from the PNM. So each year they brought similar Bills to increase expenditure.

5.15 p.m.

What is the difference? There are several differences. The first one, which is very easy for us to deal with, has to do with the percentage of increase and that will take me into another area or avenue, issue, which the Member for Diego Martin West raised, which had to do with the issue of deficit financing, deficit budgeting and spending expenditure.

First, this is very different from what we saw from 2002 right down until we came into office in 2010 in terms of the percentage of increase. Here it is, in 2002/2003, the former administration came for supplementary appropriation with two Bills, that is, two different Bills, two Acts and their percentage of increase was 19.21 per cent.

In 2003/2004, again they came with two Bills, in other words they came twice to increase; a total of 17.2 per cent increase. In 2004/2005, again two supplementary appropriation Bills for an increase of 22.71 per cent. In 2005/2006, again coming by way of two supplementary appropriation Bills, an increase, in this Parliament, the former Government sought a 23.9 per cent, almost 24 per cent increase. That was in 2004/2006.

In 2006/2007, two Bills again, a percentage increase of 13.48. In 2007/2008, two Bills, 23 per cent increase by the former administration. Mr. Speaker, you may remember that was an election year, 2007, and, in fact, they came after the budget of 2009, after they read a new budget. They came after the fact, long after, not even the same fiscal year, to increase, to cover up what had already been spent in the 2007/2008 year. And that was a 23 per cent increase. So let us look at this Government.

In 2009/2010, when we were in office, we came for one increase, January 2011, for a 3.2 per cent increase by this Government. In 2010/2011, that increased because we came in in 2010, there were some issues with covering the books for

the previous years, 16 per cent. In 2011/2012, 6.6 per cent; this Government came for a 6.6 per cent increase and they had come for 20 and 24 and so on.

In 2012/2013, the percentage increase that we sought was 8.72 per cent and in this supplementary appropriation, guess what, Mr. Speaker? The increase that we are seeking is a 6.7 per cent increase. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Mr. Speaker, for the hon. Member to speak about you should have known last year and you should not come here now, I mean, is really a contortion and a wiggling when you look at the record of the former Government. Let us make no bones about it; many Members sitting there now on those benches were sitting in the last Government, including the hon. Member for Diego Martin West. And so, that is one difference. But we can look at many other differences when we look at expenditure.

We go to some other issues, which have to deal with spending. The hon. Member for Diego Martin West raised the sceptre of deficit financing and talked about how much money we are in deficit by. The hon. Member is living in a different part of the globe or in a different part of earth or out of space, totally out of space. Everywhere around the world—and I remember, I made this point before, the hon. Minister Dookeran who was once my teacher when I was in the EMBA at the Arthur Lok Jack School of Business—we did a course there with him and one of the issues we had to discuss was the whole issue of: should there be deficit financing and what are the benefits of deficit financing?

The benefits are basically to push your development agenda that you may go into deficit financing in order so to do. If your economy is slow; if there is little that is happening; if your jobs are very low down, you go into deficit financing so that you will come out of deficit financing and create more revenue, more income, more jobs in your country. You do not stay there down on the ground and grovel. What you do, you go into deficit, and every ordinary householder knows that, you know.

If you want to buy a piece of land, what do you do? You take a loan. Sometimes you want to buy furniture, which I do not fully always agree, you go and take a hire purchase. What is that? That is deficit financing. Every time you go and take a loan, it is deficit financing, but for the Government, we do it on a larger scale.

Look, some people go into deficit financing to buy a carnival costume. Not true, Mr. Speaker? Maybe not your good self, but some people do and that is how you live. So that today you can enjoy some of the benefits. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

I would kindly say that the hon. Member for Port of Spain South does not need a costume. She is fine where she is.

So we all engage at some point in deficit financing and here is our Government saying we are engaging in deficit financing to increase development, to bring better infrastructure, to bring more jobs, to train more people, educate more people and for better health care. If you look at the Heads for which increases are being asked, you will see where the priorities are.

In health care, you will see there, in infrastructure development, works and infrastructure; in local government; all the Heads are there in the Bill to see where it is that we are putting some priorities with increased expenditure. Yes, deficit financing. But, you know, again it is like you want to scare people. There are some of us who feel the only way we can succeed is to get people frightened so they will condemn everything that they see or hear.

Look at the great United States of America, the great US of A. In 2013, their deficit financing, their debt to GDP ratio was 101.6 per cent. In the great United Kingdom, the debt to GDP ratio was 74.2 per cent. Right here, next door, in the Caribbean, Barbados, their debt to GDP ratio is 82.7 per cent. What is our debt to GDP ratio now? None of the above.

In the US, 101.6; UK 74.2; Barbados and many others in the region are at very, very difficult debt to GDP ratios. In Trinidad and Tobago, we are just about 44.7 per cent, way below any of these—44.7 per cent. But, more importantly, with that kind of debt to GDP ratio, our economy has remained very strong, very buoyant and Minister Howai in his presentation earlier today would have given you the macro indicators, which are very healthy macro indicators with respect to unemployment, with respect to inflation rates, with respect to reserves and all the other indicators that show that we are in a very strong, buoyant economy. We are poised for growth. I think the Minister said 2.6 to 2.9 per cent and not coming from us, but coming from outside international agencies.

So that is where we are, Mr. Speaker, and, therefore, there is absolutely nothing wrong with deficit financing. You know what is wrong? It is when you go into deficit financing, but you are wasting and squandering the money. That is what I will attempt to spend a few moments on, to look at the difference in terms of the expenditure. What was this financing used for?

In fact, the former administration spent over \$200 billion in nine years and we have to ask what did they spend that money on? Did they spend it on workers? Did they spend it to increase the lot of workers, the packages or workers? No, they did not and I mentioned that before.

Let me see if I can find my statistics with respect to workers. Yes, I have it here, Mr. Speaker. I have told you just above \$1 billion of this increased money is to be spent to improve workers' salaries. Let us look back. It is for us to continue the job that we have been doing in improving the salary packages, wages and COLA and so on, of workers.

First of all, this one, over \$1 billion, out of that, 18,900 persons will benefit. [*Desk thumping*] These are persons represented by the National Union of Government and Federated Workers, their daily-rated employees of the central government, THA and municipal corporations. In addition, another 1,500 persons represented by the Amalgamated Workers Union as daily-rated employees of the Port of Spain Corporation, 1,500 persons, they too, will benefit from this \$1 million. And some more under the purview of the SRC.

Let us look at what we have done and I want to say this very clearly. We have done something very crucial. We have settled 83 wage disputes. [*Desk thumping*] These amounted to covering and taking care of 88,668 workers in the country. [*Desk thumping*] That is why it is very hypocritical for some persons to stand and say that this Government has done nothing for labour. No other Government in the history of this country has served labour as has done this Government.

So 88,000—[*Interruption*]—I will come to him in a moment. Do not be in a hurry; we will get there. Eighty-eight thousand, six hundred and sixty-eight workers benefited from increased packages and these represent members of the civil service and statutory authorities under the Statutory Authorities Act, 32,767; under the prison service, our prison officers, 2,624; fire officers, 2,670; police service, 7,711; teachers, teaching service, 16,095; daily-paid workers, central government: THA, Port of Spain, San Fernando Corporations, 21,229; defence force, 5,488; Sugar Cane Feed Centre, 84; in total, 88,668 persons, bodies, moneys were appropriated and provided for. I am advised, I am told by Minister Howai that this meant a total paid by this Government to workers, from 2010 to the present, \$1.9 billion worth of superannuation benefits. [*Desk thumping*]

And what is important to note is that all those numbers I read out, the 88,668, a large majority of those workers had not been paid by the former regime. They never settled their salaries, so they were spending the money, but did not find money within all these appropriations I told you all about, all these increases and so on, to increase the pay packages of workers.

So we see the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation. We settled moneys due and owing to workers for the period 2005—2007. For the

Naparima Bowl workers, daily-rated, we settled for 2006—2008. When we came, they had not done it.

We go to the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2008—2010, two years owing to these people; Betting Levy Board, 2008—2010; CDA, 2008—2010. That is the precepted staff and monthly-paid employees, the same thing; the Civil Aviation Authority, 2008—2010; Chief Personnel Officer, 2008—2010; Chief Personnel Officer, Port of Spain Corporation, 2008—2010; all of these 2008—2010, 2008—2010, 2008—2010, and we go down these 83 negotiations settled. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, thank you very much. Settled, settled, settled. [*Desk thumping*]

On top of that, that is what we did already. In his appropriation, we are now seeking to take care of some additional workers for the period 2011—2013 for daily-rated workers and so on. That is what we are doing with this additional spending.

5.30 p.m.

I know the hon. Member for Diego Martin West would remind me of this document. He spoke of when we were in Opposition that we took great umbrage to the spending levels of the former Government, our then Government, and Minister Dookeran had to get up to explain: “Look, what you are talking about is something totally different.” The situation is very different now from then. If I may speak a little further on that because we are increasing spending. That is what we intend to do to boost development.

Mr. Speaker, in April 2008, the Governor of the Central Bank began to reflect on what so many international financial institutions, local economists and business agents were saying. Governor Williams cautioned then that there was urgent need to reduce public expenditure. He noted that he was referring to both the spending directly by the Government as well as expended by quasi-government institutions. So, that is the Governor of the Central Bank.

The IMF also issued similar warning wherein their directors expressed great concerns that the increase in public spending, the widening of the non-energy fiscal deficit, in the context of our economy operating in the near full capacity could exacerbate inflationary pressures and jeopardize fiscal sustainability. Mr. Speaker, who was responsible for that? Who was responsible?

I am sorry the Member for Diego Martin North/East is not here, as well as the Member for Diego Martin West, but I want to remind this honourable Chamber—I think some of us were here in December 2009—when today, the Member for

Diego Martin West is talking about spending and so on, and said that we were critical of their levels of spending. Of course, we were, and Mr. Dookeran explained some of the reasons why, I would say a little more. But not only were we in Opposition critical of that spending, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, as a member of that Government, was also critical of that spending. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] And the words come out of the mouth of the Member for Diego Martin North/East, his parliamentary colleague, and this is what that Member had to say on Monday, December, 21, 2009—you will find much more, but I selected this particular extract from the *Hansard*. It reads:

“**Hon. C. Imbert:** It does not matter. You heard the Member for Diego Martin West say that the Government squandered the money and that the Government wasted the money.”

So, it did not just come from us, it came from the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, and it is extremely hypocritical for the Member to come today to try to defend the levels of spending and expenditure under the PNM; extremely hypocritical when he, himself, was of that view. It goes further. Mr. Imbert goes further and he says:

“How would he know, he was part of it until—we never heard anything about waste and squandermania...” [*Laughter*]

So, he was part of it until, and until then we never heard anything about waste and squandermania, and the hon. Member for Diego Martin West was no longer a member of the Cabinet. So you heard nothing of it until the hon. Member was no longer a member of the Cabinet.

“He now has this obsession with UDeCott and Calder Hart.”

That is when he left the Cabinet, because there was nothing the hon. Member ever said prior to leaving the Cabinet before with respect to UDeCOTT; not a single word. Recently, the hon. Member was talking about something about the PNM would have won the election if they had fired or if they had done differently with UDeCOTT and so on. And, again, tunnel vision, maybe the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East was correct, that he was obsessed, but that is not the only reason why the PNM lost the election, Mr. Speaker. Numerous reasons! They break down infrastructure; the squandermania; the flooding; no moneys for labour. I mean, a host of reasons. Corruption: I mean, there were monuments of corruption; multi-million dollar monuments of corruption, one of those is the Scarborough Hospital, which has other issues associated with it when it comes to the Landate matter. Landate, do you all remember that?

You know, up to today that Landate matter—and I am imputing no motives to anyone. There was a commission of enquiry into Landate where materials were siphoned from the Scarborough Hospital; siphoned away to another private development site. And that happened, and there was a commission of enquiry, and that commission of enquiry found that there were sufficient reasons for investigations as to whether there was any criminal liability for larceny of the materials. In our common parlance, that is “tief,” larceny, and that report, Mr. Speaker, went to the Integrity Commission. So, we have to understand technicality and substance. It went to the Integrity Commission.

Regrettably, the Integrity Commission never gave natural justice to the Member before they sent that report—their part of the report; their recommendations—to the Director of Public Prosecutions. That is all that happened. There is no finding of guilt or no guilt, but there was a commission of enquiry with recommendations that the siphoning of these materials, there could have been something that was illegal about it. That remains unresolved up to today, Mr. Speaker. That remains unresolved.

And so, we continue with the Member for Diego Martin North/East, at that time, in December, 2009, the Member for Diego Martin West said that the government squandered the money, and he never said it until he was removed from the Cabinet. “He is obsessed with UDeCOTT and Calder Hart”, from his own Member. So, we come back to this issue of spending. The Member from Diego Martin North/East himself is saying that there was squandermania, and I come back again to the point raised by the Member for Diego Martin West about overspending, and we accused that Government of overspending, but what happened?

I said, in 2008, the Governor of the Central Bank, the IMF, everyone was saying, “Look, you are spending too much, you are heating up the economy, you are up to full capacity, and what that does is to put pressure to bring up the inflation.” Mr. Speaker, that is definitely not the case today. What is the inflation rate today? The inflation rate is nothing that it was under the PNM. We are not in that scenario; we are not in that position.

And so, in April 2010, the Minister of Finance, at that time, said it was the people spending which had created high inflation, not government’s public spending. This was in the face of the IMF. The Governor of the Central Bank was

saying, it was the public spending, government spending, that was putting on inflationary pressures. The Member for San Fernando East, in typical style, claimed that warnings to slow down the then Government was a ploy to prevent the country from achieving developed country status by the year 2020.

Well, if there was ever an obsession with Calder Hart by the Member for Diego Martin West, I do believe there was an obsession by all those now sitting here, and the previous administration with Vision 2020, because the Member for Diego Martin West had now said, “That is my vision, I am just changing the ‘20’ to ‘30’, and I am going to change a few clauses here and there. That is my vision”, forgetting that is the same failed Vision 2020 which caused them to lose the election; one of the factors to cause them to lose the election; the same failed policies and principles. And, indeed, not just the same policies and principles failed, you know, many of the same failed people were frontline Members—I saw a huge advertisement of all the old guard—the same old failed policies and persons to come back. I say, Mr. Speaker, never again! [*Desk thumping*] Never again! [*Desk thumping*] We must never forget; never forget, Mr. Speaker.

You know, they tell us when we speak, we must not talk about what happened before, and do not go back there and why we are going back there but, you know, those of us who forget the mistakes of the past, we are doomed to repeat them and, therefore, we must never, never, never forget the spending, the inflation, Mr. Speaker. And so, there we were, 2020, saying it was a ploy. Whose ploy was it, Mr. Speaker? Was it the IMF? Was it the Governor of the Central Bank to say slow down? That was a ploy by them to stop development? That was your own Governor of the Central Bank, appointed by your administration, and you are saying it was a ploy by him to slow you down. And while all this is going on, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, now Leader of the Opposition, he was still a Member of that Cabinet and of that Government. There was not a word from him, Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Diego Martin North/East told us. “Not a peep”; not one peep to talk a whimper to say that there was overspending until after.

And so, what did they do? Being warned not to overspend, they continued to spend—spending, spending and spending—and what happened when the money ran out? What did they do? They borrowed and they borrowed and they borrowed. So to come to talk to us about deficit financing and borrowing, is totally hypocritical, because you did it at a time when you were being warned that was not the prudent thing to do. It was not feasible to do it, but yet still you continued because, you say somewhere there is conspiracy to slow development down. And further, Mr. Speaker, when that happened, they borrowed and they borrowed, and

when they borrowed and they borrowed—I come again—what did they spend the money on to show us that we had achieved something?

In the six years when the country had the highest revenues, in our history, we paid over \$25.5 billion in debt. The incessant borrowing meant that that debt continued to rise, and that is part of the debt that we have inherited, Mr. Speaker. Again, hypocritical to talk about deficit financing and public debt.

Here we are today then, and the question I now have to ask is: where did that money go, the \$200 billion, all the Supplementary Appropriation Bills, where did it go, Mr. Speaker? And that is why I talk about the difference; the difference between this Government and the former administration. Again, I make the point, never forget; never forget.

If we look at the Ministry of Education, for example, we would have to ask: did they use that money to build schools, the \$200-billion plus? Did they build schools, Mr. Speaker? Did they build schools for our children? Did they spend money sufficiently in refurbishing schools? If we look at the numbers again, we would see in the nine years, the former Government in office built nine primary schools. I want you to hear me, you know, remember in nine years they built five primary schools.

Mr. Speaker, we have been in Government and within four years, we have built, throughout this country, 16 primary schools; 16! [*Desk thumping*] I must compliment the Minister of Education for his tremendous work, but we are not finished. Right now, under construction, there are another 30 primary schools. [*Desk thumping*] And here we come, under the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, under the IDF the Minister of Education is seeking approval through this Bill for about \$172.9 million. What is it for? It is to continue the construction of the schools. And, so, here we are, in four years, we have built 16 completed, hon. Member. [*Crosstalk*] In nine years, you built five.

In addition, under construction, 30 at present are being built, and to commence when we get some of this money now to be appropriated, another seven to be commenced. [*Desk thumping*] What this means, Mr. Speaker, in five short years in Government, we would have built 53 primary schools [*Desk thumping*] as compared to nine primary schools by the last Government. You see, they do not want to hear this, it hurts them, but the truth would set you free. We must understand that in nine years you built five primary schools; face up to it. Secondary schools, in nine years, do you know how many secondary schools the PNM built in the nine years before we came into office? I wonder if you could ever

guess.

Mr. Roberts: None. *Interruption*]

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Zero! Not a single secondary school, none! Not one.

You turned the keys for many of them I built, and so, the Minister of Education will confirm it, “zero, nil, nada zilch”; not one. You opened schools, but you did not build them. You turned the keys. When I was Minister of Education, prior to that, many of those schools—and not only did you not build, you know, you shut down schools; you shut it down. The famous Biche High School, built by the former administration under us, you refused to open it. [*Desk thumping*] We have opened it, Mr. Speaker, as you well know. [*Desk thumping*] In under four years, this Government has constructed 53 primary schools—sorry, five secondary schools, and under construction now is 11. [*Desk thumping*] Part of this supplementary funding is to help to pay for the 11 under construction. [*Desk thumping*]

5.45 p.m.

We are speaking of the nine years—Mr. Speaker, let them not confuse the issue, you know. We are talking about the nine years just prior to us coming into office, when they were in office. I will give the father of the nation great credit, Dr. Williams, yes he built some schools, yes he did. I will give him that credit. I am speaking about your watch, when you were there. Many of you, when you were there in the last nine years, this is your dismal record. [*Desk thumping*]

Early childhood centres—that was a recurring decimal in this Parliament by the former administration. Every single year—regurgitated, recurring decimal: we will build early childhood centres; every single budget; and, “We will put how many billions into building early childhood centres.” “We will build 600 early childhood centres in one year.” [*Crosstalk*] Nine years later, the PNM built 22 early childhood centres—22 early childhood centres.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: We left some of them in various stages of construction.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: In under four years, we have built 53 early childhood centres. [*Desk thumping*] There are 13 under construction, and again some of this money will help us to construct them. There are another 26 to be constructed. So it means, should the Minister of Education continue his track record, in our five years we would have constructed 92 early childhood centres. [*Desk thumping*]

Yes, we must remember their famous contractor Haji, whom they contracted to build and he absconded with \$60 million and did not build the childhood centres.

In addition, what are we doing with this money? With 800 schools we used over 550 contractors to do refurbishment works. That is another thing, local contractors, small contractors, over 550 of them.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Here it is, in this book. [*Dr. Gopeesingh lifts document folder*]

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, when you get to speak. [*Laughter*] The textbooks for about a quarter million students; that is what we will be doing with the money, Mr. Speaker; textbooks for about one quarter million children.

We talk about scholarships, and I think Minister could provide that when he speaks, the number of scholarships given out.

School meals—we are providing 156,000 meals per day. That is to say we are providing meals for about 100,000 children in this country.

But I think one of the things we are all very proud of is the laptops. They say: What are we doing with this money? Why are we asking for more? It is not going in my pocket or yours, Mr. Speaker. I am showing where this money is going. Laptops—73,300 laptops distributed to students, principals and supervisors. We made a promise and we kept the promise. We kept that promise, 73,300 laptops. [*Interruption*]

I want us to remember Members on the other side—one of whom is just muttering non-stop at the moment, but I am not going to be distracted at all—stood up when we talked about this laptop initiative, giving every child in our schools. You know what they said? “Duncey head children”; we must never, never forget that; never forget it. In the same way the Member for Diego Martin North/East, when we were building schools to give every child a place in a school, he talked about “parrot and douens”. This is how they think of our children—“duncey head children”. When we said we would give the laptops to everyone, “duncey head children”. We must never, never, never forget.

Hon. Member: Shame!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: But you see, they could speak like that because their children had laptops in their homes, but for the normal child, the ordinary child in this country, parents could not afford the laptops. I am proud that this Government has given every child a laptop in their home. [*Desk thumping*] So

whether you are poor or you are rich, you come from Laventille, you come from Cedros, Arima, Toco, wherever you come from, every school child has that opportunity, that chance to expand their knowledge, to live in this generation and the next. That laptop initiative will take us.

In fact, in the ratings under the World Economic Forum, our ratings as a country in the IT sector grew. Our ratings increased because of that initiative. [*Desk thumping*] So today, four years later, Form 1, Form 2, 3 and 4, every child. And guess what? By next year, before next year, in our five years, by September this year, everybody 1 to 5 has a laptop.

They said they would steal the laptops, but they did not understand. The same Member muttering is the one who said they would “tief” it; the same one quarrelling now. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Where are the laptops?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: They said they would steal it. Up to today the Minister has told me only one laptop was stolen. And guess what? They found it; it was recovered, very, very quickly. So the laptop initiative and many more, we are saying this is where some of the money went. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for Siparia has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. E. McLeod*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, hon. Speaker.

May I just at this juncture pause to debunk the idea that we are only developing south and central. That has been again another recurring decimal on the part of some of the Members on the opposite side, because I am sure some of them would know of the work going on in their own constituencies. It is either they are being hypocritical or “dey cyar see”. They just cannot see what is happening in their own constituencies. Perhaps you do not even go to your constituencies; you do not see the work.

So if we look at the 16 primary schools that were built for us: St. Barbara’s Spiritual Shouter Baptist Primary School; Lengua Presbyterian; Palo Seco Government Secondary; Arima New Government Primary; Penal Rock Road Primary; Tulsa Trace Primary; Mount Pleasant Government Primary; Riversdale Presbyterian; Tunapuna Government; Enterprise Government; Eccle Village AC;

Monkey Town; Febeau Village—that is down in the La Brea constituency; Rose Hill RC Primary; Paramin RC—I wonder whose constituency is that?—[*Crosstalk*] Belmont RC. That is for the primary schools, and I could go through the MIC centres. You heard me speak before. We have opened an MIC centre, guess where? In Diego Martin. Member for Diego Martin West would know of that, it is in his constituency.

I do not have sufficient time to go through every project, but it is likewise. The early childhood centres that we built, they have been built throughout the country and across the water in Tobago too. So wherever it is, it is national development for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Given the limited time, I will not go through the list of every one. Perhaps each Minister should consider listing every single project and put it in a book, and distributing it so people will know the projects delivered.

Water is the same; water for all. We have increased water supply, the number of persons who benefit, as well as the length of time the water is flowing for.

I have a little moment to really talk about an issue raised by the Member for Diego Martin West, which I think needs to be put paid to.

Minister Cadiz has told me on the matter of the vessel—first of all it is erroneous to say that the vessel was purchased. The vessel I am told by Minister has been leased not purchased. Now, a comparison is being drawn with the *MV Su*. Let us not fool ourselves. The *MV Su* never floated, not one single day. [*Laughter*] They had to tie it and drag it. We could not even bring it. I know there was an attempt to bring it here to the Parliament. You could not even float it to bring it here. There is a word for that when you tie something and pull it together. What is it, wreck it? You had to haul it with a rope or a chain and bring it up the road. It just could not move.

Mr. Cadiz: Towed.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Towed, that is the word. Thank you very much, Minister of Transport. [*Laughter*] So it was leased, not purchased.

Secondly, Minister has told me that the shore side infrastructure work is being done to accommodate the vessel. This together with the following:

The necessary infrastructure work to enable this temporary operation consists of: Construction of two booths for use by security and port personnel—completed; necessary signage, well that is painting sign boards—completed;

rental of a vehicle for a security mobile patrol during the operation has been finalized and will commence when the operation starts.

Further seaside operations as follows: Work to be done, asphalt paving of barge deck; construction of a new ramp from the barge to the wharf; cutting openings in existing bin walls of the barge; installation of wearing plate on barge where vessel ramp sits. Approval has been obtained from the board for the cost of the works. The contractors advise the works can be completed in seven to 10 days. So these are just infrastructural work. It is not that the ship cannot move; it is not that the ship cannot float. [*Crosstalk*] It is not that the ship cannot come into the dock. It is to improve and upgrade. If you really want to see it, the Minister is telling me it is right outside the Hyatt here. At least that one could have floated up to the Hyatt. [*Interruption*]

It is a small cost, yes, \$797,000. [*Crosstalk*] Let us make it clear: it is not \$51 million for these works. It is about \$797,000, not the \$51 million, and should be completed within seven to 10 days. This will bring enormous relief to the people of Tobago—to the people of Tobago.

Mr. Cadiz: They do not like Tobago, boy.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I wonder why they do not like Tobago at all, because the Tobago end is ready. Minister, is that correct?

Mr. Cadiz: Yes.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And it is just these minor infrastructural works. So do not jumbie people out there, to frighten them, to say this thing is \$51 million, it cannot float and compare it to the most horrid thing that ever happened in sea transport, the *MV Su*. There was no greater disaster and fiasco than the *MV Su* in this country. This is nothing, anything near to the *MV Su*. So to get the goods and supplies faster in greater quantities, this is what will be used.

The Minister expects to be on the maiden voyage by the second week of July. I hope it will happen and, again, this is no *MV Su*. Would you like to go on it too? We could take you for a ride, from Trinidad to Tobago. [*Laughter*] Again, no *Su* and not any of the frightening things that people are attempting on the other side, to place fear, to make a bold headline tomorrow: \$51 million. Nothing of the sort. It was just maybe an attempt of misinformation or to grab some fancy headline in tomorrow's paper, that will be totally misleading and totally inaccurate, Mr. Speaker.

So here we are, I have about 13 minutes left, thank you.

Mr. Speaker: You have until 6.20, madam.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I want to raise some other matters which may not be as—the good news—the Member for Diego Martin West says we only want to give the good news, we want to give the Government's side. Again, you wonder where this thinking comes from, it is out of Mars. Whose side should we give? [Laughter] We are the Government. Does he expect us to give the Opposition side? That is what he is there for. That is why we have a Government side and an Opposition side. So Members would give the Opposition view, and on this side we will give the Government view, but we will be very happy for any of the others on that side to also give the Government view. We have no problems with taking the Government's view. The Member said that we are giving only the Government side, and not giving the other side. Well let me give some of the Opposition side on certain matters.

The Member raised the issue of the LifeSport Programme. I know, hon. Speaker, you stopped him. I am not going into any details. I want to make it very clear, I think the Minister of Finance and Economy has made it very clear as well. Whilst there is a request for appropriation under the LifeSport Programme here, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has given the undertaking that no moneys will be disbursed until the audit is complete and disbursements will be made in accordance with that audit. [Desk thumping] That is how we operate.

But the question then is this: yes, allegations have been raised about the LifeSport Programme, what did we do? Did we cover it up? Did we hide it? Mr. Speaker, we ordered an audit; that is what we can do. I want to say, at every single time allegations have arisen, this Government has been brave and courageous enough to deal with those allegations. [Desk thumping]

The question would be: well, what did you do when you had the authority so to do? So many things happened. What happened? The Member is talking about Minister Howai should bring the report on the IPO for FCB. Which report did they ever bring to this Parliament? Did they lay any report in this Parliament? Did they lay the report on the Landate matter in this Parliament? All those reports: the Barnes report on health care and so on? But he is there badgering the Minister to lay a report in Parliament in a matter that is at present live.

It is a live issue for investigation, and it will be reckless and inappropriate to bring that report to the Parliament, when it is a live issue under investigation. And what we have done with that, let us again say we did not hide, we did not run.

That report, the parts that are ready, have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions. If there was criminal wrongdoing, that is the office and the agency charged to deal with it.

6.00 p.m.

We must not mix institutions and the role and functions of institutions, that is when you get into trouble. That is where you can get a Prime Minister storming into a radio station [*Laughter*] when he did not like what was being said. When you confuse your role and your function with that of another agency or body or another institution of the State, you intermeddle, interfere and you cross the lines of democracy, of justice and fairness, Mr. Speaker.

So, I am asking the question, what did they do, Mr. Speaker? And this gives us another indication as to where they spent money. What did they do about the obscene cost overruns of the 50-plus UDeCOTT projects? The Chaguanas Corporation Administrative Complex, \$10 million over budget, 24 months delayed. The Chancery Lane Government Complex, \$300 million over budget; left incomplete. The Government Campus, Legal Affairs, \$300 million over budget. The International Waterfront project, \$1.3 billion over budget. The Ministry of Education tower, \$300 million over budget. The NAPA, Port of Spain, \$234 million over budget. SAPA, San Fernando, \$238 million over budget. The Beverly Hills housing project, \$106 million over budget. Brian Lara Stadium, again a monument to—what I said, a multimillion dollar monument to corruption. How many seats?

Mr. Roberts: Ten thousand.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Ten thousand seats costing \$1.2 billion, not completed and still running, which takes one seat in that stadium, do you know what it will cost?—\$105,000; \$105,000. Minister of Sport tells me in the Caribbean the average is \$6,000 per seat, per stadium. This is \$100,000 per seat, a monument to corruption, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: Shame!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Seven hundred over budget, and climbing. The Prime Minister's Residence and Diplomatic Centre, \$700 million over budget.

Hon. Member: “Ohhhhh goood!”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Seven hundred million over budget. Mr. Speaker, no wonder why the hon. Member for San Fernando East could come into

this Chamber and hold up a photograph of my private home in south, my real home—and say that thing cost how much hundred million?

Mr. Roberts: One hundred and fifty million.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: One hundred and fifty million. Because if this residence was \$700 million over budget, you really “doh” have any concept of proper expenditure.

The Scarborough Hospital, another monument of corruption, Mr. Speaker, over budget by millions of dollars. Final cost \$700 million with—how many beds that worked out to? How many was that? How much per bed?

Mr. Roberts: Two point seven million.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: About \$7 million per bed for the Scarborough Hospital. But we are very proud that we were able to open that Scarborough Hospital—very proud. [*Desk thumping*] In the same way we were very proud to open—could you find the hospital ones for me?—Health. We were very proud to open the Chancery Lane, the San Fernando Teaching Hospital—the teaching hospital in San Fernando. I think that was the first hospital that was opened in Trinidad since 1959—if I am not mistaken—and it will not be the last, because we are at present constructing the Couva Children’s Hospital, which will be the only one of its kind in the entire Caribbean—[*Desk thumping*] and it is just rising and rising. Each day you pass along that strip of road, it is rising. It is just going up. And that will give us 230 beds, Mr. Speaker, at that hospital for care of our children.

The San Fernando Teaching Hospital, 216 beds with the added capacity for teaching—very important for training medical personnel. And in addition to that, we have opened, for the first time in this country, a nursing academy to train nurses for our hospitals and for our health centres. [*Desk thumping*] Those are some of the areas in health.

Every year I was in this Parliament in the Opposition, every single year, and that was for many years we were here.

Dr. Khan: Oncology Centre.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Oncology Centre. Yes. You know it, recurring, regurgitated decimal. Every single year, “we will build the oncology centre, we will build it. We will build it. We will build it.” Well this Government will build it. It is being built now. [*Desk thumping*] Work is under construction. It is under construction, the National Oncology Centre. The work is currently 35 per cent complete. All foundation works completed. The structure, the steel frame, it

is a superstructure being erected. Thank you, Minister Dr. Khan, for your work in health and helping us in these matters. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: The foundation work was already there.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Now, we talk about—“the foundation was there”—[*Crosstalk*] You know, Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand. [*Crosstalk*] I know, I know the word “lie” is not parliamentary, Mr. Speaker, so I will not use it, but the Member, Miss Hospedales, was talking about a “false lie”—a “false truth”. So, Mr. Speaker, you know, in the same way they said they left us with a “strong foundation” in the economy. “Strong foundation”, what? The sinkhole that was Clico. That was the “strong foundation” you left us. The sinkhole that was HCU, that was the “foundation” they laid us. The spiralling inflation rate—that is the foundation they laid us. Mr. Speaker, it is totally incorrect, the Minister of Health can confirm. The only foundation they left was one of sand that washed away. That was the only one. Sand washed away in the waters. [*Crosstalk*]

Member for Diego Martin West spoke about the URP something, URP corruption and so on. You know, I wondered what did they do when Members on their side, under the then CEPEP Programme, hired a parent, a father, the multimillion-dollar CEPEP contract. And when that Minister was approached about it, her defence was to quote from the *Holy Bible*; that was the defence—sadly. “Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” That was the explanation, Mr. Speaker, for Members on the other side. The question is, what did you do? Yes, if one Member did something, and it was wrongdoing—what did you do? We have said, we will run the audits. We face the punches where they are and we take decisions, and it continues. And I know about honouring my father because what I am today it is because of what he did. That is fine. That is true. I am about honouring my father because what I am today is because of what he did, Mr. Speaker.

And then she went on to say that everyone knew her father had received the contracts. [*Crosstalk*] Please, do not disturb me. I just have a few minutes left. You can go behind the chair, and I am sure the Speaker will be very happy, as will I. [*Laughter*] And she went on to say that everybody knew and so on.

And therefore, what did they do when the Auditor General issued a report that contained scathing criticisms on the total absence of accountability on the \$1.6 billion spent on CEPEP from 2002 to 2007. What did they do, Mr. Speaker? You come every day, every time they open their mouths they speak about section 34. Let us take that face on. When the consequences were brought to our attention,

within days we called this Parliament to convene, [*Desk thumping*] to repeal the offensive section, which had been passed with all of them, eh—with all of them. And that is why, in some senses, you see this pensions Bill, let us make sure that they are not setting us up for another section 34. Because when they passed the section 34 in the House, they came outside, and marching round, all over Port of Spain, against section 34. Total hypocrites. Total hypocrites. And we moved, within days of it coming to our attention, to repeal it. And the Court of Appeal has upheld our decision, [*Desk thumping*] it was legal, that these persons will not benefit from that invalid section 34.

The other recurring decimal that they use to fight us, and to come into our faces, was to talk about, I said already, Resmi Ramnarine. Okay! What did I do? What did we do? She was moved out of there within days—within days. [*Desk thumping*] But what did you do when you got the Auditor General's Report, ah?—\$1.6 billion spent on CEPEP with corruption. What did you do? Nothing! But on each time we have faced the challenge, because this life is one of challenges, and the question will not be the challenge itself, but it is how you deal with the challenge that faces you. [*Desk thumping*] And that is what I have shown, and we have shown. We are not afraid to confront these obstacles and challenges and to take the decision that is right because it is the right decision to take. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we do. And what did you do when the Tobago Library project was at a cost overrun of \$19 million? It was supposed, sorry—library—to be \$19 million was the cost. You know what was the cost overrun?—\$100 million. It reached to 100 million. And I do not think it is even complete.

Hon. Member: Not finished.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: What did you? What have you done? So it is all well and good to cast stone and to cast aspersions and cast blame, the question is, when you were confronted with hard decisions, what did you do? Did you duck and run? Did you hide your face? Did you turn away from the problem? We have never failed and never shirked our duty to face those challenges. [*Desk thumping*]

And whilst I am saying, what did you do when we had all these corruption and cost overruns, at the same time, I am giving you some answers. Why were you not able to build schools? Only nine primary, zero secondary, five primary, zero secondary, 22—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: One police station.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes. And I was coming to police stations. And that was another recurring, regurgitated decimal. I have the *Hansard* here. Time

will not give us much time to go through it, but what it was about is that every year we are building police stations. And they will identify where, Matelot, and wherever, and wherever. You all remember we were in the Parliament—they, some of them were there too. Every year, how many police stations did they build? One police station—one. The Belmont police station. Well, hurrah for them, well done. In nine years, one police station.

Mr. Speaker, in the several years that we have been here—[*Crosstalk*] Oh, please. Oh, please. Please. Please. Mr. Speaker, 17 new state-of-the-art police stations are being delivered. [*Desk thumping*] The first eight are almost complete. The second, phase nine, all tendered. The St. Joseph and St. Clair police station sites, construction works to start in August. And in these we have already completed—oh, we have to commence work in Roxborough and Old Grange in Tobago, Manzanilla, Matelot, Matura, Maracas, St. Joseph and Besson Street. Again, is this south and central only, Mr. Speaker? It is everywhere. These are to commence. I do have a list of the ones that have been completed. We have completed construction of Arima, and it has been opened. The Piarco police station Maloney, these have all been completed. So we will deliver, Mr. Speaker, on construction of these police stations.

I come back again, cost overruns—where the money went. And I am showing why they probably were not able to give the delivery that we have been able to in four years, they were there for nine years. And guess what?—they had more money than we did; they had more. We inherited a depleted Treasury, Mr. Speaker.

So, the CEPEP, nothing happened, \$1.6 million spent. Nothing happened. Overrun in Tobago. We are looking at other projects. [*Crosstalk*]

What about the famous scholarship slush fund? What about it? [*Crosstalk*] I am told—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Could you avoid the crosstalk, please? Hon Members, avoid the crosstalk.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—it was about—thank you, hon. Speaker. Sixty million dollars in the secret scholarship slush fund—\$60 million. I am told it was for just about 200 persons, \$60 million. And someone is coming today, Member for Diego Martin West, to question LifeSport \$24 million maybe to go to LifeSport, maybe to go, depending on the audit—for 2,000 persons. About 200 people, \$60 million, what happened? What did anyone on that side say? What did they do when it came to light that this was not properly done? Today, Mr.

Speaker, I am advised, I am told that this matter has been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for investigation. [*Desk thumping*] So these are some of the areas of expenditure but, again, where nothing was done.

You will see here on this side when allegations came to light with respect to a conflict of interest in the award of a contract, we took action with respect to that Minister, the first Minister to be dismissed from the Cabinet. Following allegations, Mr. Partap was under police investigation, and the matter is before the court. Also, we took action with respect to him. With Mr. Volney, again, when matters arose, we took action.

6.15 p.m.

Minister Ramadharsingh, again, when allegations arose that were out in the public domain—with respect to third parties too, whether they are true or not, those matters will be dealt with—we took action. Minister Sharma, again, with respect to a third party, that matter was dealt with. And they say, why did you not deal with Minister Roberts? Why did you not likewise fire him or ask him to resign? Why? And I will give you the answer. The answer is, in those matters there were third parties involved. In this matter it is this Minister alone and there is no other corroborating evidence with respect to what has been done, and that is why. You see, people ask me, why did you not? You dealt with these others. There were other outside parties involved, who came forward in those matters. In one matter the police investigation and a matter before the court; in another matter, police reports and another person was involved; in another matter, another person was involved, a member of the public. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, there are different scenarios, and do not lump all into one. What did you do when it was brought to your attention that the Minister of Finance with the responsibility under the Constitution to protect the moneys and the well-being of this country, what did you do when it came forward that that Minister bailed out her moneys out of the Clico and CL Financial? Billions of dollars together with her mother—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Billions?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Millions, millions. Well, Member you may know more than I do whether it is billions or millions. But millions of dollars pulled out before, went into the sinkhole.

You know the Member for Port of Spain South was not so fortunate.

Miss Mc Donald: Again, oh God.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: No one told her she should pull out her shares before the sinkhole. But the Minister of Finance whose husband was a director of that company—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: He was a director.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: She was also a director.

Mr. Roberts: She was an owner of those shares, 10,400 shares.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay. Mr. Speaker, what did that Government do? They did absolutely nothing. Buried their heads in the sand. Not even the Member for Diego Martin West spoke about corruption. Not even him said a pipsqueak or a word. *[Crosstalk]* And then they put her back to run for the same seat—*[Crosstalk]* Nothing was done.

What did you do? Mr. Speaker, that is with respect to one Minister. So many other instances we can talk about where nothing, no action was ever taken. None was taken. I have to wind up, okay.

Well, I have enjoyed this contribution, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: You want to go on or you want another hour? *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I would like to serve notice, that having participated in this debate, I intend to participate in many more, Mr. Speaker, *[Desk thumping]* because I think it is important to place the performance and the delivery on record. There can be no gainsaying, there can be no doubt whatsoever that the People's Partnership Government has delivered and is continuing to deliver. *[Desk thumping]* There is no doubt.

I just dealt with schools, but if I could go through every Ministry, and I am hoping other Ministers would speak—we go through the roads and bridges, with each Minister, through transport, through community development, through utility, through every single Ministry you would see the list and the pile of projects. *[Desk thumping]* And again, to repeat the point, these projects are throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago. You see, the same way they repeat every time, we only serving south and central, we must throw it back, face to face we are developing the whole of Trinidad and Tobago *[Desk thumping]* and we will give the examples.

So, I have learnt something, repeat, repeat, repeat and someone would remember. But, we say things; we have so many things to say; we end up saying it once and we say okay, we said that already. But we must repeat, and that is why I have taken some time today to point some of the areas. So, yes, we will continue to deliver, we will continue to work throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and in addition, we will not take any more lying down, the lies, the half-truths and innuendoes, famous words from Mr. Basdeo Panday. We will not take any of those unanswered. We will come back face to face and answer them. And I serve notice as I said, all of us, we continue to work very hard. I want to compliment the Ministries who have been working very, very hard, who have pledged that they will continue so to do, and if I had one minute more I would have dealt with the very infamous trade union leader, Mr. Roget, but I would leave that for another day.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh (*St. Joseph*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, as I rise to make a contribution on this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into my contribution, it would be remiss of me if I did not offer on behalf of the People's National Movement, our sincerest condolences to the Member for St. Augustine, the hon. Prakash Ramadhar, on the passing of his dear father, Mr. Siew Ramadhar, businessman extraordinaire and philanthropist, from what I could gather. It is also fitting that I also offer on behalf of the People's National Movement, condolences to the Catholic community on the passing of Father Gerry Pantin. But not only to the Catholic community, but to the wider Trinidad and Tobago community, because Father Pantin did not confine his good deeds to the Catholic community, and I think the country is much poorer for his passing but we are much "more richer" for his living. So, I offer condolences to both families, hon. Prakash Ramadhar and to the Pantins. For those who do not know, the Member for St. Augustine is also my constituent.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you for your visit.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: You are most welcome. Mr. Speaker, it is quite obvious that the 2015 election campaign has begun in earnest with the hon. Prime Minister's contribution today. One would think that we are still fighting the 2010 election as all the issues raised in 2010 are being raised in 2014 with—
[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I am hearing a good groan. What you hear?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, well you were always involved in it, you know. [Laughter] Yes, you were always involved, so now you are seeking protection [Laughter] but I shall offer protection, but I want you to take note of your own injury. Okay? Continue, hon. Member.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, as I was saying it is obvious that the 2015 election campaign has begun in earnest, in that the same issues we heard in 2010 are now being regurgitated ad infinitum and ad nauseam in 2014, but I would not be responding to the hon. Prime Minister's barbs or comments—that would be left for the platform for the general election of 2015—because there are a couple of live matters that really need elucidating in this debate. And I will be referring to some of the things that the hon. Prime Minister did say. For example, what does this have to do with the ordinary man about deficit financing and so on?

And the first question I want to ask the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy and the hon. Prime Minister, who gave a very spirited defence of deficit financing, is why was the Point Fortin Highway financed out of Trinidad and Tobago's savings and current account? And why did we not borrow? If I remember correctly, it was the former Minister of Works who gave the Prime Minister and the Government an ultimatum, to start that highway or else he would do something, and that is why that highway was started on cash. The other potential reason, why the highway was not financed, was that Resmi Ramnarine, then, was the current issue, and we were all in the Hyatt in a CPA conference, and I remember the hon. Prime Minister leaving the Hyatt and rushing down to the site, with the big cheque, to start the highway, and that is why it was politically expedient for the Government—[Interruption] Sure.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Member. I do not know what big cheque you are talking about or running down where, please. Can you kindly say cheque for whom? From where did I run on the highway with a cheque? I do not recall any such thing. I never had any such cheque to give anybody to run down the highway. Please, Sir, what am I, a banker?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: The hon. Prime Minister left the Hyatt, went down to the site for the highway, with one of those big displayed cheques.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I do not know what cheque he is talking about.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: That is why \$7.2 billion of our money is being spent out of the current account and not being financed by deficit financing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address a very live issue, and I base my contribution on page 24 of this Bill. National Insurance Property Development Company, \$83.698 million required on a loan from the National Insurance Board. The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy has found himself in a very unenviable position in this Government. He has to deal with the CAL debacle, one; where this Government took an airline, which had been restructured, refinanced, with no debt; this Government ran it into the ground with a \$1 billion debt. The whole board had to be fired. We have the CAL debacle, two, where the new board is not able yet to chart a course for the survival of CAL.

Under this Government the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy has to launch an investigation into URP agriculture for charges of corruption there. The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy is also involved in the LifeSport issue, he would say very little about that. The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy has also been called to account to us for FCB one, which is the Philip Rahaman debacle, and now FCB, two, with Chanka Seeterram. Live issues, and five, the issue which I would speak to, the NIB issue.

The hon. Prime Minister spoke about the little man and the working class, and this NIB issue, which I am about to deal with, is important to the working class, the little man, the sugar worker, the taxi driver, the dock worker, the fisherman, anybody who is paying their little NIS contribution. Therefore, the workings of the NIB must be scrutinized and scrutinized heavily.

Mr. Speaker, there is a deed registered on March 14, 2014 between a company called R&M Property Holdings Limited of #3 Lewis Street, San Fernando and the NIB, the National Insurance Board. And the deed is for the sale of a property at No. 13, Queen's Park East, and I would refer to that property hereinafter, as Apsara. Because every Head that we are seeking to spend money on, is used to pay people who have to pay NIS, COLA.

Mr. Speaker, it is well-known that the actuarial reports out of the NIB paint a picture, which is not uncommon to Trinidad and Tobago. The NIB in their wisdom—and we have no problem with that—has been seeking to increase benefits to persons. For example, retirement pension from \$1,000 to \$2,000 and other increases. But with these benefits, we are now incurring long-term liabilities—the NIB, National Insurance Board—which have to be funded by the contribution of the little man that the hon. Prime Minister just spoke about, and on this Bill where everybody, the daily-paid workers, they are paying national insurance.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that because of demographic pressure and low birth rates, our working population has been decreasing in size over the years, therefore, fewer and fewer persons have now to support the benefits of an ageing population. That puts pressure on the NIB. A lot of pressure. A lot, a lot of pressure.

I want the population and you, Mr. Speaker, to understand where I am coming from when I talk about this issue with the National Insurance Board. And I want to put a figure out there for you and for the listening population, and that figure I want to put out is 4.75 per cent. Small figure, 4.75 per cent.

6.30 p.m.

And what is that figure, Mr. Speaker? If you go to the website of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, that is the rate that the Government will give you for an investment into Government bonds. So if I buy \$10 in Government bonds, I will get back \$14.75. Government bonds as we all know are probably the most perfect investment. It is risk free, carries zero risk. Governments do not default, as the hon. Prime Minister has just said. The United States has a debt to GDP ratio, north of 100 per cent. But governments do not default. Our Central Bank is offering us 4.75. So I want to hang that figure there. I want to hang that figure there in the context of two persons—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: Which bank is 4.75?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: The Central Bank.

Dr. Rambachan: Now?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Now. I want to hang that figure there in the context of two persons: one, Mr. Christopher Robertson, who had to have his claim for benefits from the NIB adjudicated in the public domain, in the *Trinidad Guardian*, March 24, 2013. He spoke about his frustration and runaround in getting a simple claim settled by the NIB. So 4.75 risk-free investment.

Mr. Christopher Pereira of Diego Martin, runaround to get his claim. I also have a constituent in Bamboo No. 1 whose name I would not call, because he is now before a tribunal. He cannot get satisfaction before the NIB tribunal. They want to tie him up in legal wranglings and the poor man does not have the wherewithal to go for judicial review. So you have those two cases, the little man, the working class man, Mr. Robertson and my constituent from Bamboo No. 1.

So what is national insurance? That was introduced by the People's National Movement many, many years ago. It was a form of social security where you are paying your little contribution—the working man, the simple man, Mr. Robertson, my constituent in Bamboo. NIB has to understand what its primary role is—that is, to pay out money—to ease people in their times of need. But this NIB is now engaging in magic shows. Magic.

Mr. Speaker, there is an ad which appeared in the *Newsday*, October 16, 2012:

“PROPERTIES FOR SALE BY MORTGAGEE”

Now, Mr. Speaker, when a bank, when a mortgagee puts up a property for sale, it means that the owners of that property are what we call in common parlance, “bad pay”—they cannot service their loans. And you can forward your sealed offers to the:

“CREDIT MANAGER

P.O. BOX 1153, PORT OF SPAIN”

And one of the five properties is:

“No. 13 Queen's Park East, Port of Spain

Three Storey Commercial Structure on 18,368 Sq. Ft. Land”

Member run out a deed recently—R&M Holdings.

That building, aka Apsara, is a property in distress since 2012 that we know of. For a bank to offer that property for sale in 2012, it means that there was a history going back probably years. So the owners of this property, No. 13 Queen's Park East, aka Apsara, are persons who ran afoul of the bank whose P.O. Box No. is 1153—ad in the *Newsday* October 16, 2012—R&M properties.

And in the newspaper an article:

“NIB buys \$37m restaurants, June 1”—2014”

The names of MessrsKavanagh and Mohammed are mentioned as the owners of Apsara.

Mr. Imbert: They were in default.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: They were in default.

Mr. Imbert: And they bail them out?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Coming to that, coming to that. So when a property is advertised, a distressed property, it indicates delinquency by the owner, cannot pay their bills. It talks about a property without the capacity to earn revenue to sustain itself, and normally banks would go for a fire sale once it could recover a decent price for it within 10 per cent or so of market price. The question is, what price was the bank or lending agency with P.O. Box No. 1153 willing to accept in 2012? Question two, what was the valuation of the said property in 2012?

Mr. Speaker, it is now known that this Government has entered into this magic show, with Messrs Mohammed and Kavanagh, magic show, total magic, that things will appear, and certain things will disappear. This Government has agreed to purchase No. 13 Queen's Park East for \$37 million. But poor Mr. Robertson and my constituent in Bamboo getting runaround with their little claims. And they have entered into this deal, structured in such a way, that for the first five years they lease it back to Messrs Kavanagh and Mohammed at \$96,000 a month for five years, and then there is an option to buy, and if they do not take up the option they could continue paying a monthly rent of \$125,000 a month for a further five years. So it is a 10-year time horizon.

Mr. Speaker, remember I hung that figure of 4.75 per cent up in the air, that the Central Bank will give you, risk-free investment. Mr. Speaker there is something called time value of money, which means money today is worth more than money 10 years from now. Simple layman terms. So if an NIB pensioner whose salary we are going to pay out in this money Bill, invests \$100 now, what does he expect to get back in 10 years? Similarly, if NIB invest \$37 million in a property, what should they get back in 10 years? And I will come to that, I will come to that.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister spoke about PNM deeds in the past, and that is fine. We were voted out of office, fine, not a problem. Let us look at a real-live issue, where the participants in this magic show are living, breathing and walking amongst us. We do not have to dig up a grave, we can get a DNA sample from them. According to the *Guardian* or the newspaper report, the first valuation from NIB, the first valuation in January 2014, is \$16.5 million. Valuation one. But NIB pays what? Thirty-seven million and then agrees to spend \$5 million to repair.

Mr. Speaker, the valuation by Mohammed and Kavanagh is \$29 million. Look at that "eh", almost twice the amount. Bearing in mind that Kavanagh and Mohammed had \$3 million outstanding, they could not service their loans. But, Mr. Speaker, question: Why did the previous board reject the offer of Kavanagh and Mohammed to buy the property? Question two, why did this board under Mr.

Adrian Bharath agree to buy it for \$37 million?—when NIB’s own valuation was \$16.5 million. According to the Prime Minister, where the money gone? Where the money gone? Into whose hands? The previous board rejected it because the risk was too high. Remember I said 4.75, magic number, risk-free investment, taking no risk.

I want the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy to answer some questions on this deal with Apsara: Who approached whom? Did Kavanagh and Mohammed approach NIB or did NIB approach Kavanagh and Mohammed? We need to know that.

Question two, why was not NIB’s valuation, their own valuation as a purchaser of \$16.5 million not used? Why pay 2.3 times NIB’s own valuation, and even more than Kavanagh’s and Mohammed’s valuation. You see the magic? You see the magic starting to happen? The magic show open.

Mr. Indarsingh: What! Abracadabra.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Abracadabra, that is it, abracadabra. But, Mr. Speaker, hear NIB’s justification. They say it is a good investment. The property will appreciate by 7 per cent per annum. I am not going to get into details, but every finance student, business student, knows present value tables. It is a simple formula, as the years change and the numbers change, you just plug it in and you get a number. At 7 per cent per annum, compounded, over 10 years using NIB’s own 7 per cent, that value, that property will appreciate by 1.96 times in 10 years and three months. So let us round off the figures. At NIB’s own 7 per cent, at \$37 million—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: That is impossible. What property does that?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Well, I am coming to that—at \$37 million purchase price, using NIB’s own 7 per cent, in 10 years that property should double in value. Question is, the agreement to buy back that Kavanagh and Mohammed has, means that they should be paying \$72.5 million for that property in 10 years. What the NIB is saying is that properties in Port of Spain will double in value every 10 years. Ask any real estate agent who knows about property in Port of Spain. They would tell you that is magic, that is abracadabra, that is hocus pocus, hocus pocus.

Mr. Indarsingh: You could do your own show.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Mr. Speaker, if NIB had taken that \$37 million and bought Government bonds at 4.75 per cent from the Central Bank, risk free for 10

years, they would get back \$58.8 million in 10 years. That is what they would get back. Are Kavanagh and them going to give back NIB either \$58.8 million or the \$72 million based on NIB's 7 per cent appreciation. But, Mr. Speaker, the magic goes further. NIB is saying that they are going to use this property, possibly, for their head office. It is a three-storey old building, granted the land is valuable.

In Trinidad, in Port of Spain, there is north of, and in excess of, 1 million square feet of office space. Some of that is coming due, because of the relocation of Ministries and State enterprises to other parts, fine. So office space in Port of Spain is not a problem. The Government, when it came into power in 2014, met the Government Campus, they stopped it. They want there as a monument. I understand now they are going to revisit it and complete it. What happens with that excess office space, when the Government Campus comes on line, and when more Ministries and state enterprises leave Port of Spain, is it that NIB cannot find office space?

6.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, my information tells me that in late 2012, a property in Queen's Park West, not East—East is where Apsara is, West is where the American Embassy is, and other places are. A property in Queen's Park West, in late 2012, sold at \$700 per square foot. Queen's Park East, even if we are generous, at 18,000 square feet, cannot be more than \$800 a square foot. So if you are talking about the land value for NIB—because the building is unsuited for the headquarters of anything.

Mr. Imbert: The building is derelict.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: The building is old; it is derelict. That means you are paying \$15 million for the land alone—\$15 million. Forget the building, because no agency like the NIB wants an old two-storey building. They want a high-rise with floors.

Mr. Imbert: Run-down.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: So they are going to demolish this building if it is their intention to build their head office there. Explain that to me. Let the hon. Prime Minister explain that to me. Let the Minister of Finance and the Economy explain that to me, that a property, generously valued at \$800 a square foot, which gives you a total value of \$15 million, with a worthless building, is being bought by the little people of Trinidad and Tobago—the workers, the taxi drivers, the farmers,

the fishermen—for \$37 million. Explain that to me. Who benefits from this deal? Who benefits from this magic? Who benefits from this? The NIB board, under this Minister of Finance and the Economy, has a lot of questions to answer—a lot of questions to answer.

I cannot begin to fathom the reason that led this NIB board to buy that building, and at the same time my constituent cannot get his benefit. I have to write to the Minister of Finance and the Economy, I have to write to the tribunal, I have to write to Adrian Bharath to get some relief for a little man, and Mr. Robinson has to go to the papers—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Dey doh care.”

Mr. T. Deyalsingh:—to get NIB to do something about his claim. I mean, this is totally ridiculous. This reeks, to use the Prime Minister’s words—reeks of corruption in 2014—not 2009, not 1956—2014. The Petrotrin board and the NP board “doh like me and dah is fine. They take out big ad about me already—the NP board”.

Mr. Imbert: Let the NIB board do it—

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Let the NIB board do that for me now. They “doh” like me, fine. But the NIB board, headed by one Mr. Adrian Bharath, has a case to answer in the court of public opinion.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: That is right. That is right.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: He has to explain to us how a land value generously pegged at—what?—\$15 million, he is paying \$37 million for, and then going to spend \$5 million to fix an old building which was in distress in 2012 and put up for sale by PO Box 1153, and everybody in the real estate market knows who PO Box 1153 is. It is no secret. But “ah doh” want to draw the bank into this.

Dr. Rambachan: Who is that?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: “Ah go tell yuh afterwards. Ah oh gih yuh de ad.” I will give you the ad.

Mr. Speaker, we want to know, on this side, not the terms of the purchase, you know, we want the terms of the lease buy-back arrangement. What price has Messrs. Kavanagh and Mohammed agreed to pay back the NIB after the first rental lease finishes in five years, at \$96,000 a month, and on the second period? And the question that I want to ask Mr. Adrian Bharath of the NIB—because we have not seen the agreement—does the NIB have the power in that lease to reject their

offer? Or is it that they have to accept their offer? So if Messrs. Kavanagh and Mohammed come back in 10 years and say, “Well, yuh know, ah could only offer yuh back \$20 million or \$30 million”, we want to know—we demand—on behalf of the contributors like Mr. Sylvester and my constituent in Bamboo—we demand to know the terms of that buy-back after five years and after 10 years. Talk about corruption in 2014?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: That is it.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: That is corruption in 2014. Talk about “lie”? “Yuh see lie.”

Hon. Member: “That is lie.”

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: So, Mr. Speaker, that NIB deal reeks, it smells, and we on this side demand answers of Mr. Adrian Bharath, either through the Minister of Finance and the Economy, or by himself. Hold a press conference and tell us what you paid, what do you think the land value is, why did you not use NIB’s own valuation of \$16 million, why did you pay more than twice NIB’s valuation? Tell us, did you approach Kavanagh and Mohammed, or did Kavanagh and Mohammed approach you? Tell us what are the terms of the buy-back arrangement, and tell us, in that buy-back arrangement if you, the NIB, have the power to reject their offer in 10 years. We need those answers.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have dealt with the NIB issue. Much has been said about the FCB IPO and I am not going to go into that again. But when I made my contribution on the HCU Bill, for the second time I called on ICATT to tell us something. Mr. Speaker, this country is fast losing confidence in its institutions. We spoke about the involvement of a large firm in the Clico debacle. We spoke about the involvement of a medium-sized firm up in the east in the HCU debacle, where the principal partner of that firm literally admitted to perjury during the commission of enquiry. There is another single-man firm implicated in the Excellent structure up in Macoya Road. My issue is not with those accounting firms, my issue is with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Trinidad and Tobago, that up to today they have not issued a statement on the investigations into these three accounting firms.

The Member for Diego Martin North/East also called for ICATT to say something in a public meeting in Arima.

Mr. Imbert: They would not do anything.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: So you have two Members of Parliament: St. Joseph, Diego Martin North/East, beating on the doors of ICATT. Tell us. We understand due process, but public confidence in all our institutions has been shaken. What are you, ICATT, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Trinidad and Tobago, I think based opposite the Hasely Crawford Stadium—I know where they are; I know people who work there. When is ICATT going to issue a statement as to the state of investigations into PricewaterhouseCoopers, Chanka Seeterram Limited, and I think it is Dave Rampersad?

My issue is not with the accounting firms, you know, at this point in time. My issue is with ICATT. Tell us something. This is the third time I am in the Parliament—and the Member of Diego Martin North/East, once in a public meeting in Arima, is calling on ICATT to say something. [*Interruption*] No, that is not the head. I will tell you who the head is.

Dr. Rambachan: What is the secret?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: No, no, no. Forget that. “Ah doh” want to draw personalities in. I am calling on ICATT as an entity—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: You just drew three, you know.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Those are the people under investigation. Mr. Speaker, I would not be distracted.

Dr. Rambachan: No, but Mr. Speaker—would you allow a question?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Rambachan: Is it fact that those three firms are under investigation?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Yes, it is fact—PricewaterhouseCoopers, Chanka Seeterram and Company and I think it is Dave Rampersad and Company—three.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and the Economy, as is their duty, painted a very rosy picture about Trinidad and Tobago and our circumstances. The Minister of Finance and the Economy and the Prime Minister—hon. Prime Minister that she is—was at pains to point out what is happening with our foreign exchange situation.

Before I give you our take on the foreign exchange situation, I direct you to the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago exchange rate, TT dollars, US dollars average rate: 2010, 6.40; 2011, 6.42; 2012, 6.38; 2013, 6.36. So far, so good. Since the dollar has been floated, we in Trinidad and Tobago, and the business

community in general, have become accustomed to 6.3. In 2014 now, two years after—a couple years after this Government took power—6.43; 2015 forecast, 6.42 and 2016 forecast, 6.5. You are seeing an upward trend under the tenure of this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy lives. To use the hon. Prime Minister's words in describing my political leader, he lives on Mars or out of space. But the Minister of Finance and the Economy was at pains to talk about the difference between tightness and crisis. In the constituency of St. Joseph, I am honoured to have large businesses—four or five large businesses along the Eastern Main Road. I am honoured to have alongside—along the Aranguéz Main Road, large family-owned businesses involved in importation of one thing or another. In Bamboo No. 1, you have a couple large businesses—family-owned businesses. In Valsayn North you have many owners of large family-owned businesses. And to stand up in the Parliament and say there is no crisis is insulting to those people. Because when those people cannot get US \$1 to pay a bill, it is a crisis for them. It is a crisis for their suppliers abroad who call and harangue, harass and threaten them every single day because they cannot pay their bills.

It is a crisis for the business community because they cannot import goods. It is a crisis for the business people because, as one business person on TV said—one of those morning shows—they had a bill for US \$10 million to pay for pharmaceuticals—US \$10 million they had to pay, with reputation built up over years, and years, and years—and they only got \$1 million. They got 10 per cent of what they wanted, to bring in pharmaceuticals.

Dr. Rambachan: Which bank they deal with?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: They did not say. That is why we need to know what drove the Governor of the Central Bank to take a system which has been working 21 years, working fairly good—and the Member for Chaguanas East will know that; he is in business.

Dr. Rambachan: They are distributors?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Yes, distributors, and they supply NIPDEC. So there is going to be a shortage of drugs in the government service, and that is only one distributor.

7.00 p.m.

You have a system of foreign exchange allocation working reasonably well for 21 years, what lunacy led the Central Bank to tinker with that, saw the

negative effects and then the Minister of Finance and the Economy comes here and says there is no crisis. There is a crisis. Because you do not see it, because you do not want to acknowledge it does not mean it does not exist.

Mr. Imbert: It is like the video.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Yes, it is like that. You know, it is there in your face. The forex crisis is there in your face, facing you every day.

Mr. Speaker, you have people with US accounts, who deposit US money into their US accounts, and when they go for a hundred dollars they cannot get it. This is the state of our forex situation in 2014, and the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy and the hon. Prime Minister will stand here and tell us all is well. Tell that to the business community who cannot pay their bills. Tell that to the business community whose credit ratings with all their suppliers are now down the toilet. Tell that to them. They do not care whether you are tight or whether you are in a crisis. All they know is that their businesses are being affected. Their businesses and their livelihoods are being affected and their credit ratings are being adversely affected. Tell that to them.

Mr. Speaker, you go to the Central Bank website again, it talks about energy production under crude, natural gas and other liquids, and they use some fancy units, billions of—I will just give you the figures that they used here—the units for comparison sake—to show you where our energy policy has failed, because the hon. Prime Minister spoke about energy again.

2011: production total—oil, gas and everything in these units that they use—145.4; 2010 is when they came into Government—you met 145.4 units of production;

2011, decline—138.1;

2012, decline again—119.0;

2013, stabilized, went up a little bit—120.3;

2014, 121.1;

2015 forecast—122.3; and

2016 forecast—124.8.

In other words, we are stagnant and this economy, as you know, is an oil and gas economy because the Government has not diversified the economy as they planned to do, as they promised to do. So we are stagnant.

So when you take this stagnant state in oil and gas production, you marry that with the tightness or the crisis, whichever term you want to use, whether you are tight or whether you are crying, it does not matter to me. You marry that to the forex situation and you marry that to this.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, Kevin Ramnarine, went to the Hyatt in the Regency Ballroom on Monday, April 08, 2013, and proudly announced to the nation—I have the press release here—that construction on the Neal & Massy joint venture with Mitsubishi out of Japan, would begin in the second quarter of 2014. Mr. Speaker, guess what? We are in the second quarter of 2014. Not only are we in the second quarter of 2014, we are at the end of the second quarter of 2014. As far as I know and I stand to be corrected, and according to the Member for Diego Martin North/East, not a blade of grass has been touched for that site. Not a pile has been driven. No decorative shovel has been adorned.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for St. Joseph has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. Mc Donald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you colleagues, thank you Member for Port of Spain South for moving the motion. So as I was saying, we are depending on that Neal & Massy/Mitsubishi deal proudly announced to begin in the second quarter of 2014. Nothing has been heard of it. Could someone from that side alert us what is the status; when is the start date of construction for that plant?

Mr. Speaker, when you marry the flat energy production which I just quoted from the Central Bank website, you marry that with the forex situation. Now, Mr. Speaker, before I leave that foreign exchange thing, do you know what we now have in Trinidad that we have not had for 21 years? A black market for US dollars, 6.80. Under this Government, the ugly head of a black market for US dollars has now reared itself; has not existed for over 21 years. I remember the bad old days, all that was dealt with, with the floatation. You have taken a perfectly floated

dollar and you have sunk it. You have sunk it. Now, if you want US dollars you have to pay \$6.80, hon. Member for Chaguanas East, the businessman that you are. This is under four years of that Government's tenure.

Mr. Speaker, the last thing I want to say on energy, the delay in the Mitsubishi/Neal & Massy deal, the flat production, is the totally worthless contract and agreement we have negotiated with Venezuela over the Loran-Manatee Field, especially clause 21 of that Loran-Manatee agreement. Mr. Speaker, under that clause, if the Venezuelans do not want it, we will not see a cubic inch of gas because clause 31 literally takes away our rights, but that is for another time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address a couple other issues under headings. Under Head 58, the Ministry of Justice, this Government up to now, after a year or two years of pleading, cannot tell us what is the state of the four judicial centres. It is the subject of a question and I go no further. Under heading 74, Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration, \$35.1 million, of which \$31.6 million goes to national days and festivals. We know that the Government gave \$.75 million to Maha Sabha. Not a problem there. Absolutely not! But my question is: did any other Hindu organization benefit from the largesse or was it only the Maha Sabha? Did the Swaha in Aranguez, my constituency, get any money? Did the Hindu Festivals Society in Santa Flora, that is headed by a former general secretary of the Maha Sabha, is he persona non grata in this Government? Did the Hindu Festivals Society get any money for Indian Arrival Day? Did Swaha in Aranguez get any money for Indian Arrival Day? I fear not.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to matters pertaining to my constituency in particular with the time I have left, and I draw your attention to an ad in the *Daily Express*, Tuesday, October 29, 2013:

10 DAYS

25 PROJECTS

1 INCREDIBLE PERFORMANCE

with the picture of my former opponent, Mr. Ian Alleyne. Mr. Speaker, I want to put it on record what I am about to say has nothing to do with the former candidate, Mr. Alleyne, because this Government would have done it regardless of who the candidate was.

Mr. Speaker, some of these things that the constituents of St. Joseph referred to as the Ian Alleyne projects—I have no problem with the man, Mr. Ian Alleyne.

They would have done this regardless of who the candidate was, but the constituents refer to them as the Ian Alleyne projects.

Mr. Speaker, I have a list of streets in Aranguez that are yet to be paved, although the Ian Alleyne projects spoke about them:

Rambhaju Street east of Aranguez Main Road;

Henry Street west of Aranguez Main Road;

Nanan Street west of Aranguez Main Road;

Mangra Street west of Aranguez Main Road;

Lower Johnny King Road;

Oudai Street;

not paved yet.

Mr. Speaker, there is a road in Mount D'Or which was started. So if they could treat Aranguez so, far less for Mount D'Or. I mean, I eh win one polling division in Aranguez, no problem, but they are my constituents and they want me to articulate their concerns here. So forget that I lose all the polling divisions in Aranguez, I have a duty to come to the Parliament and fight for them. Do you know what they did for the by-election? They went hurry, hurry, no contract and laid down lights in the Boundary Road savannah and they laid down lights in the Aranguez Road Sports Club. Hurry, hurry, hurry! Mr. Speaker, it took me via a question in the Parliament to pull out of this Government that the lights in Boundary Road would be operational in July 2010 [*sic*], only because I filed a question.

The Aranguez Sports Club people want to know when would their lights be operational. Do they have to wait for another election? Give the people their lights, "nah". What is the problem? You rush in there a week before the by-election, you mash up the grounds—mash up the grounds, you know, Mr. Speaker—mash up the Boundary Road grounds, had big meeting. It is an excellent turf wicket—played division one cricket there—put up these lights, leave trenches open and up to today, from November to now, "dem lights eh wukin".

Mrs. Mc Intosh: And they voted for them.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Forget whether they voted for them. I do not go down that road. Forget that. I have their concerns to raise.

Mr. Speaker, in Bamboo No. 1, aka Jonestown, box drain construction, it stopped. The road in Mount D'Or, 6th Street, it stopped and rain is going to come just now. There is a road in Quarry Drive. URP went in there for the by-election, started to do things. As soon as the results announced on November 05, URP moved out and one of my constituents broke her leg trying to negotiate the road that was left in dirt, mud, rock and stone. All the URP material there, the URP sign there.

Dr. Rambachan: What is the name of the place?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Quarry Drive. I could carry you. A woman broke her leg. It is my problem now, as the Member of Parliament, to get medical care for her. All these URP projects started for the by-election, I now as the Member of Parliament has to hear, "Well, we ain't ha no money. We had to go and do over measurements." So how were you able to start them in this rush for the by-election? How? Explain that to me.

7.15 p.m.

Farm Road: when I went in there for the by-election, drains starting to build, little bobcat and thing there. I say, "Nice, ah glad for the people", because they cannot carry heavy machinery in there, the roads are narrow, it is densely populated. I was glad for the people. I am glad for Farm Road if they are getting their drain fixed. Mr. Speaker, after November 05, do you know what happened to all that work? It done! I am calling on the authorities—I am willing to meet with them—let us get together and finish all these projects. Do not tell me you have to resubmit and redo technical specs and redo costing. If you could have done it for November 04 without that, you could do it now. You can do it now.

Mr. Speaker, do not talk about water. Geez! Mr. Speaker, my entire constituency does not have water but yet the Government takes out ads boasting about five feet of water spouting up and people's lines "bussing" because they have water. [*Crosstalk*] You have published a schedule and you are not sticking to the schedule and that is why we do not have water, from Valsayn North to St. Joseph to Champs Fleurs to Mount D'or to Mount Lambert to Quarry Road to Aranguez to Bamboo No. 1. The only people who have water are those with tanks who could store water. And you are not sticking to the schedule and you cannot get through to WASA on the phone to tell them, "I do not have water and I want a truck borne supply". The phones are either busy or nobody answers. I have tried it on behalf of my constituents. They come to the office, "ah say yuh lying, ah say leh me pick up meh phone and ah call the number". Mr. Speaker, you cannot get through to WASA, there is no water.

Over this long weekend, as their Member of Parliament, my biggest job over those four days was water: water for Mount Lambert, water for Aranguéz, water for Mountain View Terrace. No water but WASA has the unmitigated gall to take out these ads saying that water spouting three feet in the air and pipe now “bussing” because of water. It is just not happening in St. Joseph.

Mr. Speaker, \$75 million under one heading there is dedicated to cleaning watercourses. I had the good fortune here of listening to the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara once who berated the PNM because there was a policy, if you wanted to use a ground, you had to pay a fee, and he said, you know, he done with that. Good. When I first became a Member of Parliament, people from Mount Lambert to Aranguéz, and everywhere else—Valsayn, Mount D’or, the corner of King Street and Abercromby Street in St. Joseph—they wanted their drains cleaned. I went to Minister Ganga Singh because WASA has this big vacuum pump thingy that you could send down into the drains. Do you know what I was told? I have to pay for it. “Ah say, ‘but it is taxpayer thing’”. He said, “No, you have to pay for it”. “Ah say, ‘Me personally?’” He said, “Either me or the corporation”.

Mr. Speaker, the rainy season is here, I want no flooding in the flood-proned areas. I want the corner of King Street and Abercromby Street cleaned with the vacuum. I want the whole of Mount Lambert cleaned with the vacuum. I want the whole of the Eastern Main Road, from Curepe Junction to the Croisee, cleaned with the vacuum and I want it done free of charge. I want Aranguéz Main Road which has not been cleaned in years, all those business persons would show me the water height in Aranguéz; clean the thing! I have offered to go around with the hon. Minister, the Member for Couva North, and she has agreed that next week Thursday, we are going to do a tour.

Dr. Rambachan: “Yuh have ah date?”

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: I have a date with the Member for Couva North. Bring the baby. So we have a tour.

Mr. De Coteau: Abuse.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: I want those drains cleaned. *[Laughter]* We have to clean those drains because flooding is not a thing of the past as the hon. Prime Minister would have you believe, it still happens. There is a particular part of Mount Lambert, where the roads are lower, that people show me waterlines four and five feet in their houses. Let us get together and clean all the drains with the vacuum because people cannot do it because those drains are deep and the years of neglect

means that the sediment is about a foot deep. I had to move one of the manhole covers, put a stick down, and I was totally amazed to see the depth of sludge, whether it is in Aranguéz or Mount Lambert or St. Joseph, so we have to clean it.

Mr. Speaker, there is another issue I want to raise because the hon. Minister spoke about education, and I was hoping the hon. Member for Caroni East, who is the Minister of Education, could help me with. I do not know if other MPs have this same problem but the schools in your area, I do not know who is cleaning them now. Because in my constituency, principals of all the schools—the ECCE centres, the primary schools and the secondary schools—call my office every day, literally every day, begging for assistance to get their schools cleaned. And why? Because CEPEP has been ordered not to clean the schools. I do not know if anybody else has that problem.

I was told that there was some incident in Mayaro with CEPEP and a schoolchild, and that is the new policy, but the fact of the matter is, who is cleaning the schools in St. Joseph? Is it my responsibility? But every day, from all the ECCE centres, the secondary schools, the primary schools are asking me, “MP, we need the schools cleaned, CEPEP has been ordered, told, not to clean the schools again”. So if you change the policy, what have you put in place?

So, Mr. Speaker, those are some of the issues I wanted to raise. I raised the issue of the NIB purchase of Apsara. There are serious questions to be answered because that deal smells and reeks of corruption. We have raised the issue on this side about the Forex matter, and why is a black market for US dollars now rearing its head after 21 years. The Governor of the Central Bank cannot be allowed to escape in silence.

I have raised several issues pertaining to my constituency from flooding, to getting all those by-election projects which were promised for the by-election, I would like to have them finished so more persons do not break their legs. The rainy season is coming. That road in Mount D’or is just mud and work was stopped in February. I could tell the hon. Member for Tabaquite the exact location, it is Sixth Street, Mount D’or. The road was just stopped in February, it is just a mound of dirt. What have the people in Mount D’or done to deserve that? I want the roads in Aranguéz paved. What has Aranguéz done to deserve that? Six roads in Aranguéz to be paved under the Ian Alleyne projects.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the hon. Member for Tabaquite, may I remind hon. Members, and in this instance, my colleague from St. Joseph, that you may

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[MR. SPEAKER]

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have compromised Question No. 148 which was deferred today. That is the whole Apsara matter because you went into a lengthy discourse as if you have all the answers to a question that is on the Order Paper. I want to advise Members again, once there are questions or matters on the Motion for the adjournment, or Private Member's Motion, we are not to anticipate these matters.

Please be guided accordingly, because we are going to compromise these answers when they are due in terms of the questions on the Order Paper. Again, I want to advise Members, please be guided accordingly.

The hon. Member for Tabaquite and Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of points that I want to make reference to in reply to the hon. Member for St. Joseph, and before I do that, it seems to me that he has now assumed a new title, “the hitman” for the PNM. But, what is disturbing in this Parliament is when people's names, and institutions and organizations, their names are called in this Parliament, and those people have no real way of defending themselves, and here was the Member for St. Joseph calling names: Chanka Seeterram—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Deyalsingh: It is in the public domain.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Dave Rampersad, PricewaterhouseCoopers—I do not know if Dion Ramcharitar is still the head of PricewaterhouseCoopers—and he kept going through all these names: Adrian Bharath, Mohammed and Kavanagh and so on.

Mr. Deyalsingh: All of that in the papers.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, it is important I say this because there is something called due process, and if it is that certain matters are before ICATT, do we expect, as a Parliament, to have ICATT just come and rule on a matter without going through their proper investigations? I think anyone in this Chamber would want to know that if there is a matter against him or her, or there is an investigation, that proper process and procedures are followed and I do not think—and this Government is not going to be part of any witch-hunting and try to force decisions upon people, but to let due process take its course, and I think that is very important for the Member to note.

It was the PNM, way back, that brought the medical records of a pilot into this Parliament and attempted to disgrace the individual, and that man had to run from this country, I believe, and seek employment in the Mideast, and this is

dangerous. I know that people can write to you and explain themselves and so on, but when the damage has been done to people's character, and when the damage has been done to people's name, and we do not know what is going to be the outcome, I think that the line has to be drawn. It really has to be drawn, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The only recourse that the chairman or the presiding officer has, in matters like those, is to bring to the attention of the Members of the House that when you call citizens' names who are not here to defend themselves, those Members must take full responsibility because the court of public opinion is the only avenue to deal with that. We do not have any measures in our Standing Orders. There is what is called absolute unqualified freedom of speech under our Constitution, and we observe that to the "T".

However, Members of Parliament should exercise some degree of care and responsibility when calling members of the public's names in this Chamber. But I cannot tell a Member do not call a citizen's name, a Member must have that sense of care and duty. If he or she does not, they will have to take responsibility for their action. And, as you rightly said, members of the public have the right of reply but the damage would have been done already.

7.30 p.m.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your guidance and explanation. I think it is important that you say what you said, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*] The Member for St. Joseph said that we stopped the work on the Government Plaza. I do not know that this Government has stopped the work on the Government Plaza at all—not at all.

Mr. Deyalsingh: I never said that.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: I am quoting your line, "stopped the work on the Government Plaza". Work continues there and, as far as I know, we are moving to outfit that particular plaza. So the Member is in the game of propaganda. You know, I have a new name for PNM you know, "Propaganda National Machine". It is disconcerting that the Member will talk about truth, and come here and be a stranger to the truth in this kind of way. Member for St. Joseph, I do not want to lose my respect for you. I really have respect for you, but I do not want to lose it.

Mr. Speaker: Please? All Members are hon. Members, and we do not want to go into the area where we are accusing Members of dishonest acts or telling untruths. So I would ask Members to refrain from that kind of language, because all Members are hon. Members of this Chamber.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: I so recognize him as an hon. Member, Mr. Speaker. Then he spoke about people are losing confidence in the institutions of the country, but he was making specific reference to First Citizens Bank. *[Interruption]* You had spoken about it in the context of FCB. Mr. Speaker, FCB continues to be one of our strongest banks in this country, with a reputation for good service, and has been profitable and continues to be profitable—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Gopeesingh: A local bank too.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and a local bank. So, Mr. Speaker, we must be very careful. When you attack FCB, you are not just attacking the institution FCB, you are attacking the integrity of every single employee who works at First Citizens Bank, that is what you are doing. *[Interruption]* I bank at FCB, and I am very proud to be a person banking at FCB. I am very, very proud. I get excellent service from the Chaguanas branch, very, very good service—in fact, better than I get from a certain foreign bank in the country at the moment. *[Interruption and laughter]*

Mr. Speaker, then the Member for St. Joseph spoke about the rate of return on investments. Mr. Speaker, I just consulted with the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, and the Ministry of Finance and the Economy gave me the following figures as to the yield on Government bonds: less than five years, 2 per cent; less than 10 years, 2.65 per cent; less than 15 years, 3.37 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, if he is talking therefore about—and I am not going to comment on the Apsara matter, just on the matter of the finances. At \$96,000 per month over a year, which is about \$1.2 million, that is just a rate of about 3.3 per cent if I am right, on \$37 million. So it equates, in terms of rate of return to the rate of return on Government bonds. So to say that the National Insurance Board has not made a good investment, they have made an investment that is equivalent to what the rate of return in 15 years is, in fact, on bonds. So I wanted to put those things in particular perspective.

Finally, on a point he made, he said it is not just happening in St. Joseph. Well, if it is not just happening in St. Joseph, you really have to ask some questions, hon. Member, whether you are being a good representative, or whether you are just strolling all over the place, *[Crosstalk]* looking at everything, become a man with a PhD. in complaints management, but yet, you have nothing to do about solving people's problems. You have to be very careful, my hon. friend from St. Joseph, that you have now become a superman complainer, when you

should be representing people and getting their problems solved. What you need to do is come and have a meeting with the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, so that you could sit and determine these things. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Because you see, the Prime Minister said something here this afternoon, you, hon. Member for St. Joseph want it to look like we are discriminating against you; far from it—far from it! The Prime Minister showed absolutely and without doubt, that we are doing work all over Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] So there is—do not try this “underhand ting” of trying to say that we are discriminating, no, no, no. We are not discriminating. The project might very well be continued, but I heard you talk about some URP project called “Quarry Road”. I have all my URP projects here, 636 of them, and there is no “Quarry Road” in these projects.

Mr. Deyalsingh: It was started for the by-election.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: But not by URP, not by URP.

Mr. Deyalsingh: But the sign is there.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin my contribution this afternoon by first congratulating the hon. Prime Minister, [*Desk thumping*] on what was a really super contribution. Mr. Speaker, you saw leadership in this Parliament at its best. I have looked at many Prime Ministers speak in this Parliament, and today the Prime Minister superseded and exceeded anything, from any other Prime Minister in this Parliament.

Miss Mc Donald: We never had anybody who spoke like that.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, I also want to take this opportunity at the beginning of my contribution, to express my gratitude as a Minister, and my appreciation to the staff at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. I am sure I do so on behalf of my colleague Minister—the Member of Parliament for Oropouche West—because we have had their cooperation. We have had from them hard work, and we have had from them excellence, in terms of their professionalism, and because of their cooperation and their excellence in terms of professionalism, we have been able to achieve at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, unparalleled level of achievements in terms of what we do over this particular fiscal year.

I see my colleague, the Member for Oropouche West, nodding her head, because she is toe-to-toe with me, in all our meetings and in everything that we do. Therefore, I really want to go one step further and acknowledge Mr. Roger

Ganesh of the Highways Division and his team, Mr. Mahadeo from Bridges Division, Mr. Navin Ramsingh, Mr. Hayden Phillips from PURE, as well as Permanent Secretary Isaac James and DPS Sonia Yearwood. I also want to acknowledge the contractors who have been working very hard to implement projects.

Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the contractors because this Government has set new standards in terms of performance. I do not know if we recognized it, but we are not hearing these words “cost overruns” as part of the national vocabulary. When last did you hear the words “cost overruns” in terms of the national vocabulary? The hon. Prime Minister in her contribution today spoke about the \$700 million cost overrun at the Prime Minister’s residence and Diplomatic Centre, \$100 million more, \$400 million there. When last did you hear about cost overrun in this country? When last did you hear about that? Those are not words that are in the vocabulary of the People’s Partnership Government. Mr. Speaker, what you have instead are projects being brought in on time or ahead of time, and within budget. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, we have been so good at bringing in projects within budget, that we have what you call savings accruing as a result of what we do. We have savings, and because we have savings, we are able to use those savings to do additional projects.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have here, for example, we have been able to do from the—in fiscal 2013/2014 already, Infrastructure Development Fund, projects executed from savings as at June 17, five projects at a saving of \$8.4 million. Mr. Speaker, Tantril Road, St. Augustine, Erin Road, Gonzales Trace, Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, Pasea, Bedeau Street, Gasparillo—yeah, all over the country. We have also been able from the NIPDEC loan funding to do 10 projects. We have been able to do again from savings in fiscal 2013/2014, under the supplemental loan funding, we have been able to do 14 projects. Again, under the NIPDEC, NIBTT loan funding of \$249 million, we have been able to do seven projects.

So not only are we performing better, in terms of on time, but because we are bringing in our projects within budget, and because we are saving money, we are now able to do additional projects across the country worth millions of dollars. That is not something you used to hear under the PNM and, that is the great difference between the PNM and the People’s Partnership Government. We know about—there is an old Hindi word, I will tell you, an old Hindi word called “barakat”—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: English is the language.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—the English—I can speak a word if I want, and I will explain what I say—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: It is in the Standing Orders.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—Member for Diego Martin North/East—*[Interruption]* means that the little you have, you spread it more. Why? Because you are able to manage it better, that is what it is, and we are managing our money better and, therefore, we are giving greater value to the people in terms of what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, there are two projects that we are doing now, where because we have been able to utilize value engineering on those projects, and to do the designs in a particular way, we have been able to extend the length of those jobs that we plan, and I will give you the two examples. One is, in fact, in Caroni where the Motor Vehicle Authority building is being constructed, and where we started to build a by-pass road from Washington Junction, which is where the Cunupia Road meets Kelly Village Road, St. Helena Road, and coming back to the Caroni Bridge, near the cremation site. Mr. Speaker, you are not going to believe this, but that work started on April 22, and the work is almost 60 per cent completed; almost 3 kilometres of double lane highway being built, all by local contractors.

Mr. Speaker, because we have saved money, we will be able to reach the roundabout by the Caroni Bridge, and that is going to take so much traffic away from the Southern Main Road, what is called the Caroni Road and, therefore, ease up the problems people have coming out of Cunupia on a morning, or going back to Cunupia on an evening. Mr. Speaker, we intend to take that road right up to Piarco, so we will have a double lane highway going to Piarco. *[Desk thumping]* Mr. Speaker, so we have that example.

Another example is the Diego Martin highway. The Diego Martin highway is budgeted to cost \$74 million, and already my people at the Ministry are telling me we are going to have savings on that \$74 million and, therefore, we are going to be able to do other works. You see, Mr. Speaker, it irks the Member for Diego Martin North/East, it irks him to see that Diego Martin expansion completed under the aegis of this People's Partnership Government. *[Desk thumping]* He could not do it. *[Interruption]* He could not do it! He never did it. The money was spent everywhere else—everywhere else it was spent except in helping the people of Diego Martin to relieve their pressures that they were subjected to. *[Crosstalk]*

You know what is interesting? He lives—the Member for Diego Martin North/East lives in Diego Martin—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: No, I do no. I live at Maraval. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—or, commutes through the area, purportedly represents the people in the area, but will not give them a proper road. It took the People’s Partnership Government to do it. [*Desk thumping*] We are doing it.

Mr. Speaker, the fiscal year 2013/2014 is an important year in terms of achievement of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, very important year of achievement. I want to put it to the population and to the Parliament in terms that we can understand what is happening, because an infrastructural transformation is taking place in this country under the People’s Partnership Government.

Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that under the PNM rural areas were neglected. So if today, the People’s Partnership, whether it is Toco, Matelot, Sangre Grande, Valencia or Penal, Debe, Siparia or Moruga, whether we seek to correct the wrongs of the past, by ensuring that the people in rural communities also enjoy a better quality of life, we are committed to doing that, [*Desk thumping*] because we are for all the peoples from every part of this country.

Mr. Speaker, for this year 2013/2014, the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure was given \$246.4 million under the IDF Programme. With that money, we are doing 198 projects. And then, Mr. Speaker, under the loan funding, we got a loan of \$1 billion, and we are doing 477 projects under that \$1 billion. Mr. Speaker, I just want you to know, that 272 contractors are involved in work right now across this country.

7.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, because of what we are doing in the country, that has helped to bring down the unemployment rate among skilled people in the country to very, very low levels. People have to line up now at the National Quarries Limited from very early in the morning, even overnight, in order to get aggregate. The concrete-producing factories will tell you that they are over-subscribed.

I say this because people still want to paint a picture on the other side that the economy is not moving. They do not want to believe that this Government, because of prudent management by this Government and good leadership by the Prime Minister, we have taken it from negative to positive in terms of growth.

The Highways Division: so you have three divisions; you have PURE which is working on 698 projects, the Highways Division as at June 17—and I have the report here, 2014—for this year had completed 340 projects at a cost of \$105 million across the country.

What is interesting about that—and I will show you through this what we have done for value for money. Because of the way that we spend money and because of our adherence to value, amongst those 340 projects were a number of landslips and retaining walls that had to be built. We have built 3,369 metres of retaining walls so far under the Highways Division of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. That is not just a tribute to the technical competency and management of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, but it also says something about the ability of our contractors to respond and to do this magnitude of work in such a short time—between October and June 17 of this year, 3,369 metres of landslip were repaired or built. That is almost two miles of landslip. I will talk more about the kind of landslips we have to deal with.

And the much maligned URP; today, I decided I will walk—because when people talk it is important. This here [*shows document*] is a list of every single URP job that is being done in the country at this point in time for this fiscal year. While they say that we are not doing work in certain areas, in the Diego Martin region, for this year, there are 31 projects.

Mr. Speaker: We have a procedural motion.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 10(1), I beg to move that the House continue to sit to complete the debate on the adoption of the First Report (2013/2014), Session of the Finance Committee and the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) (Financial Year 2014) Bill, 2014.

Question put and agreed to.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT (ADOPTION)

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Yes, I was saying that while they complain and make the country feel that no work is going on, in the Diego Martin region—and the URP has divided the regions—there are 31 projects, some completed, some ongoing.

In the Port of Spain region, there are 25 projects; San Juan/Laventille, that region, there are 38 projects that are going on. I can go through this area by area and show you the work that is being done across the country.

Mr. Speaker, just to let you know that, so far, in the first six months of the year, we completed 224 URP infrastructural projects and 412 are in progress. It is a record year in the URP where 636 projects are either completed or are in progress. That has never been ever achieved under URP because we have changed the philosophy and we are giving people work that is important and significant where they can see, that when they do something, it is for the benefit of the community in terms of the infrastructure projects that are being done across the country.

The magnitude of all of this is reflected in the fact that the total number of projects being managed at this point in time, since October to now, by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, amounts to 1,674 projects across the country. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: For how long?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: From October to now. Of that, 839 have been completed, 616 ongoing and 219 are yet to start. So we are on course to achieve the total 1,674 projects by the end of this fiscal year.

Hon. Member: Where are these projects, Minister, please?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Questions have been filed by Members of Parliament and I have provided written answers to those already. If the Member wishes, I can always give you where all those projects are.

There is one more point I want to make on this. It is a very important point. Small contractors have been catered for under this Government and because we have expanded the infrastructural work being done by the URP, to date 460 small contractors have been employed on projects of the URP for the year. [*Desk thumping*] And where did these contractors come from? They have come from the communities where the projects are taking place, and my good friend, Mr. McLeod will tell you—he saw some of the work in the Aripéro area—he will tell you about the quality of the work that the contractors are doing. They are working very hard.

So, when you see all these beautiful signs all over the place, “Your Government Working for You”, you must know that we are working on 1,674 infrastructural projects at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure this year.

Earlier, in the contribution made by the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition, in opening his contribution, sought to give the impression that we were hiding the cost of projects and not showing it in the total budget that we presented at the beginning of the year.

Mr. Speaker, how is a project done? When you have a project, you do an estimate for the project and you get the full cost of the project, but not all the funding for a project is going to be required at the same time. For every project, we develop a cash flow at the Ministry, therefore, we are not going to go and borrow money and pay interest on money that we do not have. We are only going to get money and pay interest when we require the money, so the costs are allocated over the life of the projects.

For example, if you have a cost of \$5.2 billion for the construction costs of the highway to Point Fortin, are you going to borrow \$5.2 billion up front when you know you are not going to use \$3 billion of that in the first year and even in the second year and are you going to pay interest on that by just holding the money there? Or are you going to borrow money in a way that you need to use it?

People do it with bridge financing also when they are building a house. It is not good financial sense to borrow money and pay interest while you are not using it, and the fact is that loans are not very difficult to come by right now. It is a very liquid market in this country in terms of money. So what we are doing is engaging in prudent management of the finances of the country.

Another point made by the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon—he alluded to the fact that this Government might be in the habit of burying reports. On every occasion that I can remember as a member of this Government, this Government has conducted enquiries with dispatch whether it is in the case of the death of the baby or whatever, the Government has been conducting enquiries with dispatch.

This Government moved to have the commission of enquiry into the HCU, into Clico. We did not—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: The 1990 coup?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And that is the next one, the commission of enquiry into the 1990 coup. We have stated that all of those reports are going to be made available to the public. We do not hide things. The Prime Minister made the point that we are not here in the business of hiding things. We are in the business of open government and transparency. That is what we are about.

When Selwyn Ryan did his report, the report also was laid in the Parliament, youths at risk. Were these things hidden? You have to face the truth of what exists in your society if you have to deal with it. So we are not in the business of hiding reports, of burying reports, not at all. But at the same time, like I said earlier, if a report is done, you have to respect process and there is a process by which a report will be laid and will be made available and, if necessary, debated.

One of the platforms upon which the Leader of the Opposition spoke today was with regard to the energy sector and he said that we are depending more and more on the energy sector. I think that he, really, is not paying attention to what is happening in government and this is a Government that does not operate by “vaps”. If there is one thing about this Government that you have to give this Government credit for, is its penchant for openness and transparency.

We came to this Parliament in 2010 and when we came here we laid in the Parliament our manifesto as public policy and we said to the country: “You will judge us on the basis of our manifesto”. March 31, 2014, we have been courageous enough, brave enough, honest enough, to publish for the benefit of this country a document that says *Achievements Aligned to Government’s Framework for Sustainable Development Commitments: Review of Government’s 2010 Official Policy Framework*. In other words, we said these are our commitments and these are the results of those commitments. This is available to the public.

Tell me where the PNM has ever done something like this. Tell me where they have had the courage to come and say: these are the commitments and these are the achievements. If that is not good enough, we have also published the Annual Report of Performance—and this is one from 2013—Measuring Progress, Identifying Challenges, Actioning Solutions. It is all here; 190 pages of it. And on page 106 of this particular document from which I crave your indulgence to quote, I want to read into the record something important about what the hon. Member for Diego Martin West was saying.

He said we are totally dependent and growing more dependent on the energy sector. But, Mr. Speaker, when you look at this document carefully and you look at what the Government set out as its target and what the Government has achieved, you will see that it is not consistent with what the hon. Member is saying.

For example, Mr. Speaker, the Government said that it intends to create a different balance between the non-energy sector and the contribution of the

energy sector and what is being shown here is that the non-energy sector contributed, in 2013, 60.2 per cent of the national GDP, which is a really important figure in terms of contribution because it means to say that the energy sector, which contributed 40.2 per cent in 2012—and at that time the non-petroleum sector was 59.7 per cent—and this on page 125 of the book—in 2013, the energy sector contributed 39.7 per cent and the non-energy sector 60.2 per cent.

8.00 p.m.

And what we did, we had set a target in 2010 that by 2015 we will increase the non-petroleum sector contribution to GDP by 3 per cent. In 2010, which is the baseline year, the non-petroleum sector or non-energy sector, was contributing 58.1 per cent. As at 2013, it is contributing 60.2 per cent. So, we have gone up by 2 per cent over the last four years—well, that was three years—we went up by 2 per cent, and our target for 2015 is 3 per cent. I am saying this to you because it is important for us to note that we are not managing this economy by “vaps”.

This, perhaps, is the first time a government has set out clearly what its strategic objectives are and in terms of achievement, and has put it in a book form so the population can judge us by what we set out to achieve, and that is what makes the difference between us and the PNM. Judge us by our performance, and the reality is that they cannot beat performance; they cannot beat performance, Mr. Speaker. Performance is making the difference.

Mr. Speaker, in that regard, you know, we also set other targets. For example, we set targets with respect to foreign direct investment. Mr. Speaker, we said that our goal was to increase foreign direct investment to US \$1 billion by 2015. In 2010, the foreign direct investment was US \$550 million; in 2011, it went up to US \$772 million; in 2012, it went up to US \$2,527 million, and as at September 2013, it was \$1,319.2 million.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we are on target, in terms of what we want to do with foreign direct investment. So, I have given you two examples of how we have been managing this economy and achieving the targets set, because we know that if we manage the economy right, by getting the foreign investments in; if we know that we expand the non-energy sector and, particularly, the service and entertainment sectors, we are going to create the jobs that we need for people, and we are going to be putting money into people’s pocket, and we are therefore going to have a stimulation of the economy, and a better quality of life for our citizens, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is, in this country, in my view, if you want to work, there is work for you to do. If you want to work, there is work for you to do in this

country, there is nothing wrong with doing hard work; nothing is wrong with doing hard work. Nothing is wrong with that at all. Mr. Speaker, so it is important that I point these things out.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West also said that, you know, we were accusing them of too much spending, and the Prime Minister dealt extensively with that matter. But, Mr. Speaker, when you talk about development expenditure, you have to put it into a certain perspective. You just cannot go and keep spending money, spending money. You just cannot do that. The Prime Minister made an excellent point today about the role of deficit financing; an excellent point today.

Mr. Speaker, your development expenditure must ensure that there is a balance between what you earn and what you can borrow against what you earn and your ability to repay your debts. You must have the ability to repay your debts. So, your ability to repay your debts will also determine how much you can borrow. Mr. Speaker, there are too many countries in the Caribbean that cannot pay their debts that are now at the doors of the IMF. Their futures are mortgaged, and that is what we were also telling the PNM when we used to warn them; warn them about the high level of debts.

You see, the problem is that they do not want to accept the state in which they left the economy which we inherited and the hands of cards we were dealt with in 2010 when we won the election. They still do not want to acknowledge that this country had to dig deep into at least \$20 billion—and we understand may be \$25 billion—to deal with the Clico matter.

If the regulatory authorities had done their job as they should have done their job, at the time when they should do it, this country probably would have had \$25 billion more at the beginning to spend on development, and we would have probably built more schools, but yet despite that, Mr. Speaker, look how well we have managed in this country that we can build so many schools; that we can do so much work in terms of infrastructural development, despite that. [*Crosstalk*] And do not worry, Member for Port of Spain South, the people next year will decide and they will vote back this Government into power. [*Desk thumping*] They will, because there is a big difference between the way that the people perceive the leadership of this Government compared to those who aspire to be Prime Ministers in this country. There is a very big difference. [*Desk thumping*]

If there has been a leader who has been able to embrace people in this country, if there has been a leader who has been able to be a consultative leader, a

consensus-building leader; a leader who has humility and a leader who is honest with the population, that leader is Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and it distinguishes her from the Leader of the Opposition by miles, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, because of how we manage this economy, we have returned the economy to growth. Mr. Speaker, foreign exchange reserves, yes, there was a problem with foreign exchange reserves. The Member for St. Joseph seems to think that the problem still exists. As far as I understand, the problem has virtually been solved, at this point in time, because I am not hearing the level of complaints and so on that was being heard for a while. So, that is old ground that the Member for St. Joseph was going over, but we have not spoken about the fact that we have, at least, US \$5.6 billion in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, which is quite a good sum of money. So, we have continued to save and, for what it is worth, if you take the \$10 billion that is there in the foreign exchange plus this \$5.6 billion you would probably have about \$100 billion between foreign exchange reserves and the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

Mr. Speaker, in that regard, you know, they keep asking, “Where the money gone?” The Prime Minister pointed out the several things that we are doing, but we can also show them where the money gone. Mr. Speaker, we have been able to complete the Aranguez Overpass; we have completed the Grand Bazaar Interchange and all the associated works; we started the highway to Point Fortin. This is a good opportunity for me to give an update on what is happening with the highway to Point Fortin, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are two segments to the highway: the segment going from Golconda to Penal, and then from Penal to Siparia and Siparia to Fyzabad, and then there is a segment going from Dumfries Road—that is in La Romaine—along the Mosquito Creek, through St. Mary’s, through Mon Desir, through Grant Trace, through La Brea on to No. Eight Road and then to Dunlop Roundabout. I memorized that very good, Mr. McLeod. And, Mr. Speaker, what is happening, I will tell you. If all goes well, and if the weather permits us, we are going to be able to reach Point Fortin through Mosquito Creek by about May next year, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, already, we are building the bridge at Ally’s Creek which is Dumfries. We have started to do the earth works between Ally’s Creek which is Dumfries and Paria Suites. We have already put aggregate on the area along Mosquito Creek so that, by the end of this year, we can pave that and shift the traffic from where it is now along Mosquito Creek on to that, so that we can then raise that other part of the highway.

We are already doing the piling for the second bridge at Godineau and, Mr. Speaker, this will surprise you, but we have already nearly completed the bridge behind Cole Cold, which is called the Tarouba River Bridge, the bridge at Berridge Trace is completed, and from behind Cole Cold to Mon Desir, that road is 80 per cent paved already, on the four lanes. So that very soon people would not have to go through Avocat and so on to go to Fyzabad through the constituency of my good friend from Fyzabad—he will be the first to drive on that road—they will be able to go and get into Mon Desir and into Fyzabad through that area. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, that is what is happening. Right?

On the other side, Mr. Speaker, as you know, we have completed Golconda to Debe. The Interchange at Golconda is going to be opened at the end of September, and Debe by the end of the year. Mr. Speaker, we have already started to construct the road going right up to Penal. There are some challenges there because of soil conditions but, God willing, we are going to be able to overcome that using technology, and we are able to have that piece of the road completed.

What is going to take us some time is that we have a number of wells to cap between Penal and Fyzabad, which have to be capped, and a number of petroleum lines to be moved. But, Mr. Speaker, the challenge of this highway, people probably do not understand it, but in the Point Fortin area and the La Brea area and so on, we have had to cap 39 wells; 39 wells we have had to cap in order to get this highway going. Thankfully, all our problems regarding the acquisition of lands and so on are now virtually over, and we have a free space in order to build the highway. It has been a bit of a painful experience but, thankfully, with the cooperation of the population—I want to take the opportunity to thank all of those people, Mr. Speaker, who sat down and engaged in negotiations with Nidco; private treaty negotiations, so that they brought in their value, Nidco had their values, and they negotiated, and they have now been placed in Picton, as well as in Petit Bogue, so that they can now go there and construct their houses.

Nidco is providing for them plans, which they can use to build homes. Mr. Speaker, and there have been some people, elderly people, they have asked Nidco: “Would you utilize some of the funding that you are paying us to build the houses for us?” And Nidco says they are prepared to also do that on behalf of the people. Therefore, in other words, it is a service-friendly environment that we are creating. Understand that the people are displaced; they are elderly, they need help to have those houses constructed. So the highway is progressing very, very, well to Point Fortin, at this point in time. Mr. Speaker, so that is something that we have also done.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues on the opposite side, you know, they have this habit of talking about matters—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Tabaquite and Minister of Works and Infrastructure has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. R. Indarsingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is sad—and I take no delight in saying this—that for a Government that was in office for over 40 years, the extent to which they left the infrastructure of this country in shambles.

Mr. Speaker, there are about 1,000 bridges which are under the responsibility of the Highways Division—about 1,000 of them—about 990-something that they tell me. But, in 2012, we did an evaluation of these bridges, and they are in various stages of disrepair. Mr. Speaker, 98 of those bridges needed to be reconstructed—broken down and reconstructed; 98 of those bridges, because they had suffered from structural deterioration, and many of these bridges were in rural areas, but not just in rural areas, they were important connectors to communities, and I will give you an example of what I am talking about because, Mr. Speaker, we have started work on about 62 of those bridges; not all construction.

Right now, under the Bridges Division of the Ministry, we have 11 bridges under construction. Mr. Speaker, listen to where these bridges are: Mayaro Guayaguayare Road; Pluck Road; Sisters Road; Cedar Hill Road; Toco Main Road, we have two bridges; Talparo Main Road; Valencia Main Road; Eastern Main Road, Guanapo; Eastern Main Road, St. Joseph and Calcutta Road No. 2. Those 11 bridges are under construction, at this point in time [*Desk thumping*] and they are all progressing very well—[*Crosstalk*] Valencia Old Road. [*Crosstalk*] It is nearly finished? Mr. Speaker, that is the point, we are ahead of time. These 11 bridges are being constructed right now.

8.15 p.m.

But, Mr. Speaker, I visited a bridge, just when I became Minister of Works and Infrastructure, called the D'Abadie Bridge. You know that D'Abadie Bridge on the Eastern Main Road. That bridge is 100 years old and that was structurally deteriorating. Mr. Speaker, we started to construct that bridge late last year. I want

to announce it is ahead of time, on budget and within budget with savings and the bridge is to be opened on Sunday, this Sunday. [*Desk thumping*]

St. Helena Bridge also—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: One hundred years old.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Yes 100 years old also, reconstructed. Mr. Speaker, outside Trincity Mall, where the road came from three to two arrests, so many people got into accidents. That bridge is about to be opened too in about a month's time. That work also progressed very well, and in Endeavour Village, which used to be flooded because of the narrowness of the La Lune Bridge as they call it, that bridge is also under construction and will be finished in the next two months.

In addition to that, we are about to tender 12 other bridges: Coblenz Road, St. Ann's; two more on the Toco Main Road, I am saying that because it is important; Talparo Main Road; Four Roads, Tamana—it is two different ones—; Cumuto/Tumpuna Road; Camden Road; Papouri Road; Torrib/Tabaquite Road; Southern Main Road, Cedros; Naparima/Mayaro Road; Paria Main Road, Blanchisseuse, over the Marianne River; and that is the rehabilitation of the cable suspension bridge.

Mr. Speaker, all over the country, the work is being done. We did not choose one area and say because we have votes there we are going to do a bridge there. What is right is right and what is right is the interest of the people of this country and we are for people. We are a people-centred Government, as much as we are performance-driven, but we are human being-centred and in being human being-centred, we do not know the colour of your eyes, we do not know the tilt of our nose, we do not know the shade of your hair. What we know is that you are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and you will get equal treatment in this country and that is what we do. Mr. Speaker, there are 13 more bridges which are in the stage of design at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker, there is also the problem of landslips in the country, major landslips. There is a landslip now near Coryal Road in Princes Town, near the Iere Village Cemetery. There, the cemetery is caving down and we have to spend about \$7 million in order to put a retaining wall and to save houses and a church in that area because we have to be very respectful of our ancestors and where they have been buried because those are the loving ancestors of many people in this country and the landslips are taking place across the country. In that regard, there

are 23 landslips that we are about to tackle at a cost of \$204 million and design works are scheduled to commence on a further 60 landslips in the country. It is a big problem, this matter of landslips in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to bring the national population up-to-date on matters regarding the Diego Martin Highway expansion and also the Valencia Bypass Road. Firstly, let me take the opportunity to apologize to the commuters in Diego Martin who were affected by the milling of the road that took place and it was not paved as quickly as it should have been paved. It might mean nothing for me to say that it was a problem also with getting bitumen out of the factory, but it happened and we take responsibility for it and I apologize to the people for what has happened. But the road has been paved and everything is back to normal. In fact, let me just say that that Diego Martin expansion project will be opened by the end of July. [*Desk thumping*] That road will be available and will make a tremendous difference to the project.

Mr. Speaker, in Valencia, the work has progressed very well. There are two bridges that we are building there right now that would be completed very soon. It is almost completed and by September that road also that bypasses the traffic on the Valencia Junction will also be available.

As I say that, we are also doing smaller things in order to affect the traffic in the country. If you go, for example, to Freeport which I have spoken about before, there is the Freeport exit. That used to be a single lane; now it is a three lane. It has eased up the traffic immensely there.

We are also doing a major job in the Price Plaza area. For a long time people had difficulty getting over the Endeavour Flyover and getting in and out of Lange Park. With some intelligent thinking, we have found a way to ease the traffic in and out of Lange Park and people do not have to go along the Divali Nagar Road, get in front of PriceSmart to get into Lange Park. What is happening, we are going to be widening the road just after the Endeavour Flyover and creating a roundabout into Lange Park and that is going to alleviate and ease the traffic considerably in that particular area, with a rerouting.

On the other side of the road, the Mulchan Seuchan Road, we would be having an exit directly out of Mulchan Seuchan onto a layby that will take you onto the highway. So you do not have to go and face the long lines of traffic at Medford Plaza. In three weeks' time, the work is going to start at Endeavour Flyover.

Mr. Speaker, all of these things remained there for years and years, under the PNM. I do not want to say that they discriminated against the people of central. I would let the people of central say that and I will let the people of central determine, but I know that we are doing work where work is necessary. As I said, we are a Government for all the people of this country. [*Desk thumping*] I want to make that point. We do not serve just one area or one person. We serve everybody in this country.

Also, there is a lot of traffic that piles up by Munroe Road and by September of this year, we will also have designs completed for creating loops by Munroe Road, which will also relieve the traffic problems there.

What we are trying to do in the Ministry now is not just look at building the big highways only, but to do with the little interventions that will bring relief to the traffic congestion that is taking place across the country.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West, I believe, spoke about criminal conduct and the Member for St. Joseph was talking about corruption and the waste of money, and so on. I need not remind people about the \$1 billion Tarouba Stadium, the \$2.7 billion GTL Complex in Petrotrin, which now has to be sold as scrap. We seem to forget that we were going to buy lemons in the OPVs, but we were able, through the intervention of the AG, to get back \$1.4 billion out of that. Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to note these things because what I am trying to show here is while we govern the country, we are governing the country in the interest of the people of the country and in a way that is to the benefit of the country and the way money is spent.

Mr. Speaker, I looked at the Shore of Peace by Mosquito Creek, where the cremation site is located. Way back in 2000, and before that, we were telling the Government that the Shore of Peace needs to be stabilized and that they need to do something about the coastal erosion. Mr. Speaker, nothing was done. Nothing was done about the coastal erosion. All they did is they commissioned a study to be done by Royal Haskins. Royal Haskins did the study, and having done the study, the study was just placed there and at that time when the study was done, it was estimated that the cost of doing the works would have been just about \$7 million.

Mr. Speaker, because they did nothing for 13 years, the cost has escalated to nearly \$35 million and in the meantime, the road leading to the cremation site was washed away and the erosion has affected even the cremation site itself. Mr. Speaker, but that was since 2001, 12 years. That is very similar to the police

station in Brasso, which was burnt down in about 2000 and only towards the end of last year, under UDeCott and the Minister of Housing, that police station was started, and in about 30 days' time the police station will be finished in Brasso, a \$42 million station. For 13 years they did nothing. Thirteen years. Why? Because the people live Brasso? Are they not folks too? Are they not people too? So we are correcting some of these ills.

Those can be described as criminal, in terms of what you have done to people in this country. Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis you hear them still talking as if they were prophets of gloom and doom, attacking the Government of Mrs. Persad-Bissessar as corrupt, ineffective, engage in poor governance. Mr. Speaker, they have not been able to support their claims of corruption with any evidence. They have not been able to do that, but we still have to find an explanation as to why Calder Hart has not been charged after all the evidence has been presented in the public space. We have to find out why the former Prime Minister was let off the hook on the matter of the Maha Sabha issue and the radio licence. Why was he let off the hook?

On the matter of governance hear some facts. We talk about governance only in one kind of way. But tell me, is governance not also about these things I am going to ask? Show me a Prime Minister and government who have engaged in as many consultations and built consensus on issues as the People's Partnership Government and Mrs. Persad-Bissessar. Show me, in terms of governance, where this Government has ever breached the rule of law.

Hon. Member: What?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Show me where the People's Partnership Government has not sought to and has maintained, at all points in time, the separation of powers?

Mr. Speaker, has the Prime Minister ever relinquished her responsibilities with respect to upholding integrity in public life? Is that not about good governance? Count the number of Ministers—and she did it here today also—and public officials who have been dismissed? Is that not good governance?

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, in terms of legislation in this House, has this Government ever used its majority to pass legislation that is contrary to public will? Has it even done that? Has the Government even told the President, for example, that he must sign all laws that come before him before enforcement?

Madam Deputy Speaker, has this Government ever refused to stand up to the scrutiny of Parliament?

Madam Deputy Speaker, examine the number of Motions that have been brought to this Parliament and we have debated them successfully under the glare of the public, including no confidence Motions in the Prime Minister, the Attorney General, a series of Motions on the Adjournment. Is that not about good governance? Were we afraid to stand up here and defend ourselves?

The Leader of Government Business proudly says all the time that the records will show that over 95 per cent of the questions that have been filed in this Parliament have been answered. [*Desk thumping*] What is the track record of the PNM, with respect to the answering of questions? One year and then they just let it go by and there are no answers. I have gotten some questions in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, where 40 to 50 pages we have had to put together, in terms of written replies and we have done it on time and brought it before this Parliament. Is that not good governance?

Madam Deputy Speaker, if you talk about good governance, good governance is reflected in investor confidence, and earlier in my contribution I showed what was the track record of the People's Partnership Government in attracting FDI.

In terms of good governance, while the Prime Minister spoke today about the former Prime Minister going to a radio station to shut down two guys, has this Government ever closed any institution which has been set up to protect the interest of citizens, including the Equal Opportunity Commission? Has the Government ever done that? Instead, the Government is supporting all of that. The Government sought to make freedom of the press as secure under the People's Partnership Government. Remember who removed criminal libel? Is all of that not about good governance? Has the Government ever shut down a media house or a newspaper?

Madam Deputy Speaker, I may also tell you that the Prime Minister started the national conversations to get citizens' feedback, so as to ensure Government policies and decisions include the voice of the citizen. All that is about good governance, but they choose one or two things to make it seem that this Government is not involved in good governance, but I have given you the evidence and asked the questions—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Proliferation.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—of areas where we have engaged in good governance in this country.

Madam Deputy Speaker, so for me I am very proud to be a Member of the People's Partnership Government, led by Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. [*Desk thumping*] I am very, very proud.

I am conscious of the fact of my responsibilities, in terms of getting the infrastructure in this country right and all I want to say to citizens is be patient. I understand. I receive your telephone calls. I receive your emails, your text messages. I have placed my telephone number: 792-1155, on the electronic billboard on the highway for people to report to me problems they have with roads and drains, et cetera, and they do report them and they will tell you that I take up the phone and I call them and I speak to them and sometimes they say: Minister is that really you? Is it you I am speaking to? Because we have changed the culture of service to the people, and the people will attest to that, they will attest to that, because we care. That is the point I am making. As a Government we care, we care for people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are going to do even better with this midterm review, and you will see the great difference in the next three to four months, in terms of infrastructure in this country.

I want to compliment, as I close, all my colleagues who have been working very hard in every single area of their endeavours in order to ensure that we bring about a transformation in the quality of life of our citizens. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. On Monday, June 23, the Finance Committee of which we are all hon. Members here, met to deliberate on the supplementation of appropriation for fiscal 2014, which formulates the basis of this Finance Bill that is being debated in this honourable House this evening.

Very little detail was provided then, but the hon. Minister promised to respond to the many queries that the Members on this side had and to elaborate on a number of issues that were raised. Even the Member for Barataria/San Juan had queries and voiced his concerns. The Member for Diego Martin North/East did raise the point that very often, in the previous year at least, the queries were not answered, not all of them and it seems that it was an exercise in futility.

Today we come and we see we have a schedule and a report, quite copious documents. I do not know who is expected to go through them to see if the queries were answered. I tried. We got them as we came to make our contribution

today. He said we would have gotten it yesterday. I got it today. I met it here on my desk. So, I did peruse it very briefly but, of course, I could not go through everything. In a nutshell, the Government is coming here in this honourable House to ask for a supplementary appropriation of \$3.82 billion for fiscal 2014, and that is \$1 billion more than the supplementary appropriation for the previous year which was \$2.89 billion, \$1 billion more.

While the hon. Minister was speaking, I heard him speak about the various increases in allocations that the various Ministries and Government agencies were getting and I heard him, I was quite surprised actually, speak of the allocation for education, because when we came here on Monday, I noted that there was absolutely no allocation for education, tertiary education, yes, but none for education, and I looked at the allocation for 2013, the supplementation of appropriation for fiscal 2013, and I noted that the Ministry had, indeed, received \$314,676,100 in that allocation and, indeed, the introduction of the Bill says that the supplementation is:

“...to fund urgent and critical Recurrent and Capital Expenditure to September 30, 2014, in areas where insufficient or no allocation was provided.”

But the Ministry of Education did get quite a copious allocation previously.

I looked through these voluminous documents. There is nothing here in the schedule about the Ministry of Education. I asked my colleague from Laventille West, could he please assist me, I am seeing nothing about Ministry of Education and I am wondering if we are to come in this honourable House and sit on a committee and deliberate over various allocations and we get a schedule defining and identifying the allocations and we hear from the Minister about education and it is nowhere there, we never spoke about it and it is just there in the air, verbally. There is nothing in writing about that. It gives me the impression that all is not well. There is some sort of cut and paste going on from the previous year and all is not well. Where is education?

I particularly looked for education, having a vested interest in education, and I saw none. But when I looked last year, I saw they got a lot of money. They were second only to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Hon. Howai: Member, could I please?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Yes, please.

Hon. Howai: It is actually in the IDF. There is a total allocation of \$1.2 billion in the IDF; \$1.6 billion in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, which comprises the Baico facilities, the amounts for the loans and a \$1.2 billion transfer to IDF. That is for a number of projects. So that \$1.2 billion is broken out into several projects and I probably could get the details of that so I could probably explain to you how that \$1.2 billion is made up but inside of there will be transfers to the IDF from which the \$172 million will come. That is how it is broken down.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Thank you, hon. Minister, but I find it is strange that education should not, like the other Ministries have been mentioned and the amount allocated to education identified. So that we could discuss it. I had to dig up and find that it is hidden somewhere. It has been hidden and I want to know why.

Mr. Indarsingh: It is a public document.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: It is a public document, Sir. As the hon. Member for Couva South is saying but why should it be hidden? Why could it not have been very overt like the other ministries having been identified and the allocation having been stated very overtly?

Madam Deputy Speaker, however, let me move on. We see that the majority of expenditure is on transfers and subsidies, amounting to \$2.95 billion and emoluments amounting to \$605 million. In looking at the figures, I think that this whole scenario suggests poor budgeting and poor planning and organization, nothing else. We are told in the explanations that:

“...part of the Supplementary funding is required to meet the cost of implementing the revised Collective Agreement on Wages and COLA and other terms and conditions of employment for the daily-rated workers of Central Government, the Tobago House of Assembly and certain Municipal Corporations...”

And this expenditure amounts to 25 per cent of the supplementation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this administration has spoken repeatedly about settling outstanding negotiations. I see the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre and Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development leaving, but he speaks always about settling outstanding negotiations and one would have

imagined that a fuller projection, in respect of revised wages and COLA, et cetera, would have been included in the original budget for fiscal 2014, and hence the supplementation would have had minor adjustments, but this is not what these figures suggest. These figures are major adjustments.

Of course, one would expect that there will always be variations, but what concerns me is the quantum of variations, and this gives great cause for concern and raises many questions, the least of which is proper organization and planning. Sure, there are unplanned expenditures. They would always arise. If you are doing a household budget, you budget for certain things and sometimes you have unforeseen or unexpected expenditure.

We had an unexpected expenditure like the death of the former President, ANR Robinson. You cannot budget for such occurrences. I understand that, but then surely annual religious and cultural events, annual celebrations that have been going on for donkey's years for example Ed-ul- Fitr, Indian Arrival Day, Emancipation Day, Independence Day and Republic Day, how come these were not aptly catered for and covered in the original budget for fiscal 2014? I am a layman and these are the questions that the laypeople in the public would be asking. You have all these celebrations we commemorate year after year. Why are we now dealing with this in this Appropriation Bill? How come?

Seven Ministries were allocated more than \$140 million and the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is heading the list, with \$1.7 billion or 45 per cent of the supplementation. When I look at item 04/001/13: Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) I see that Trinidad and Tobago is being allocated \$258 million. The Bill says this supplementary funding of US \$40 million, which is the equivalent in US, is required to provide support to the financial system of these states as a result of the Clico/BAICO collapse. The hon. Minister did state, in response to my question during the finance meeting on Monday, that these moneys will be given in the form of a grant or a gift. So that these moneys will not be recovered.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the public should be made aware of this. This is taxpayers' money. I have no problem with helping our Caricom brothers and sisters. This has always been the PNM's approach, extending a hand to our brothers and sisters in the Caricom who are less fortunate, but we must let the public know that that amount is a gift, it will not be recovered. The public is giving this, taxpayers' money. They must know. You see, if I had not asked that question, it would not have come up. We have to let the public know what is happening to the taxpayers' money.

I see item 04/014/02, a loan to the Government of St. Lucia for \$97 million, which is equivalent to US \$15 million, but nothing has been said about how this loan would be repaid, what are the conditions of the loan, why the loan in the first place. As I said, I have no problem, but we must know how these moneys will be recovered, especially given the very precarious financial position of St. Lucia. Taxpayers need to know.

8.45 p.m.

Yet, Madam Deputy Speaker, having said all that, I am indeed happy to see this Government has had a volte-face, an about face, an about turn in respect of the original stand-off position with our Caricom neighbours, because we all remember when the Prime Minister had said and declared openly, publicly, “Trinidad and Tobago is no ATM”. I now am very happy that she is allowing them to drawdown from the ATM, very happy. Under the PNM administration, Trinidad and Tobago always enjoyed a very healthy, a very good relationship with our Caricom neighbours and, indeed, it is our responsibility to extend a helping hand to any of them, or those of them that are in need in these stressful financial times. But yet I do feel the public must know how we are dealing with their money. We must give them the details, and this is what we had stressed in the meeting. We need details.

Madam Deputy Speaker, before I go any further, I want to tackle the problem with education, and I am glad the Minister is here. I heard the Prime Minister say at the end of her contribution, and I quote her—I hope I am quoting her correctly, I stand to be corrected—we are not taking any more lies, half-truths and innuendoes. I would like to respond that we on this side are not taking them either.

For four years I have sat here and I have been revolted by the number of lies, half-truths and innuendos, especially when it is coming to education. [*Desk thumping*] I have spent over 33 years of my life in the field of education, as a teacher and as an administrator, vice-principal and principal. I must know what is going on in the sector.

I have forged many alliances with professionals in the education system. I must know. I visit schools; I must know. I know teachers whose children I taught; I must know. I must know what is going on, and I have heard so many lies, half-truths and innuendos to have disgusted me about education and about the PNM, that I do not think any of us—just like the Prime Minister said she is taking none, no more lies, half-truths and innuendoes—neither are we on this side. The masks

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[MRS. MC INTOSH]

Wednesday, June 25, 2014

are off and the gloves are on for all to see, and we have to debunk certain statements that are so convincingly made, [*Desk thumping*] and they are passing for the truth, and the unsuspecting citizen will believe. [*Interruption*]

Yes, you have to get a little hot, because you know what? You have to set the record straight.

She said we built no secondary schools. Do not make a blanket statement like that. What schools did we all go to? We all went to schools. People looking out there would say, “But, PNM built the school.” We built schools; we built several schools. And in the latter years, before we demitted office in 2010, let me tell you something, Madam Deputy Speaker. We built from scratch a number of brand new schools, and I am going to say them now: Mount Hope Secondary; Aranguuez Secondary; Barataria Secondary; Couva Secondary; Princes Town Secondary; Five Rivers Secondary; Marabella Secondary; St. Joseph Secondary. All of those were built. Some of them, because we demitted office earlier than we thought, were not completed. The only one they opened is Aranguuez; they left the others. We had already opened Couva Secondary, and they left the others, yes. Yes, yes, we built them. You go and find out.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I cannot be vex, I will tell you.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Yes, well when you have your chance, Sir, you say things.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You built? You crazy, they are still being built.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Well, they are still being built? But we started when you left them, and you left them. They are still being built, because you wanted to make a point. You wanted to make a point.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will deal with that.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: You left them, and you left them, and you left them.

Miss Mc Donald: Do not take bait. Listen, do not engage her; speak—do not engage her. [*Interruption*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, Member; Member for St. Ann’s, I want to ask you to address the Chair.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: I will address you, Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do not get hot under the collar.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: They keep boasting and I keep reminding them about these early childhood education centres. We had built 35 of them, and they met 25 in various stages of completion. So they completed them, but they have taken all of that. You see, everything the PNM has done, the Members on the other side they adopt it as their own.

Miss Mc Donald: Chancery Lane, and they say that is the first teaching hospital, is theirs.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: That is not true. They take everything. All the highways and so, all those were the plans of the PNM, of the Member for Diego Martin North/East. They claim everything. They are scaffolding, building on the PNM's rich legacy. [*Desk thumping*]

And I want to take the Prime Minister to task about Vision 2020. How could the Prime Minister say that Vision 2020 is a failed document? How could a vision that is predicated into the future, and we had 10 more years to go in terms of realizing that vision, how could you call it a failure? How could you say it failed?

Miss Mc Donald: Disingenuous!

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: That vision is based on sound, philosophical underpinnings—sound philosophical underpinnings—and I will not sit here and hear that.

I would like us to reach to a point where we come and we are honest in how we deal with each other, we are clean and honest in how we deal with each other, and we will not get into this thing of bringing down each other, when we do not even have a limb to stand on. It is wrong to do that, and I have stayed here for four years and been revolted and “revulsed” by that approach of the Members opposite. But I say, the public, they are a bright public. The public is listening, the public is seeing, the public is feeling the effects of this Government, and come 2015 or before they will make their decision.

Before I move off from education, I am going to talk about the laptop programme. Nothing is wrong with a laptop programme, that is what you need in education. I never said that we should not have a laptop programme. I always supported technology in education. I think that I was one of the first educators in Trinidad and Tobago—there were three of us who were sent to Japan and Singapore to witness, to observe the integration of ICT in the curriculum. Three educators from Trinidad and Tobago, amongst three from Guyana, three from Jamaica and three from Barbados. We spent about a month abroad observing every day.

When I went back, what did I do? I disseminated all that information: principals' meetings, seminars, et cetera. I disseminated that information and I implemented at St. Francois Girls' College, so I cannot be against technology in schools, but I have to tell the hon. Minister, I know he is trying, but he does not have the resources with him to help him implement. The implementation is what is killing the project. It is not the idea, it is not the concept about the technology in schools, it is how it was implemented.

So much so, it is my understanding, I do not know, I stand corrected, that the Director of the IT department had his contract terminated. He did not know what he was doing. From the time he got the job—I understand he was the executive secretary—again, I stand to be corrected—of the Caroni East constituency, a political appointee. A political appointee, he was put in the position, and he did not know what he was doing. From the time he was appointed, he met with a very competent IT expert in Valpark. He said, "I told him do not come to the Ministry. I do not want anybody to see you. Help me, help me, tell me what to do." He did not know what to do. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Deputy Speaker, 36(5). I stand on 36(5), she is imputing improper motives to the Member for Caroni East, indicating back room type of discussions on this question.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Not you, not you I said she met with.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Please clarify your statement, Member.

Mr. Imbert: He is not supposed to be talking.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Madam Deputy Speaker, I did not say he met with him. I said when he was appointed, the IT specialist who recently had his contract terminated, he met with an IT expert, to beg him to assist him, to tell him do not come to the Ministry. He does not want anybody to see him, see the expert; could the expert please assist him in implementation. [*Interruption*] They met at the Chinese restaurant in Valpark. You see, they are so ready to jump on the wrong things. They met at the Chinese restaurant in Valpark. [*Interruption*] Yes, I knew when they met; I know the date they met. But this is when you put political appointees in; he did not know what he was doing, and the implementation was bad.

To this day, the laptops are not being used as an integral part of pedagogical practice. Ask the principals, ask the teachers. I ask them; I know them. They boast about the number of laptops given out; oh, they gave out. Yes they gave out. I am

not doubting that; they gave out. I am asking, Madam Deputy Speaker, through you, the Minister—I like him, you know; we get along very well, but, you see, to learn sometimes you have to listen.

Mr. Imbert: “I doh like him.” [*Laughter*]

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: No, to learn sometimes you have to listen. If he does an audit—

Dr. Moonilal: That is his bedside manner?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Very good bedside manners. [*Laughter*] I am not disputing the fact that they gave out the laptops; they did. They spent the money; the intentions were honourable, but if they do an audit—as you go up the ranks, let them do an audit. Call the children for a class and tell them bring their laptops. When you get to Form 5, find the laptops. Whose brother has it; a number of laptops are in a state of disrepair—a number of laptops. I am going to bring photographs of the laptops in certain areas packed up. They are told to send them to certain places, the technicians cannot cope with fixing them. In some schools they are packed up in a corner. Some children do not know where their laptops are. As you get up the ladder in the forms, you have fewer and fewer laptops available. The Form 1s will have them now.

Some of the parents, in some instances, fix the laptops; some do not have money, they do not care. The Internet access, the technical infrastructure still is not there. They talk about the children going on the Internet and so forth, those who have Internet access home. If it was not for Flow—you know how many schools Flow gave Internet access free of charge, but still many schools do not have the required amount of megabits to get good Internet access. You know how long the Minister has been promising 25 megabits for primary schools and 50 for secondary schools. Since I have come in this Parliament he is saying that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no; only within the last year.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: No, no, no, Sir, go back in the *Hansard* in your budget contribution, when I first started, it was the laptop thing. You kept saying it. I am taking account. I know you mean well, you do mean well, but you have to realize—I am not saying the intentions were not honourable, Sir. You all must not take these things personally, but I have to state facts. The infrastructure is not there.

I see you are starting a good programme; the PNM had started that. You all are doing as though you just started that, e-classrooms. My classrooms were to a

point e-classrooms. They were not as sophisticated. Some of the equipment was there, but classrooms where you could use technology with the laptops and the multimedia projector, and the whiteboards. Some of them the Ministry had begun to send for us the electronic boards. Those are good things, but you have to look at implementation, Sir. Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, you have to look at competent resource personnel to assist you in implementation, because some of those people will let you down. They will let you down.

Then you are rushing the teachers in this training, and up to this day—and you keep talking about the level one, level two, level three, level four. You could go to level six in this Microsoft thing. I think you just started, or there are a few things you said, I still have to investigate that, about real training to teach, to impart using the technology. It is a difference; there is a difference, and the teachers are not into it. They are not comfortable with it. Some of them do not understand it; I talk to them. I talk to principals. I do my homework.

So you know, when you talk, say what you are doing, but the Members on this side have their responsibility. We must be responsible, or we will just sit here, “Yes, Sir; no, Sir, three bags full, Sir.” That is what they expect, but we cannot. We have the public’s interest at hand, and we have to do what we have to do. We have to give the other side of the coin. It might not be always nice, but we have to do it. Do they alone have the prerogative to do that? They can always hit at us all the time; they alone have the prerogative? I am not hitting at anybody, I am just speaking the truth.

9.00 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at the Finance Committee meeting I had raised a concern over the waste water project that this Government is proposing. I expressed a concern that no provision for that project was in this supplementation appropriation, and I expressed the concern because neither was it catered for in the budget for fiscal ’14. I did ask the Minister. I looked through this; I saw that it was nowhere in here, that is why I say, according to the Member for Diego Martin North/East, they might bring all this paper but some of the things we asked are not in there, you know. They said that they will answer all. “Eh eh.”

Minister, when I asked the question how will it be funded, he said by the respective Ministry. I suppose that is the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. That is, I suppose, the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, NGC and an international funding agency. He did not say which one but I suppose it might be IDB. All right. But my concern, when I voiced it then

and I say the same now, is whether the resources of NGC would be expended in such a manner that avoids parliamentary approval and oversight. I say it again, Madam Deputy Speaker, NGC has become like the Government's special purpose company. It has become like a political tool, especially in the last couple of years.

It seems that NGC is no longer doing the work for which it was intended. It used to be a flagship, a leader in the energy sector, and now it is a shadow of itself. I do not know if the Members opposite speak to the employees of NGC, speak to the employees of the industrial estate, speak to people in the energy sector; they will tell you—I am telling a truth, a very big truth—“What has become of NGC?”. I would like to know because I also have a vested interest in NGC. Since the last president demitted office, all has fallen down. Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a critical matter, this NGC matter, and this waste water project is a critical matter because it is still not clear whether this project that the Government is proposing is necessary, given the fact that there were already pre-existing arrangements to facilitate the production of additional water.

In addition, the Member for Diego Martin North/East mentioned in the supplementation of appropriation of the proposed cardiovascular centre, which this Government is also proposing, and we want to know how are these projects going to be funded? Will it be NGC again? I have to ask because NGC seems to be funding many things, and the public needs answers on these issues because after all, we are talking here about taxpayers' money. We want details. We are drilling down. We are digging and we want answers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I note, with particular interest, that funds have been allocated to facilitate the filling of a number of vacancies under short-term employment and contract employment in some of the government ministries, for example, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development. I want to know. They did not tell us. Will these positions be advertised to afford all citizens who might qualify for such positions, the opportunity to apply for them? Very little is said about these positions. The public needs to know. Exactly what are these positions? Which of these positions? What are the criteria for employment? After all, I say again, it is taxpayers' money, and taxpayers' money will be used to pay these salaries. We want to know so that everybody—they say it is an even playing field. It is not! It is not!

Despite this Government's boast of a low unemployment rate—I googled it, 3.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2013—many of my constituents in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, both skilled and unskilled, remain jobless. It has not been a

level playing field, I say again, in respect of job opportunities and job acquisition, and this is of grave concern to me as a Member of Parliament. I have heard the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo and the Member for Couva North boast that the presence of CEPEP in their respective constituencies has assisted in alleviating the unemployment situation and, as a consequence, crime has decreased in their constituencies. Madam Deputy Speaker, you do not think I would like that for my constituency? We had vibrant CEPEP teams keeping our constituency aesthetic and clean, and sanitary, but quite the opposite now occurs, or now obtains in my constituency.

What this Government did? What they did was to take away the opportunity for employment from the people in the PNM constituencies, like Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, and give them to the people in their constituencies, [*Desk thumping*] leaving the people in the PNM constituencies jobless, penniless and susceptible to crime, and leaving the environment bushy, unsightly and unsanitary. Madam Deputy Speaker, if I want any part of my constituency clean and cleared, I have to—and I must say, lovely, gentle gentleman. I have always said that; very cooperative, he responds, answers me and responds, like also the Member for Naparima, very, very nice. The hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, I cannot complain; Minister Ganga Singh, I cannot complain, but I do not have a CEPEP team that will give any job employment to the people in my constituency and get jobs done in my constituency.

I have to ring Mr. Adesh Deonarine, who will take my calls, take my texts and so, and ask him, "Could you please send a CEPEP team to clean here?". As his constituents complain to me I have to be texting him, "Could you please", and he would surely do it. Well, he would surely do it. I have a few that I would have to text him about again that have never been done. Sometimes he is told that they were done and he would answer me, "But that was done", I would say, "Well, no, it has not been done. I went myself and I saw it has not been done". But we do not have anyone in our area. I have never seen them. When I asked the question, the Member for Oropouche East told me that we had about three or four. Where are they?

Every now and then you would see a team, you know what the people say? "We do not even know where they come from. We do not know who those people are." I asked, all in St. Ann's. We had a team there. St. Ann's used to be lovely, manicured roadsides, bush cut down nicely, now everything is growing wild and mosquitoes killing the people, and the drains are clogged up and bush and all of that, and that is what we have. Where is St. Ann's? In the same constituency in

which the President's House and the Prime Minister's residence are located. That is it. In the heart of Port of Spain, and that is what we have.

So we have all those people who lost their employment, all of them. I know many of them. They come to my office in St. Ann's and all over, and I have to ring or text Mr. Deonarine and he will answer me, and he will try his best, it does not always work out, but that is how we operate in my constituency.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me move on. Under Head 72, Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, I saw that Ministry has been allocated \$173.5 million, and I looked at item 04/007/04, On-the-Job Training Programme, which was allocated \$33.1 million for increasing stipends to trainees. I want to know how much the trainees will now receive. Trainees want to know: When I go on-the-job training how much will I get? Do not just give me a bulk, I want to know how much the trainees will now be entitled to. Then when I looked at item 04/007/06, I saw \$7 million to facilitate payment of stipends due to an increase of the intake of trainees in the Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme.

All these programmes were initiated under the PNM. They were initiated, started and they grew under the PNM. I should like the Minister to provide a breakdown of the intake of trainees in both these programmes, the On-the-Job Training Programme and the Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme, in terms of region, north, east, central and south. Taxpayers' moneys are being spent and we on this side have to ensure that everyone, every single citizen in Trinidad and Tobago is benefiting from a share of the national pie. We have to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of our country's resources.

Madam Deputy Speaker, under the same Head 72, \$221 million has been allocated for a number of development programmes. I am calling them out: \$5.2 million for establishment of a skills and technology centre in Debe/Penal; \$30 million for establishment of a training facility in Woodford Lodge, Chaguanas; \$11.9 million for the construction of a drilling school in Ste. Madeleine; \$20 million for the establishment of a UWI south campus in Debe; \$17.9 million for the construction of an open campus facility in Chaguanas, \$36.4 million for the construction of headquarters for MSTE, NTA, YTEPP and ACT; they do not say where but anyone can guess, central or south, because this is the trend in the UNC-dominated partnership, central and south.

I am not unhappy for them. I am glad for them. I am glad that they are getting all of this largesse from the national pie. I am glad, but when I looked at these programmes two thoughts assailed me, Madam Deputy Speaker. The first one: but

why were these development programmes not properly budgeted for, amply budgeted for in the original budget of fiscal 2014? Why? These programmes were identified in the Minister's budget statement, why are we now dealing with them in respect of such a large quantum of money? In respect of such large quantum, Madam Deputy Speaker, in this supplementation of appropriation. How long are we hearing about this? We are hearing about this since the last budget or before so why are we now dealing with this? I do not understand. Is there some hidden agenda? Or is it nothing but poor planning and poor budgeting, plain and simple? What is it? What is it? It is rather perplexing, at least for me.

The second thought that assailed me when I looked at all this development, under Head 72, it was that everything concerned central and south, Trinidad only. I keep hearing that we are doing everything with a broad brush, you know, throughout Trinidad and Tobago, throughout the country and I am seeing, I am hearing and you are telling me. It is not what I am making up, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am being told by this Government that all the major development projects are being undertaken in the central and south, and all the headquarters of learning and all the development is there. While I do not have a problem with that, per se, what is happening in the north?

Madam Deputy Speaker, what about the growth poles that were identified for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, in Belmont and Gonzales, in the Minister's budget statement, both for fiscal 2013 and 2014? You talk about growth poles. They talk about growth poles. While all this development is planned for central and south Trinidad, we have people in Port of Spain North, in the capital city, without pipe-borne water, and I have been asking—[*Interruption*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. Mc Donald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: While all this development is being planned for central and south Trinidad, we have people living in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, the capital city, without pipe borne water. I have written several times. They keep begging me and ringing me, and I have to get the truck, beg the truck to drop water for them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I bought with my own money, three 1,000-gallon tanks. I went up to—what is the place on the Beetham Highway? Chief Whip, help me, the hardware—Bhagwansingh’s, and found a transport man and got my three 1,000-gallon tanks on there—this was about two years ago—and I took them up to Mackai Lands, and I gave them. But, one thing, very often the tanks are empty, and the Mackai Lands residents own another three on the other side but they are always empty. We have to be begging them to fill the water for them. *[Interruption]*

Miss Mc Donald: Or you have to buy water.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Yeah, they have to buy water. And people come to sell them water, unscrupulous people. They are supposed to give them water free from the corporation, sometimes sell them water.

Hon. Member: Port of Spain corporation?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Anywhere they come from.

9.15 p.m.

And you have places like Upper Mackai Lands and Upper Marie Road, and time and time again I am asking, when are these people going to get water, and they say, no pump and no this, but, oh yeah, when you turn on your TV, “water bussing pipe; water bussing pipe,” people getting water like they never got before. Hmm, hmm, and this is in Port of Spain and you are telling me about development in south. While all this development is being planned for central and south, we have people in Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, in the capital city without street lights such as areas in Layan Hill.

Now the Member for Naparima has assisted in little areas. I would text him one or two, but he would assist, but I have to say the people up in Layan Hill, there is a road there, they came, they said they would bring the poles, they never went back. They wrote me a letter. They never went back. They said they would put lights for the “lil” people. One man’s wife left him, she moved by her mother, said she is not going down that hill in the dark because there have been people attacked there. Nobody cares.

Upper Marie Road West Morvant—Madam Deputy Speaker, I fail to understand, if people have lights in their house—there is some sort of connection on the grid there—what is so difficult about getting street lights so that you would not be attacked. When the “lil” children are coming from lessons late in the night

and so, parents have to go down to the end of the street, try and meet their children, bring them up so that nobody would attack them. At least if there were lights people would feel safer. There is already electricity in the area, why a few lampposts and lights cannot be given to the people? I have been begging for that for the longest while at Layan Hill and Upper Marie Road West.

A place like Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, in the capital, you have a lack of basic necessities like water and electricity, and you are telling me about all this development down central and south. I want to ask you all, Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government knows how these people feel?

Miss Mc Donald: "Aaah."

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: This Government understands—and they say they are all for the people and they love the people and they govern for the people and they are serving all. Which all? Which all are they serving? They understand what the people feel deep down inside within them? They do not understand.

You know, it is a lot of rhetoric, but you know what, Madam Deputy Speaker, the rhetoric does not reflect the reality. The rhetoric does not reflect the reality that everything is fine and hunky-dory. So, it does not reflect the reality. While all this development is being planned for central and south Trinidad, we have people in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, in the capital city whose homes are collapsing because the very roads on which they are situated have already collapsed, and I have been asking—it is a political football—the Minister of Works, I wrote them time and time again, from Minister Warner, go right back, Minister Emmanuel George, go right back, the present Minister, the Member for Tabaquite, Augustine Lane, Gonzales, fall down like if an earthquake took place there. The whole road has collapsed and people's houses are trembling at the edge; people cannot even access their homes, they have to cut a path elsewhere to get to their homes. They cannot drive their cars to their homes anymore.

Albert Lane in Belmont, how many times have I asked and begged for that road to be fixed. The corporation alone cannot do that, that is major infrastructure, it needs the Ministry of Works. I begged for it, nothing. What about the rehabilitation of St. Francois Valley Road? All over there they could boast about the roads that are being fixed; "oh, the roads everywhere". What about the roads in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West?

Miss Mc Donald: And they will hear about Port of Spain South just now.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Yes, tell them. We have to tell them. We have to fight for our people.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: They could say about all the beautiful things they are doing as though everything is hunky-dory. Everything is not hunky-dory.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: The Government is playing politics and games and I am sick and tired of it.

Now, the Member for Tabaquite, he spoke about building a bridge—I am very glad to hear—among the numerous 990 bridges to be rehabilitated throughout the country, but he said one thing, I hope he hears or somebody tells him. He is not here in this honourable House on this side. How many Members do they have, Madam Deputy Speaker? They have—the Minister of Education has just come back—five of them sitting here. How many Members do they have, 30, how many?

Miss Mc Donald: It is supposed to be 27.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Out of the 27 they have five.

Dr. Moonilal: Five people interested in hearing you.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Yes. Well, that is very good.

Miss Mc Donald: “Wha he say?”

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: That is very good. That is nice. He said five who are interested in hearing me. You know why? Madam Deputy Speaker, I am representing the views of the people. [*Desk thumping*] He is not interested. [*Crosstalk*] They are not interested in hearing how the people of Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West felt. He just told me that. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Mc Donald: Not only Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West; Port of Spain South too.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: He just told me that.

Dr. Moonilal: “So, you are not grateful I hear?”

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: No, I am not grateful. Madam Deputy Speaker, through you, I am being asked if I am not grateful. I cannot be because you never gave my people a house. Never! So, how can I be grateful? [*Interruption*] I go on bended knees all the time. When they come to me I say, “Child, not a house. I do not know what else I have to do.”

Mr. Indarsingh: Do not go and bend.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: I bend, I bend, nothing to be had. [*Interruption*] You hear he said nothing else. They are very proud of it, nothing else you can do. That is right.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister said they would build a bridge, Coblentz/St. Ann's bridge, but it is not the Coblentz/St. Ann's bridge that I wrote him about. It is Cascade Road/St. Ann's bridge. The Coblentz Avenue/St. Ann's, that is wide, that is opposite Queen's Hall. He might have had the terminology, the name wrong, because that is by the Prime Minister's house. That is wide, you could go in there—wide enough.

What we want rebuilt is the bridge the leads from Cascade Main Road on to St. Ann's Main Road, which is exceedingly narrow.

Miss Mc Donald: Oh yes, that is true. I go there. I saw.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Cars have to stop. Yes, very well, the Member for Port of Spain South and the Chief Whip, she knows it. One car has to stop to let another car go—no, you cannot go, so I hope he rehabilitates the right bridge.

And he is talking about the cemetery. I am so glad the hon. Minister thinks—because that is how we feel—that our ancestors are buried in cemeteries and we must show respect and we must treat cemeteries right. I am making an appeal through you now, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Works, that the cemetery in St. Ann's has collapsed. The bones and the dead they are out. They are out on the surface.

Dr. Moonilal: What?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Yes, they are out on the surface.

Mrs. Thomas: That is true.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: You know, and the corporation does not have the money. Mind you, we better speak of the lack of funding that the corporation is getting from the Ministry of Local Government. They are squeezing them. They do not have that money to build retaining walls.

Miss Mc Donald: Remember, they reduced allocation for Port of Spain, eh.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: It is a bad way. Madam Deputy Speaker, through you, the Member for Oropouche East, he just sit down there, he does not know how people

are feeling, he does not know how people are hurting. The ancestors! The ancestors' bones are to the wild, to the open, in open air.

People are suffering and we have to come here and see all of this development in central and south, which I am glad for. I cannot be vexed. How could I be vexed for development in any part of my country?

Mr. Indarsingh: You sounding like that.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: No, I am impassioned and upset about the neglect of the people in my constituency. And if it was your constituency and you are not impassioned and upset about it, well, something is wrong with you. You should not be representing anybody.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when all of this development is taking place in central and south, and the people in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, in the capital city, have been asking for an upgrade of their recreational grounds, such as the President's ground, and it cannot be upgraded—the football competitions and the cricket competitions would start after, they go on every year—there is not a potable supply or a supply of potable pipe-borne water on that field.

We have been told in writing, we have been told several times, that we cannot get it because the line has to pass through the Prime Minister's grounds and that would not be allowed. So, all that they have is a tap from which emits black, foul-smelling water. That is what the human beings who play, who look to expend their energy in positive ways, that is the water they have to drink when they are thirsty when they are playing on those fields, or if they need to wash off or even to wash their clothes to wash off themselves, they cannot even use that water. That is black, foul-smelling, stink water, that is the same line that is used to water the Prime Minister's grounds, and that is what the human beings, playing on the field, have to drink, and nobody cares.

And, what they say? They cannot get a supply of potable pipe-borne water there because they would not be allowed to run lines from the Prime Minister's grounds. So, it is all right for them to have that black, foul-smelling water to drink, or to wash off their clothes, or to wash their faces. How many bottles of water would they bring? If there is an injury and they have to wash off anything, they have to use that black, foul-smelling water.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you see all of these things make people feel that they are treated unfairly, like animals and not like human beings. All of these things. While all this development is planned for central and south Trinidad, the people

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[MRS. MC INTOSH]

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of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, in the capital city have no fire station. The Belmont Fire Station, which is in dire need of refurbishment six months now, and it is just a lot of politics playing by the powers that be with such an essential service. Recently they had a spate of fires in the constituency and it was the Morvant Fire Station and headquarters, had from there to send—they are coming late, people anxious—

Miss Mc Donald: You lucky they come by you, when we had the fire in Sea Lots, they said that is a hot spot, they cannot come. The one in Laventille—the one down on Wrightson Road—where the boy died.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: But at least you still have fire appliances or fire station in your area. We have no fire station.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I end, I would like to say, this UNC dominated partnership must come to this Parliament and account to the people of this country, in a very transparent way, disclosure of everything. They must not leave things hidden for us to dig up and find out, and discover. They must know how their moneys are being spent. It is taxpayers' money. And, in addition, they must come to this Parliament and say how they intend to improve the quality of life for the people in the PNM constituencies, like Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, who they have been neglecting and marginalizing and discriminating against over the past four years.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] It is a real privilege and an honour for me to stand here this evening at 9.27 p.m. to make my contribution to this Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2014, a midterm Bill, and, of course, to respond to some of the comments that were made by the last speaker, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it was a real privilege and an honour to have been here this afternoon to witness the contribution by our distinguished and hon. Prime Minister—in an eloquent contribution on this Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, particularly in the context of showing where we are as a Government, what we are doing in terms of our expenditure, and contrasting that with the over expenditure of the last administration during those nine years.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister has so eloquently and aptly informed this House about the policies that have governed our last four years in

office, and indeed this period would be remembered in history as one of our best developmental phases of our nation's history. You heard the Minister of Works and Infrastructure giving information on the tremendous amount of work that has been happening under his stewardship as works and infrastructure Minister. You have seen where the Prime Minister has governed as a true Prime Minister with strength, courage and determination.

9.30 p.m.

And we are in the country now where we, as a Government, we are now being accused of not taking the entire country in our remit, in terms of development of the entire country. That is a myth and a fallacy which I will debunk, as the Prime Minister showed this afternoon, and where we have shown that is something that you all continue to say to win the minds of the people, is malicious, it is wicked and that ought to be stopped. It is a perpetuation of a fallacy, and it is deliberate in its intent to win the hearts of the people in an election ploy. This will not stand.

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure just showed you where he has continued to do work all over the country—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Not in Port of Spain South.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam Deputy Speaker, may I have the privilege to—[*Interruption*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Member for Port of Spain South, please, pull out your pencil and paper and take some notes and your turn will come to speak. Allow the Member to speak in silence, please. You may continue, Minister of Education.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister leads this Government in development far and wide in this country. Despite geographic location, class, social status or political affiliation, everyone has been benefiting from some of the most innovative and humanitarian policies that can be implemented by a Government. I will expand this evening on a crucial sector, the education sector, but I will respond before that on the comments from the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this country has recognized that since this People's Partnership Government took reins of our country's governance four years ago, we have undertaken most progressive strides and most rapid rate of development in almost all sectors of the country. Madam Deputy Speaker, this was our

manifesto, “Prosperity for all...2010”, and in that contained seven developmental pillars. And all these development pillars we have been working on, and I want to remind this country, they are as follows: information and communication technology, and we will show where we are going as a country; good governance, which the Minister of Works and Infrastructure spoke about just a while ago, and showed the tremendous ability of our Government to establish transparent and open government with full accountability that can withstand the test of any type of scrutiny. We have been an open Government. People Center Development, with a more diversified knowledge intensive economy. National and personal security, we know we have a lot of work to do with that again. Poverty eradication and social justice and foreign policy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in our first 365 days of Government, we were able to produce our work and our achievements for those 365 days. Pillars of National Development, the first 365 days, and it is all here, so voluminous of our achievements in the first 365 days, the first year. This is one of the open and transparent books that we produced to show what the Government has achieved, and it is here for everyone to see. We tried to summarize it for 2011, and we had nearly 27 pages of achievements within our first year. It is so voluminous in terms of our achievements I would take a long time to go through these, because I want to speak a bit about the education sector.

Then in May 2012, we produced another document for the second year of work that we did—achievements. And in this, 28 pages of achievements. So close to 60 pages of achievements in two years, Madam Deputy Speaker. And 2011/2012, fulfilling the promise the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and here it is for all to see, on every aspect of our seven interconnected pillars, all. And this is a Government that can pride itself of being so transparent and being open, that we are brave, courageous and strong, to be able to put these together for national scrutiny and scrutiny by all Members of Parliament in terms of our performance over the last four years.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development produced the Medium-Term Policy Framework 2011—2014, which brought all of the seven interconnected pillars in five developmental areas. And the ideas of culture, growth, investment, productivity and competitiveness—so our area was innovation for lasting prosperity, and prosperity for all, with creativity, inclusion, equity and development of our people and knowledge. And so our Medium-Term Policy Framework, when they say that we have no plan, we

brought out our first manifesto which formed the basis for our governance. This was our Medium-Term Policy Framework 2011—2014, and this is how we are marching on.

In the Ministry of Education, here is my first administrative report to show the achievements of the Ministry of Education, 2010—2011. It is thick, it is thick. This is the book, and it is there, it was laid in Parliament. It is here for everyone to see, and there are nearly 70 pages of achievements in our administrative report 2010 to 2011. This is the next administrative report of the Ministry of Education 2011—2012, and in my contribution shortly, I will expand on some of these—on what we have in fact done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, every time there is a debate on any issue dealing with education or finance we hear our colleagues on that side complaining, complaining, complaining, just a while ago, about our laptop policy, about how it is no good, it has not been working, the children do not have the laptops, their brothers have their laptops. They were saying at one time, why you all are bringing the laptops. They will thief the laptops. The laptops will mash up. Who will use the laptops? There was so much hue and cry about this and, as far as I am aware, in terms of stealing of the laptops, I believe that there was either one or two, and these people were caught as soon as they were stolen, because these laptops had security devices. As soon as the laptops were opened to the Internet they knew exactly where the laptops were located, and I believe two people were in jail—one for nine months and one for seven months and that ended their talk about all these issues. But here it is today, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West comes in complaining about the laptop again which I will deal with shortly.

But from 2002 to 2010 she said that—the Member said that in her school she was innovative, she was sent on a mission abroad in Japan and so on, and where was the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West in 2002 to 2010, not to tell the PNM Government if she was a member, an educator, to bring out IT policy for education and bring the laptops into the school?—because she said that she was using it in her schools. Was she not brave enough to tell the Government? Why the Government languished and did absolutely nothing—

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Would the Member give way?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—for nine years—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Sir, would you give way?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yeah, sure, sure.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I was indeed a member of the committee that sat to write IT policy for education. I was a member of that committee, Sir, and I did give the best of my experience—[*Crosstalk*—]advice under the former permanent secretary.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The last administration never took her advice. And the question is, why did they not take her advice? Did they feel that your contribution was not a valid contribution or they did not respect your advice? These are some of the questions.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, they have never apologized to our nation's children for calling them "duncey". They never apologized to our nation's children for saying they are behaving like hyenas in a jungle nor have they accounted to this Parliament and by extension our country as to why they seem to have no set policy on this matter whatsoever, and on education as well. Why our school system was allowed to languish under outdated and irrelevant models in a global age of rapid technological development, for nine years?

So today, I will take the opportunity to educate them about how it is easy, so easy to develop a progressive education policy which benefits a nation and leads to its first-world status and that is where we are now in education, Madam Deputy Speaker, first-world status in education. We have universal primary education, universal secondary and universal tertiary. We have the GATE Programme up to the undergraduate level free and the postgraduate level for the masters and PhD, those who win first-class honours get full scholarships and 50 per cent is paid for the Masters and PhD, and now we are bringing on universal early childhood education.

Let me take this opportunity to say this one time, that it was Mrs. Hilary Clinton the former Secretary of State in an address of the IDB recently, spoke so eloquently about our seamless education programme and spoke so glowingly about the work that we are doing in our education system.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Well, it is the IDB, it is a conference for all the IDB people. And so, I crave the indulgence this evening as the old people often say, "you can learn at any age". So firstly, to achieve a progressive relevant education system that can develop and advance a nation into first-world status you need a visionary leader, and that is our Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

A leader like our Prime Minister, the hon. Member for Siparia, who served this nation as a teacher, as a social activist, as a woman, a children and human rights activist, an attorney, as Minister of Education, Minister of Legal Affairs, Attorney General, who pioneered universal secondary education and adopted as her mantra an official policy that no child should ever be left behind. And this is the mantra of the hon. Prime Minister, today as well, and none of our quarter million children in this country will ever be left behind by this People's Partnership Government.

We believe in equity, accessibility, quality and teacher development and training and student centred development. We have a leader who recognizes that in the words of former United States President, John F. Kennedy, education must be seen as the means of developing our greatest abilities, I quote:

“...education”—must be seen—“as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which fulfilled can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.”

And our Prime Minister epitomizes the wisdom in that quotation from former President, John F. Kennedy. The means of developing our greatest abilities, translated into benefit for everyone. Our Prime Minister is a leader who realizes how vital education is to developing countries in bringing people out of poverty and in giving them a sense of dignity, self-worth and confidence and who makes it a personal mission to ensure that all children and all their parents know that getting an education is not only their right but a passport to a better future for the children and for the country.

We have a leader who recognizes that:

“Education makes the people easy to lead but difficult to drive, easy to govern but impossible to enslave.”

Those are the words of Barron Henry Peter Brougham.

9.45 p.m.

As US President Barack Obama once said, and I quote:

“We have an obligation and a responsibility to be investing in our students and our schools. We must make sure that people who have the grades, the desire and the will, but not the money, can still get the best education possible.”

And when the Prime Minister brought out the laptop policy, we knew that there were students whose parents had the money to afford, but there were so many thousands of poor students from poor families who would never be able to see the day of a laptop at a cost of almost \$3,500 each. This was one of the areas that the hon. Prime Minister decided that she must move to, and which she successfully accomplished over the last four years.

So it is under the stellar leadership of our distinguished Prime Minister that we have been able to accomplish so many achievements in almost all sectors and almost in all ministries, where our colleagues work day and night and toil tirelessly to effect and implement policies and programmes for the benefit of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

And it is sad to see that on a television station that the people are saying the things that they say about parliamentarians and Members of Parliament, and I want to state, particularly, for many of us—of all of us in Parliament—it is a personal sacrifice at times, and most times—all times—and the work that we do 24 hours a day, seven days a week, we do it for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a labour of love, that we continue to work for the people, and it is unfortunate that these comments are carried, and made by citizens who we want to say must try to understand and appreciate the tremendous amount of work and time that we put into trying to help, and work for all our people.

So, I want to come to the response now from the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West when she made some very unfortunate statements—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Moonilal: Very sad.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Very sad statements, about half-truths and innuendoes and so on. Madam Deputy Speaker, this side is proud at all times, that whatever cometh out of the mouth from all our side here, is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We have nothing about half-truths, innuendoes, and it is shameful that the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West could stand to accuse our Prime Minister of bringing about half-truths, innuendoes, and so on, on this side—very sad and unfortunate.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Madam Deputy Speaker, 36(5).

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Member, you may continue.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I did not say that, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is unfair! I did not say that!

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I have ruled. You may continue, Member.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to prove the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West as giving unfortunate statements and misleading statements to this House.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I said we are not taking it either!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister spoke about the amount of schools that we constructed, and she spoke about 53 Early Childhood Education Centres, 14 primary schools—and there are more to be built—and secondary schools. She spoke about the secondary schools that we built, and let me speak about them and show that PNM built no secondary school, whatsoever, during the nine years of government, from 2001 to 2010.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: That is not true!

Miss Hospedales: That is not true!

Dr. Moonilal: Name one. Just name it!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You name the school. Let me tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, we renovated the Biche High School which they had closed down for nine or 10 years. We had to spend about \$30 million to renovate that and bring it back together. We did a 14 pre-engineered block for classrooms in St. Lucien/Cameron Road in Diego Martin which houses 490 students. Is that south of the Caroni River?

Dr. Moonilal: Nothing done there.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Nothing done there. We did a new block at Hillview Boys' College. Some work had been done there in terms of giving them some temporary type of support, and which we are going to help them a little more. We finished phases one and two of the St. Augustine Secondary School. They started it. A bit was started by them, and let me go into that one time.

Miss Hospedales: A bit?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The PNM meant to build a number of secondary schools. They put out a tender, it would seem, for a design consultant and a supervising consultant for the schools that they wanted to build. The same person got the schools they wanted to build—nine schools—to be the design consultant and supervising consultant. Those are the secondary schools. The person is an

engineer, but he was given these schools to be the design consultant and the supervising consultant, and he put forward the design. So he is the design consultant, the supervising consultant, the civil and structural engineer and the quantity surveyor, and the project manager, for all the schools they wanted to build.

Dr. Moonilal: “An de cook.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: They started some of these schools and the value of these schools were close to about \$160 million. They would have finished about 10 or 20 per cent. They built no school, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: Name one. They cannot name one.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: They cannot say that they completed, or they built any, and they ran up bills that they were not able to pay, and the contractors in these schools downed their tools. They had a design for these secondary schools to put H-Vac systems, where they use natural gas and a strong flow of water. We have had to work on these schools. We started from about 10 per cent where they had started, and we had to complete these schools. These H-Vac systems which are costing about \$30 million to put central air conditioning in those secondary schools, we have had to deal with, and every day now they are breaking down—the air conditioning system.

We completed Aranguéz Secondary School. We completed the Marabella School. The Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, the Prime Minister and myself, formally opened the Marabella School. We just completed the Couva West Secondary School, and we are now constructing—we are working now to complete the construction of a number of these schools: Baratária North, they eh build it. The Member just got up there and said they built Baratária. Carapichaima West is still being constructed. Couva West, we just completed about three months ago.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Completed. Completed.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Five Rivers, Arouca, we are still continuing to build. Mount. Hope, we are continuing. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: They were almost completed.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We are building Parvatie Girls’—Madam Deputy Speaker, Parvatie Girls’ and Shiva Boys’—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members, please, please, I want to listen to the Member's contribution in silence. Member, you may continue.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam Deputy Speaker, they are so—I do not want to say, wicked, but—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Do not say it!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The last administration was so unprincipled—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Mc Intosh: That is not a good word! 36(5)! 36(5)! I am not unprincipled!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right.

Dr. Moonilal: You were not in the last administration.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: No. We are not unprincipled.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right, okay.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, please. May I ask you to choose some word that is appropriate?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Sure. All right. In 2001, Madam Deputy Speaker, there was US \$50 million allocated to construct the Parvatie Girls' and the Shiva Boys' School in South, and because it was the Member of Parliament for Siparia, the last administration said, "I eh buil'in dat". They preferred to waste the US \$50 million that was given by the IDB and negotiated, and they did not build these schools at all.

Dr. Moonilal: For nine years.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: For nine years. For nine years they closed down the Biche High School; for nine years they did not build the Shiva and Parvatie schools, and for nine years they did not build one secondary school. Princes Town East, we are still continuing to construct it.

So Shiva Boys' we are doing, Siparia East and St. Joseph, all these schools are under construction but, hopefully, we will complete them before May 2015. They built no secondary school. *[Interruption]* So when the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West gets up to say that they built schools and she named a number of schools, that is untrue. It is an unmitigated falsifier of veracity. It is the untruth.

Hon. Member: “Wha is de meanin ah dat?”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Unmitigated falsifier of veracity. You determine that.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “Nah, nah, nah.” You have to explain that.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Falsified—

Dr. Moonilal: You “doh know what dat mean?”

Dr. Browne: Madam Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 36(5).

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It is unmitigated falsified veracity. I did not accuse anybody.

Dr. Browne: That is imputing improper motives to a Member of Parliament.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: You did not accuse anybody? Who “yuh” spoke about? [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members, Members, please. I am asking for your cooperation.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Sure, sure, Madam.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, you may continue and I want to ask you to choose your words meticulously, please.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right. Madam Deputy Speaker, what was echoed here was unmitigated, falsified veracity.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “Yuh saying it again?”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I did not say who. I did not accuse anybody.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: The public is listening!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I did not accuse anybody.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Let them go ahead. The public is listening.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Anyway, you all do not have too long again.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—we have 16 administrative and science blocks scheduled to be constructed and we are going to start working on them during the summer holiday, to start. The Prime Minister alluded to the primary schools that

we constructed, but let me give you where we constructed all these schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Is Rose Hill RC—we are constructing a school there now—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Where is Rose Hill RC?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Where is Rose Hill? Where is Febeau Village Government Primary? Is that saying that we are not building in any of the constituencies where the PNM Members are the Members of Parliament? Enterprise Government, Tunapuna Government, Riversdale, Tulsa, Arima New Government Primary, Palo Seco Government Primary School, St. Barbara's Spiritual Shouter Baptist School. All over Trinidad and Tobago we built these 14 primary schools to house 3,600 students. And this is where we are building schools now: Belmont RC Primary School. Where is Belmont? Paramin RC—the Member for Diego Martin North/East was in Parliament for 20 years. He did not even have the inkling of building a school, but it takes a UNC-People's Partnership Government to build a school for him in Paramin RC in his constituency.

Hon. Member: “De chirren went to school in a grocery.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And they went to school in a grocery.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “All yuh too. All yuh too!”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We are building at New Grant, Cap de Ville Primary. That is in the Point Fortin constituency. Rousillac SDMS—that is in La Brea constituency. Lower Cumuto, Curepe Presbyterian, Kanhai Presbyterian, Rio Claro Presbyterian, Egypt Village, Point Fortin, Lower Morvant Government Primary.

Hon. Member: Where is that?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Where is that? I just got a text a while ago, they are asking for permission to bring police onto the site.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Where?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: At Lower Morvant Government Primary. The contractors cannot continue the work without having police protection and it is happening all over the country where we are building schools. So we are building the school in Lower Morvant and we have to get police protection.

Point Cumana RC—where is Point. Cumana RC? Where is Fanny Village Government Primary School?

Mr. Sharma: Barrackpore.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: No. Fanny Village is in the La Brea constituency. Chatham, Point Fortin constituency. Madam Deputy Speaker, these are the 18 schools that we are now building. Many of these are almost completed—in addition to the 14. What about the others? San Juan Boys' Government Primary, St. Joseph, La Fillette RC, Santa Flora, Preysal and so on, Woodbrook Presbyterian. That is all over the country.

10.00 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the early childhood education centres, the 53 that we have built all over the country, you can take a map of Trinidad and Tobago, put the early childhood education centres and you are seeing where they are. Spree Simon, Port of Spain, we started that. You called me many times, Member for Port of Spain South. They want a massive block. We said we will build an ECC centre. I hope we are given the ability to continue. Egypt Village Government Primary, we are building an ECC centre there. Cedros Government, we are building an ECC centre—we built. No, 29, they have been completed. They were completed. And then we did another 24 under the IDB, all over the country again.

So when they come with this myth and fallacy that we are—what was the word for the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, who has 33 years as a teacher, an educator and visited schools, and her masks are off and her gloves are on?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: That is right. We cannot fight back; you all must fight us and we cannot fight back.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: She said they built 35 ECC centres. Where are these? In the sky? Madam Deputy Speaker, they built 22 early childhood education centres in nine years, five primary schools and not one secondary school. We built 53 early childhood education centres. Twenty-six are going to be starting with the IDB, phase two; 16 are under construction now; and we propose to construct another 50 in addition to this.

We have 16 primary schools under construction, another 18 going to start pretty shortly and we are going to complete the 10 secondary schools that we have under construction at the moment. That is the work that we are doing in the Ministry of Education in just infrastructure.

Then you began to criticize us for talking about your 2020 vision. You say that you now have a 2030 vision, and you just transformed the 2020 vision to a

2030. That is not a vision. The PNM had 29 different groupings of people in different silos, coming up with recommendations for various areas, health, education, security, whatever, and nothing was coalesced in terms of a vision. You could not say that you had a mission statement and a vision.

As far as we are concerned, as far as I understand it—as far as we understand it—we have the documentation for a manifesto with seven interconnected pillars, and that is where the hon. Prime Minister has been taking this country. We are moving steadfastly to bring about prosperity for all our people in Trinidad and Tobago.

So you asked: how could you call it a failure? Sound philosophical underpinnings. They have sound philosophical underpinnings in their 2020 manifesto. It would seem like that sound philosophical underpinning caused them to demit office because the people believed that they had nothing. There was no meat in what they were saying they were going to do, because as the hon. Prime Minister showed, there were a lot of skyscrapers and cost overruns in all their projects, billions and billions of dollars in cost overruns. What we are showing here is value for money, as the Minister of Works and Infrastructure showed and I am showing.

Our early childhood education centres cost less. There were some that cost \$3 million. These now are costing about \$7 million. You can drive along the highway, the Eastern Main Road—not the Eastern Main Road, the highway and look at the one at Maloney on the left-hand side, and that is a replica of what we are building all throughout the country. They were spending \$140 million/\$160 million to try to build a secondary school. They started a few and we now have to take up the mantle of it and pay these contractors who did some work and they were not paid by them, and building primary schools at \$14 million each. We built a primary school in Riversdale in 28 days for \$7 million, and we built another one in 35 days for about \$9 million. That is the work of this Government, value for money in everything that we do.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West said the public is listening. I hope the public is listening and they must feel the effects of this Government. As she said, they must feel the effect. This is the effect of this Government, the work that we are doing, and I am just speaking about education. The laptop programme, she said that we went to Japan and Singapore and we do not have the resources.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have given 73,000 laptops to our students. We have given to at least 4,000 teachers. We have given to the principals of 476

primary schools, 134 secondary schools. We have trained close to 5,000 teachers in information communication technology skills, in infusing the curriculum with ICT at different levels—admitting we have not gone to the most sophisticated level of training—and which we will continue to work with to make sure that the teachers can conduct their classes and the curriculum with the students using their laptops. We have 150 technicians in the schools, IT technicians, servicing these laptops.

Admittedly, there are a number of laptops that have fallen into disrepair, and I am making an announcement here today, that pretty shortly there will be an advertisement in the newspapers with a direct hotline for all students whose laptops are not functioning, to call in to this number and we will ensure that we repair all these laptops that are not functioning, [*Desk thumping*] and that will be done very quickly.

Just today, I had discussions with one or two companies that, I believe—and we will put it out for a quick tender to see whoever will be able to be competent to do it as fast as possible. So we are not unmindful of what has to be done for those computers. But in addition to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, all 134 secondary schools have computer labs ranging from one to six, and some labs have 60 computers and these are serviced by the ICT technicians. Three hundred of our primary schools have computer labs and we are working feverishly to ensure that the other 176 do have labs pretty shortly.

We created history recently when we had the launch of our virtual education workshop and conference, where we had distinguished leaders from all over the world in ICT coming to Trinidad and Tobago, and at that we had international companies of Samsung, Microsoft—a number of other companies that came together, Flow, TSTT and Columbus Communication. Samsung, with their Android tablet, launched the first scientific ICT in education here in Trinidad with the virtual education classroom, the classroom of the 21st Century. We have 20 schools that are now under a pilot project where the teachers stand with their Android tablet and conduct the classes with the students in the class. We launched it at Presentation College and 20 classrooms.

We are in fact moving now to have 100 schools with interactive whiteboards. So computerized whiteboards, with the computer built into the interactive whiteboard. We have given each of 500 schools a smart television, a multimedia projector, overhead projector, a radio and one to use the CDs. So all these schools are now equipped to be able to conduct a number of their classes in their

audiovisual rooms with information communication technology, and we are continuing to train our teachers. My understanding is that in most of the schools, at least once per week, one of the subjects is taught using the laptop with the rest of the students.

The Member said that we have been trying to improve the Internet connectivity. We have a tender out with the Central Tenders Board—which is taking an extraordinarily long time to get done. Almost six months it has been there—to get Wi-Fi for all schools; Internet connectivity for the 25 megabytes for primary schools and 50 for the secondary schools, the classrooms are to be interconnected and a CCTV camera system for all the schools. That is before the Central Tenders Board at the moment and we are awaiting their resolution to the issue. So that deals with the whole question of the laptop, the disrepair and so on, and Internet access. We appreciate what Flow, TSTT, Digicel and so on have been giving to the schools and we really appreciate that.

Now neglect in the constituencies, I have dealt with that to show that all through Trinidad and Tobago we have been, as far as education is concerned—and the Minister of Works and Infrastructure showed what he has been doing throughout the country.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are other areas in education which I want to touch on, but let me indicate that in December 2010 we produced a business development report. We scoured the shelves of the Ministry of Education to look at all their reports, all their task force reports, all their research papers, and we came up with a business development report in December 2010. Just subsequent to that, we came up with a strategic plan 2011—2015, with a rollover every year and we identified 16 prioritized areas and it is like a little book pad.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. C. Sharma*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you. Thank you very much Members for the opportunity to carry on with my contribution.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have 16 prioritized areas and they are as follows—and we have been focused and blinkered in our approach towards ensuring implementation of all of these. I am proud to say, that at this time, all the

areas that we promised under our people's manifesto, we have reached close to about 80 to 85 per cent of delivery on our promises. When we look at all the promises that we made, information and communication technology, IT-based learning, this is what we said:

“IT-based learning will be infused in education at primary and secondary”—schools—“to support and complement other forms of teaching, learning and basic research.”

is being done.

“Connectivity technologies will be tapped to link teachers with teachers, teachers with students, and students with students.”

That is before the Central Tenders Board now.

Pre-primary and primary: “We will re-work curricula for the early childhood care education in the primary school to prepare the ground for seamless transition between the two.”

Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, commends Trinidad and Tobago for our seamless education programme.

“The focus will be on building self-confidence, the development of social skills, strengthening attention span and ability to focus, and on promoting creativity...critical thinking...entrepreneurship through general knowledge at primary level”

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is what we promised. This is the achievement:

- We have reviewed and reformed the early childhood care education curriculum and the primary school curriculum. Completed.
- We are now doing the secondary school curriculum reform consultations.
- We have a new restructured primary school curriculum incorporating a continuous assessment component with teaching in morals, values, ethics, citizenry development and character development, physical education, visual and performing arts, critical thinking, innovation, agro-science and health and family life education.
- We are now preparing to house close to another 20,000 children in early childhood education centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

10.15 p.m.

At the moment, we have close to 200 early childhood education centres and we house close to about 10,000, with the construction of another 100 ECCE centres, we will house another 7,000 and we will move with a public sector/private sector partnership to house 18,000 to 20,000 students in over 500 early childhood education centres. In that way, we will take care of the 36,000 students, ages 3 and 4, who we will formally house in early childhood education centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago. So we will reach our target of what we promised the population of universal early childhood education by 2015.

Madam Deputy Speaker, secondary school will strategically address the issue of school dropouts. That was our promise. We have now strengthened our Student Support Services Department to over 700 personnel as guidance counsellors, school social workers, behavioural, clinical and educational psychologists. We have almost 700 there within the school population now. School-based management teams have been established in each school. Local school boards have been appointed for government, primary and secondary schools. We have 85 local school boards and student hotline established, 800-4321, so that students could call in with any difficulty they may have and wish to remain anonymous. A strong parenting programme is now being established.

We will seek to improve performance at the CXC level on a school-by-school basis. We have filled most of the vacancies of principals, heads of departments and deans. We have appointed over 170 health and safety officers.

Dr. Browne: Minister, would you wish to clarify?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, please.

Dr. Browne: Thank you for giving way. You are moving at a swift pace and I heard you mention a strong parenting programme has been established.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: No, not has been, we are working on it.

Dr. Browne: You did not say that. [*Laughter*] Thanks for that clarification.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yeah. We have had massive consultations nationally, it is ongoing and we are now establishing a strong parenting thing with the Student Support Services Division which is bringing these parents together for a parenting in education programme.

Now, we have filled most of the areas of heads of departments and deans. We have appointed 170 health and safety officers. We have looked at the

recommendations of various task forces on student discipline and we are implementing a number of programmes. We have a provision of preparatory examination materials, has become the norm. Provisions of guidelines and strategies for students preparing for examinations in dealing with stress and anxieties, and we are continuing to retrain most of our 16,000 teachers in both the primary and secondary schools. We have retrained a number of them in various aspects of education, pedagogical skills, ADR, mediation, et cetera and the continuous assessment component.

We have almost filled all the teaching vacancies. We have some vacancies in the board schools, in the denominational schools, where we are working with them to fill these vacancies. We have now rationalized the teaching staff in each one of the schools and this is turning out to be extremely beneficial to all our students. In our primary schools, we do not have any teachers now, probably about 1 per cent, with just an ordinary level, with CXC or A level, but 99 per cent of our teachers in primary schools do have a Bachelor's of Education or a teachers training diploma from either the Corinth or the Valsayn Teachers Training College. So, the cadre of our personnel is improving very rapidly. So we promised on curriculum which I have spoken about.

Madam Deputy Speaker, all the areas where we promised: special education, hearing and visual testing going on, student assessment service centres are being established in various education districts. We are partnering with private sector centres in training special needs students in addition to Government financial grant per child in 22 special needs schools presently taking care of almost 2,000 special needs students. We have a lot of work to do with our special needs students throughout Trinidad and Tobago. We estimate that they constitute about 30 per cent of the school population with either dyslexia, autism, attention deficit, hyperactive disorder, neuromuscular disease, visual problem, hearing problem, emotional, behavioural and psychological abnormalities.

All these areas we have problems with and we are working assiduously to bring the NGOs and the CBOs that are dealing with these students to come under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education, so we can work with them and take care of these students with these special needs. That is a priority on our list and we are continuing to work assiduously with that. So, we have hired more clinical, behavioural and educational psychologists in our schools, and we are training more teachers in special education training. So that is just only part that I have read there.

Literacy development: within these last four years, we have had a 10 per cent improvement in language arts in the SEA examination, and a 12 per cent improvement in the creative writing. We have now moved from 58 per cent to 72 per cent of our students getting more than 50 per cent in their SEA. We have moved on from 14 per cent down to less than around 4 per cent of students getting less than 30 per cent in the SEA. In our primary schools, we have moved over 100 underperforming schools to performing and we have moved more than 100 from performing to excelling. Whereas previously, approximately 30, 40 schools were getting passes in the first 200 in the SEA, now we have 82 schools last year getting passes in the SEA.

CXC, we need to do a lot more work at the CSEC level. It is not acceptable at the moment, I acknowledge that and we have been working tirelessly to improve the performance at the CSEC level. At the CAPE level, we have more students doing CAPE. We have close to 4,000 in unit 1, 4,000 in unit 2, approximately from 3,500, and their grades have improved from about 86 per cent getting grades 1 to 5 to 93 per cent getting grades 1 to 5, and about 65 per cent getting grades 1 to 3, so we are continuing to improve on that.

As far as open island scholarships are concerned, we had, when we came in, about 250 scholarships used to be given per year. Last year, we gave approximately 430 open and additional scholarships and more schools are now in the race for scholarships—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Open and additional.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Open and additional, yeah.

Dr. Browne: Those are the only two categories?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yeah, open and additional. We had about 20-something schools getting scholarships, secondary schools, now we have about 42 secondary schools getting scholarships. So, one in eight students, writing CAPE, approximately one in eight, now receive a scholarship from the Ministry of Education.

As I am on that, I have been given some figures here by the Ministry of Public Administration on—let me see if I have it here. We have, I think, close to—we have given nationally close to 2,900 scholarships since we have come into Government in—yes, here it is. Our Government has awarded in 2010, 534 scholarships; 2011, 885; 2012, 609; 2013, 663 and so far this year, 245. So we have given 2,936 scholarships to the students in Trinidad and Tobago at a cost of \$748 million over the last four years.

In terms of having how we spend our money in education, the Minister of Finance and the Economy and the Parliament have ensured that we get close to \$4.2 million, \$4.3 million, on an annual basis, and the expenditure of this four point something million dollars. So we have received close to about \$17 million over the last four years and about \$11 million out of the \$17 million—you know it is always asked and said, “How all yuh spent the \$200 billion that you all received”. [*Crosstalk*] I am accounting for the expenditure in education and my colleagues, I am sure, will account for the expenditure in their portfolio. So, we would have received close to \$17 billion over the last four years. We spent close to \$11 billion on personnel emoluments and salaries and wages. How much have we spent on janitorial services over the last four years? Approximately \$528 million, it is approximately \$110 million per year.

The laptop initiative: it is transparent, open and for everybody to see. There was never any question asked about the transparency. We have spent \$261 million on the laptop programme. School security for the four years, we have spent \$811 million to keep our nation’s children safe. The textbook: we have spent close to \$250 million on the textbook programme over the four years. And just yesterday, or two days ago, Minister Cadiz and myself had a meeting with the PTSC on the school transportation, the maxi-taxi operators. We have paid, for the last four years, \$126 million. So just those four alone, we have spent close to \$2 billion in taking care of our children’s education. In janitorial service, laptop, security, textbook and transportation.

What about school feeding? We provide about 156,000 meals per day at a cost of about \$1.2 million per day for our students in the school feeding programme, and over the last four years, we would have spent close to \$920 million on school feeding.

Hon. Member: Who are these contractors for the food?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Who are the contractors? The same 75 that you all had there under the PNM. The same 75 contractors in the school feeding programme who have been there for 20 years under PNM rule, they are still there. The UNC Government is not a government that will remove people by whim and by fancy—[*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members: Ooooooh!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We have left all your 75 contractors, they are there to testify. We have not removed any of your 75 contractors in the school feeding programme.

Hon. Member: Thank you!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Let us say they make a profit about 30 per cent, they would be about \$20 million rich, each one of them, over the years that they have been—*[Interruption]*

Miss McDonald: Twenty million dollars a year?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Over the years.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Over the years.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Over how many years?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Well, the school feeding programme began, I think, about 1980-something. So I am just giving you an example, colleagues: \$11 billion in emoluments, \$2 billion in the ones that I spoke about, that is 13, and school feeding, \$14 billion. So we are left with \$3 billion to do the things that we want to do in education.

Expansion of CVQ: we have moved from 42 schools doing CVQs now to 102 schools. We have close to about 1,000 facilitators to work with the students on the CVQ. Just this morning I had a meeting with the City and Guilds and I spoke about the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, he would have been through the system in those days where City and Guilds used to be given the tech/voc certification, and I asked the Chief Education Officer to see where we can bridge the City and Guilds with the Caribbean Vocational Qualification, and the TTMVQ with which Minister Karim has been working assiduously.

Let me say publicly, I want to sincerely congratulate my colleague, Minister Karim, publicly for the tremendous work that he has been doing in tertiary education. *[Desk thumping]* I have here all the areas where he has helped in, and if I have some time, I will just read it out to you. But tech/voc is taught up to Form 3. We want to make sure that more and more students are doing CVQs. At the moment, we have about 2,000 students doing it, and we are asking the school principals now to accept CVQ as one of the subjects to be used in the movement of the children from CSEC to A levels, and I am sure the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West will agree with that because this is something that they have been asking for and we are implementing it this year.

10.30 p.m.

The change of date of the SEA, well, it resulted in better performance of the student. The Continuous Assessment Component, people had been asking for the

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removal of the dreaded SEA Examination. We have moved one step. We have introduced the Continuous Assessment Component based on the consultations we had at a national level, and 85 per cent of the participants indicated that we must introduce CAC, the Continuous Assessment Component. This year, 2014, for this SEA Examination, 20 per cent of the marks were given to the Continuous Assessment Component, done in Standard 5. Next year, at May 2015, 40 per cent of the marks will be given to continuous assessment, based on the assessment in Standard 4 this year, and using that for next year, at Standard 5, the Language Arts and Mathematics will be 60 per cent.

Hopefully, we will be in Government again, and we—God forbid, I mean, we should be in Government because of the amount of work we have done, [*Crosstalk*] and the people must understand the confidence that we have been able to move this Government forward, in serving the people and working for the people, and doing everything that is absolutely necessary for the people. Once we are there, I feel almost convinced that we will move to possibly 60 per cent of the marks with continuous assessment, probably assessment in Standard 3, 4 or 5, is something for the national population to discuss, and then 40 per cent of the marks for the examination, Language Arts and Maths. This is a consideration for—this is for consideration by the national population to give their decisions on this, because we did not do this Continuous Assessment Component without going out for consultations. Madam Deputy Speaker, how much time do I have again?

Madam Deputy Speaker: You finish at 10.42.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: 10.42, 11 more minutes then, thank you.

Well, I had spoken about the improvement in the academic performance, and improvement in infrastructure in schools, teacher training. We have been working hard. Yesterday I spoke to the Principal of the University of the West Indies, I have spoken to UTT, I have spoken to the Faculty of Education at the University of the West Indies, to help us in continuous training of our teachers during their summer vacation, those who are willing to come forward for training, you know how difficult it is, but we are working with our training for our principals and school supervisors in leadership and management during this summer period.

So we will continue to work with our facilitators and moderators for the CAC. We are bringing in substitute teachers. We are going to advertise for that pretty shortly, and we want to use the skills and expertise of retired principals who are extremely competent—[*Interruption*]—not you, [*Laughter*] [*Dr. Gopeesingh*]

acknowledged Mrs. Mc Intosh] Well, I know you probably do not want to be there, but there are tremendous skills and talent and capabilities by our distinguished retired principals out there. We want to thank them publicly for the tremendous work that they have done for our students throughout Trinidad and Tobago. And we congratulate them, thank them, and may God continue to richly bless all of those who have dedicated their lives to teaching, and our 16,000 teachers now taking care of our quarter million students.

I spoke about the curriculum reform. We have finished ECCE and primary, and we are now doing the secondary. We have begun work on the human resource management function at the Ministry to computerize our 16,000 teachers; 3,000 public servants and 1,000 contract officers, and we will be able to computerize that and have all the information about a particular teacher at the touch of our fingertip.

Since we have filled most of our vacancies, we have done an organizational restructuring and institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Education, and I meet almost every two weeks with a strategic executive team, and the heads of about 27 units and 14 departments in our conference room, where we discuss the issues that have to be implemented, and we get the buy-in and support of all the heads of departments and so on.

Our communications have not been as strong as it should be, because what I am saying now, the general public does not really know much about what we have done, and this is one of our misgivings. We have not told the population as much of what we have done, and this is what we as a Government, we have not done. So, the people outside there do not know the amount of the work that this Government has done, and this is one of our weaknesses, but we intend to correct that. So our communication strategies have not been as strong as they should be.

Career guidance, we have exposed over 66,000 students over the last two years to career guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. They had been exposed to about 100 different professions, but there are six tertiary learning institutions and about 50 business organizations.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, in our 16 priority areas which we have here, we have been focused, we have been blinkered, and we have achieved close to about 85 per cent of the areas where we thought that we will want to go.

Let me spend just a few minutes to indicate some of the things that the Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training has, in fact, done. I am acting for him at the moment. So it behoves me to indicate something of the tremendous

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work that he has done: establishment of a COSTAATT Campus in Sangre Grande; completion of the MIC Tobago Technology Centre; development and implementation of Workforce Assessment Centres; the National Training Agency; relaunch of OJT Programme; placement of programme with NTA and expansion of the programme in Workforce Assessment and Development areas; Community Career Coach Programmes done by NTA; MIC/HYPE administrative centre in O'Meara; completion of phases 1—3 of the Waterloo Training Facility by YTEPP; expansion of the NESC Point Lisas Technology Administration and Technology Centre, and there are so much details to be filled in there which in the period of time, I am not able to do. He himself will speak about his work when he has the opportunity.

Establishment of a MIC Technology Centre in Diego Martin, that is MUST and HYPE; establishment of an Academy for Nursing and Allied Health at El Dorado, phase 1, COSTAATT, where our nurses are being trained; upgrade of the NESC Palo Seco Centre to NESC Palo Seco Skills and Technology Campus; construction of the Mount Hope Medical Science Student Activity Centre; upgrade of UTT Physical Infrastructure Complex; establishment of a National Qualification and Credit Framework, ACTT. These are just some of the areas where the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training has been working at for the last four years.

Establishment of a Skills and Technology Centre in Debe/Penal; construction of a Drilling School in Ste. Madeleine; establishment of a COSTAATT Campus in Chaguanas, phase 1, the project duration is 15 months and that project is expected to be completed by August 2015; establishment of a training facility in Woodford Lodge in Chaguanas; the establishment of UWI, South Campus, Debe, is 52 per cent complete and the capacity, 450 full-time students in phase 1, residents will be 100 in Phase 1; Roytec's programme capacity 550 full-time students; construction of an Open Campus facility in Chaguanas, and the list goes on, Madam Deputy Speaker, of all the tremendous work that our distinguished colleague, the Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training has been doing. MIC, the establishment of the Diego Martin HYPE Centre, Sangre Grande HYPE Centre, MIC Craft Programme; construction of HYPE administration and O'Meara Centre; Tobago Technology Centre; National Skills Development Programme in Macoya, et cetera. Upgrading of technology centres in Pointe-a-Pierre, Laventille, Point Fortin; Ste. Madeleine; Tobago; Government Vocational Centres; construction of new facilities at Point Fortin; establishment of the Pleasantville Technology Centre.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, and colleagues, as I close, I want to say that the work of this Government is unparalleled, and we stand proud as a Government by virtue of our performance and the distinguished leadership of the hon. Prime Minister. So I wish to emphasize that few things could be more central to the life and health of our nation, than the education of our children. Our schools hold the future of our country in their hands. They will decide whether that future is enlightened, free and informed or shrouded in the darkness of ignorance. It is our responsibility to ensure that the ignorance part does not occur.

From the beginning, our administration has made excellence in education a top priority. The Prime Minister has given the most money to education, and from the beginning, we have recognized that excellence is formed in the classroom by teachers, administrators and parents working closely together to give their children the very best education possible. So that is why we have been able to achieve so much in so short a time. Around the country, the educational picture has improved so vastly, we are very proud of it. At all levels we have improved, performance and infrastructure.

My message to this honourable House and the nation by extension, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, is simply this, the education system under the leadership of Kamla Persad-Bissessar's People's Partnership Government, exists to serve you, and it is up to parents to get involved. The more parents get involved with their children's schooling and education, the better it will be, and the brighter the future of our country would be. Let the *Hansard* record reflect this amazing progress, and may our colleagues on the other side, also come on board as the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West has given her life to education, come on board with this progressive system. For it is only then will they learn the lesson of true leadership and the amazing progressive development of our country and people that it can bring.

Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Amery Browne (*Diego Martin Central*): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it is a privilege to contribute while you are in the Chair, yes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this debate has taken us some distance through the evening, it is now 10.42 p.m., so I do not intend to take my full quota of time, but there are—I know that you are disappointed to hear that, but there are several observations that I do wish to make, to contribute to the discourse, and also to reflect the views of the constituents of Diego Martin Central, who I have the honour and privilege to represent.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I listened very closely to the Member for Caroni East. Now, this Member is well known to me as a distinguished physician and lecturer at the university, and I believe he also received a national award sometime aback for his contribution to medicine and national service. I do not think there is any danger of him receiving such an award for his contribution as Minister of Education, [*Laughter*] because he has perfected the art, Madam Deputy Speaker, of boasting about the education system, while simultaneously presiding over the complete disarray in education in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, you speak to any parent, any teacher, any schoolchild, any journalist who reports on what is going on in our schools, they will give you a very different picture. The picture, the honest picture that they would give you, is one of total chaos, breakdown in morale, breakdown in discipline, breakdown in security, breakdown in order, and a sense of a sector that is in need of repair and greater attention at this time.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a few—[*Interruption*] yes, and he says he accepts some of that, in terms of the school violence, the fighting, the indiscipline that we are seeing rampant across the country. So I am not too sure what laurels persons should be resting on, or what boasting should be taking place. There is a long litany, and I think we need to—and I recognize my colleague who spoke before me. She began to correct the record on this issue of building schools, and who did not build schools and who built schools.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to put the UNC on notice, that their penchant for pulling statistics out the sky, and just throwing things at the population, that will not go unchecked any further. [*Desk thumping*] The Member for Caroni East is a specialist in this regard, since his days in Opposition, and he has carried that specialty with him into Government. So he would just stand here and say, well, 72 per cent improvement in this, and 50 per cent improvement in that, and we built 200 schools, and there is no substantiation of any of this, and we cannot—if we have learned one thing, Madam Deputy Speaker, since this Government has come into office, is that we cannot take them at their word. [*Desk thumping*] We cannot do it. [*Interruption*]

10.45 p.m.

Well, yes. That is a classic example; reading out this litany and I heard: “We have implemented something—a strong or incredible, he used an adjective, a lofty adjective—parenting programme”, and he went merrily along and he graciously

allowed me to interject for clarification and then he corrected himself immediately, which suggests to me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that he knew exactly what he was doing when he was rushing through that list.

It does not exist. He is talking about a plan, but in giving us his list, unchallenged, he presented it as something that has already occurred. That is a signal to the population, whenever members of this Cabinet are speaking, you really need to verify every single thing that they say.

There is talk about building schools and it has become clear to us that when this Government is preparing its indicators and its checklist of what they have done, if they met a school in construction, even if construction was complete, if they have to put in one faucet in the school building, they refer to that as they built the school, you know. That is what is going on. So, I suspect they also built the Waterfront Complex; they built the Hyatt Regency Hotel and they built these things because any modification, any detail, any decor, any improvement, it is considered building; not to mention these ECCE centres. Some of them are initiated in existing structures in communities.

Dr. Gopeesingh: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. A. Browne: No, no, no. Let us be honest with it. It is not all an independent building that has been erected, but you know what, they will call that building an ECCE centre and it just adds up to these bloated statistics that they are floating out there. [*Interruption*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, if the hon. Member for Caroni East has something further to say, he can do so in the next debate or he can very politely ask me for an opportunity to interject, but this throwing words, I mean, come on, I am not attacking him in person at all. [*Interruption*]

Well, I would not even because some things the population would recognize very clearly as nonsense, so I would not even go down that road.

So Madam Deputy Speaker, the other issue is the matter of guidance counsellors, school psychologists and the other social sector professionals that are very important to the education sector. The Minister again gave us a figure of 700, which we will have to verify, but that represents a deficit which was created by this Government in not retaining a number of professionals that were there before and a number of our schools and students have suffered during that interim period. We had cause, even in joint select committees to encourage, berate and examine the Ministry of Education, particularly with regard to primary schools, as well as secondary schools, what has been going on. So there was a real problem there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Member for Diego Martin Central, for giving way. The question of guidance counsellors, guidance officers and school social workers is a remit of the Teaching Service Commission and they are the ones who appoint all these people. We had found them not doing it and we went to Cabinet to get Cabinet to agree to the creation of 732 positions in those areas. We have filled almost all those positions already, which the Teaching Service Commission was not able to fill. You know that.

Dr. A. Browne: Madam Deputy Speaker, if I knew that the Minister was going to launch an attack on the Teaching Service Commission while I allowed him to speak, I really would not have given way. That is not the purpose.

The point I was making is not that. I was not casting blame. I was pointing out to the Minister and the population that during that interim period when you had two professionals for entire districts in some cases—I can talk about what went on in Port of Spain and the western communities and all the schools that exist in that location and the paucity of these professionals during a time in these children's development when they need these services the most. That has created some of the problems that we are experiencing today.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

You know what has happened in the interim, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: No, the Madam has left. The Mister has come.

Dr. A. Browne: You know what has happened—Welcome back, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for introducing yourself in that very kind way.

What has happened in the interim, Mr. Speaker, is that there has been a deficit. As a Member of Parliament, I have had to step in in my constituency, recognizing what has been going on in the school system, identify some young persons—one young lady returned from the United States highly qualified in dealing with troubled children and some of those areas—and I had to find ways to encourage, incentivize, motivate some of these individuals to get involved, to volunteer in some cases, interact with the principals, interact with the teachers and fill the gap in the interim.

I am certain there are other Members of Parliament who have had to serve in that role. The Member for Arouca/Maloney probably could have done some of that herself having had training in this regard. So it is not a matter of casting blame or launching an attack on the Teaching Service Commission, but recognizing that while the grass was growing, our calves have been starving and there is a consequence to that in terms of the future of Trinidad and Tobago.

Again, the Minister found ways to reference school repairs and so on and that is an area of ongoing disaster where these repairs are started late, they are not done strategically; at the end of vacation period, schools are still not opening on time in significant numbers and we are not really hearing a strategy to treat with that and to solve those problems. The Minister had an opportunity today to share some of that with us. It does not encourage us for the September to come. It certainly gives me no encouragement as a representative of the people.

Again, this House needs to be aware that some Members of Parliament have been stepping into that void. I myself, with a few volunteers, one or two teachers and the principal of one primary school, went and bought paint ourselves, out of our pockets, and some young people donated some money and went and painted one of the primary schools in Diego Martin, the interior of the school. That is the scenario while the Minister has been boasting and saying all is well in the education sector. It cannot be a case of all is well at all.

You know, Mr. Speaker, besides all the infrastructure, besides the lack of motivation to staff and other things, what our school children need the most is not a laptop; it is inspiration. I said several times, in this country, thanks to good work that was done over the last several years, we, in some ways have approached equality of opportunity. In some ways, we have approached that, with free tertiary education and other things; but what we do not have is equality of inspiration and, depending on the home some children come from, they just do not get that spark or that fire. It is as literal as that. We do not have quality of inspiration and one would hope that the school system could help provide that. That inspiration has been lacking and that example has been lacking from the very highest corridors of power in this country and I wonder what our school children think and feel when they look at the news.

We used to tell parents: sit with your children and look at the news at 7.00 o'clock every night. I wonder if the Member for Moruga/Tableland can advise parents to do that these days. Because when you turn on the news, it is some scandal, some reprehensible firing or behaviour. What are our children getting from all of this and who is bringing out the latest video and audio clip and phone recording? There is nothing really of example in that; there is nothing of inspiration for our children.

So, I am not sure why the Minister of Education is so overjoyed here today, singing the praises of the Prime Minister and all those other things, when, at the same time, he and his Cabinet have been presiding over an education sector in

crisis and a Trinidad and Tobago that is also in crisis. That is the reality on the ground besides the fairy tale that they have been spinning.

I heard him also saying, in praise of the Prime Minister, that she has a policy that no child would be left behind. The Prime Minister has a policy that no child would be left behind. He said that, Mr. Speaker, with no reference whatsoever to the reality today that we are experiencing in Trinidad and Tobago, the worst period in terms of unnatural child death that we have ever seen. That is what we are experiencing today.

I thought, in saying that no child would have been left behind, the Minister would have found some way to reference what is going on. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I am being disturbed by several Members right now.

Mr. Speaker: Could I appeal to hon. Members to allow the Member for Diego Martin Central to speak in silence?

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Where was I? No child would be left behind, but he did not point to the reality that we are currently experiencing the worst period that we have seen in this nation with unnatural child deaths in Trinidad and Tobago and the Minister of Health, the Minister responsible for child and youth development, the Minister of Education, the Minister of National Security and the Prime Minister appear to have gone totally silent on that particular crisis.

But our citizens when they turn on the news or they turn on the radio are expecting now, every day, to hear of some—and you are hearing wild theories of people conjuring all sorts of explanations for this, but it speaks to, in my opinion, neglect not just at the community level or the level of the home, or the institutional level, but also neglect at the level of governance in Trinidad and Tobago. There are a number of areas that fall under the purview of the Executive that have been left in abeyance and have not been receiving due care and attention. I am speaking specifically about the issue of the welfare, safety and protection of the nation's children.

I recall the Prime Minister issuing a Daniel Decree, which was unprecedented in this nation and in the region, where a Prime Minister would take it upon herself to write a letter to a dead child, a child who was murdered. That letter was written; a funeral was attended; tears flowed and the entire nation felt those emotions. It was an emotional time. What has happened since then, Mr. Speaker, death after death after death; murder after murder after murder; case of neglect after case of neglect after case of neglect; and you look at the legislative

framework, it is basically the same as it was when this Government came in. One Bill they were able to bring out of the many and that was already prepared for them.

When you look at the administrative framework, it is almost the same as where it was. We are now seeing some kind of effort to lift the Children's Authority to where it should have been at least two and a half years ago, at least—and I am being generous with that because the foundation was laid. We are now seeing some glimmer of that. That is another example of neglect. So when we talk about no child is left behind, those are empty words. Those are empty words. We need to see the reality and what we are seeing now—well, I do not know if it is being left behind—they are going under, six feet under and that cannot be acceptable. So, if the Prime Minister were consistent, we would have had so many decrees since then, so many letters, so many attendances at funerals.

With regard to our children in the health sector, you look at the paucity of paediatric staff in many of our institutions. You look at the lack of a neonatologist, something as simple as that that has been referenced time and time again over the last four years and it is still the same.

And then we talk about children's hospital and teaching hospital. Well, the teaching hospital issue, to anyone with knowledge of medical education is largely ludicrous because every hospital in this country can be considered a teaching hospital and really should be if our health sector is operating in the right way. Our children's hospital—when our existing institutions are bereft of neonatologists and the trained staff that are required to provide optimum care for our children, you really wonder where this Government is taking Trinidad and Tobago.

11.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, and then there is another point I want to touch on with regard to the education sector, and I am going to invite the Minister to think outside of whatever zone he has been thinking in so far. I am concerned, in this instance, particularly about those schools that he might have deemed non-performing schools; in addition, schools in our inner city areas or town areas, schools near urban centres and schools that, if we are to be frank, sometimes are situated in communities that have some very troubling social issues; higher levels of poverty; associations with violence in the community, et cetera. I am inviting the Minister and whoever would be the next Minister of Education to consider doing things very differently. My suggestion is that we need almost a martial plan in education

for those schools, those schools in particular, because those are very different to your QRC and your CIC and the so-called prestige schools. These are schools that really require very special attention.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to visit a school in New York, which was in an inner city area and, clearly, there was a different philosophy involved there, and a massive investment was made. I am suggesting we need to make a similar massive investment in this country, not in all the schools, very strategic. The thinking was, when you cross the gate of that institution, Mr. Minister, it is almost as if you are walking into a different world.

So, you are coming from a household and sometimes you may not have a high standard of living—that texture of quality may not exist in the home or on the street or the community, in some cases—but you see when you cross that school gate, it is a different world altogether—everything is first class—and this was in an inner city area; everything is first class—the security is in place and these children would know—and the school becomes almost an oasis in the desert, and children prefer to even remain there to do their homework afterwards, and then you can inject some additional programming, psychosocial development and the ethics and all the other things that we would like to provide for our children, but if that environment is not first class, just as if, you know, there is a theory, if you provide persons with the right environment or a proper building for public servants, you will begin to get a different outlook, morale and aptitude.

So, my suggestion is, besides all these billions that the Minister himself has said is passing through the education sector, at some point, we need to say, “Listen, there is a problem here.” The money is also being expended in national security and all those other services; let us start from young before some of these bad habits develop. Let us recognize that one of the few places that everyone passes through in the country—every time I pick up a newspaper and I see a bandit rob somewhere or hurt someone or a bandit is shot or some thug behaviour is occurring, that person went to school, you know, in this country, because we have mandatory education. That person went to a primary school somewhere in this country.

I hope in 10, 15 or 20 years, we might be able to say something different, because the children of tomorrow should be able to experience something different when they walk into whatever school it is. I am not going to name them. There are some examples on my mind, I am not going to name them, because I do not really want to stigmatize, but that is my suggestion. I am hoping the Minister

is awake, and we really need to do things very, very differently. I am suggesting a martial plan for education, targeting those schools that we sometimes describe as challenged schools.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address some of the things the Prime Minister said as well, because it appears to some of us that she launched her general election campaign—[*Interruption*] Well, Member for Couva North, I know you will want to say—[*Interruption*]

Miss Ramdial: She did well.

Dr. A. Browne:—she did well. You do not have a choice in saying that, but I have a very different view, because I do not have to sing the praises of the Member for Siparia. What I am here to do is to convey the sentiments of my constituents and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and I am certain I can tell you with all confidence, they are not pounding on the desk when they hear the Prime Minister say some of the things that she said today.

So, it appeared to me that she launched her general election campaign, and it seems everyone is moving into election mode—the Member for Tabaquite came and gave us another election speech and so on—and she built a few speeches, et cetera, that is great. But, Mr. Speaker, I really did not hear an accounting for the \$274 billion that has passed through this country in the last four years. I did not hear any accounting. I do not know if any Member on this side heard any accounting for that.

So, there is very little to show and, again, that is what the population is saying. They are saying, yes the PNM in their 10 years prior would have expended about 270 or \$271 billion in that entire almost decade duration, but in four years more was expended, and there is very little to see or show for it. That is what the people are saying, and if that is news to you, Member for Couva North, then you have lost touch with what the people are saying. There is very little to show for it. The Prime Minister went on very boldly to challenge the PNM's record of achievement. Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of us if we do not defend the record of achievement of the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] I am not going to allow the Prime Minister to get away with that, so I am here to assist in defending that record.

The citizens may not have agreed with every decision that was made by the People's National Movement, but at least they recognize they could see their investment; they recognize that there was an attempt to develop every sector in this country. Mr. Speaker, I am just going to give a short sampling of some of the

investments that were made, and some of what we have to see, feel and show in terms of the PNM's record. The very buildings that we work in, that we debate in and that we operate in right now are part of the achievement of the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] Simple.

The Hyatt hotel in which the Member for Oropouche East has now hung his portrait downstairs, the staff cannot stop talking about that.

Mr. Deyalsingh: What? Say that again.

Dr. A. Browne: The same people who attacked the Hyatt and the very principle of constructing that hotel, now have their portrait hanging in the foyer.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Are you serious? [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Browne: I mean it is incredible. The staff sometimes avert their eyes because they know what was being said back then, and it is like a whole new world, a new enchanting point of view right now, because they are in Government. So that is part of the record of achievement.

The upgrade of the Hilton Hotel, that is part of that achievement; the government campus, two 22-storey buildings and two 10-storey buildings. It is not that you have to look for it, it is there and we are inviting this Government to make good use of those investments, and they have been very slow in that regard. The Ministry of Education Tower; the National Academy for the Performing Arts north, always a beehive of activity—if it was up to UNC policy, I do not know where these shows would be occurring, maybe in the savannah. I do not know, but we now have an Academy for the Performing Arts, and we also have one in south Trinidad as well, which is also being utilized.

The President—I am not going to dwell on him—but he made a wonderful decision to take the national awards down south last year. I attended. Great event! It would not have been possible if it were not for PNM vision; PNM implementation; PNM success. So, I do not want to just paint a completely rosy picture, but I want to correct the Prime Minister's premise that she has been performing. I do not think that she has been at all, and she took the opportunity to try to fool the population, once again, that the PNM was not making investments for the people of Trinidad and Tobago because I do not know who NAPA and SAPA were for. They were not for Dr. Amery Browne, they were for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The expansion of highways: the Churchill Roosevelt Highway, three lanes to Trincity; expansion of the Uriah Butler Highway; the overpass that we now utilize

every day and are very proud of, the Aranguez Overpass and supporting infrastructure; Point Lisas plant and the expansion of the power plant at Point Lisas to over 200 megawatts; the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery upgrade; the power plant at Union Estate, 720 megawatts and supporting transmission infrastructure; natural gas pipeline to the people of Tobago and the island of Tobago to support the power plant and Cove Industrial Estate; Chancery Lane Administrative Complex; UTT campus in Tamana; upgrades at John S. Donaldson—I do not know what they have with John S. Donaldson but, anyway—San Fernando Technical Institute; Chaguaramas at the Maritime Institute; campuses at UTT—UTT itself; 35,000 houses constructed—I wonder if anyone is going to stand up on the other side and say how many houses they constructed.

Now, if they put a tap or a faucet in a house, they might say they build the house, but no sensible person would interpret it that way. Just as you say you have built a school, and you put a faucet in the school—[*Interruption*] Exactly! The Member for Caroni East is agreeing with me. [*Crosstalk*] Facts are facts. So, let me give you a fact, once again, 35,000 houses constructed. That is a fact!

Community centres right across Trinidad and Tobago: if the Member for Mayaro were here, he would rise in testimony as to how his constituents would have benefited during that period, right across Trinidad and Tobago. Lighting of over 150 recreation grounds: you know, when they do the counting now, Mr. Speaker, they include the grounds that the PNM lit, in their counting, you know, and that is how they approach many of these sectors. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, they do that.

Mr. Speaker, right across Trinidad and Tobago, upgrade of over 40 community recreation facilities; over 150,000 street lamps across Trinidad and Tobago: where were they? All in Petit Valley? Not at all, right across the country! So, Mr. Speaker, you realize how their eyes are opening now, and they realize what has been told to them in their Cabinet meetings is not the truth. There is a lot. There was a lot to show for that investment.

New infrastructure bringing electricity to hundreds of communities, right across the country benefiting people, human beings; including water infrastructure. I can testify what has happened in Diego Martin, in some parts of Petit Valley where, finally, persons were getting water for the first time. Thankfully, some of that has continued because it is not just an overnight process. To get water, let us say, up to a hillside, you require a well, you require pumps,

and then you might require a booster pump depending on how far it goes, and there is still more work to be done. I want to encourage the officials at WASA and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.

I heard the Prime Minister say, water for all and so. Stop giving people all these clichés and this dogma. That does not work anymore. That was in the year 2000 or whatever, that gone dead already. Persist, ensure that the programmes are working and you should be able to say more and more people will be receiving water. The boasting and so on, I am not sure, but I am still correcting the record as attempted to be presented by the Prime Minister today.

The fast ferry service to Tobago did not exist before. Certainly, it is not a product of UNC work or implementation; the purchase and deployment of over 400 buses. Where did that come from? Member for Laventille West: where did that come from? Come on! Come on! How could the Prime Minister stand here and say those things.

Radar system to defend our borders from drug barons: Mr. Speaker, we are now hearing the United States Special Prosecutor is telling us—lecturing to us and telling us it was a multi-national drug operation with Trinidad and Tobago linkages that executed one of our dearest and fairest. That is what they are telling us. The investments were being made, at that time, and the Prime Minister wants to dismiss all of that—14 fast interceptors; six fast patrol vessels and others which they cancelled, designed to help shield us from that menace; that global menace, that threatens all of us. That is the People's National Movement. [*Crosstalk*]

11.15 p.m.

ECCE centres, the school feeding programme, which they are now talking about as if it is their own; new primary and secondary schools; textbook programme, many, many initiatives; school bus programme; new primary and secondary schools; expansion of the San Fernando hospital; hundreds of roads right across the country—I will not even talk about that, because almost every road you can see—a number of special purpose enterprises: CISL, RDC, that have provided infrastructure to a number of communities; proper dredging and maintenance of watercourses was being done. It is not being done now.

I see some effort late, being made in the Diego Martin area, and we are glad that has started, but we are not satisfied because by now our agencies should have learned. It has to be continuous, it has to be strategic. From the time the dry season kicks in, a programme of strategic intervention has to start. I am not seeing that. Our residents and citizens are not seeing that, and people are worried,

because every day I get calls, reports, photographs of drains that are not cleaned. Persons are saying our underground drains are still not cleaned; there is more work to be done.

So if agencies want to be fighting each other, and who gets the credit for what and so on, that is not my business. I “ent” business with that. What I need to see is proper effort, strategic effort and better safety for our citizens. It is as simple as that. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, it is a long list, but I would not even go through. I mentioned free tertiary education. Over 200,000 citizens benefited, mainly persons from the lower socio-economic sector in this country. The Higher Education Loan Programme; training programmes which they are now listing in their schedule of achievements: OJT, MuST, HYPE retraining programme; YTEPP; YAPA; GAPP; CCC; Women in Harmony; non-traditional skills training—again, over 200,000 mainly young people would have benefited.

GATE—of course, so many persons continue to testify how that has changed their lives and their families’ lives, but the Prime Minister wants to dismiss all of that and pretend the development of this country began in 2010. Nothing could be further from the truth—nothing could be further from the truth.

Increased tertiary enrolment from 12,000 to 55,000; expansion of the school feeding programme; chronic disease assistance programme; charitable cardiac surgery programme; free cataract operations; increase in grants right across the board—some of that was continued, but it was right across the board—dramatic increase in subsidies and subventions to NGOs in all parts of the country, various areas and constituencies; grants for home repairs; establishment of NEDCO and assistance for small business entrepreneurs; micro enterprise loan facilities; regional social development boards; women’s programmes in communities where single mothers and poor women from distressed areas can get some financial independence, some empowerment, some personal development.

What did the UNC give us? They met the women’s programme and we ended up with the LifeSport programme—polar worlds apart. One seeking to empower our women in our communities and the other seeking to empower gangsters, thugs and criminals. Where are we going, Mr. Speaker? Where are we going? Where is our money going? What is the philosophy here? I am not too sure.

Programme to decentralize our social services piloted, implementation began, the idea was to bring social sector workers, family case workers to every

neighbourhood in Trinidad and Tobago. That is vision that is lofty, and a programme of scholarships and incentives in the social sector to get us there. All of this was mapped out and planned. The Member for Caroni East has no clue about it, so he was able to just say well, there was no detail. Tremendous detail; tremendous intellectual and emotional and technical work went into these things. Where are we now? We have gone from an intent and programme and strategy to put a family caseworker in every neighbourhood, to a social sector and a Ministry of the People and Social Development in disarray, and I will talk a little bit more about that later on—in disarray.

So a social worker in every neighbourhood, no, but then we had a Minister who wanted to go in every living room on the television. That is what we ended up with; that was the replacement. That cannot work, it did not work, and we see where it has gotten us today.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I spent some time on this is to correct the perception the Prime Minister was trying to paint for the national community. And it is not to say that governments in the past have been perfect, certainly not, otherwise the PNM would not be in Opposition today. It was not a case of perfection, it was certainly a case of application of an attempt to help focus the country on development, to develop a vision of a better Trinidad and Tobago and to harness and channel a national effort in that direction.

This country longs for those days, for that effort and that kind of dedication. Whether it is UNC, PNM or whatever political party, people just want simple things in this country. They want shelter; they want safety; they want health care; they want opportunity for a job. They want fairness from their Government. That is really what people want, and they want to avoid the assault of scandal and greed and all these other things that they are getting when they turn on their television every single day. That is basically what people want; a Cabinet and an administration that they could tell their children, “Well, at least you can emulate this one or that one.” I am not sure what they are telling their children today.

This is not to say that the PNM administration was perfect; we are still learning; we are all learning. I certainly am learning as a young parliamentarian and politician. We learn as we go, we learn as we grow. I learnt some things last week as well from the population, and they teach us all the time. The population is teaching us stuff. We all have to learn that we have to respect the views of the population. We may not always agree, Member for Arima, but we have to respect

those views. We have to remember we are dealing with citizens, we are dealing with people, human beings. They are our people, they are Trinbagonians. They are not cattle; they are certainly not rats. [*Laughter*]

Miss Ramdial: Rats! Who said that?

Dr. A. Browne: They are not rats. Their views have to be respected. We may not always agree, because we bring different perspectives. I do not expect someone out there liming on the block in St. James right now to have the same perspective as the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central in his suit, talking in Parliament. It would not be the same, but I cannot disrespect that individual's view, just as I cannot disrespect the view of any colleague. It is as simple as that. So I just wanted to say that we will all have different perspectives.

The Prime Minister launched her general election campaign; but back to that theme that I heard earlier that no child would be left behind. I recall on March 14, 2014, I requested a matter of urgent public importance, which you, I believe quite rightly, referred under a different Standing Order. But, Mr. Speaker, I am no prophet, and I will not stand here and call myself a prophet at all, but there was some content in that particular submission. I just want to once again remind the House, because I am coming to a report that we are seeking to fund in this Bill, that is of relevance and concern to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

So on March 14, 2014, which was exactly two weeks after the death of a young citizen, the untimely death of a very young citizen, I brought to the House these words:

“...there has been an alarming epidemic of neglect and negligence”—and criminal conduct—”within the health sector which falls under the purview and responsibility of the Ministry of Health.”—this country—”continues to experience unacceptable levels of perinatal mortality, infant mortality, maternal mortality, injuries related to health care procedures, negative complications due to botched surgeries,”—flagrant—”exploitation of patients, and...criminal medical negligence”—that is politely referred to as medical error.

I had no \$10 million, no \$8 million, but those words proved to be prophetic, because the matter of Baby Simeon Cottle has now come to the fore once again, and it is very much in the public domain and in the media at this time.

The findings of that investigation panel are horrific in the extreme. These findings do not come in isolation, but they come in the aftermath of so many other

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[DR. BROWNE]

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untimely deaths, in the aftermath of very low public confidence in the Mount Hope Women's Hospital. That is a fact, and patients go to other institutions sometimes from even that community and complain and say, "We want to be admitted. I want to have my baby in Port of Spain or elsewhere," because of the low level of public confidence.

Unfortunately, I am forced to conclude that this report and its findings are not going to assist that institution; it is not going to assist the North-Central Regional Health Authority at all, because it really chronicles a disaster, a disaster not just that has resulted in pain, but in death, in untimely death.

The report chronicles a seven-centimetre deep laceration in the scalp, skull and brain of a new-born infant, at the hands of a medical practitioner.

Mr. Speaker, the report chronicles that it took three minutes. The doctor is described as a fast operator. If I am going for a surgery, I do not think I want a fast operator looking down at me with a scalpel. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I really wonder on reading this report, those who rushed to defend in those initial heady days, they must be regretting their actions now, one would hope. I am not going to go through all of the details, but I do have some observations to share.

The report also indicates that they were unable to identify a single similar case in the history of medical practice in Trinidad and Tobago. It has never happened before. Worse than that, this little country, they have been unable to identify a single similar case of this extent on planet earth. It has never happened before. It is not recorded in the medical literature. What have we done here?

The question that remains, even after reading this report: What were the particular circumstances? And this is where I have some very strong recommendations. What were the particular circumstances that led this young registrar to commit such a gross act of negligence? That is my question; and that question has yet to be answered. But I can tell you off the record, many people in our medical establishment know fully well what happened.

What really should have been done as an addition to this—and I am hoping the police get involved and conduct a continuous investigation, or a deeper investigation—is to trace back where some of the health care professionals involved in this worked previously and why they no longer work there. One of them worked at the Port of Spain General Hospital, and no longer worked at the Port of Spain General Hospital. Sometimes we transfer our issues without addressing the root problems.

Remember this was a Carnival Saturday morning. This was a Carnival Saturday. Part of the investigation should also investigate what the surgeon was doing prior to taking up duty; what he may have consumed; what he may have imbibed prior to taking up duty. That is what I am saying here, Mr. Speaker, right here on the record.

They examined the medical literature. They were unable to find any such case. Then the report goes on to chronicle—and this is also a horrific chapter in terms of the lack of procedures. There is no finite written or implied specific inter or intra departmental reporting structure within the medical team. There seems to be no real relationship between obstetrics and neonatology with respect to the joint care of patients. There is no matching of the level of experience or seniority in the responding doctor to the complexity or requirements of the situation at hand. There are also no factors that go into preparation for a high risk delivery, beyond physical preparedness. For example, no ensuring that blood is available—no ensuring that blood is available, Mr. Speaker?

11.30 p.m.

No protocols for managing small or tiny babies. No protocols for management of acute blood loss. No protocols for resuscitative procedure. No protocols for ensuring availability of blood. No protocols for safe infusion rates. No protocols for sodium bicarbonate versus normal saline. No protocols for temperature management. Medical record keeping was disastrous. All the infant's notes were retrospective. They wrote them after; wrote it in after, except for the nurses notes. The report did commend a number of the medical staff at that institution, and so that needs to be placed on record as well. All the infant's notes were retrospective. Notes continued to be added to the record on March 02—baby is already dead a day ago, notes continue to be added to the record. Even on March 05, 2014, notes being added to the record. No finite pronouncement of death. Mr. Speaker, this, after so many untimely deaths and a history of some poor outcomes at that institution and under that regional health authority.

Mr. Speaker, the report just gets worse and worse and worse and I have to say that my worst fears have been confirmed with these findings—my worst fears. I know a number of recommendations were made that the Minister of Health would be turning his attention to, but I have a recommendation myself, Mr. Speaker, given the finding of negligence and the very strong and forceful findings and report that has been presented. And given all the prior reports involving the health sector in general, and this institution in particular, which has been examined before, I now call on the Minister of Health to step up to the plate. I call on the Minister of Health to step up to the plate. The population is demanding accountability in matters like these. It cannot be a case of just one doctor on suspension after this atrocity. And my recommendation to this Minister, today, is to immediately dismiss the board of the North-Central Regional Health Authority. [Desk thumping] That is my recommendation. We have gone too far, Mr. Speaker. We have gone too far. We have gone too far. [Crosstalk] We have gone too far, Mr. Speaker.

So it has been referred to the medical board. I hope the Director of Public Prosecutions also gets involved with a police investigation now because there is a lot more to this story; and I have piece of that. There is a lot more to this story, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot more.

So it is not just a matter of an investigation, but the consequence—what happens after. And the Prime Minister again made heavy weather of the auditing, the fact that the LifeSport programme is being audited. And I got the impression she wants to get some congratulations or praise for that, Mr. Speaker. But the problem that is being audited and examined, happened under her watch, and under the watch of a Minister that she appointed, and she cannot get credit for that. That is really a discredit, and a dishonour to the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. And why, Mr. Speaker, are we being asked to approve an additional \$8.8 million for a programme that is under audit by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy? Can someone explain that to me? I heard the Minister say something very weak about “we asked to approve, but only after the audit the funds will be dispersed”. This is a Parliament. You cannot ask us to vote “yea” to something pending the result of an audit, and then when the audit is completed we will then trust the Cabinet— [Interruption]

Miss Mc Donald: No.

Dr. Dr. A. Browne:—to disburse or not disburse. That is not acceptable to me, Mr. Speaker. That is not acceptable to me, and I do not think that is a wise use of the Parliament or the taxpayers’ funds.

Mr. Speaker, maybe this Government could learn a little bit from FIFA because there was a biting incident recently in a football game. And you know what FIFA is examining right now to determine guilt or innocence? The video records of the game. And, Mr. Speaker, what is his name, Luis Suárez?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Luis Suárez. Yes.

Dr. A. Browne: So if Suárez were to dare tell FIFA, that is not him in the video, I wonder what they would tell him. But that is not acceptable in corrupt FIFA, apparently it is acceptable in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: There was no third party here.

Dr. A. Browne: I want to know who was the third party in the case with Cumuto/Manzanilla? But I am not going to dwell on that because I probably will be drawn into a whole other line.

Then Member for Caroni East tells us, “this is an open Government with full transparency”. I cannot concur with that. I cannot concur with that. And, Mr. Speaker, if this is the only programme being audited right now, this Government has some questions to answer because I have an article in my hand from the *Trinidad Express*, April 18, 2014 entitled: The “Govt is out of control”. It talks about:

“Bedlam reigned at the Himalaya Club, Barataria...”—and—“...hecklers...”—at a particular—“...public meeting...”, and it quotes someone by the name of Barrington Thomas who was an advisor to the Government, and I will quote from here, referring to Mr. Thomas:

“He spoke about wanting to tell the truth about the present Government and described the hecklers as... URP workers who had no choice but to show up at...”—“...the meeting...”

Thomas said, “The People’s Partnership is out of control”.

Mr. Speaker, I am quoting from someone who is currently a staff member—currently—as advisor in the Ministry of the People and Social Development. This is what he was saying just a few weeks ago. “

“The People’s Partnership is out of control...”

He called the names of some of his former colleagues describing some of them as incompetent and...”—well a very pejorative term referring to alcohol consumption. I am not going to reference it.

“He listed a number of projects that were supposed to be initiated by the Ministry of the People but which never got off the ground.”

There is another from the *Guardian*, April 23. Barrington Thomas:

“...on allegations of irregularities in ministry: It may be difficult to get documents.

He named an official of the company, alleging a \$4.3 million dollar payment was sought from the ministry to provide tents, and other items...he said he didn't want to be part of that. He claimed he'd photocopied 'every stub' the person had sent for.”

And then later on in the article they quote the Prime Minister.

“The”—Prime Minister—“has said she would enquire into the allegations of irregularities.” She would enquire into the allegations of irregularities.

Mr. Speaker, I have done my checks at the Ministry—but hold on, before we go there. There is another article, April 09, 2014.

The Prime Minister—this is the *Trinidad Express*.

“The Prime Minister and Minister of the People and Social Development, Kamla Persad-Bissessar last week instructed”—PS—“Simeon Yearwood to terminate the services of Andrew Boodoo,...”—from the Ministry—“...manager of the Inter Agency Unit...

His termination is with immediate effect. He received his letter...despite an ongoing investigation.”

You hear that? He was fired “despite an ongoing investigation”. Talking about this so-called transparency and accountability—“despite an ongoing investigation”, someone could be dismissed. Complete repudiation of what the Prime Minister said earlier today, and the excuses they have been making. Attempts to contact Boodoo were unsuccessful.

“The unit consists of representatives from the Ministry's Displacement Unit; mental health officers;”—et cetera.

“Sources say allegations of wrongdoing arose following investigations”—“‘recycling’ of homeless persons...

Sources within the Unit explained that on each occasion a person is picked up off the street and housed, this is a significant cost to the State.

The person is then returned to the street, only to be removed again.

...the State was paying double and in several cases triple for the removal of the same individual,..."

Mr. Speaker, this is the brainchild of somebody, you know. This is another LifeSport Programme—fully operational. So they got rid of this Mr. Boodoo while the investigation was going on, and there was a promise to do a review.

Mr. Speaker, no audit of this programme has been conducted to this date. Nothing! I have checked with the Ministry. There is no investigation taking place into this programme. The man long gone. The allegations made by the current advisor to the Minister in the Ministry of the People and Social Development still up and down with the Member for Tobago East in the Ministry, giving out cards and doing the other things they do there. Serious allegations, no audit, no investigation, no transparency, no accountability. But the Prime Minister selects this one programme because one of her Cabinet colleagues is under threat, and is beating her chest and is telling us “there is an audit and we need to wait on the results”. They have a very poor record when it comes to accountability to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, how much more time do I have?

Mr. Speaker: You are finishing at 11.56.

Dr. A. Browne: That is lots of time. Mr. Speaker, and then amazingly, the Member for Tabaquite chose to reference the issues of flooding in his contribution. And, Mr. Speaker, I could spend the next three hours, as I have done in the past in this Parliament, talking about flooding and my own experiences, over the last three to four years, in dealing with the floods in Diego Martin, which have been getting worse and worse every year. Mr. Speaker, I can inform this House about the poor resourcing of the drainage division of the Ministry of Water Resources and the Environment.

I could inform this House that the maintenance teams that were traditionally supported in that division when it fell under the Ministry of Works and Transport, under a People’s National Movement Government, those maintenance teams have fallen into abeyance, the vast majority of them. This division is starved and under-resourced. There is reliance on contractors and contracting and, you know, I see a new pattern has gone on in the Diego Martin area, Mr. Speaker, and it is an insult to the environment, where these contractors and other staff come in and they are mandated to clean a river or a watercourse. You know what they are doing now, in the dry season this was done, a couple weeks ago, lighting a fire to burn the greenery in the river; to burn the bushes and overgrowth, and then coming and

doing an easy sort of clean up because it is easier then. I spoke to some of them. Absolute madness! Putting homes and houses at threat. I am certain, I am hoping the Member for Couva North would be aware of this because it is now a common practice.

Hon. Member: I will look into that, Member.

Dr. A. Browne: Please do because that is a new pattern that we are seeing now, and the residents are horrified. Yes, they are happy that some of the rivers are being cleaned, but that is not the way to do it. There is a proper way, there is a lazy and dangerous way which is damaging to the environment, and it is going to do more harm than good; that is certainly not the way. That is certainly not the way, Mr. Speaker.

All of the recommendations that I made the last time in the budget debate on mitigation of flooding, none of them have been implemented by this Government. There has been no flood alarm implemented in any of the Valley areas. No one has been charged for dumping and littering in those communities. There is no forest ranger activity to protect those hillsides. There is no drainage study that has been implemented, after it was promised by the Prime Minister and Minister Ganga Singh, and they are yet to tell us when this drainage study would be done. And that is the record. That is the record, Madam Prime Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker. That is the record of this Government. And here we are again, the rains are falling and there is just this back and forth between the agencies.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Tabaquite, I was very pleasantly surprised when he apologized to the residents of the western peninsula for what happened over the course of the last week in that Cocorite stretch. I mean, the traffic was horrendous. I called the Minister, he did respond with information. I was not happy to hear that information at all, that they would scrape the surface off a highway, causing a depression and lots of traffic and then discover they had no bitumen to pave it. So after the scraping has been done, there are days and days of traffic, including during the work week, and then the Minister stepped in and ensured that it was paved. So, I was very pleasantly surprised that he apologized, and on their behalf I just want to acknowledge that apology.

While we have his ear, we are also requesting, once again, a walkover for the residents of Phase 1, Powder Magazine, who will now have an even wider highway to skip and jump across to get to the other side.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of residual issues in the community, one falling under the purview of the Ministry of Sport and the Sport Company. There

was an exchange to develop a sporting recreation ground in Harding Place in Cocorite. An exchange of a parcel of land with the Seventh Day Adventist Church of Cocorite, and that is now ending up in court—that is not necessary if the Minister and the Sport Company would put some more attention and bring a spirit of flexibility and negotiation to the table. That exchange can be facilitated properly. The church can get the property that they are seeking, and the State can be able to provide to the community the grounds that are so desperately needed in that part of Cocorite.

11.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me on June 25, 2014, to end this contribution without reporting to this House, there is an epidemic, an infestation of mosquitoes in western Trinidad—

Hon. Member: Yes, all over.

Dr. A. Browne:—and I am discovering elsewhere as well. I could speak about Diego Martin, a complete infestation. And it boggled my mind when I heard colleague, Minister of Health and Member for Barataria/San Juan, tell Trinidad and Tobago that we are ready for Chikungunya.

Minister, how could we be ready for Chikungunya if we are inundated and besieged by mosquitoes, including the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquitoes? So, yes, there is domestic responsibility and household responsibility. I acknowledge that every time I speak about this issue, but we cannot be fooling the population in that manner and I would want to again recommend an immediate, very, very aggressive ramped up programme of spraying, household visits, inspections, support for residents—

Miss Ramdial: You need to bring back aerial spraying.

Dr. A. Browne: Definitely, definitely. You see, the Member for Couva North is thinking on the fly here, but we would want this to be done properly, and citizens to feel some relief and benefit. So, that is a crisis right now. Mosquitoes are killing our people. The Government has all of these resources coming through, asking for \$3.8 billion more, the least you can do is to respond on behalf of the citizens.

I just have a few more that I want to touch on, Mr. Speaker. One that I hold very dearly, because I am speaking on behalf of constituents and thinking persons in Trinidad and Tobago who have recognized that we have a problem. Where is the Minister of National Security? We have a problem with the recent increase in police-related shootings. There is a problem.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be one of those public officials who will stand here and attack the police or pretend that everyone who is shot is innocent, or holy, or a saint, because that is not the case. Sometimes when you listen to the news you get that impression. That is not the case. Because I speak to some of these police officers, they are under heavy, heavy pressure. They are out there, many of them do not have proper equipment, they do not have flak jackets and bulletproof vests in many cases, but their lives are on the line.

So they are under pressure and we have to understand that, and they are being asked to produce results, not just by the Government but also by the same citizens, but sometimes when they intervene forcefully they are vilified and stigmatized and people are quick to burn tyres and so on, and again it tells me that there is a lack of process. The public is not comfortable that when these incidents occur, there is a transparent process that can be initiated to let us know very clearly and simply, a matter of fact, whether this was a lawful slaying or not.

In the United States, in many of these states and police departments there is an automatic shooting review board or shooting review panel that is initiated—automatic—involving sometimes members of the community. Anytime an officer shoots an individual/perpetrator, whether it is responding to a robbery, whatever the circumstance, this panel is convened, the facts of the matter are determined and a report is given to the public, a press release, a press conference; people are told what transpired. And this is not only with deaths, when someone is injured and ends up in the hospital as a result of any police intervention there is a review. If proper attention is given to process in this country, we would have more trust. But when there is no process you cannot expect there to be trust, and I am saying there is a paucity of process when it comes to the tentacles of this particular Government, Mr. Speaker.

So, the Prime Minister stood up here today and she really triggered my intervention. She stood up here today and boasted and started to talk about the UNC and the UNC, and what they have been doing, but I do not think she painted an accurate picture for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. It is my respectful view that this Government has been doing a very poor job on behalf of our citizens. It is my view that every sector is failing in this country, and most importantly, the level of trust that the population would wish to experience simply is not there.

We see people begging for houses, debasing themselves for houses, sometimes in the “most sad” way for houses, and the Government is not building any and they are not even delivering the ones that have been built already. We see

a health sector that is—well, we have the report—in a state of decay; we see child protection that has made no progress whatsoever, despite all their huffing and puffing while they were in Opposition, they met a good foundation that I could testify to and did very little with that. We see child marriages. We are one of the few countries in this hemisphere where child marriages are still flourishing. What is that? That is a taboo issue, we cannot talk about it.

The Member for Moruga/Tableland said that they would have further discussions with the religious bodies and whatever, well, it is time now. Where have those discussions gotten us? I attend international conferences sometimes and we are pilloried and vilified. Trinidad and Tobago, what are you all doing marrying off underage children? What are you all doing? We need to hear from the Minister on this. Where are we going on that? What is the Government's policy? Stop hiding on that particular matter.

Crime and murders are on the scene every day and we get the impression that the Ministers of Government are not focusing on the citizens or on policy development. A set of crosstalk and personal references and attacks, that does not benefit any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. And as I said before, Mr. Speaker, our citizens are not asking for much. They are just asking for the basic things and fairness and attention from the Government. They are asking for transparency and accountability with regard to every dollar, every billion, far less for \$3.8 billion.

They are asking to be able to see some of their investment of their tax dollars as opposed to all the old talk the UNC simply throws around. They are asking for an administration that cares. They are not asking for much, but the little that they are asking for is not being delivered by the current Government in power.

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

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol Mc Leod): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the next eight minutes I should be saying to you, good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central, whose contributions I always listen to, I like his articulation, but quite often, he allows himself to slip into a great measure of indiscretion. The Member alluded to, among other things, two important issues which he considered to be with a developmental thrust by the last administration. Those two issues, I thought I might make a response to. The one has to do with refinery upgrade, and I suspect that it is because of the Member's lack of knowledge of the refinery processes and what is necessary in

that sector that he allowed himself to slip, as he did slip, into pointing out the refinery upgrade as a development issue, which really, by itself, it is. It ought to be.

What we have, what we still have—of course, there has been some improvement at very great expenditure and even greater cost overruns. We have an old refinery, really, which was first configured to process 365,000 barrels per day. That was when it was foreign owned and when it depended largely on imported crude. It still does depend to a great extent on imported crude, notwithstanding the amount of work that we would have done in exploration and production activities over the years. But as the multinational reorganized its business, the refinery at Pointe-a-Pierre became less important to them than it continues to be important to Trinidad and Tobago, so that we were forced to engage in a reorganization, restructuring of the refinery, and I think we are now down to a throughput capacity of 160/180 perhaps, maybe 200 barrels per day.

And it was necessary to upgrade the refinery so that you get down deeper in the barrel—and this is how the oil talk goes—you get deeper to the bottom of the barrel so that you can have more lighter ends and less fuel oil. The residue from your operations used to be about 40 per cent of the barrel. That is a substantial portion of the barrel, and that residue ends up being valued at less than the barrel of crude oil that would have gone into the process, if you get my drift.

So, you have, let us say, \$100 per barrel, 45 American or imperial gallons, I think, it would have measured, whichever one. You put that through the process and you get what? Three-fifths in higher value ends and two-fifths remain at a value that is less than it would have been before it was processed. So, it was necessary to do that. But the way that they went about it was not so much to provide us with a more efficient refinery, with higher yields, thereby making it more viable and more cost effective for Trinidad and Tobago, but there were contracts, some of them open ended contracts; there were deals, all kinds of deals that made the refinery become even more expensive than it would have been before any attempt was made at upgrade. And I put the upgrade that I am talking about, Mr. Speaker, as being separate from the ridiculous expenditure that was incurred in the gas to liquids business, that has really ended up as scrap iron and so on.

12.00 midnight

I thought that I might say that. A lot more can be said about that, but I do not think that I want to spend more time on that issue. I mean, it has been ventilated on a couple of occasions well before.

The next issue that the Member raised is with NEDCO, the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited. I think, Mr. Speaker, indeed, this side of the House continues to believe, continues to think that it was an excellent approach to developing an entrepreneurial spirit among our people and providing us with opportunities to become, not just small and micro enterprise people, but to have us do that with as wide an expanse of knowledge as possible in business development, and so on. And it is a programme that we continue to finance, except that when this programme came into being in 2002, it was not so much to develop an entrepreneurial spirit among our people, as it was an attempt to provide for slush funding.

Indeed, NEDCO was capitalized with \$40 million in 2002, and all of that money, Mr. Speaker, was invested in buying votes in the election of 2002. That is what happened. And I will come back to it in a minute.

At our committee stage on Monday, I think it was, when we dealt with this Finance Bill, some questions were asked, and the Minister of Finance and the Economy asked that Ministers respond to such questions as pertained to their particular portfolio. One of the questions asked had to do with NEDCO's operating costs and how we might detail the loans that we have provided for in the supplementary funds, and I thought that I might respond to those questions.

NEDCO requested an increased subvention to facilitate loan disbursement for the fiscal period 2013/2014 in the sum of \$15 million. A small sum. NEDCO's projected operating expenses for the rest of the fiscal period, June to September 2013/2014, is \$9.8 million, and its projected loan disbursement for the same period is \$12.8 million. Small money, Mr. Speaker. The projected operating expenses and loan disbursement amounts to \$22.6 million, and I think the question was asked by the Member for Laventille West. NEDCO's projected collections for fiscal period 2013/2014, is \$7.6 million. Therefore, the additional funding of \$15 million is necessary to facilitate NEDCO's operations.

You will note, Mr. Speaker, that most of the requested \$15 million will be allocated for new lending with only \$2.2 million targeted for operating expenses, which include: personal expenses, rental and occupancy expenses and other administrative expenses—such as advertising, building maintenance, janitorial expenses, telephone, e TecK training centres and so on.

In 2012, the Board of Directors approved a new strategic plan for NEDCO which placed greater emphasis on portfolio quality management, improved entrepreneurial development services and operational strengthening. In terms of

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operational strengthening, a new organizational structure was approved which provided for a stronger leadership at the executive level. The executive management team now consists of the chief executive officer at the head, with new positions for chief operations officer; chief financial officer; internal auditor; executive manager, legal and corporate services; executive manager, finance and risk; marketing and corporate communications manager.

And NEDCO is implementing, Mr. Speaker, its strategic plan, and is currently focusing on transforming its operations into a more effective and efficient operation utilizing value-driven management strategies, improving client services and working toward achieving self-sustainability. It is a long road that we have been walking in that regard.

NEDCO's total loan portfolio is \$112 million, approximately, of which 81 per cent is in a non-performing status. And this particular question, about non-performing loans, was raised by the Member for Diego Martin North/East. So 81 per cent of our loan portfolio of \$112 million, approximately, 81 per cent of that is non-performing loans.

However, and I think this is the question really, and the question was, a report on the non-performing loans 2013/2014—in 2013/2014, 8 per cent or \$9.2 million is identified as loans with a non-performing status—and that is, loans that were disbursed after 2010. That is for the period 2013/2014.

But what is the history, Mr. Speaker? I alluded to what was done in 2002 and what continued until 2010 when we came into office. It was worse than a free-for-all. Indeed, it had become very fashionable, and I use the word “fashionable” quite deliberately, it had become very fashionable for persons to go to NEDCO's office if a messenger was not sent from NEDCO's office to the person's residence to disburse loans. Loans, when we check the records, and, Mr. Speaker, the discipline that must be applied to this issue is such that I will not breach that discipline, so I would not call names of persons. I would not do that.

Miss Mc Donald: Call mine.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: No, I would not do that to you either. We will fight here, but there are some disciplines to which I subscribe, and that I will always be faithful to—[*Crosstalk and laughter*] Hear this, to a particular person, as discussed:

Attached the following for the attention of your line Minister. Advise me when it is received.

This was March 31, 2010. Elections in the air.

Miss Mc Donald: Those are loans you are talking about?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Please have an appropriate Cabinet Note prepared urgently.

And there are the initials of the line Minister, April 17, 2010. When was the election declared? It was held on May 24, but when it was declared?

Miss Mc Donald: Could I ask a question, Minister? Are they loans?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yeah.

Miss Mc Donald: Are they being repaid?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Well, I am coming to that, I am dealing with that. And the ceilings, ceilings were raised by way of a Cabinet Note, yes? One of those ceilings moved from \$50,000 to \$250,000, yes? And a number of people benefited from such loans, and the records will hardly show appropriate applications being submitted and evaluations being done, and so on, and so on.

So when one is faced with this kind of situation, it makes you feel to puke sometimes. When self-righteous people get up and paint the PNM as having been the best thing after sliced bread, I suspect that they would have been talking certainly about the period after Williams. So 81 per cent of all of the loans prior to 2010 are in the non-performing category. And you had a cultural Senator who was the person that would normally make the arrangement. A cultural Senator does not miss a cultural activity. [*Crosstalk*]

12.15 a.m.

I have records, Mr. Speaker, of three loans that were issued in August 2002, that were significantly above the stipulated lending limit of \$30,000 at that time. It used to be \$30,000. It is for small business, and this loan appears to be a special arrangement, as their records do not show the normal loan application process.

NEDCO's operational cost averaged around \$2.2 million to \$2.3 million annually since 2008, and we have struggled—yes, we have struggled—to successfully maintain that expenditure level over the past four years. For the period 2010 to 2014, a total of 1,688 loans were disbursed to small and micro enterprises throughout Trinidad and Tobago, at a value of \$60,532,149 and as I indicated earlier, \$9,225,026 of that total for this period are non-performing.

So we have work to do for that period, 2010 to the present time, and I am informed that the board and executive management are working assiduously. Some legal approaches are also being considered. Some of the persons prior to 2010 with non-performing loans, I am advised, cannot be found. As indicated earlier, NEDCO's strategic plan includes a focus on transforming the company's operating systems, and in this regard, through the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, NEDCO received support from a transformation consultant from the European Union, and it was funded through the 10th European Development Fund to establish more efficient systems for loan appraisals, client business advisory services and training, as well as it developed a more effective reporting for the company. Systems have been established to improve NEDCO's operations.

Loans provided by NEDCO are all consistent with the company's objective of stimulating entrepreneurship development. While there is an emphasis on the sectors targeted in the *Medium-Term Planning Framework*, the company lends to all entrepreneurs whose business idea is viable. You do not come to NEDCO today and say, "Well I am UNC", "I am People's Partnership, I walked with you in the elections and I have an idea and I want a loan". You are not considered on that basis. Indeed, the position that I continue to hold, a position that was expressed in 2011 while I still held responsibility for the URP, was that I did not want to know where you have come from, what your affiliation is. You are unemployed, you are unskilled, you cannot get a job, you have an opportunity to work in the URP.

There are those who did not like it, and there are those who supported it as a principle that was decent and so on. So, similarly, with NEDCO you must have an idea, it must be a viable idea, you must be serious about it and you must have a plan worked out as to how you are going to service the loan that is extended to you so that you can grow the business.

Some 85 per cent of registered businesses in Trinidad and Tobago are small and micro enterprises, so it is a most important sector, and we are talking at the level of the ILO, we are talking at the level of the United Nations, indeed, about transforming from the informal to the formal sector, so that we can properly advance the notion of decent work—decent work being work that is productive, work that recognizes the workers' rights, work that promotes the enhancement, really, of people's lives and so on, work that is safe, work that is legal, and all of that, and Trinidad and Tobago subscribes to all of this and we will not be preaching one thing at that level and practising something else on home ground.

So NEDCO is a very important strategic player in our Ministry's effort to promote MSE development. To support economic diversification, it is necessary for us to get MSE development to play a more important role as entrepreneurship development and innovation are key aspects in the promotion of economic diversification.

Allow me an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to highlight some recent and ongoing initiatives. Now, we established—we implemented in August 2011, the National Integrated Business Incubator System to provide entrepreneurial development to micro and small enterprises, and we graduated 61 candidates in the pre-incubator training. Now, it is a facility that provides training; it provides seed money and so on. So we graduated 61 candidates who had gone through the pre-incubator training. An additional 52 candidates are in the final stages of training in the communities of Diego Martin, Carenage, Couva and Chaguanas.

Previous graduates were from Point Fortin, Laventille, San Juan, Barataria, Sangre Grande and Penal/Siparia. We go to those areas that need this the most. Mentoring, business space and financial support have been provided for 41 of the 61 graduates of the IBIS Programme to date. Twenty-five of the IBIS graduates have established new businesses and the programme has supported businesses in areas such as waste management, agro-processing, forestry and fisheries, fashion, health and wellness and information technology. Other graduates of the IBIS Programme had existing businesses and as a result of the programme, have been able to improve their own operations of their businesses.

But we want to go beyond that. So you have a small business, you went through the programme, you are running the business properly and so on, you are more enlightened now—you are better enlightened—you are thinking expansion, but you do not have the capital to get into the kind of expansion that you want to do. So we established the FairShare Programme, and at present, under the FairShare Programme, 18 ministries and 13 state agencies are participating in this programme. We have written all ministries. We are assisting the small business entrepreneur to access business in Government ministries and state agencies.

Registered MSEs—that is micro and small enterprises—have unparalleled access to Government procurement and revenue-generating opportunities. To date, under the FairShare Programme, the Ministry issued a total of 825 certificates, 802 of them are full certificates, and 23 are provisional certificates. And we have approximately 400 at various stages of being certified. These MSEs are marketing and selling their goods and services through the FairShare

Programme. And they access up to \$1 million worth of business with Government agencies and ministries and so on. And all of this would have contributed to our being able to boast, if you wish, that we have an unemployment rate of 3.7 per cent. To date, under the FairShare Programme, there are 825 with full certificates, and there are some 400 at various stages of being certificated.

The Ministry's National Employment Service—this one deals with job placement. To date, the Ministry's National Employment Service has placed over 2,300 persons in both the private and the public sectors. The NES is also placing people. They bring their CVs and so on, and we send it to the NES. The NES does a matching process. They are in with the private sector and so on, and people are being placed. The NES website was redesigned to make it easier for job seekers and employers to register and upload their particulars.

For the period 2010 to September 2013, approximately 3,873 persons were employed in the Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Programme. Under this programme, nationals earned, and perhaps remitted, approximately \$216,411,809.60. These are 1,040 persons whom we have employed on Canadian farms through this Commonwealth Agricultural Programme. One thousand and forty persons are there as we speak.

There is another unit. Now, prior to coming to this Ministry as Minister, I went to the Ministry of Labour regularly for the settlement of disputes and so on, in my trade union incarnation—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Your professional career.

Dr. Rambachan: You are fulfilling your karma.

Hon. E. McLeod:—and I did not know that the Ministry of Labour was such a big Ministry. I mean, compared with other Ministries it is small, but its area of operations, its sphere of influence and so on, one might say, it is quite big.

12.30 a.m.

You have the Labour Inspectorate Unit. The staff of the Labour Inspectorate Unit, Mr. Speaker, has been working assiduously to recover arrears owing to workers. You have a number of workers, unrepresented workers, who are cheated quite often by some employers who refuse to effect the legislated minimum wage, who refuse to pay workers as they go off on maternity leave and so on, and some of them, they leave on maternity leave and they could not come back to their jobs.

Mr. Cadiz: They fire them.

Hon. E. McLeod: Yes. So these people in the Labour Inspectorate, they go to different employers as they receive complaints as to the injustices done to these workers, and this unit of the Ministry has been instrumental in the collection of an outstanding \$1,793,125 that was owed to workers over the period May 2010 to September 2012, and I just was a little bit too busy to get the numbers from 2012 to the present time. I am advised that no attempts were made. Previous to our coming in there, attempts were not being made at all to collect outstanding sums owed to workers.

You see, the Ministry's workers and officials realized that this is a new dispensation and people buckled their belts, and unlike somebody who had gone before us, they kept their zippers up. I understand former Prime Minister, Member for San Fernando East, had had to reprimand somebody, advising him that he should keep his zipper up. Pull up your zipper.

Miss Mc Donald: I do not know anything about that.

Hon. E. McLeod: Well, he did not tell you that.

Miss Mc Donald: He told you?

Hon. E. McLeod: In September 2013, Cabinet approved the development of a national labour inspection policy as a key component for the administration of labour. The Ministry commenced work in the development of the policy which would set standards for the conduct of inspections, and facilitate greater adherence and compliance with labour laws.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the Prime Minister had said a little more than I had prepared to say on our settlements of disputes, collective agreements. I would just like to add that these settlements—83 of them—were effected by the superintendency—I like to use that word—of both the Office of the CPO and the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. Tremendously good work, Mr. Speaker, was done. I remember when the first report on our progress was made it was 37 agreements that we had settled, and the next time we spoke about it we were talking 57 agreements, and the next time it was 63, and the next time it was 68, and a couple months ago it was 75. Today, we are saying 83. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, somebody who has now fully established himself as an antagonist questioned the change in the numbers, “but one minute they say 60, the next minute they say 70-something” and so on. Well, the numbers have been changing

because we have been working. That is all. [*Desk thumping*] We have, I think, about four agreements that are not yet settled. One of them referred to the Industrial Court. Well, I do not think that any of us said that the absolute number of agreements to be settled is 83. There are more to be settled. Some of them have gone to the court because the conciliation process failed to get parties to come together. Sometimes parties both from the employers and from the unions, they become so recalcitrant, Mr. Speaker, that they make the process difficult, and the more they refuse to see themselves as having joint responsibility for the workers as they must have for the business, and it is always a shooting across the bow and people not wanting to talk with each other.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and let me hasten to the chase. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, Mr. Speaker. You know, the world has changed. The world has changed, and those of us who refuse to accept that the world has changed will remain behind for a long time. We are no longer in the days of hard-nosed ideological "badjohnism".

The world has shifted, Mr. Speaker—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—to being more pragmatic than we would have been. I heard yesterday—was it yesterday or earlier today? We were not here yesterday.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, 40 minutes ago was yesterday.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East talking about his days as a trade unionist, and I would have never believed that the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East was a fierce shop steward, you know. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Imbert: I was rough. Three strikes when I was general secretary.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: I could not believe it.

Mr. Imbert: Former general secretary.

Hon. E. McLeod: General secretary. And I mean, look at how conservative he is now.

Mr. Imbert: What? It shows more intellectual [*Inaudible*]. I can adapt. [*Laughter*]

Hon. E. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I am making the point—I mean, for those who perhaps did not understand it, for those who perhaps never heard about it, I think I studied it a little bit and there was the Cold War. It was really, really cold. I mean it was so chilly and then you moved from that when it started to thaw, there was Glasnost and Perestroika, and there was the fall of the curtain and serious difficulties between east and west started to become less difficult.

I do not know that it is so much a case of people having abandoned principles to which they subscribed previously, but people are seeing the world is changing and the people in their communities all over are themselves recognizing the changes that are taking place, and you had technology bombarding us all of the time with information which would have taken two years to reach here, however many years ago, and it will continue to change. We must recognize, Mr. Speaker—and this is the point that I was attempting to make on May 24, a point which seems to have aroused the latent hate, animosity. I wonder if I should use a word like that. I mean, a word like that had been used as another Member of this House was described. I better not use that word, hate and “badjohnism” and “wajang” and so on. I do not want to use those words, Mr. Speaker.

I was trying to establish, Mr. Speaker, that there has to be respect on both sides of the fence. You know, I had been in some fierce battles myself, but I always maintained a line of communication with the leader of the other side. You have to talk because there are workers inside your business, workers for whom I have a responsibility, and you also have a responsibility for them because they are your workers, they are my members. You have to talk. Even as you effect strike action, Mr. Speaker, you have to talk.

12.45 a.m.

When someone comes and says, “I am not moving”. Well, you are going to stand there alone? Would the other side come to meet you? Are you sure that yours is such a position that you are so right that in the greater interest, you are not going to move? No, man, think about it. But when you say that you are resolute in your position—and I was responding essentially to what the Minister of Works and Infrastructure raised—please, please, do not interfere with my thinking, again. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, I attended a function hosted by the Occupational Safety and Health Authority at Queen's Hall and some workers came outside there. They were demonstrating, they were protesting and, well, I thought that workers will take any opportunity that they get if they have something that is bothering them. It was not the union from which I came but there was a member of the union, from which I came, who was among them wearing union blue and with a placard that said, "Errol McLeod, fix workers business".

Now, it is a worker whom—and I am not being reproachful, Mr. Speaker, God forbid—I personally helped. Quite apart from negotiating rates of pay and terms and conditions and so on, it is a worker who was a little bit backward, and you would give him things to read, and then you will meet and discuss with him and so on, to build him in his own job. I say, "I wonder if he could read what he has on that", and I realized that I should not have said that. The worker has since met me and apologized. I said, "That is all right".

But some time, a couple of weeks ago, in response to what I said on the 24 at Mid Centre Mall, there was a demonstration outside of my office about—I checked 32 people and I even suggested that when I used to play "bush whe whe", I would have told them what 32 was [*Laughter and crosstalk*] and there was a placard that said, "Errol K. McLeod, sell-out". I say, but what the hell is this. What am I selling out?

Miss Hospedales: Is that parliamentary?

Hon. E. McLeod: What? You mean sell-out?

Mr. Imbert: He is talking about himself. Nothing "eh" wrong with that. [*Laughter*] You cannot be unparliamentary about yourself. [*Laughter*]

Hon. E. McLeod: "Not me yuh talking about?" [*Laughter*]

Mr. Imbert: The placard is about you.

Hon. E. McLeod: I will talk to you. Remember you used to be a general secretary, eh.

Yeah, Mr. Speaker, and when I enquired, it was a response to what I said and I am going to tell the House what I said, and I am going to explain too what I meant, because I think it is very important. But, let me just step back a little bit and suggest that I have been forced to put two and two together and I recognize now where this is really coming from.

Do you remember, Mr. Speaker, that I had retired after 21 years of leadership of the OWTU? I was not pushed out. I did not see any apparent candidate wanting to contest the position, but I thought that I had spent 37, maybe 38 years, doing this thing; 21 of which were top leadership. And I might say to the House, the position of President General of the Oilfields Workers' Trade Union is a very powerful position in this country; it is. The more powerful your position is, the more responsible you ought to be. That is my training, that is my belief.

I decided that it was time for me to ride out into the sunset, they say. I was ready to do it in 2004. Why? I had been up and down this country negotiating and re-negotiating, quite apart or in addition to wages and so on, doing pensions. I remember—and I have very little time left. I remember 1983, when Lloyd Austin, the General Manager of Texaco decided to retrench all of the people with short service. You know, a retrenchment would normally be done on the basis of last come, first go. So, all these people with service up to 10 years, and they are the younger people, they got these notices, and they were all gathered near the medical centre, Guaracara Park. And President General Weekes called me, come, we have a crisis in Pointe-a-Pierre and I went with him. I thought that I dealt, more than comrade Weekes would have dealt, with the younger people, because I was part of that too.

He started to talk with them in his usual way and they did not want to hear that, so I went in front and I told them, “Well, listen, we are going to respond to this now. Give me all of your letters”. And I collected all of those letters. They had about 400, 500 of them and these are only the ones in Pointe-a-Pierre, we did not get those from the fields coming up yet. And we marched to the admin building and we collapsed the gate when they locked the gate with some big chain and I never see chain bust like that and we handed those letters back to the management of the company, and the company was forced to meet with the executive of the union to decide this issue.

And our argument was that we could not be sending home these young people to join so many other young people who are unemployed. Today, it is difficult for any young person to say that he could not be in some programme to help himself. Then, it was a horse of a different colour. The company was made to reduce the retirement age from 65 to 60, so that young people have an opportunity. So—and I remember the famous words, we said that “you do not trim the hedge at the bottom, you trim the hedge at the top”, and that is how the retirement age in oil, in energy, really came down to age 60. So, having gone and negotiated all of these plans, age 60, I thought that I needed myself to exit at that age which I acquired in

2004. But I was told by some people, well respected in the national community, “I do not think you should go yet you know” and I consulted with people and so on and say, “No, no”, so I held on, and in 2008, I said, this is it, I am gone and I was asked to come in 2010.

Now, I was a founding member of a little organization that we later named MSJ, and I would have gone to meetings every now and then, I am in retirement, you see. And they called me and said, “Well, this is what is presented to us” and so on and “we want to get involved and you have to be the man” and I resisted it, but after a whole lot of consultation and so on, okay, fine, but I laid down certain rules. I laid down rules and I thought that we needed to clarify exactly where we are going, who—now, the trade union is not a political party. The trade union, having members from all different political walks, could not itself be a political party, so that this person here, Errol K. McLeod, is not going to be controlled by any leader of any union as much as the union would be expected to support the political party.

Well, it seems that people had other designs, but let me just step back a little bit again and indicate—and I am saying this for the record quite deliberately. I decided, Mr. Speaker—I was able-bodied and I could have gone on, but I decided that one of the ways in which you preserve and promote your heroes is that you do not try to run a longer race than they did. George Weekes retired after 25 years as President General and I decided that I am going nowhere near there, because I still see George Weekes as having been the best trade union President General in the entire Caribbean, and I want to continue to feel that way.

1.00 a.m.

Remember the state of emergency, August 2011. Well, I was hauled over the coals, Mr. Speaker, and I am saying this for the first time. How could you agree with a state of national emergency without first coming and discussing it with us? I said: “but do I come and discuss with any unit that the Cabinet has decided on a state of emergency and the unit then gives me instructions as to what to say?” I said: “that is not how it happens. That is not how it happens.” Then I was told: “yuh should cuss dem and walk out.” My discipline, my training, will not allow me to so behave, will not.

And then, in 2000— even before that, I was going home and over the radio I heard the voice of somebody with whom I would have been familiar in the trade union thing, was talking at a meeting of electricity workers, mobilizing. Their negotiations were not going anywhere, and what I heard suggested to me that

some workers were going to engage in a kind of action that is not allowed under the Industrial Relations Act. You know electricity is an essential service. So, when I got back to the office the next day I called in my conciliators, and so on. What is the situation here? “Thing, thing, thing.”

The matter had not yet been reported to the Minister but you know that under the law the Minister could deem a report to have been made to him and I called that one in, because I wanted to save this country from any untoward situation taking place and I wanted to save the workers, because I suspected that they were being ill-advised and I called them. I called the management, conciliation, and so on. We did not succeed because even I was not agreeing with any 5 per cent offer. But the Minister of Labour does not impose a position on the parties. He will try to get the parties to agree.

Indeed, the position that the management was putting up had a configuration of two/three aspects which, when I distilled them, were pointing to 8 per cent and I thought that we were well in the area of coming to an agreement between eight and 11. Parties do not agree, matter sent to the court. “You finish with me, Mr. Speaker?”

Mr. Speaker: No, four minutes more.

Hon. E. McLeod: Okay. I then realized how deep the anger was. I should have left that matter to ferment and to fester and there would have been certain things happening.

I decided that, for Trinidad and Tobago, nothing else and nobody else will have me take a position that will render so many of us in difficult situations, while others, because of their lack of understanding or otherwise, might be in some backroom grinning.

Then came the Petrotrin negotiations and on March 17, or February, there was strike action, impending strike action and I called parties together. One party did not want to meet anywhere else but in Port of Spain. I said: “no, we would meet in San Fernando” because I knew what was being planned for Port of Spain. We met in San Fernando. Sat down with them for 17 hours and broke the neck of 16 per cent on one side, 5 per cent on the other and settled at nine. Now, the strike was going to begin on Carnival Saturday. I mean, struggle knows no season, but as Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, I have to put struggle in particular seasons, in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] To take strike action in oil for carnival is to spoil the carnival, to spoil oil and Petrotrin has been on the brink. Had to be careful about that. So, Mr.

Speaker, I was trying to establish that strong relationships will settle almost any dispute as I was able to save the job of the President General of the Oilfields Workers' Trade Union.

In 1999, as a foreman in compressors, a worker was injured because the worker was sent into the belly of the compressor to see whether any tools were left there and the shut out system had not been properly effected—foreman is a supervisor—and the compressor was started with the man inside the cooler box. The man could have been fatally injured. The lawyers were called in. They did their investigation and the worker, the foreman, was going to be dismissed. I worked in the industry and I know the standards that we must subscribe to, especially when it comes to health and safety. I talk about that and the hairs on my head raise, whatever hairs I have remaining. Yes? That is a serious thing, Mr. Speaker. And the injured worker was told: “do not say anything, do not report this thing.” That is another violation. You report near misses and every accident.

Sometime after the injured worker was given \$300.

Mr. Imbert: Time up.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: They were going to dismiss him, except that I spoke with the acting Chief Executive Officer and said: “send that worker to my office and give me an opportunity to discipline him.” I kept that worker, paying him his rate that he would have received as a foreman for six months in my office and that is why he is continuing to be employed today.

Mr. Speaker, I will say more about that at another time. Thank you very much.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have even seen a Member get stoppage time, maybe it is the World Cup.

Mr. Mc Leod: Give me five minutes of your time?

Mr. C. Imbert: You got an extra minute. You know that thing they put up, it has the name Hublot at the bottom, one minute, two minutes? You got one minute injury time.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, I rise at nine minutes past one and 28 seconds in the morning, in the defence of the public interest, while members of the Salaries Review Commission and commentators such as Martin Daly SC, Reginald Dumas, retired ambassador and the American Chamber of Commerce, of all organizations, are safely tucked away in their beds, dreaming blissfully about the

next swipe they will take at us hapless parliamentarians while we all do the people's business in this Parliament at one o'clock in the morning, but I am not discouraged, because in spite of their inexcusable behaviour, I am of the view that the work that we all do here is important, even if they do not. So I have no difficulty speaking at 10 past one in the morning, in defence of the public interest.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development just regaled us for 76 minutes with stories of his exploits in his youth, his middle age and even his old age. The man has told us he is almost or is already 70 years old, threescore and ten, the biblical age; threescore and ten.

Mr. Mc Leod: And if by reason of strength.

Mr. C. Imbert: Let me congratulate the Minister, not for his contribution, which I will deal with in a little while, but for the fact that at the ripe old age of threescore and ten, he is—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Mc Leod: Not old age, ripe.

Mr. C. Imbert: The ripe age of threescore and ten, he is still here at one o'clock in the morning doing what he believes is in defence of the public interest.

But the fact of the matter is that the Minister seems not to understand, as the hon. Prime Minister did not seem to understand today, as all of the Government Ministers who have spoken, do not seem to understand, that you lost your audience a little while ago. And while the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre was a very distinguished trade unionist, let me just read into the record an article, a very recent article, entitled:

“Trade Union pickets outside the Labour Ministry”

And it goes as follows:

“Members of the Oilfield Workers Trade Union protested in front to the Ministry of Labour...at the waterfront this morning.

The members were responding to statements made by Minister of Labour, Errol Mc Leod at the People's Partnership rally, last Saturday.”

So this is just last month.

“Mr. Mc Leod accused the union of teaming up with the Opposition to...destabilize the country.

President of the OWTU's Fyzabad/Palo Seco Branch, Leroy Connell said the members are very disappointed with Mr. Mc Leod's tenure as Minister of Labour.”

Finance Committee Report
[MR. IMBERT]

Thursday, June 26, 2014

It is not me saying this. These are—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: What is the source?

Mr. C. Imbert: It is a story from an Internet article called—it is actually Power 102. It is a transcript of a story on Power 102, which would be sometime in May. We have the President of Fyzabad branch, Leroy Connell saying the members are very disappointed in the Minister.

“President of the Trinmar Branch, Ernesto Kesar said members felt betrayed by their former union colleague.”

Minister—“Mc Leod bypassed the protestors on his way to his office...and was booed and jeered by the protestors.

He was called a sellout by OWTU Senior Labour Relations Officer..., Errol Mc Leod.”

His namesake. And that is what I mean by hon. Members opposite have lost their audience.

I also read from the *Express* of May 28, 2014 and the headline is:

“Mc Leod takes a beating from ex-allies

‘Little done for labour’, David Abdulah, secretary general of the Oilfields Workers’ Trade Union (OWTU) addresses the media during yesterday’s news conference at OWTU headquarters in San Fernando. At left”—of Abdulah—“is research officer Ozzie Warwick.”

1.15 a.m.

So who have we had so far? Kesar, Connell, Warwick, Errol Mc Leod, Abdulah and we have the other persons in the photographs—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Comrades!

Mr. C. Imbert:—other comrades-in-arms and according to his former colleague, who was also a Government Senator at one point in time, and the Leader of the MSJ, Mr. Abdulah said that:

“Labour Minister Errol Mc Leod seems to be confused about the relationship between the trade union movement and politics.”

And he went on to say that:

“...(Mc Leod) is no longer a part of the trade union movement...because standing up, wearing a yellow shirt in Mid Centre Mall, defending the...nonsense of this Government, places him somewhere else,”

[*Laughter*] And I would not bother to read anymore. It is a very pejorative article, Mr. Speaker. But the fact of the matter is, the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, despite all those [*Interruption*] interesting anecdotes about his exploits in the movement, has lost his audience, Mr. Speaker, and that is one of the problems that this Government has. Because I listened to the Prime Minister today speaking for perhaps the 15th time in this Parliament, 1-5, after we have had about 150 sittings. So unlike—what was it? The production rate of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, your 60-something per cent? Whatever it was the Minister of Finance and the Economy said about you, hon. Minister. The Prime Minister’s production rate is 10 per cent. So speaking for the 15th time, in 150 sittings of Parliament, the Prime Minister regaled us about the performance, the brilliant performance, fantastic work being done by her administration.

It reminded me, Mr. Speaker, of the speeches made by the hon. Prime Minister during the Tobago House of Assembly election. I remember a very passionate speech by the hon. Prime Minister, just two or three days before that THA election, when she declared to the now topless leader of the TOP, Mr. Jack, who apparently is under threat, they have some new movement in Tobago. I think they want to call it TOP something rudder, and they have an injunction in the court. Imagine, they are fighting over a party symbol and a party name, that is where the TOP reach. I remember a very passionate speech from the hon. Prime Minister, that tomorrow, we will rename this square “Freedom Square”, the meeting was in Market Square in Tobago. So convinced was she, that they would sweep the polls in Tobago, that she announced they would rename Market Square in Scarborough, “Freedom Square”, to celebrate the liberation of Tobago from the wicked PNM. Two days later, the PNM won all 12 seats.

Hon. Member: Freedom Tobago!

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, and Tobago was liberated, [*Laughter*] but not from the PNM, from the UNC. But be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, we then had the by-election in Chaguanas West, and the Prime Minister and her Ministers, they regaled us night after night, about all the box drains that they had built, and all of the laptops that they had given to secondary and primary school students, and all of the wonderful things that the Government had done.

Mr. Deyalsingh: The candidate got married the day before.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, even the—you are quite right, Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, the candidate was even married in a show of stability. When the dust settled, the lone challenger, the one-man challenger, had destroyed the UNC by a margin of almost three to one in their heartland, in the safest UNC seat in the country, that has a history of the most votes for the various incarnations of the UNC over the years, ULF, DLP whatever you want to call it, for the last 50 years, the safest seat in the country, three to one.

And then, we had the local government election, Mr. Speaker, and again very similar to what we heard tonight, about all of the wonderful things. I took notes of it, man: about fair play and equity and the hospital that they built in San Fernando, and the highway they are building in Diego Martin, and this and that, and how they move swiftly to deal with any allegation of corruption and malfeasance promptly and swiftly, immediately and jump in and take action. In the local government election, every night after night we had to hear this and, Mr. Speaker, when the dust settled, they had lost, I think they had 11 corporations, they were reduced to five. [*Interruption*]

Then, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for St. Joseph, the former Senator resigned, he crossed the floor, a ruling was made that the seat was vacant. We had a by-election, and night after night I had to hear about the wonderful job this UNC Government is doing, all the roads that they paved, all the community centres that they built, all the schools that they repaired. I mean, manna was falling from heaven, and when the dust settled, we have a new PNM Member of Parliament in the constituency of St. Joseph. That is what I mean by losing your audience, Mr. Speaker.

Because all of these things that the Prime Minister is talking about, with due deference to her, nobody is listening to that propaganda. Nobody is interested. When people have made up their minds, and “dey fed up, yuh hah to come better dan dat yuh know”. All of that old talk—you know I remember, Mr. Speaker, in 1986, I remember taking a look at the 1986 manifesto of the PNM. When I was writing the '91 manifesto, they gave me the '86 manifesto to look at, and they said, well, follow that. I opened this thing and I saw page after page, glossy photographs, the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, the twin towers, the Hall of Justice, the dualling of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, project after project, after project. Not box drains you know, we are talking about huge, large, impressive projects, 100 glossy pages; PNM got three seats. [*Laughter*] You know, I remember that.

When people have made up their minds and they want to get rid of you, all this pretty talk, they are not interested. And what I want the Government to take note of is, matters that I am about to deal with, because in this budget—second budget or supplementary allocation, whatever you want to call it, this \$4 billion expenditure, you know, they are spending money as if it is water, you know. It is not \$4 million anymore you know, it is \$4,000 million and saying it like nothing, you know, just rolling off, \$500 million there, a billion there, \$700 million, like, I do not know, is monopoly money?

But, Mr. Speaker, in this budget there are allocations for the Ministry of National Security, and when you look at what the money is for, it is for some communication system which they have not really explained properly to us, and I will not go into the appalling inadequacy of the responses to the questions posed by Members on this side in the Committee stage. Because what we are debating here is a Motion to adopt the first report of the Finance Committee, and in a short while, I will show you the questions we asked, the commitments given by the Minister, and the appalling answers that we received, in the cases where we even received answers at all, because half of the questions were not answered.

Hon. Member: We never received answers from you. You never answered.

Mr. C. Imbert: That is right, and maybe that is why we are here and you are there, and because you now decide that you will not answer us, you will soon be here, and we will be there. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] You see, no, madness—Einstein’s definition of madness is doing the same thing over and over, and expecting a different result.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what is important to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and what the Government should be appropriating money for in the Ministry of National Security. I read from an article in the *Express*, January 02, 2014:

“2014 murder toll takes off with 7 in 2 days

Seven murders have been committed in the first two days of the new year.

In 2013, the first murder of the year did not occur until January 2.”

But in 2014, 7 murders in the first two days. And they went as follows:

“Murder #1

Pastor...Khan, 52...shot dead...when bandits stormed his Mausica, Arima, home in search of a large gold chain...”

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Killed the man for that, you know, and it was not his chain, you know. It was his son's chain.

"...a large gold chain"—his—"son, Ezra Khan, was wearing..."

Murders #2 and #3:

In Princes Town"—and it was geographically distributed. It is not Laventille only, you know, "In Princes Town, south Trinidad, a couple were found stabbed to death at...home

Murder #4:

In Tobago"—and this is what I mean by geographical spread—"a man was killed in a domestic situation.

Murder #5:

In Wallerfield"—around the same time the couple in Princes Town were murdered another life was snuffed out.

"The Wallerfield father of one was gunned down near his home..."

Murder #6:

A 65-year-old Cocorite man...was brutally beaten about the body yesterday"—"and set on fire.

"Murder #7:

...a family who went fishing off the Caroni flyover found instead this country's seventh murder victim for the new year."

So where were these murders, Mr. Speaker, first two days of 2014? Mausica, Princes Town, Tobago, Wallerfield, Cocorite and Caroni. So that was how we started the year under this administration, that is now asking us to agree to an additional appropriation for the Ministry of National Security. That was January. Let us go to February, *Guardian*:

"Too many murders left unsolved

One every 16 hours. That is the rate at which intentional homicides were being committed"—in Trinidad and Tobago. If—"the current murder rate continues...2014 will see..."—in excess of 500 murders...

That was February, Mr. Speaker. Let us go now to May—*Newsday*, May 14:

"ON THE heels of Acting Commissioner of Police Steven Williams' revelation last week, that serious crimes including murders had dropped by 36 percent

this year, killers sought to mock Williams' statistics as seven murders were committed between Friday...and yesterday."

And they go through and they speak about the murders and there are murders in the Port of Spain area, in the Cocorite area, in the Maraval area, Mr. Speaker, Maloney, and so on and so on, Mr. Speaker. May, last month, "Seven murders in four days".

What is the current murders rate, Mr. Speaker? Two hundred and seven murders as of today. What was the total on June 25, 2013? One hundred and eighty-one. There are 26 more murders as of today, when compared to the same period in 2013. I have not heard a word from one of the Ministers who have spoken tonight about this, and this is the most important thing to citizens in Trinidad and Tobago. Two hundred and seven murders for this year, and I mean, you go on the Web, look at what you see:

"Trinidad & Tobago Warning!"

Murders in Trinidad and Tobago, murder number 205: mother dies in East Port of Spain turf war; a five-month-old baby girl survives a close brush with death, when armed men opened fire on her mother. She died after the gunmen shot her in her head while she was still cradling the baby to protect her; that is murder 205, June 22. Murder 204, 15-year-old shot to death. The families of Rohan Ayres and Patrina Salandy cried out yesterday for the killings to stop; East Port of Spain.

1.30 a.m.

Murder No. 203: this is on the Internet now, Mr. Speaker. When they go on the Internet, "dey doh see all dem tings about box drains and furniture and school and laptop; dey seeing dis";

Retired school principal stabbed to death: 74 years old, stabbed to death, Mr. Speaker, Delhi Street, St. James;

Murder No. 202: Cop seeks help to identify man; a man who was shot to death on Gordon Street, Mount Hope;

Drive by shooting kills two in Laventille; that is murder No. 201 and murder No. 200.

Mr. Speaker, this is what is important to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and I really hope, instead of giving us a plethora of pious platitudes, that the Minister will give us some comfort in terms of what the expenditure in the

Ministry of National Security and what we are being asked to appropriate in the Ministry of National Security, what that is going to do to reverse this horrible trend that we are seeing here.

I am telling you that the citizens of this country are fed up of that. I can assure you that they are not taking that and all the pretty talk is not going to reverse and erase the image of a mother shielding a baby and being shot by snipers from a hill.

The other day, the Member for Port of Spain South told me that she was unable to go to her constituency office. She was on her way, normal standard public day—these are the things that we do; we see the public all hours of night and day.

Miss Ramdial: All MPs.

Mr. Indarsingh: He said “we”.

Mr. C. Imbert: I said “we, we, we”.

Miss Ramdial: I thought you meant “we”, as on your side.

Mr. C. Imbert: All of us, on both sides of the House, in both Houses of Parliament. That good enough for you?

Miss Ramdial: Very well.

Mr. C. Imbert: From all political parties.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you.

Mr. C. Imbert: One of the things we do at all hours of night and day, putting our health and our personal security at risk and our family life, we see the public and try to deal with some of their problems, some of which are quite impossible.

Dr. Gopeesingh: He is singing for his supper.

Mr. C. Imbert: Not my supper; I am not speaking for my supper. I know what I do, you know. I value what I do. I hope everybody in here values what they do.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mr. C. Imbert: “Well, doh make joke about serious ting.” And the Member for Port of Spain South was called and told. “Doh go to your office today because bullets are flying.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you know where the office of the Member of Parliament is, it is on Piccadilly Greens. I, when I am travelling to the East—which I do from time to time—I go through the back. I come down Charlotte Street, like most people, by the hospital; I turn left by the Republic Bank car park; I go round in the back there; pass the traffic light, down by the Greens and come out in the back there by Riverside Plaza. Like most people who live in north Trinidad, that is our route to get out. Others may take Wrightson Road, some may take Lady Young, but most people will go that way.

So, on a normal day, I will be driving past the Member's office, which is right there on Piccadilly Greens, just opposite where they have the carnival stage and so on. I could have been hit by a stray bullet in the middle of the day, in a populated area of Port of Spain. This is not in the hills of Laventille. This is not up in the back of the creek in my area. This is not up in the hills; it is not in an area that is remote, inaccessible and so on. This is right there in the city, on a main road. Any one of us could have been passing there and got hit by a stray bullet, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore, I think it is incumbent on the Minister of Finance and the Economy—because I get the impression the Minister of National Security is not going to be with us here tonight—to tell us what positive effect we can expect from these appropriations, these millions of dollars that we as a Parliament have been asked to appropriate to the Ministry of National Security.

Mr. Speaker, I saw something on cable television the other night. It shocked me. Imagine, there is this outfit in the United States called VICE News. I had not heard of them before. Apparently they go all over the world and they do—[*Interruption*]
—I had not heard of them before and when I saw the documentary I was quite angry as a citizen and a parliamentarian. I was angry the way they portrayed Trinidad and Tobago. I did not like it. Forget Government and forget Opposition; I was angry. Of course, they dramatize everything and they escalate everything and they make things appear more scandalous than they are.

But be that as it may, US-based VICE News did a documentary called “Corruption, Cocaine and Murder in Trinidad.” According to this article that I have here, the documentary was uploaded on YouTube and gathered more than 24,000 views in the first eight hours. That is Trinidad and Tobago outside there on the World Wide Web and the author of the documentary talks about all the corruption in Trinidad and Tobago according to him; and according to him, listen to what he says:

“...gang violence is merely a symptom of a bigger problem. Trinidad has become an important stop for drugs headed to West Africa and the United

States. Many observers point to ‘the big fish’—the nameless...elites...who are behind drug trafficking and the culture of endemic corruption and murder...”—and so on and so on.

And he makes a statement:

“Many of the murders are attributed to ruthless and politically connected street gangs who control territories that are sometimes no larger than a city block. The gangs fight over lucrative government contracts meant to provide social services and combat unemployment.”

If any Member of this Parliament says it is not so, they are dishonest. I am not saying that anybody in here is dishonest. If anybody says that it is not so; that these gangs are not fighting over government contracts meant to provide social services and unemployment relief, then they are strangers to the truth. This is the perception that people have of Trinidad and Tobago and it is incumbent on the Government, the Parliament, we have got to take control of this situation. We have got to clean up this mess.

So when we come to debate an appropriation and to give more money to the police and the Ministry of National Security and to make the security forces more efficient, I expect the Minister to explain. Crime is the number one problem in Trinidad and Tobago and I have not heard a word. To borrow from a debate I was looking at in the Senate, last night or the night before, not a funeral drum, not a sound has been heard from the Government about what they intend to do about the crime scourge in Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Not a drum was heard; not a funereal note as his corpse to the rampart we hurried.”

Mr. C. Imbert: Whatever it is. “Not a drum was heard; not a funereal note”. Really, when we come to debate these things, I do not want to hear about any more box drains. I am tired. Stop telling me about box drains! The amount of box drains I built in my life; I built miles and miles of box drains so I do not want to hear about it anymore, because the population does not want to hear about that anymore. They want to know what you are doing about these things.

Now let me go to the report of the Finance Committee and, Mr. Speaker, I have highlighted all of the questions asked. The first question asked by the Member for Port of Spain South was about the Government’s intention to build three new Magistrates’ Courts. I have looked at the responses. I have put a note there with respect to the question and the response and my comment is: no answer given.

And the minutes say, the Chairman, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, advised he will get the information. No answer. The Member for Chaguanas West enquired whether there was a policy that governs medical expenses incurred by the President of the Industrial Court. The Chairman, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, indicated a copy would be provided. No document has been provided.

Let us move on. The Member for Chaguanas West asked for the following information, under Head 05, Parliament: the nature of the archaeological work at the Red House, whether there have been any archaeological discoveries at the Red House site since the last discovery of remains in March 2013 and whether there have been any further discoveries and, if not, the work done and the status of the restoration. No answer to question 1; no answer to question 2; no answer to question 3, but according to the minutes, the chairman agreed to provide the information.

I also asked about the nature of the archaeological work, the final cost of the work, the delay that the archaeological work was causing on the project; whether provisions had been made for parliamentarians' medical plan and under what Head of expenditure could we, who have to be here at 1.41 in the morning, claim for reimbursement of medical expenses. No answer; no answer; no answer; no answer, but the minutes say the chairman agreed to provide information.

And the Member for St. Joseph asked whether any systems were put in place to reimburse MPs who had already submitted claims for medical expenses and who had not been reimbursed. The Chairman, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, said that he was not aware of this, but enquiries would be made. No answer in the answers, Mr. Speaker.

Minister of Finance and the Economy, we asked for a breakdown of the \$258 million required to provide support for Clico. No breakdown.

Let us move on. We come now to the Programme for Upgrading Road Efficiency, for the Infrastructure Development Fund, under the Ministry of Finance and the Economy Head. I asked for a breakdown of the \$1.2 billion funding for the IDF; the amount allocated for each project and a description. We got about two words, a woefully inadequate and incomplete answer to this question.

The Chairman told us he would provide the details during the debate. Not a single note; not a funeral drum on the \$1.2 billion that we are being asked to look at under the IDF; not a note; not a funeral drum. [*Laughter*] You think it is funny. All right.

Let us go on to national security, which was my point of departure. The Member for Port of Spain South asked for a breakdown and details of the \$78 million for the acquisition of a digital public safety communication system.

Let us see what the answer is. Cabinet agreed to execute a contract between the Government and the Harris Corporation to supply the police with digital safety communication system at a cost of US \$30 million. Now, when I went to school, Mr. Speaker, that was not details. We asked for a breakdown of details. We already know it is \$30 million for the thing. We already know what is going on. He said the Government had given a contract to Harris. That is his concept of details. It is disrespect for this Parliament, Mr. Speaker. Disrespect!

The Member for Chaguanas wanted to know was a cost benefit analysis done. The Chairman agreed to give the information. No information. The Member for Chaguanas West asked what is the difference between this system and other systems where millions of dollars were spent in the past communications system. No information given. What? The Minister said the matter would be referred to the relevant Minister for provision of a comprehensive statement during the debate. Where is the Minister? Is he wearing a cloak of invisibility tonight? He is not here. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has told us nothing and the Minister of National Security is missing in action, Mr. Speaker.

1.45 a.m.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, please, just to indicate that the Minister of National Security was out of the jurisdiction on official Government business.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you for that information and, on the next occasion, please ask me to give way. Do not just stand up. You are not the Speaker. The Speaker could do that, you cannot do that—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Next time.

Mr. C. Imbert: I will give way though, but ask “meh” to give way. [*Laughter*]

Now, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Be polite! Be polite!

Mr. C. Imbert: Be courteous! Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of National Security is out of the jurisdiction, what on earth—[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: Will the Member give way?

Mr. C. Imbert: Of course, I will give way.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I indicate that the Acting Minister of National Security is in the House.

Hon. Member: Who is that?

Dr. Moonilal: The Member for Moruga/Tableland, and he would be in a position to respond to some of these matters if the need arise. [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Imbert: “Look, joke is joke yuh know.” [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, we were told we will get a comprehensive statement on this digital public safety communication system—whether there was a cost benefit analysis, what is the difference between this system and what was bought in the past and “cote ce cote la”—no information. Well, let us move on.

I asked whether the contractor was the lowest or the highest bidder. Now, Mr. Speaker, this was asked throughout. We asked for the details of procurement procedure. We wanted to know if all these multimillion dollar contracts were awarded to the highest bidder or the lowest bidder—right through this question is recurring—not once did we get an answer, Mr. Speaker—whether it was awarded to the highest bidder, the lowest bidder or somebody in-between—not once, Mr. Speaker, did we get an answer. I also asked for a breakdown of the item “extraordinary expenditure”, Mr. Speaker, no answer. Okay.

Let us move on to the Ministry of the Attorney General. The Member for Port of Spain South requested a breakdown of the \$8 million under the sub-item “fees”, the Chairman concurred. Let us look in the answer. Did we get an answer, Mr. Speaker, to the breakdown of fees? No, not a drum; not a funereal note—a funereal drum or a note, whatever it is. Nothing!

With respect to the committee investigating the unfortunate demise of the little baby, I asked about the \$8 million, whether it is to meet legal fees. The Member also asked for a breakdown of the legal fees, Mr. Speaker, we got a half-baked response. We have not got any breakdown of legal fees, but I would tell you something—[*Interruption*—\$8 million. Mr. Speaker, I see some information here which I find astonishing, because I have not heard Martin Daly complain about this. The sum of \$500,000 was paid to the chairman of the independent committee, Justice Mustapha Ibrahim, for reading medical reports. That was the exercise—looking at documents—\$500,000, for what? A month’s work! I have not heard the commentators outside there say that that is obscene and scandalous

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and unfair and immoral. No! It seems it is okay to pay the chairman of a committee \$500,000—a half a million dollars—for reading medical reports. That is okay in this country, Mr. Speaker.

I really would like to hear some justification for these exorbitant payments, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] We are coming to that. Five hundred thousand dollars! I am still astonished at this, Mr. Speaker, \$500,000. I mean, that is no wonder they laugh at us outside there. They laugh at us! No respect for parliamentarians. They must have no respect when you are paying a man \$500,000 to read a few pieces of paper and finish something in a month. Half a million dollars for a month's work! Anyway, let us move on.

The Ministry of Legal Affairs: the Member for Port of Spain South asked for a breakdown of the \$9 million allocated under “Promotions, Publicity and Printing”. Let us look and see whether we received an answer. [*Crosstalk*] I am not seeing that, Mr. Speaker. I am not seeing any response to the question about the \$9 million under “Promotion, Publicity and Printing”. So, what is the point of this debate? We expect the Minister—this is not a debate about, as I said, how many box drains you have built. This debate is about an appropriation with Heads of expenditure. There is a Schedule here, Mr. Speaker: Supplementation Variation of Estimates. It is 108 pages long. It has appropriations and virements and so on. There is a host of heads and sub-heads, and some of these sub-heads are very important. They are important issues of policy and things that the population wants to know about, and we are not getting answers from anyone about this. All we are hearing about is a public relations campaign—a misguided public relations campaign—with respect to some election in the future, but the issues are not being addressed, and the Chairman indicated, the information would be provided during the debate; no information.

The Member for St. Joseph asked for further information on the additional media campaigns, promotions and publicity, as well as a breakdown of costs: the names of the contractors. The Chairman concurred, no information. The Member for Chaguaramas West requested a breakdown of the cost incurred for media houses, no information.

The Member for Port of Spain South requested detailed information on expenditure and balance outstanding for the National Consultation on Constitutional Reform. So the reform of the Constitution is obviously so trivial and insignificant and irrelevant that when a Member of Parliament asked for details on how much money was spent, and what are you doing and so on, it is not

worthy of the time of the Minister of Finance and the Economy to let this honourable House know the answer to that question. Obviously, this Parliament is an irritation. Now, let us move on, Mr. Speaker.

I had raised a matter which I found scandalous with respect to the Coolman matter where I saw—I mean, I was really, really, taken aback at this one, Mr. Speaker—under “Legal Aid”, I saw a fantastic expenditure for defence attorneys—millions of dollars—\$10 million or \$12 million, some figure like that, Mr. Speaker. I cannot believe—how many of them they have there? Is it nine accused, Member for Port of Spain South, through you, Mr. Speaker? About nine accused, right!

Miss Mc Donald: Eleven!

Mr. C. Imbert: Eleven or whatever. So, it is working out at about a million dollars in legal fees for the defence attorneys, working out at a million dollars per man. Since when legal aid is paying people a million dollars, Mr. Speaker, since when? And I asked for details. I asked: is this true that each attorney for each defendant in the Coolman trial is getting a million dollars in legal aid from the State?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. Mc Donald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, in my view, on the face of it, without any further information coming from the Government, this is scandalous. I know accused persons scrambling to get attorneys in this country, and they would pay the legal aid lawyer \$20,000 or \$30,000. I have never heard of payments of a million dollars to defence attorneys under legal aid, and we get no answer from the Government. No big thing! They are just spending money like water in this country; like water, and that is what getting people angry, and that is why you have lost your audience, but let us move on. The Chairman told me that it was paid through legal aid, and he said he would provide clarity on this matter. He provided no clarity, Mr. Speaker, none!

The Member for St. Joseph asked about the supplementary funding of \$481,000 for the Police Complaints Authority and whether it was for investigators; no information, no answer. Member for Port of Spain South asked

about the strength and information management system and wanted details of the project, the chairman promised to provide the information, no answer.

Let us go to Ministry of Food Production. I asked about the Praedial Larceny Squad: what was its function; whether anybody had been prosecuted, and the Minister said under his breath, “Dey charging endless people.” He promised to provide the information, and indicated a number of charges were filed. So, I am looking for the response now and my question is: what is the status of the squad? What is its function and whether anyone was prosecuted? The Minister said he will give the information and he said, “Ah lot ah charges filed.” Look at the answer! The squad is functioning. That is the answer to my question. No thing about charges; nothing about nothing. You know, this debate, Mr. Speaker, really, come on, the Government has to do better than that.

RHAs: millions of dollars being appropriated for the RHAs, Mr. Speaker, huge sums of money—\$80 million, \$50 million, \$70 million—all of us in this Parliament asked for details on the cost for the RHAs—\$400 million, \$500 million—the Chairman agreed. Do we have an answer with respect to the details of this massive expenditure in the Regional Health Authorities that we have been asked to approve? Blank page, no answer, Mr. Speaker, no answer! I mean, it is quite ridiculous, no answer.

All right, let us go to this famous boat now. Mr. Speaker, because of the lateness of the hour, I have had the opportunity to be able to take a look at the Morning edition of the newspapers and our very energetic Minister of Transport who was sleeping a little while ago when I looked at him—oh, he wake up! There is an article in the *Express*: “Cadiz hits back: Utter nonsense”

“Transport Minister Stephen Cadiz described as ‘utter nonsense’ claims made...by Opposition Leader Dr. Rowley”...about...the Super Fast Galicia...

Cadiz said the Super Fast Galicia was 160 metres long and can carry 5,000 metric tonnes...as opposed to the 3,500 metric tonnes...that can be facilitated on the Warrior Spirit...

...(the Superfast Galicia) has a loading ramp exactly like the Warrior Spirit, the area that the ramp has to come down the current mooring facility...that we have for the Warrior Spirit, which in fact is being reconstructed right now...

He said technocrats were consulted...

‘When you hire a vessel you have to pay for it to be transported from the home port...because nobody is shipping the vessel here for free...’

He said it is all a set of foolishness and nonsense.

2.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, that is not the information I have. The information that I have is that the boat arrived about 16 or 17 days ago. It cost \$3 million a month to rent. The boat was hidden at the Anchorage, brought back to Port of Spain on June 23, 2014. The boat cannot dock in Port of Spain; it is too big for the area, and there was a secret meeting at the port to deal with these issues.

Let me tell you what the facts are, Mr. Speaker. The cost of the *Warrior Spirit* was US \$14,000 per day. The *Warrior Spirit* could have carried 126 loaded trucks, 390 cars and flatbeds, trailers, bulk cargo, hazardous cargo and had cabins for 133 passengers or truck drivers to allow overnight journeys.

Mr. Speaker, this boat is costing at least 50 per cent more than the *Warrior Spirit*. The contract, according to the answer—at least on this one we got a little bit of answer from the Minister of Finance and the Economy. But the answer begs a lot of questions, because according to the Minister of Finance and the Economy, the boat has been leased from April 2014 to June 2015, or thereabouts.

The Prime Minister told us the maiden voyage is going to be on July 15. So the lease began in April, the boat arrives in June and it is not going to be able to go to Tobago until July 15. Now the fact of the matter is, that somebody messed up big time here. I know there is something in the transport world, that behind every ship is a pirate. What it means is that the shipping world is a playground of thieves; that is what they mean by behind every ship is a pirate, and they have crooks outside there wanting to outsmart people at every corner.

What, in fact, has happened here is that we have been renting this boat since April. The Minister has tried to explain away all of this by saying, “Well, you have to pay for de boat when it travelling from wherever it is to come here.” All right; let us assume for the sake of argument, not admitting that he is correct, but for argument sake let us go along with that. All right; so you have to pay for the boat when it comes from here to there. It took a long time to come from here to there. “Yuh renting it since April, it eh reach here until June.” I do not know what kind of boat that is, but be that as it may, “it reach”. It reached here at the beginning of June and it is not going to make its first voyage to Tobago until the middle July.

Now why? Why did these brilliant, super bright technocrats, before the boat came here, in all the two and three months the boat was taking to come here, not construct the ramp that was required at the Port of Spain docks? Mr. Speaker, you

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cannot explain away stupidity. Stupidness is stupidity no matter who does it. The fact of the matter is that this boat arrived in the beginning of June, it will not make its first voyage until the middle of July, and that is costing this country at least \$5 million in lease time that we cannot use.

I am giving the Minister the benefit of the doubt, and giving him the time between April and June for the boat to come here. Even though it “must be take” about six weeks to reach here, I give him that. But what about the five weeks since it “reach”, and dey have it down by Anchorage and dey have it by de Hyatt and so on, doing what? You have to have an investigation into this. [*Desk thumping*] You have to have an investigation into this.

I mean, come on; who is the smart man who decided to lease this vessel and then not provide the infrastructure, so you have to park it up for five weeks and pay \$5 million for that? No amount of explaining away and carrying on and ranting and raving is going to change that fact. Somebody must answer as to why you have this boat parked up for the last five weeks, incurring wasted expenditure of \$5 million.

Hon. Member: “Cadiz, dat is true?”

Mr. C. Imbert: Those are facts. The Prime Minister herself said the maiden voyage is on July 15 and, in fact, invited the Member for Port of Spain South to accompany the Minister on the maiden voyage. I was here; I heard all that. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Marlene, “doh go on that boat, eh.”

Mr. C. Imbert: I heard that with my own ears.

Mr. Cadiz: The boat could take real load. [*Laughter*]

Miss Mc Donald: That could be the *Titanic*.

Mr. C. Imbert: Everything is a joke. So the Minister could say what he wants about what is nonsense and what is not nonsense, but facts are facts.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today I heard the Minister make a very offhand statement about the Point Fortin water taxi service in response to a question. He just brushed off the question: “Ah went down there. It have nowhere for de boat to berth. De water flat; it shallow. Dey have no money. Dey going to do a study. Dey go start de study next year in 2015.” “Start de study, eh.” Offhand, dismissive, just dismissed all the residents of the southwest peninsula, La Brea and Point Fortin. “Forget dem, man.” That will make five years of this People’s Partnership.

Now, let us see what this People's Partnership had to say in 2011, when their tail feathers were up in the air, and "dey riding high". *Newsday*:

"Point Fortin water taxi in 2011"

Sunday, December 12, 2010, and at that time this gentleman was riding high:

"Works and Transport Minister Jack Warner has indicated that a water taxi service from Point Fortin to San Fernando to Port of Spain will begin in the first quarter of 2011.

'The existing fare from San Fernando to Port of Spain is \$15. The fare that will apply from Point Fortin to San Fernando is \$15,'... Warner's disclosure was part of a written response..."

"You see, this Government doh care what dey say, you know." A question was asked in this Parliament in 2011 by the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, and the response came in a written reply to that question which was circulated in the House of Representatives in 2010.

The article continues:

"Warner said arrangements are currently being made to utilise the access channel and construction dock at the Trinmar Jetty, Clifton Hill in Point Fortin. 'Once these arrangements are concluded, the water taxi service may be introduced in the first quarter of 2011,'..."

So has the Trinmar jetty evaporated? Has the Trinmar access channel suddenly become silted up? Do boats no longer go to the Trinmar jetty and use the Trinmar access channel? Has it disappeared? Did an alien spaceship come down from space and lift up the Trinmar jetty and take it away, so that when the Minister went to Point Fortin he could not see that?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Chaguanas East is your constituency?

Mr. C. Imbert: Then we have statements made:

"Govt considers Pt. Fortin water taxi terminal"

September 2010—September 2010, you know. We are almost in September 2014. "September 2010, dey going and do de terminal." And then January 2014, Transport Minister Cadiz—it is not Warner anymore:

"Point Fortin, Waterloo to get water taxi terminals"

Hon. Member: Cadiz again?

Mr. C. Imbert: Cadiz:

“...construction of water taxi terminals at Point Fortin and Waterloo is expected to begin soon.”

January 2014—you see, that is why you are losing your audience, you feel you could say what you want and people will not remember, and there is no record of it, and you could be flippant and you could be dismissive. But the worst I heard today was from the Minister of Health—the worst.

The Minister of Health is asked a question by the Member for Point Fortin: When will the construction of the Point Fortin hospital begin and why has it not started. I had to listen to all this “tra la la” about design brief, and you have to understand a hospital is a complex thing and you have diagnostic services, and you have the laboratory, and you have the surgery, and you have the wards, and you have the incinerator, and all kind of medical jargon, and “Yuh doh do ting just so,” and you have to get consultants, and you have to do it right and, you see, this Government is doing everything right, and you know we are different from the other government. One long speech, and at the end of the speech he tells us, “Well it go start sometime towards the end of 2014.”

I went into the records, Mr. Speaker, and I have in my possession an article, November 27, 2011. *Trinidad Express* headline:

“Construction of Point Fortin hospital begins March 2012”

Mr. Deyalsingh: What!

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes:

“Construction of the Point Fortin Hospital will begin in March 2012, Health Minister Dr Fuad Khan said Friday.”

“De same fella.” This is it:

“He was answering a question in the House of Representatives...”

This committee—Mr. Speaker, you say you have a committee, how they call it, “Government assurances”? I do not know whose idea that was. It might be yours—brilliant. This stupidity—excuse my language, and I will withdraw it if you want—is not going to happen again, with the new Standing Orders. The Health Minister:

“...was answering a question in the House of Representatives filed by Point Fortin MP...”

Mr. Speaker, 2011, and he says work will begin in March 2012:

“He said the estimated time for completion was 36 months...”

It will be completed in March 2015.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Wow, that is like the judicial centres.

Mr. C. Imbert: That is Dr. Fuad Khan, Minister in 2011.

October 2012, *Newsday*:

“Fuad: We’ll build Pt Hospital in 2013”

So in 2011 he said we would do in March 2012. Now in 2012, this is what he has to say:

“Health Minister Dr. Fuad Khan has assured that construction of the Point Fortin Hospital will begin in the first quarter of next year. Last month, Point Fortin residents protested over what they claimed was Government’s deafening silence regarding the hospital...”

The Minister—“explained that the Point Fortin hospital was supposed to be built on the site of the old hospital...the ministry realised if this was to be done, the old hospital would have to be demolished and if that were to happen, Point Fortin residents would have no health facility...”

As a result—“The ministry then began searching for a new site...‘After that...’”—and this is the part that I find horrifying.

I listened to all that piousness from the Minister, talking down to the Parliament:

“‘After that, we had to have a design brief...’”

Telling us today “yuh doh build hospital just so”, you have to have a brief, but he is telling the Parliament in 2012, the public—this is in the budget debate, telling the Parliament and the national community—the budget debate:

“...we had to have a design brief...that has since been done...” [*Interruption*]

Yes, the same Minister tells us today that we cannot build the hospital because we do not have a design brief, and the Member for Point Fortin just does not understand the complexity of a brief and you have to do it first and get it right. In 2012 October, the Minister tells the national community in the budget debate, “We had the design brief done and we sent it to the Ministry of Finance and the Point Fortin hospital will start in 2013.”

Mr. Deyalsingh: Again?

Mr. C. Imbert: In 2011 he said it would start 2012—assurance. In 2012 he said it would start in 2013: “I promise as Minister, it will start. I do de brief. Ah send it to Finance.” In 2014 he is now doing the brief and it will start again at the end of 2014. You really think the people of Point Fortin going to take that. They are not taking that at all. They are not taking all this “ol’ talk” from hon. Members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, as I go through the answers, or lack of answers, absolutely pathetic—absolutely pathetic. The Member for Diego Martin Central asked about the CCTV cameras: How many cameras? Who is the supplier? What is the cost? No answer. All they tell us is Amalgamated has been engaged to supply the cameras. They did not tell us how many cameras, they did not tell us where the cameras are, nothing like that; a total waste of time.

How many more minutes do I have, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: You end at 2.24 a.m.

2.15 a.m.

Mr. C. Imbert: All right, 10 minutes. No problem. [*Interruption*] Yeah, yeah. “Doh worry with dat.” Mr. Speaker, you know, I took careful notes of what the Minister said—I will find my notes in a short while, it is somewhere underneath here—ah, here they are. And instead of dealing with all those questions that we asked about security cameras, about legal fees, the Minister rambled on and on about the GDP, and the non-oil/energy sector, and inflation, and \$10 billion in reserves, but you cannot get \$5 in the bank in foreign exchange and on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, I would not go into any great detail on the FCB IPO because I have a matter on the Adjournment on that. So, I will leave that for another day. The only thing I will want to say about that, Mr. Speaker, is that this country has reached the point where the authorities in this country think that the population is a pack of fools, Mr. Speaker. Because, Mr. Speaker, we have laws in this country—we have laws—and I want to read into the record the laws. I am not going into any great detail on the IPO.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the trading in securities on the Stock Exchange there is something that is called a “connected party”. A “connected party” is a senior officer of the company involved or a relative of a senior officer, and senior

officers include the board of directors. And, Mr. Speaker if a connected party trades in a listed security on the Stock Exchange, that person has legal obligations. And, you know, when you tell the Minister of Finance and the Economy and you tell the Members opposite, they play as if they do not know, you know. They pretend they do not know. They do not know. They pretend that they “doh” know. Well let me read into the record, Mr. Speaker, section 136 of the Securities Act:

“A person who is connected to a reporting issuer...”—a listed security—
 “...shall, within five business days...that he becomes connected to the...issuer, file a report in the prescribed form with the Commission...”

A person...

who has filed or is required to file a report;

whose direct or indirect beneficial ownership...”—changes—

“shall within five...days from the day on which the change takes place, file a report of...”—the change of his beneficial ownership.

“No person to whom this section applies shall transfer or cause to be transferred any securities...to which he is connected into the name...”—of another person without making the prescribed report, Mr. Speaker.

And it goes on and it is complicated obligations. If you are an officer of a bank that is listed on the Stock Exchange or the relative, like the father of one of the members of the board, you have to report to the Securities and Exchange Commission within five days of acquiring shares, and within five days of selling shares in that. And let me tell you what the penalty is for nondisclosure, Mr. Speaker. Section 138:

“Any person who contravenes...”—this—“...section...commits an offence and is liable on conviction on indictment to a fine of five hundred thousand dollars and to imprisonment for two years.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is palpably obvious, patently obvious that there are certain individuals who traded in shares in that recent IPO who are connected to the members of the board because they are relatives, who did not make the necessary reports to the Securities and Exchange Commission, and now should be subject to prosecution and jailed for two years. And the Members opposite are just making joke of this whole thing. But we are not going to leave it there, Mr. Speaker, and I will speak a lot more about this when I deal with that matter on the

Adjournment with respect to the IPO. And the Minister tells us in his presentation, the IPO was a tremendous success. That IPO was a disaster! It has caused a loss of confidence, Mr. Speaker, in the institutions in this country; caused a loss of confidence in the Securities and Exchange Commission; caused a loss of confidence in the Stock Exchange; caused a loss of confidence in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. That is what has come out of that IPO—a disaster in terms of business confidence, Mr. Speaker. But the Minister describes it as a “success”.

And I went through the Minister’s presentation, and I went through the Prime Minister’s contribution, and I have to ask myself, what world are they living in? I am the one who have been raising this Clico matter; and all you are hearing is silence. And now we are hearing they are going to sell Colfire; just out of the blue. Because I raised that on a public platform, a PNM platform at a meeting. I raised the fact that I heard that they want to sell Colfire. All of a sudden the Minister is admitting that they are going to sell Colfire, the second largest general insurance in Trinidad and Tobago. Dry so! If I had not said anything, they would have sold the company and we would have found out about it afterwards.

The same way we found out about the sale of Valpark to a person who was a connected party to the CL Financial Group. Somebody who was involved in the bankruptcy of one of those companies that these taxpayers would have had to pay billions of dollars to deal with, they sold Valpark to that person, Mr. Speaker. And the only way we found out is that when we bring it up in the Parliament, and then the Minister comes, and very shamefacedly, admits to us. And now telling us that there are no plans to put up any other assets for sale. You expect us to believe them, Mr. Speaker? You expect the people in Trinidad and Tobago to believe them, Mr. Speaker?

And let me come now finally to the economy. The Minister also is not being clean with this Parliament, forthright, he is not coming clean with the population. We have lower than estimated receipts in income tax, value added tax, Mr. Speaker. The receipts of income tax, corporation tax, value added tax, are lower than anticipated. The only thing saving this country is that Mr. Putin decided to invade and annex Crimea, in the Ukraine. That is the only thing that is saving this country, you know. Every time there is a problem somewhere in the world. Russia decides that they want to take over former Soviet Republic, so they are invading Ukraine and they take a piece of Crimea, and that causes problems with the transportation of oil through pipelines in that area, or Iraq decides they want to go to war with Iran, or North Korea sends off a rocket somewhere and it lands

somewhere, you know, close to South Korea or something like that, Mr. Speaker. That is what is saving this country!—the instability in the Middle East, the instability in the other oil-producing regions in the world, the problems in Venezuela, Mr. Speaker. That is what is saving this country.

The Minister has admitted lower than anticipated receipts in value added tax, lower than anticipated receipts in taxes on income and profits from energy companies, industrial action at the Board of Inland Revenue. And it is things like this that we need information, Mr. Speaker. We need information. If there are lower anticipated receipts in tax, we want to know why. And we want to know what the Government is doing about it. Not all this nonsense about how they are so brilliant, you know. They met an economy in tatters, and somehow they wave a magic wand, and all of a sudden, the economy revived, like Lazarus, revived from the dead. They wave a wand and “whoohooo!” the economy just rise up like that. Nonsense. Nonsense, Mr. Speaker!

I happen to know there was \$12 billion in surplus in the Central Bank when we demitted office in 2010. They spent out every cent of that \$12 billion in surplus in the Central Bank, Mr. Speaker, surpluses that the PNM administration had put into the Central Bank in the times of plenty in 2007 and 2008. I have to hear this craziness about an economy in tatters and all of a sudden by magic, Merlin the magician came down from England, he reincarnated and the Trinidad economy—“bow!” No way! It is instability in the Middle East and problems in oil-producing regions, Mr. Speaker.

So, I expect that on the next occasion, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and the Economy would be more responsible, he would act with a little more maturity, he will be a little more forthright, he will take this debate seriously, he will deal with our crime problem. Tell us what you are doing in national security. “Doh” tell me about box drain! “Ah” tired hear about box drain. I want to know what you are doing about the murders in Port of Spain; the insecurity and instability in this country. That is what I want to know. Look, I heard on the radio that some fella in the United States said that the assassination of Dana Seetahal was a contract killing, and was associated with narcotics and so on. That is not safe, Mr. Speaker! I do not like to hear these things! And I want to hear from the Government, what are they doing about that? And I can assure you the rest of the country wants to hear about that! We “doh” want to hear about box drain, Mr. Speaker. I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I listened attentively to the Minister of Finance and the Economy present the Bill,

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and the subsequent statement by the hon. Prime Minister, that the purpose of the Bill is to improve the quality of life for the citizens of this country, I could not help but remember the hypocritical platitudes of “serve the people, serve the people, serve the people”. And I ask the question, which people? Or if I go before that, which citizens are we speaking about?

Mr. Speaker, I must remind those opposite that it is not only what you say that matters, but more so about what you do. Listening to the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, in her contribution you would believe that the PNM did nothing to develop this country. My good friend the Member for Diego Martin Central enumerated some of our achievements, and I dare say, Mr. Speaker, that list is not exhaustive. And while they will tell the population that we left this country in a bankrupt state, I must correct that fallacy. When we left office in 2010, we left our reserves at US \$8.78 billion, over 11 months import cover. A Heritage and Stabilization Fund in excess of US \$3 billion. Our debt to GDP was 38 per cent. Mr. Speaker, in 2014 it is 44.7 per cent and counting.

Mr. Speaker, we had unemployment of 5 per cent. And more than that, Mr. Speaker, the high standards of education in this country is one of the hallmarks of the People’s National Movement. Our advanced industrial development, our political stability are other hallmarks of this PNM Government. You had better believe it, Mr. Speaker, we built this country. We, the PNM, built this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, less people are employed now than in 2010. There is more poverty now than when we left office in 2010. People are feeling less secure now than when we left office in 2010. But more than that, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the global competitive ranking for Trinidad and Tobago, we slipped from 73rd out of 134 countries to 92nd out of 148. In the Corruption Perception Index, in 2011 we were 73rd out of 178; in 2013, we slipped to 83rd out of 177.

2.30 a.m.

But, Mr. Speaker, the last fiscal package was the largest in the history of this country, \$61.4 billion, but what did the country get from it? What does this Government have to show for that \$61.4 billion? Over the last four years this Government has spent over \$270 billion, more than what the PNM had to spend between 2000 and 2010, and you know what, Mr. Speaker? We did more with less than this Government. There is much more discrimination in this country now than ever before. There is much more corruption in this country now than in 2010.

Miss Ramdial: What evidence you have on that?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: There has been more hiring of people with false academic papers now than in 2010. Mr. Speaker, the average man on the street is angry with this Government. Very angry, because they are seeing the overconcentration of the State resources in their heartland.

Dr. Rambachan: “Aah, come on. Come on.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: It is a fact. That is a fact.

Dr. Rambachan: You “should shame” to say that.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: That is a fact, and I will take you on in a while, just now. Mr. Speaker, in PNM-controlled constituencies we are only getting the fine crumbs that fall from the master’s table.

Dr. Rambachan: That is why Sobo “fixing”. That is why you get your road paved.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, whereas in UNC-controlled constituencies, they get large chunks of bread. But, Mr. Speaker, I dare say, even in TOP and COP areas, who are temporary caretakers of PNM constituencies, they are also receiving very fine crumbs of bread.

But, I want to demonstrate here this morning about some of the problems that we have with the operations of this Government, and let me start by looking at my good friend from Tabaquite. You see, the people in Quarry Village are angry. They are very angry because of a situation that exists in Quarry Village.

Dr. Rambachan: That is Santa Flora?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: No, no, Quarry Village, that is just before Siparia. Mr. Speaker, at Quarry Junction we have three constituencies meeting at Quarry Junction—

Dr. Rambachan: Fyzabad, Siparia—

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Fyzabad, Siparia and La Brea. Mr. Speaker, if you are looking northwards on the eastern side is Fyzabad, north of Quarry Road is Siparia and south of Quarry Road is La Brea. [*Interruption*] They paved the road, and I dare say the Siparia/Erin Road, that whole road needs paving. But, Mr. Speaker, you know what is sad? They paved the road up to Quarry Junction. On the left-hand side is Siparia, on the right-hand side is Fyzabad, and like a hot knife through butter, where they stopped paving is where the La Brea constituency began.

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But, Mr. Speaker, you know what is sad, that my good friend from Fyzabad, he shares south of Quarry Junction with me, but to spite La Brea they stopped the paving where La Brea begins.

Mr. Imbert: What?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, if we are talking about serving the people we have to do better than that.

Miss Mc Donald: What! Not you, Member for Tabaquite? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please!

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, this is nothing for us to be happy about. And the strange thing, Mr. Speaker, I have to say UNC supporters have been calling my cell phone insistently because of that situation. MP, you cannot stay like that, it is wrong, it is wrong.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes man, Member for Tabaquite, pave the road, nah.

Dr. Rambachan: “I eh paving none ah yours.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: And therefore, that is something that we must not condone. If you say, serve the people, serve the people; serve all the people!

Mrs. Thomas: That is right. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Serve all the people. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, this is no joking matter. It is 2.35 a.m., and now is not the time to skylark with this thing.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the Ministry of Food Production, under Contracted Services—\$34 million was requested; the cost of maintenance and repairs to agricultural access roads. I looked at the list of access roads for repairs and maintenance, not a single agricultural access road from my constituency, and I am talking about Los Iros, I am talking about Carapal, I am talking about Rancho Quemado, I am talking about area four. Those areas have access roads that are in dire need of maintenance and repairs. But no, La Brea is PNM, so no funding for agricultural access roads.

Mr. Speaker, under the Ministry of Transport, I do not understand that no provisions are being made to deal with the traffic jams that we have in this country. On the average, from Point Fortin and La Brea to go into Port of Spain it takes about three hours. Mr. Speaker, think about somebody going to work in Port

of Spain and having to spend three hours on the road, particularly with traffic jams. You are tired, you are stressed out time you reach to work in Port of Spain. There is loss of productivity and your health is compromised, and therefore one would have thought that some sort of allocation would have been provided to deal with mass transit in this country.

You see, Mr. Speaker, every year 27,000 new vehicles come on the road, picture in five years' time 135,000 more vehicles on our roads—building more highways—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: Fifteen thousand new vehicles, boy.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, I want your protection, please?

Dr. Rambachan: You are giving wrong figures.

Mr. Speaker: All right, allow the Member to speak in silence. Continue, hon. Member.

Miss Mc Donald: And he spoke already.

Dr. Rambachan: “Go back and sleep, nah.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, what is happening right now, building more highways would just postpone where the traffic jam would occur. If you look at South Quay in Port of Spain, if you look at the bypass in San Fernando and so on, you are going to see the traffic jam. And more than that, when you build those highways you have to pave them three and four times a year, so millions of dollars are incurred.

Dr. Rambachan: You have to, what?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Pave them, because every year I pass on that highway, it is three/four times for the year they are paving the road.

Dr. Rambachan: Which one?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: All.

Dr. Rambachan: Which highway is paved three/four times for the year?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: All! All! Mr. Speaker, it will make sense to expand the water taxi service to La Brea and Point Fortin. And it was shocking to hear the Member for Chaguanas East, speaking about the shallowness of the port in Point Fortin for the water taxi, and I ask the question, you know, that in La Brea we have the deep-water harbour, so what is the position? Why is it that we cannot get the water taxi? Why?

Mr. Imbert: What about the Trinmar jetty?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: But more than that—yes, as you say, Trinmar jetty, large vessels come in at Trinmar jetty. So, really and truly it does not make any sense with that argument.

Mr. Speaker, similarly, let us put the politics aside. Those people who are coming from Arima and Sangre Grande to Port of Spain, would tell you that it makes economic sense for us to rethink about the rapid rail. [*Interruption*] It would make sense to think about the rapid rail.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a little more time to look at the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health, there is no allocation for the Point Fortin hospital. I want to draw to the national community's attention the situation in Point Fortin at this point in time. There is no X-ray machine functional in Point Fortin at this point in time, not one, and imagine the Point Fortin Area Hospital serves people from as far as Icacos to as far as Aripiero, and you go across to the next side, Erin, and you have no X-ray machine functional.

More than that, ECT machines, they have two; one is down and the other one malfunctions ever so often. What is even more heart-rending—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: That is serious business.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I am serious about that—the toilet facilities and the nurses lunchroom. I was down at that hospital yesterday and I saw where the nurses and them have to have their lunch, in a room three feet by four feet.

Mr. Cadiz: “Three foot by two foot.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: And, Mr. Speaker, you know what is worse? It adjoins the toilet. So, you could imagine, a nurse sitting down to take a tasty meal and having to hear a toilet flushing and to smell—

Dr. Khan: Where is that?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Point Fortin Area Hospital. That is ridiculous, and I want to call on the Minister of Health to immediately find suitable accommodation for the nurses and them to have their lunch. That could never be right.

Dr. Rambachan: You take over from Point Fortin representative. You are doing a good job.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Point Fortin hospital serves the people of La Brea as well.

Dr. Rambachan: It is nice to see you are doing the work of your colleague from Point. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: So, Mr. Speaker, as far as—

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please!

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—the Point Fortin Area Hospital is concerned, that warrants urgent attention.

But more than that, Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Member for Barataria/San Juan, and I am advised from reliable sources, that the site for the Point Fortin Area Hospital has not yet been decided upon.

Miss Mc Donald: “Oh gorm.”

Mr. Imbert: “Dey eh do nothing.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I challenge the Minister of Health on that in this regard. That site opposite Dunlop is not on the cards.

2.45 a.m.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think he should come forward and come straight, and tell the population that, “we eh ready yet”. You see, Mr. Speaker, I looked at the People’s Partnership manifesto, and they talked about the construction of new hospitals in the catchment areas. And number one on that list was Point Fortin, then Arima and then Chaguanas. Couva was not on it. But you know what is happening, Couva is at an advanced stage in construction.

Dr. Rambachan: Couva is a children hospital, you know, serving Point Fortin children too.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: It is still a hospital. And I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that we need to appreciate—stop fooling around with the people in the deep south, because we know that this Government wants a next term in office, but I believe you will have to wait until 2045 to get a next term the way things are going.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look at the Ministry of Community Development. Under the Ministry of Community Development they are asking for \$3.7 million, and I cannot understand how they could ask for only \$3.7 million, because we have three community centres under construction in the La Brea constituency. Three community centres that started under the former Minister of Community Development, and my Chief Whip, hon. Marlene Mc Donald. Those three community centres were supposed to be completed and delivered in 2011. We are

in 2014, and you know what, those three community centres—well say two, still have not been completed. The one that has been completed is the Vessigny Community Centre; the centre was completed in January and the contractor has not yet received his money. Almost \$5 million is being owed to that contractor. Yet, on this list here, no allowance is made to pay the contractor the outstanding, almost \$5 million, but they are only asking for \$3.7 million.

But more on that, Mr. Speaker, the Los Charros and the Palo Seco Settlement Community Centres are moving at a snail pace because of the slow release of funds from the Ministry. And I think this is heart-rending because those contractors down in the area there are not wealthy people, like SIS and company. They need their funding and I think that an allocation should be made for those areas.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the Ministry of Sport. Forty-one million dollars is being requested, but when I look at the details, personnel expenditure, \$1 million; goods and services, \$103,000 and transfers and subsidies \$39.8 million. No allowance is made for the development of the La Brea community sporting complex which the Minister told this Parliament in response to a question I had raised, that the construction of that sporting complex was going to take place beginning August of 2013.

Subsequent to that, earlier this year, I spoke with the Minister and he told me that money is the problem for funding. Well if money is the problem and you have supplementation of appropriation for 2014, how come it is not mentioned on that listing? How come? How come?

Mr. Speaker, I think we have to appreciate that recreational facilities are indeed important. You see in the South-western Peninsula we have made representation for the development of the Sobo, Vance River, Aripéro, Salazar Trace, Lot 10, Erin, Los Bajos, Santa Flora to get grounds developed. Because you know, Mr. Speaker, despite the crude state of the facilities in those areas, some of the best sportsmen in this country came from the “deep south”.

Dr. Rambachan: Augustine Logie.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Augustine Logie.

Dr. Rambachan: I named a ground after him, you know, when I was chairman—

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Okay, Augustine Logie. The late Akeem Adams who died earlier this year in Hungary, he came from Salazar Trace. Brian Williams, Bobby Sookram, Selwyn Moren, Philbert Jones—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Rambachan: Henry Cornfield.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Henry Cornfield is from Point, and so on. *[Laughter]* Yvonne Mitchell, Michael Billy-Montague, Dolton Ryan, Ronald Dickie. Mr. Speaker, all those are outstanding sportsmen from that La Brea constituency.

Mr. Speaker, you got to understand where Trinidad and Tobago could have been at this point in time in sports if we had proper facilities down in the “deep south”. But no, you squeeze the people of La Brea, you squeeze the people of Point Fortin, and that is why our sporting achievements within recent times have been so dismal. We need to address the poor sporting facilities that we have down in the “deep south”, and try to upgrade those facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to draw your attention, because you see the Ministry of Finance and the Economy got involved with the Clico fiasco. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy got involved when Caroni almost went into receivership. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy also got involved when Lake Asphalt was facing receivership. And I would like to place on record that there is a situation at Lake Asphalt in La Brea that needs urgent attention. I understand, from reliable sources, that for over two years now the pension fund, the two pension funds are in the red, right.

Firstly, the company has not been making contribution to the funds, and even the employees’ contributions are not being entered into the funds. That is a serious thing. And you know what is worse—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Hypolite: What company?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago (1978) Limited. Mr. Speaker, in a situation like Lake Asphalt, I think I had raised it in this House some time aback, where Lake Asphalt Company used to import hardboard directly from Brazil. For some strange reason, that arrangement was stopped and a company call Fastec is now the intermediary to get the hardboard. But you know what is strange, before the hardboard could leave Brazil, Lake Asphalt must pay Fastec to get the board to Trinidad and Tobago. And, Mr. Speaker, it is costing Lake Asphalt one and a half times the amount of money they would have paid previously leading to the arrangement. But I understand that Fastec is a financier of this ruling Government.

And, Mr. Speaker, you got to understand that for 2014 no export of the finished product has left Lake Asphalt. So you know what is happening, we are going down into a downward spiral and so on, and I do not understand for the life of me, why the Board at Lake Asphalt has not been fired as yet. Because on the one hand, I think they are trying to run down the company so that they would go into receivership and some one of their friend's financiers could now go and—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Hypolite: Do not forget the Chinese.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Right, thank you about the Chinese, because they have the Chinese people right now, who “done” take all the drawings and so on, take photographs and so on, for the operation. But I want to put them on notice that the people of La Brea are waiting like a hawk for that move. You see sometime aback when the NAR was in Government, they had tried a similar thing, to privatize Lake Asphalt, and the people came out in their thousands and marched, and stopped that sale, that arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, we have a situation at Tesoro, now Petrotrin, where some 5,000 former Trintoproc workers, pensioners, their pensions, they were supposed to get some increase based on the retail price index between 2008 and 2013. To date, this adjustment has not been made to their pensions. And I am calling on the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs to settle that arrangement. There are 5,000 persons, pensioners are affected, and think about 5,000—and if you have a household of about four or five, you are talking about 20,000 people who are going to be affected.

The Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources is also a cause for concern: \$154 million, personnel expenditure, \$59 million, goods and services, \$95 million of which 20,000 is for some national clean-up. Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that it is on the Private Members' Day Motion, so I would not go very far into it. But I only want to question, that given the perilous state of La Brea, that coastal zone, that national clean-up could not possibly, that national clean-up fund of \$20 million could not possibly be dealing with La Brea. And I am calling on this Government to recognize that that La Brea coastal zone is a disaster zone that requires urgent intervention. And I will leave that at this point in time, and hope that good sense would prevail, Mr. Speaker.

3.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, finally, before I take my seat, I want to talk a little bit about our Ministry of Public Utilities. You know, when you have high unemployment,

criminal activities could flourish, and given the abundance of sporting talent in the south-western peninsula, I am asking that those recreation grounds in the south-western peninsula be floodlit, so that during night-time, rather than look for idle hands to get engaged, that they will take part in sporting activity in those recreation grounds.

And I dare ask as well, that the Aripéro recreation ground is one that needs to be developed as quickly as possible because that is a very large community and there are many young people with no place to play any sport, and I think that is something that the Ministry of Sport should also try to rectify.

Mr. Speaker, finally, I have spoken with the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development on this issue and I have also spoken to the Minister of National Security on that issue as well. Soon we expect that we are going to have a lot of industrial activities in La Brea. We have a high unemployment situation, and in order to prevent chaos from taking place, I did not see any allocation here for the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, so I am putting it on record now, that there is need for the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development to set up an agency in La Brea to deal with the recruiting of labour so as to avoid chaos from happening in the south-western peninsula. It is something that I am very concerned about, and I am asking here and now, officially, that the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development do take stock to set up this agency in La Brea to start the collection of manpower data so that when those industries are looking for their labour, they have a ready source of supply.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development—let me go back to him again—I heard him mention about the IBIS and the FairShare Programmes, and for one minute it looked as though that those are People’s Partnership initiatives. I just want to place on record that a rose by any other name is still a rose, and the FairShare Programme and the IBIS Programme are really programmes that were organized by the People’s National Movement Government. I also—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Deyalsingh: The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development say no.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: He will take notes; he will take notes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: No, he is saying no.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Oh. Mr. Speaker, the whole question of corruption—because whether or not there was corruption in 2002 is not in dispute but I also want to say that in 2013 and 2014, there is still corruption at NEDCO and there is need for serious overhauling of NEDCO. There are people who really need funding from NEDCO who are having difficulty to access the funds, but you have friends and families who really do not need the money, who have easy passage to get funding from NEDCO. And you know, that 81 per cent that the hon. Minister mentioned, a lot of that is from friends and families and, therefore, they need to take a serious audit of NEDCO.

Mr. Speaker, with these few words, I say thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Laventille West. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. NiLeung Hypolite (*Laventille West*): Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at 3.05 this morning, and as my general secretary of shop stewards departed, he indicated to me to be very short and be very quick, so I will be very short and I will be very quick.

Mr. Speaker, they tend to say that self-praise is no praise, and this Government continues to praise themselves and beat their chest, indicating how well the Government is doing. Moody's Credit Rating Agency—and Moody's Credit Rating Agency is an agency that was founded in 1909 and continues to do ratings throughout the world. Moody's indicated that in affirming Trinidad and Tobago's Baa1 rating, Moody's Investors' Service, in its latest credit opinion, said that the country's rigid fiscal expenditures continue to pressure Government finances. It also said that Moody's credit challenges that explain why the country's rating has not improved since 2006 when it was first upgraded to Baa1, and that Trinidad and Tobago has a weak growth outlook following a practised recession, while rigid financial expenditures continue to pressure Government finances, and the country faces economic exposure to volatility in oil and gas prices.

Whereby the Government is beating their chest and praising themselves and saying that everything is—

Mr. Speaker: You want to quote?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Sure. It is the Sunday *Business Guardian* of June 22. It continues to beat its chest and say everything is nice in the country and stuff like that. Here is a credit rating agency that is saying that everything is not well in the country. Everything is not well in the affairs of the country, and therefore it is something for us to take note of.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and the Economy indicated that the unemployment rate is some 3.7 per cent, but again, in the Sunday *Business Guardian* of June 22: “Economists forecast T&T inflation will fall further”. That is the headline. But it stated:

“The economists see T&T as having unemployment remain stable at 5 per cent in 2014 and 2015. In 2014 they estimate that T&T will have the third lowest unemployment rate in Central America.”

So here it is the economists are stating that the unemployment rate is 5 per cent, but the Minister is saying 3.7 per cent. Mr. Speaker, we need to know the facts, we need to know the truth, we need to know exactly what the unemployment rate is. Why I say so, is because the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries stated sometime in 2013—and this is a *Guardian* article—that the establishment of a US \$850 million petrochemical plant at the Union Industrial Estate in La Brea would have created some 3,000 construction jobs. That was in 2013. The question that follows is whether or not this particular project ever got off the ground. And, if so, were those 3,000 persons ever employed? And if that is the case, is that what is contributing towards the so-called low unemployment?

In addition to that, in 2011, a *Guardian* article, “PM: Building houses to bring 30,000 jobs” and I read.

“Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar says Government will provide jobs for an estimated 30,000 unemployed people in the construction sector...”

If the unemployment rate is at 3.7 per cent, is this 30,000 jobs for the construction industry specifically towards the housing projects, contributing towards that? Or can someone from the Government side indicate exactly what is taking place for them to say to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that the unemployment rate is at 3.7 per cent when many persons in Laventille, many persons in Port of Spain, many persons throughout Trinidad and Tobago, are crying out for work on a daily basis? And when I go to my constituency office on a Thursday or on a Tuesday, many a person come to those offices seeking employment and indicating how difficult it is to get jobs outside there.

Because you have the PURE project, also indicating that they would have created 3,000 jobs, and yet still people are crying out for work. We also have, up to March 18 this year, a number of persons being sent home from the Hilton Hotel, persons working in the housekeeping department, kitchen, stewards, a long list of individuals being sent home, and yet still, we are indicating that—well, this is actually 60 persons being sent home from Trinidad Hilton, and yet still we are

saying that the unemployment rate is at 3.7 per cent when the Minister of Finance and the Economy cannot tell us exactly what the unemployment rate is from the CSO's office.

Mr. Speaker, we have been listening to a number of issues pertaining to this particular Bill—a number of issues with respect to funding, some \$3.8 billion being requested to clear expenditure. But one of the areas of which I paid close attention to, is that area of the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, whereby they requested an additional \$75 million for the desilting of drains throughout the country. I remember that probably about a year ago we had approved a very large sum of money for the desilting of a number of drains from Port of Spain, all the way up to the east.

3.15 a.m.

When we checked, it would have been just, if my memory serves me well, one main drain throughout the—well, it was a number of drains throughout Trinidad that they wanted to desilt, and when we checked it was just one drain along the East-West Corridor, that drain by Morvant Junction that was on the list for cleaning. When we look at this particular list once again, we are seeing a number of drains, but we are also seeing \$4 million for Port of Spain, Independence Square drains north and south. I do not know if my colleague, the MP for Port of Spain South, can identify what drains are those, but when you identify \$4 million worth of drains running from north to south, you have to try to identify what drains they are speaking about. And then you speak about \$4 million worth of drains, Laventille to Curepe, and they specify east to west corridor from Erica Street along the Eastern Main Road to Curepe.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the question: what about those main drains that run from north to south on the Beetham—there are five main drains that would have been requested to be cleaned for quite a long while—as well as the completion and desilting of that drain that runs parallel to the bus route?

Mr. Speaker, as we speak about desilting of drains, I have a question for the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, through you, Mr. Speaker, with respect to a number of projects that would have been completed under the Unemployment Relief Programme. These projects are in the vicinity of some \$111 million, of which contractors have been requesting payments for these projects. They have claimed that these projects are all completed. It is some \$111 million worth of work. We are looking at some 57 contractors, we are looking at some 289 projects, we are looking at works being done in areas such as Caroni Central,

Caroni East, Cumuto/Manzanilla, La Horquetta/Talparo, St. Joseph—I am seeing three for St. Joseph—Cumuto/Manzanilla, Caroni East, Chaguanas West, Tabaquite, Oropouche West, Caroni Central, Chaguanas West, La Horquetta/Talparo, Chaguanas West, Arouca/Maloney—just about five—Caroni Central; Chaguanas West has almost two pages, Toco/Sangre Grande, Tabaquite once again—and a number of other “Tabaquites”. So we are looking at some 289 projects.

Hon. Member: “Tabaquites”.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Yes, a number of Tabaquite. Two pages of Tabaquite.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, can you kindly indicate what is happening with these projects? The contractors are indicating that the work is completed. You are seeing, whereby, some \$95 million would have been approved. Invoices would have been submitted since August 2013.

Mr. Sharma: What date?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Check back your records and you will see. Warrant for August and September was in place. It is being said that the \$95 million would have been sent back to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. So, Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that the Minister will be able to say what is happening there.

Mr. Indarsingh: He already spoke.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Then he needs to whisper in the ears of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, so that the Minister of Finance and the Economy will be able to say what is happening. Because you see, while we have 57 contractors trying to get their \$111 million, we have four contractors who would have been part of this same emergency project that would have been paid, and therefore, they are asking the question: how come when it is that an audit was done by the URP auditors, another audit was done coming out of the central audit unit and yet still their money is not yet paid to them? Mr. Speaker, something is wrong there. It is something for us to look into, and by all means we need to have payments made to these contractors.

Mr. Speaker, we have also, under the Ministry of Local Government, another set of issues and, more so in San Fernando, whereby contracts are being issued without the corporations or without the council meeting on those contracts. It is something that the Minister of Local Government should be looking into.

Mr. Speaker, I am looking at an article in the *Trinidad Express*, June 25—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What page?

Mr. N. Hypolite: I will tell you what page just now—and it reads:

“No approval was granted by the San Fernando City Corporation to spend \$2.6 million in public funds”—which was—“spent on contracts for repair and reconstruction of the Skinner Park facility in San Fernando...”

In this article, Mr. Speaker, you have the Mayor of San Fernando being very annoyed because the council never sat to give approval to this \$2.6 million, but yet still for some strange reason, this particular contract was issued. The question lies: who else can give approval for contracts outside of the council sitting and giving approval?

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

We have also some \$13 million being provided under this supplementary Bill for the Diego Martin Regional Corporation for five contractors for scavenging services. I would like to know before we close off on this Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, who are these five contractors? It is a question that we asked on Monday and we still have not gotten answers on those. We would like to know who are those five contractors. We got the answer for the second part which would have been, which corporations would have been affected. The answer was Port of Spain City Corporation, San Fernando City Corporation, Arima Borough Corporation, Point Fortin Borough Corporation and Sangre Grande Regional Corporation. But with respect to the scavenging, we still would like to know who are those five contractors.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we also saw some \$70,955,000 under the Ministry of Sport for upgrading of recreation grounds. Again, in Laventille West, I have a number of grounds of which I would have submitted at least five to the Ministry for upgrading works. I want to believe that those five recreation grounds are within this.

Hon. Member: Not all five because we have to give everybody.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Not all five? All right. Well, I am hoping that four out of the five will be inside of here. I am hoping that I will be able to see the completion of the Beetham recreation ground, also that of the Point Pleasant Park recreation ground, the Pelican Extension recreation ground, and also some of our basketball courts, like the St. Barb’s basketball court, the Eastern Quarry.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am also looking at our community centres, because when you look at the figures here, you see absolutely nothing with respect to the Ministry of Community Development. But the Minister of Community Development indicated to the people, the residents on the Beetham, that the Beetham community centre will be completed by December 7th this year. He also indicated that work would have started by May of this year. May has gone, June has gone and absolutely nothing would have started on that community centre.

Mr. Sharma: Soon you will go.

Mr. N. Hypolite: So, I am hoping—well, you gone already. You gone already, sorry to say.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Naughty corner.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Naughty corner is joke. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are looking also at the community centres of which I would like to see the community centres completed. Because when you look around the country, you would see a number of community centres being completed, and therefore I think it is only just that community centres throughout the East-West Corridor, especially those in the constituency of Laventille West, be completed also.

We continue to look and hear about the development of the growth poles, and there is the east Port of Spain growth pole of which, again, for the past three budgets we have been hearing about these growth poles, growth poles, growth poles. Madam Deputy Speaker, the last I would have heard about something being done in the Laventille/Picton area with respect to the growth pole is to have some cable car to run from Picton to City Gate.

3.30 a.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I indicated to the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development before—[*Crosstalk*] I think we need to get a car to run from Picton to the Uriah Butler Intersection and if they have a vehicle to run from Picton to the Uriah Butler Intersection, the Members in the back who are making a set of unnecessary noise will be glad to travel in one of those air-conditioned cars. It will save them a lot.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, the cable car is the last thing that the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development would have spoken about and I indicated to him that at this point in time, the people in Laventille would prefer not to have that cable car but to rather take that money and put it towards development, put it towards the upgrade of recreation grounds, the schools, put it towards retaining walls, put it towards paving of roads—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: Box drains.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Yes, box drains which this Government, you know, they are perfect in putting down box drains because that is all that they have been doing for the past umpteen months. Box drains! But, Madam Deputy Speaker, what we want is to have our roads paved, have the schools fixed, and have retaining walls to protect homes from collapsing, rather than having that cable car from Picton to the central market which will cost a lot of money.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another issue that we are faced with is that of the East Port of Spain Development Company. The East Port of Spain Development Company, being a special purpose company to look after the issues and more so the development of east Port of Spain, has a process that they tend to follow which is, before any project is completed, they must get approval from Cabinet, so as to get the project started. We have not seen any projects coming out of the East Port of Spain Development Company throughout the east Port of Spain communities for this year just yet; and again, as we look at the Bill, we realize that there is still no kind of funding put in place for any project coming out of the East Port of Spain Development Company.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the East Port of Spain Development Company started a project in Beecham Coco with respect to the upgrading of some works in that community. A lot of work has been done, but yet still, for it to be completed, it still needs to be paved, the completion of the drains needs to take place, and, therefore, I would like to find out from the Minister of Finance and the Economy what is the problem there. We also have Jacobin Street Play Park where some work is also supposed to be completed there. We are not seeing any kind of money set aside for that. There is a list also for Sea Lots East Play Park, there are no funds set aside for that. The Point Pleasant Park pavilion, no money set aside for that either, and therefore, I would like to know what is the situation with those.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Education would have boasted about the amount of work and the amount of good things taking place in the education system. In the constituency of Laventille, I have some seven primary schools, and those seven primary schools, for the past three years, would have been submitting lists of issues pertaining to those schools. Some of those issues are pigeon infestation, schools needing to be repainted, toilets being destroyed, lighting fixtures needing changing, and for the past three years or so, within those schools—Laventille Girls', Laventille Boys', Our Lady of Upper Laventille, Chinapoo Primary and more so Escallier, not forgetting the Beetham Government, where those schools have a lot of issues and, again, I am pleading to the Minister

of Education to find the money, because it is not inside the budget here, it is not inside these figures here, but to find the money, and as school closes for the August vacation, to, at least, put some attention to those schools. It is simple things, the repainting of the schools. In one particular school, just off Picton, St. Phillip's, the school would have been closed for almost two months just around Carnival time because the eight toilets or so were all broken, and the school was closed down for about two months, and to fix a toilet, or to put in a new bowl would have been no more than \$1,000. If it is eight toilets, you are looking at \$8,000.

The crime situation in the Laventille community is something for us to be concerned about, but not only in the Laventille community, but it is something throughout the entire country. You have a programme called the Community Comfort Patrol Programme. Community Comfort Patrol Programme, to me, is equivalent to the Community Policing Programme. But it takes more than just that alone to solve a crime situation in Laventille and, by extension, Trinidad and Tobago.

We have to once again look at the protection of our borders as our main priority. We also have to look at parenting because what you find taking place in Laventille communities is a lot of teenagers becoming parents and therefore, it is something that we also need to look at. We need also to make sure that our young ones, all of those young ones, under the age of 16 especially, be in school. And therefore, maybe it is time for the school authorities to work hand in hand with the parents, to work hand in hand with the politicians, to work hand in hand with the religious organizations, the sporting bodies. We need all of these institutions to come together, work hand in hand, to try to solve this crime situation throughout this country.

Yes, we may have the LifeSport and LifeSport may be a programme geared towards identifying the criminal, taking those criminals and trying to transform those criminals through sports, but that alone cannot work. And the crime situation is getting even worse because, now, instead of you having civilians fight against one another, you now have the police getting involved, and you now have what is called "the police war" taking place, which ought not to be because the police are supposed to be trained to protect and serve and not to go outside there and fight a war against civilians.

And therefore, I think we need to look at the police service once again and let the police service refocus on what they are supposed to be doing. Gone are the days whereby a police officer will shoot to wound so as to disarm. What is taking

place is that the police, right now, is calling for this war, and therefore, it has to stop, we have to cease the gunfire that is taking place outside there. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Tell the gang men that.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Madam Deputy Speaker, yes, if the police are equipped with what they need, the proper tools, if the police are given what they need to go outside there and get the proper information, they will be able to solve some of those criminal activities that are taking place outside there. We need to get to the root of these problems. We have to get inside there. Police shooting at the criminals and the criminals shooting back at the police will not solve the issue.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with the protection of our borders, which will limit the amount of arms and ammunition that come into the country, together with the various agencies, the various institutions, the schools working together with the community police, the community police working together with the parents, is another step that we can take. But we also need to get the police to get inside there and put an end—you see, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have been in this Parliament a number of times to hear Ministers of National Security indicating that they know how many gangs outside there, and they know who the gang members are, and they know who the gang leaders are, but yet still, instead of trying to apprehend the gang members and put a closure to some of those gangs, “we calling up for ah war, ah war in Laventille, ah war in east Port of Spain”. I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that that must stop. It must stop! We need to have a multifaceted approach in stopping that so-called war that the police is calling for. Let us apprehend those who we can. Of course, some people will be injured, some people will get damaged, but we need to stop that war.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I said, I would like for the Minister of Works and Infrastructure to give some more details, through the Minister of Finance and the Economy, on the reasons why these 57 contractors cannot be paid for their 269 or so jobs because these are small contractors, and they would have—
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: “Yuh want to know now?”

Mr. N. Hypolite: Yes, please.

3.45 a.m.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Deputy Speaker, we are conducting a detailed audit on each one of these jobs and thus far, we have completed almost 100 of the

audits and in 90 per cent of these cases just about 40—45 per cent of work was completed and yet the contractors submitted bills for the entire amount of the works. And now that these audits have been completed, the offers have been made to the contractors and a number of them have now signed and agreed that this is the payment that they will accept and the audit is continuing.

Member for Laventille West, in all good conscience, I cannot take up public money and pay for work that has not been done and, therefore, the reports are there. Today I gave to the Minister of Finance and the Economy the first phase of the audit and the payments that are to be done.

Mr. N. Hypolite: So one would expect that probably within the next 14 days or so, those contractors would get whatever equivalent. Yeah?

Dr. Rambachan: Well, it also depends on whether the contractors turn up for the audits. Right now, a number of contractors are not even coming to be audited. They have to turn up for the audit and show us where you did the work, and so on.

We have situations where two and three contractors are coming and showing us the same job, as if they did the same job. We cannot do not. I am prepared to stand very firm on this one. I am standing very firm on this one. That is my duty, in terms of the public funds.

Mr. N. Hypolite: While I hear exactly what you are saying, you also have a situation where they are saying audits were done. Some of them had two sets of audits completed. So of them also have where letters were sent to the Permanent Secretary for payment, 100 per cent payment.

Some of these letters also state that everything is a-okay, the auditor passed it and they should get full payment. Some of them are also saying that 65 per cent was offered to them. Some are saying that 40 per cent would have been offered to them and some of them are saying that there is more to all of this. Again, I would like to see an end to this particular situation, if only because it is small businessmen which, I think you indicated in your contribution earlier on, that you want small contractors to benefit from the programmes that you all have going.

Dr. Rambachan: I have everything here.

Mr. N. Hypolite: You can send me a copy. I would not mind.

Dr. Rambachan: I cannot send you a copy. I can tell you. It is right here. They can give you what they want.

Mr. N. Hypolite: I would like to hear about five of them. I have time. It is only quarter to four.

Dr. Rambachan: Since they chose to come to you, I give you an example of one contractor. I would not call his name. He had nine jobs. On the first three jobs, one was valued \$290,000 and the offer made to him was \$237,000. Second one, \$270,000, \$232,000. Third one, \$277,000, offer made \$232,000; fourth one, same \$277,000 with \$405,000 of work. So too on the fifth job, the sixth job, the seventh job. On the eighth, ninth and tenth jobs submitted claims for \$277,000, we found no work done. I just gave an example of the first nine. I can go through all the jobs and tell you what the auditors are finding.

Mr. N. Hypolite: And seeing that you are so generous, maybe you can also share with me, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, out of the 289 projects, and these projects were basically to do some desilting and paving and stuff like that.

Dr. Rambachan: Not paving.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Just desilting.

Dr. Rambachan: And building roads.

Mr. N. Hypolite: And building roads, 289 projects. You see none again along the East-West Corridor. You see a whole page, Chaguanas West alone. Yeah? Any reason why? That is my last question to you. Any reason why only those areas are not—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Rambachan: If you read, maybe among the documents that they sent there to you, you would see that they said that the projects were chosen by the Agriculture Society and the farmers, so the projects that were recommended, those were the projects included. But there are projects along the East-West Corridor, projects up in Maloney. There are projects in those areas there. So it is in the East-West Corridor.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you. Madam Deputy Speaker, again I would end by simply saying self-praise is no praise, all right, and, of course, refer the Members to the Moody's report that confirms Trinidad and Tobago at a rating of Baa1. Thank you.

Miss Alicia Hospedales (Arouca/Maloney): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am happy, I do not know, at this hour, almost 14 hours later, to speak on the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2014.

I sat through the entire 14 hours listening, particularly to Members on the opposite side to hear what they were saying and was in shock when Members on the other side made reference to accountability and transparency and that everything that they do is open, transparent and honest. I was in shock and I was really amazed at the fact that they could come here and boast, not just to us here but to the national population about transparency and honesty.

I remembered their manifesto and I went into the manifesto and realized that is one of their campaign promises. They said to have an emphasis on transparency and accountability. In looking at the first report of this Session of the Finance Committee, I am totally amazed of the fact that Members of the Government will come and boast about transparency and accountability, when they have failed to be transparent and accountable.

If you look under Head 18: Ministry of Finance and the Economy, 16 questions were posed to them. They only answered four. When we look at Head 22: Ministry of National Security, 15 questions were posed through the Minister of Finance and the Economy, to the Ministry of National Security, six questions were answered. When you look at the Ministry of the Attorney General, Head 23, 12 questions were asked by Members on this side. Only one answer was provided. When you look at Head 24: Ministry of Legal Affairs, 24 questions were asked, through the Minister of Finance and the Economy. No answers were provided. In the Ministry of Food Production, Head 25, 17 questions were asked. Only 8 eight were answered. Madam Deputy Speaker, this list can go on and on and on.

I just want to highlight a few others. Head 59: Ministry of Tobago Development, 13 questions were asked, no answers. And the Members on the other side want to boast about transparency and accountability. Under Head 62: Ministry of Community Development, 16 questions asked, no answers. Head 66: Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, 10 questions asked, no answers. Under the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, Head 67, 34 questions were asked, five questions only answered and under Head 68: Ministry of Sport, 22 questions were asked and no answers were provided.

So when the Members on the opposite side come and talk about transparency and accountability, I would like to ask them: when, where and how? In total, when we check through all the Ministries that have come to make requests for additional funding for various reasons, a total of 265 questions were asked by Members on this side, through the Minister of Finance and the Economy to the Government but only 44 questions in total were answered and they provided the answers through the responses to questions emanating from the first meeting,

through this document, the responses to the questions emanating from the first meeting of the Finance Committee of the 2014 Session of the House of Representatives, 265 questions in total and only 44 were answered by Members of the Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, again, they are boasting of transparency and accountability. I wish the Member for Tabaquite had remained in his seat because the Member for Tabaquite said that they are not in the business of hiding things, they are in the business of open transparency. But this does not reflect open transparency when you have 265 questions being asked through the Minister of Finance and the Economy to Members of the Government and only 44 of the 265 being answered.

I sat there and I listened to him trying to convince himself that he believes that they are actually transparent and accountable. The Member for Tabaquite said to the Speaker that the Speaker needs to give credit to the Government for its penchant—that is what he said. I am just repeating his words—for openness and transparency. I say openness and transparency? Where? Where? Not in this House and not to the nation because they have not answered the questions that were posed to them, very important questions that were asked, where we sought to receive clarification from the Government, with reference to specific sums of money they are requesting to implement particular projects.

Madam Deputy Speaker, where was the openness and transparency of the Government with reference to the publicizing of the Community Comfort Patrol Programme? This programme, based on the information that was provided after a question was asked by the Member for St. Joseph, was implemented in the month of February as a pilot project. And how come nobody knows about it until now? How come nobody knows about it until now?

I remember on Sunday, residents from the Trincity area called me. We are part of this blog. We created our own little blog. They wanted to know more about the Community Comfort Patrol, because they did not know what the vehicles looked like, whether the vehicles were marked or not. They would not have been able to decipher whether or not it was an unmarked vehicle to distinguish between the unmarked vehicle and a vehicle of someone who is coming to rob them or so.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the information was provided to them in that the Community Comfort Patrol unit operates out of Lazare Street in St. James and it comes under the umbrella of the Private Security Network Commission. But who?

What security firms make up the Private Security Network Commission? Nobody knows. How many private security firms are actually enlisted under this security network? How many security firms actually have been contracted to provide this service to the community? How many communities have been serviced to date? Nobody knows the answers. We have not even been provided with the details, with reference to the agreement that has been established between the Ministry of National Security and these private security firms.

What is the legality with reference to this kind of arrangement? Nobody knows. And this Government wants to boast about transparency and accountability? What transparency and accountability, when four months into the pilot project—it is due to end this month. The pilot project is due to end this month and coming to the end of the pilot project then we hear about it, a little about it. We have not heard everything about it and we are asking for the Government to be transparent where this programme is concerned. We are asking you as well to answer. Give us the answers to the questions that we have asked. We are asking you to give us those answers.

4.00 a.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am asking another question: who is supervising these officers? I can tell you, a constituent of mine indicated that in a particular park in Trincity, he observed a patrol car parked there. He walked up to the car and the officers were not even aware that he was by the car, because they were reclined in their seats, right, resting in the car, probably sleeping in some instances, right? They were reclined in their seats, and not even aware that someone was up on the car just about to knock the glass to find out from them exactly who they were, and what they were doing, et cetera. Madam Deputy Speaker, who are supervising these officers? Who are ensuring that they are maintaining a level of vigilance when they go out to the communities? These are questions that need to be answered and I really hope that, you know, before the close of this particular debate, we would be able to get the answers to the questions that we are looking for.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when we look under the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, there is a heading under Goods and Services, hosting of conferences, seminars and other functions. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development hosted a conference in strengthening our families. When was this programme executed? We were not told. When was this programme executed? [*Interruption*] No, I am asking the questions. [*Interruption*] When was this programme executed? No details were provided with reference to the

breakdown of the expenditure for this particular conference. How many persons attended it? Where was it held? You know, this information is not provided, and you are telling us that you want \$5,525,000 for this particular initiative. Madam Deputy Speaker, again, where is the transparency? *[Interruption]* Where is the openness? Where is the honesty?

Mr. De Coteau: Would you give way?

Miss A. Hospedales: No, I am not giving way, not at this hour. You know, I am just asking the question. *[Interruption]* You would have the opportunity to respond to me. *[Interruption]* Where are the details that we have asked for? Even though, I mean, you said—*[Interruption]*

Mr. De Coteau: You are spreading malicious things, man.

Miss A. Hospedales: No, I am not. No, no, no.

Mr. De Coteau: You are being malicious.

Miss A. Hospedales: No, no, no.

Mr. De Coteau: Mischievous! I told you it has not started. You cannot see the details.

Miss A. Hospedales: No, but we are still asking the questions. You stated here, funds are required for the operational cost incurred in executing an annual programme. When? So that is what we are asking you. When was the programme executed? *[Crosstalk]* When is the programme to be executed? No answers to the questions. *[Crosstalk]* So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we need to get answers to the questions.

Under Head 24, Ministry of Legal Affairs, you have under Current Transfers and Subsidies, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Programme, over \$1,097,976 is being requested to meet the payment of additional claims made by victims of crime. We have not been provided with the overall number of claims by victims, the number of additional claims and the amount of money proposed to be paid to each victim. We have not gotten the answers, Madam Deputy Speaker, and we are talking about transparency and accountability. You all boasted, Members on your side boasted, the Member for Caroni East as well, talked about transparency, honesty and accountability, Member for Tabaquite, even the Member for Siparia spoke of it. Madam Deputy Speaker, we are saying that, you know, the Government owes it to us, not just to us as Members of Parliament on this side, but to the national population, to respond to the questions that we have posed to them.

The other area I want to highlight is under the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, they are coming here to ask for \$154 million, and they have not even provided us with the answers to the questions that we have posed to them. All they indicated was that they have a breakdown under the heading, Other Contracted Services. They said that they need \$75 million to meet the cost of flood mitigation works which include the cleaning of underground drains in cities and towns as well as the desilting of water courses. Madam Deputy Speaker, they provided a breakdown for the \$75 million, but what we asked, additional questions that we asked, if they could have provided us with the list of contractors, the work done, the work to be done, the amount paid to date, and the amount owed. Madam Deputy Speaker, we have not gotten the information. *[Interruption]* They also did provide the list of the watercourses, but they have outstanding information that we need to get.

The other thing I want to highlight is the fact under the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, the development programme, improvement to infrastructure and purchase of equipment. There were several questions asked with reference to the \$3 million, the sum of money requested for CARIRI, and what we were told is that the sum is needed for the acquisition of new equipment and machinery. We are asking them to list—if they could have provided us with a list of the new equipment and the machinery that need to be purchased, as well as—one Member, the Member for Diego Martin Central asked with reference to the policy agreement, with regard to funding CARIRI. Normally, based on the information that we have, CARIRI charges the Government a fee for any of the services provided. What we were trying to find out, is there a cost for—you know, to recover or is there an arrangement to recover the fee or the money put out by the Government to purchase the equipment on behalf of CARIRI? Madam Deputy Speaker, we have not gotten the answers to that.

Under Head 72, Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, there were several questions we asked. We were told that there is going to be an establishment of a skills and technology centre in Penal/Debe, the establishment of a training facility in Woodford Lodge, Chaguanas, as well as the construction of a drilling school in Ste. Madeleine, the establishment of a UWI South Campus, Debe, the construction of an open campus facility in Chaguanas, the construction of headquarters for the Ministry of Science, Technology, Tertiary Education, National Training Agency, YTEPP, Madam Deputy Speaker. For all of these development programmes listed under the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, we have asked for the overall cost of the construction, the names

of the contractors, and whether or not any work has been done, and if work has been done, the percentage of work that has been done, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are still awaiting the answers. Again, I make reference to the fact that they said that they are transparent and accountable, but we have yet to get answers, and these are just a few examples, Madam Deputy Speaker, remember there are 264 questions or 265; 265 questions, only 44 were answered.

The other area is with reference to Head 69, Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, under Contracted Services. They said that funds are required to meet the payments to contractors for works to be completed. Madam Deputy Speaker, we asked again, for the list of contractors, the description of the projects to be completed, the location of the projects, the amounts paid to date, and whether or not any money is owed to the contractors? And, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are still awaiting the information.

Under Head 56, Ministry of the People and Social Development, the Ministry listed non-profit institutions. They provided a list of 10, the Islamic Community Services, Halfway House Association, Community Action Resource, Visionary Learning Centre, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Vision on Mission, the Autistic Society of Trinidad and Tobago, the Centre of Hope, Nazareth Halfway House, the International Institute of Health and Human Development.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was quite surprised that the Ministry did not list under the non-profit institutions, the Transformed Life Ministry. Why I am asking this? I am aware, that Transformed Life Ministry provides a service of rehabilitation, as well as reintegration of street dwellers on behalf of the Ministry of the People and Social Development. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am really amazed to find out that Transformed Life Ministry was not listed under the non-profit institutions. So I would like to find out whether or not other non-profit institutions have been eliminated from the list, because an organization as important as Transformed Life was eliminated, and I am sure there may have been other organizations as well, that have been eliminated from the list.

With reference to Transformed Life Ministry and the service of reintegration and rehabilitation that they provide to street dwellers, I would like to ask, you know, the Minister in winding up, if he could tell us what the terms and conditions of the agreement between the Ministry and the Transformed Life Ministry, what the terms of agreement are? How many street dwellers are housed at the Transformed Life Ministry on behalf of the Ministry of the People and

Social Development? What is the cost to the Ministry to house a client at the Transformed Life Ministry and the total sum of money disbursed to the Transformed Life Ministry to date? I would really appreciate if we could get those answers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also stood here in amazement when I heard, you know, the Member for Siparia as well as the Member for Caroni East stand here and say to us, that there were no secondary schools constructed by the People's National Movement. Madam Deputy Speaker, I remembered—I just took time out to go through the Budget Statements of 2007, 2008 and even the manifesto of the People's National Movement. I found in the Budget Statement of 2007, that work commenced on 16 Early Childhood Care and Education Centres. And in the fiscal 2007 there would have been a—you know, an aggressive programme with reference to constructing additional Early Childhood Care Education Centres. So they said to us that we did not construct the number that we proposed to have constructed, and that is not true.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am aware, I remember in 2010, there was an ECCE centre in Valencia, on the Valencia stretch that was actually completed prior to May of 2010. *[Interruption]* And after May of 2010, that ECCE centre remained closed for approximately two or three years, Madam Deputy Speaker, and you know, this is what they are doing. Most of the centres, the ECCE centres may have been constructed, and what they did, they left them closed and then opened them, and said we constructed them. So I think that is not transparency and that is not accountability, Madam Deputy Speaker. *[Interruption]* In the Budget Statement of 2008, it stated that over a six-year period from 2003 to 2007, the PNM Government constructed 42 schools, they said we did not construct any, 42 schools including seven Early Childhood Care and Education Centres, and 30 schools including 16 ECCE centres were in progress, *[Interruption]* 16 ECCE schools were in progress.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you give way? Would you give way?

Miss A. Hospedales: No, no, no, no, not at this hour. We are going to end the debate just now. *[Interruption]* Sixteen ECCE schools were in progress, were in progress! *[Interruption]* Were in progress, all right? In the same period, Madam Deputy Speaker, 1,000 school repair projects were undertaken. So when the Members on the other side come and say nothing, no schools were built under the PNM, *[Interruption]* no schools were built—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Gopeesingh: They did not build any schools.

Miss A. Hospedales:—no, that is not true. That is not true. I am aware that the Aranguez North Secondary School [*Interruption*] was constructed prior to your Government coming into office. So to say that we built no secondary schools, that is not true. That is not true. In the PNM’s manifesto, Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Interruption*] it said, I am giving a report of our achievement, 30 new schools were constructed and—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Madam Deputy Speaker, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is 4.14, and he is—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Sit down nah why yuh”—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: What? Standing Order 40(b) and (c). No, no, you are being disrespectful now, Sir.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members, please, please please!

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Man, sit down nah.”

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, you may—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Why do you have to be engaging her? You had you say already.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South, have a seat, have a seat.

Miss A. Hospedales: I am not taking him on.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Yuh” telling untruth.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I know everybody is looking at the clock and the time, and I know that it has been a long day and a long night, and coming to the morning. So Member, you may continue. And I want to listen to the Member in silence, please.

4.15 a.m.

Miss A. Hospedales: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I was indicating, 30 new schools were constructed and 20 new secondary schools were in different phases of completion, [*Crosstalk*] so to say that we constructed no secondary schools, that is not true. That is a falsehood, Member for Caroni East.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to say as well, apart from the construction of secondary schools being at different phases, [*Crosstalk*] over 280,000 students, which include 27,500 ECCE students, 140,000 primary school students, 115—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Both Members, the Member for Port of Spain South and the Member for Caroni East, I am having extreme difficulty in listening to the Member on the other end. I want to ask you to contain yourself and to allow the Member to speak in silence, please. Member, you may continue.

Miss A. Hospedales: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I was indicating, apart from the record of constructing secondary schools, ECCE schools, primary schools, we can also say that, under the PNM administration, over 280,000 students, which include 27,500 ECCE students, 104,000 primary school students, 115,000 secondary school students, benefited from the policies and programmes of a PNM Government. Three hundred thousand students per year benefited from free public education support services. There was approval of over 275,000 applications for the GATE Programme; 8,000 HELP loans were approved and 400 scholarships a year, including hundreds of members of the population receiving bursaries.

The previous Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West used to say facts are stubborn things; they would not go away. Let the truth be told and let it be established as well.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to go a little to the wonderful constituency of Arouca/Maloney. I can tell you a lot about the constituency of Arouca/Maloney. I remember that the Member for Tabaquite—again, I wish he was in his seat—came and told us that the Government benefits all, serves all and I can tell you about my experience with reference to our community centre. [*Crosstalk*] Prior to the election in 2010, there was an approval for the construction of two community centres. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think you may need some breakfast. Member for Caroni East and Member for Port of Spain South and, of course, Member for Couva West, I am asking you one more time, both of you Members, to allow the Member to speak in silence. I want to hear what the Member is saying. Member, you may continue.

Miss A. Hospedales: Thank you. As I was saying, in 2010, prior to the May 24 election, there was approval for two community centres in the constituency of Arouca/Maloney—the Bon Air Gardens community centre and the Trincity community centre. The contractor was already on site beginning the preparatory work and the Bon Air facility they had already barred around the space where they were going to begin the construction.

And what happened? After the election, the project stopped completely, so what I did, I wrote the previous Minister of Community Development and guess what? I wrote him indicating to him that those two projects were already approved and the land was already allocated, et cetera. No response to my letter. So I brought the question in Parliament and when I brought the question to Parliament, he told me that, oh, how they are not going to construct it then because they needed to complete the community centres that were 50 per cent and up and they would begin it in the year 2013. The year 2013 came and went. By that time the Minister changed, so I had to rewrite the letter then to the current Minister of Community Development.

I wrote the letter, no response via letter, so what I did, I brought the question to Parliament. You know, when I brought the question to Parliament, he said that the Ministry of Community Development was reconsidering the design of the community complex or whatever they call it. They were reconsidering it; the design was going before the Town and Country Planning Division for approval; when they got the approval, then they would decide on moving forward. I brought another question to the Minister, he said once they got the approval, they would consider constructing in 2014.

I brought another question to the Parliament to find out from the Minister exactly what was going on. Hear what he said: yes, they have so many that they were constructing, but in not so many words, they were not going to construct the two that were already approved.

They talk about equal distribution and they talk about equity. Where is the equity in all of this? You know what I want to ask? Are the residents of Bon Air as well as Trincity not taxpayers of this country? Are they not? So I really do not understand when the Government talks about equity and service for all, these people have not been serviced. These centres were approved for construction and they cancelled them. Why? I am yet to get the answer. Why did they cancel it? Why have they not gone ahead and constructed these facilities, Madam Deputy Speaker? I need the answer.

Recreational grounds: I can give you a history on that, too. There was an approval for the upgrade of the recreational grounds: Bon Air Gardens recreational ground, the Henry Street, Arouca recreational ground and the Clayton Ince recreational ground.

After May 2010, I had to write the Minister, too. I wrote the Minister and I explained to him that these grounds are heavily utilized; they needed to be upgraded; the approvals were given and all that and there was no reply to my

letter. No reply, so what I had to do was to bring the question to Parliament in order to get the reply. Do you know what the Minister told me at that time? He said a survey on all the grounds was being done and when the survey was done, then they would conclude exactly which grounds they were going to do, et cetera. He said, at that particular point in time, the grounds were not going to be upgraded.

So, in 2011, I kept pressing the Minister when was it going to be done, when was it going to be done, when was it going to be done; no positive response. In 2011, officials from the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago visited the constituency of Arouca/Maloney and they asked if I could do a site visit with them, so I went. I took them to the three recreational grounds. We told them exactly what needed to be done; I had other people who were familiar with the grounds accompany me indicate to them what needed to be done, as well, to support the request that I was making.

Madam Deputy Speaker, do you know what they said? They gave us an assurance; all right, we will do this one and then we will do that one; this one will need a little more work, et cetera. You know what happened? They said to us also that the information would be published in the newspaper. When I checked, no recreational ground for the constituency of Arouca/Maloney in sight. None! None! No recreational ground for Arouca/Maloney in sight. The three recreational grounds are still in need of upgrade and they talk about equitable distribution. So all the people of Arouca, of Bon Air and of Maloney are not taxpayers at all.

They talk about equitable distribution for all. Madam Deputy Speaker, none of the recreational grounds has been done to date. I even appealed to the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, Minister of Sport, with reference to the Red Hill/D'Abadie area. Red Hill/D'Abadie previously, some years gone by, had a recreational ground that was located on the Eastern Main Road and Piarco Old Road. That used to be their recreational ground, but there were facilities built on the parcel of land. The land was reclaimed, facilities were built on it, et cetera, and so I appealed to the Minister to locate lands and establish a recreational ground in the Red Hill area. You know what the Minister told me. He has not identified any land and basically no recreational ground has been established to date. That is what the Minister of Sport indicated.

I want to tell you about the history of ECCE centres. I am raising all of this to let you know that this is how the Government treats with Members on this side. All of us have requests and guess what? All of us have requests and they have not responded to them.

With reference to ECCE centres, in 2010, the approval for the construction of an ECCE centre in Bon Air was secured. After May 2010, it was cancelled. I had to write to the Minister of Education, no acknowledgement again to my letter, so I had to bring the question to the House. When I brought it to the House, he eventually said, after a long while—I think I probably brought the question to Parliament twice—then he came and he said yes, they will construct the facility, but I think it has been on paper for approximately a year and a half now that they are constructing.

During the dinner break, he said he had to visit the site and that they would do it, but it has been since 2010 that this was approved. We are now in 2014 and they are talking about equitable distribution for all. Everyone has been benefiting. I want my constituents to benefit as well. I would like them to benefit. So I am looking forward to seeing that particular centre constructed.

The other thing: there is a particular school in the constituency of Arouca/Maloney, the Arouca Government Primary School. I asked the Minister to conduct a visit at that school because the school is an old school. The capacity for the school is 400. The school has a total student population of 600 students and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I appealed to the Minister, I told him about the inadequate space, inadequate lighting, and inadequate ventilation. The children are literally cramped into very small classrooms.

I asked him to visit so that he could actually do a survey for himself, with reference to the school. The school needs to be reconstructed. More than once I wrote letters, filed questions in Parliament, raised it during debates; so many times over and over, talked to the Minister individually as well. Yet still the school has not had even a sod-turning ceremony for the reconstruction of the school.

The other thing is the Arouca library. In 2010, prior our demitting office, approval was given for the construction of a library in Arouca, located at the corner of Market Street and Eastern Main Road. With the change of Ministers—this library thing changed must be three Ministers so with every single Minister I had to write to say that the approval was given and we would like to see the library constructed. It is a benefit not just to the constituents of Arouca/Maloney, but the constituents of Lopinot/Bon Air West because of the boundaries that we share. [*Interruption*] Yes, it is beneficial to both of us and you know what a positive impact it can have on the community.

I wrote all of that to every single Minister. The final one was to the Minister of Education. He did send officials from NALIS. They came in the year 2012; they

did a site visit with me and a member of staff. We went and we looked at the site and they gave a guarantee that the facility would begin to be constructed in the earlier part of 2014. We have passed the first quarter of 2014 and we are still waiting for the construction of the Arouca library.

4.30 p.m.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to know when the Arouca library is going to be constructed. As I said, it is not going to benefit the constituents of Arouca/Maloney alone, but also the constituents of Lopinot/Bon Air West.

Mr. Roberts: D'Abadie/O'Meara.

Miss A. Hospedales: Well, of course, yes. You all are neighbouring. I mean, it would benefit you all too. You know, you can come down and read our books.

The other thing that I want to raise is that the Member for Tabagite said: "If you want to work there is work for you to do, nothing is wrong in doing hard work." [*Desk thumping*] Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to ask him again—and I have raised this several times in this House—where is URP in the constituency of Arouca/Maloney? Where is URP? You cannot find them but, you know, they are working. They are working. Right? And they are getting paid to do "work". Where is URP?

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to know the location of the projects; the names of the contractors. I would like to know where are they? We cannot find them. They are missing in action, but they are getting paid. Madam Deputy Speaker, they are getting paid, and this is a matter for great concern. They are not contributing to the upliftment of the community. They are getting paid for doing nothing, and he is boasting and saying that if people want to work, there is work for them to do; nothing is wrong with doing hard work. I agree, nothing is wrong with doing hard work, but where are they? They are assigned to work, but they are not showing up for work. They are missing in action and getting paid for it, and that is a cause for great concern.

We have pavements to repair; we have drains to build; we have curb walls to build, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is so much that could be done, but they are all missing in action. I would like to know where they are; the location of the projects; the names of the contractors; the scope of work; the breakdown of the cost for each project; and the amount paid to each contractor for the projects done and the amount owed, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would like to know where is

URP in the constituency of Arouca/Maloney. I am sure Members on this side, my colleagues, can also ask the same question, where is URP in their constituencies because it is missing in action, and people are getting paid to do nothing.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would really hope that, in closing, the Minister of Finance and the Economy could answer some of the questions that we have asked. As I said, two hundred and sixty-five questions only 44 were answered. That is not representative of the transparency and the accountability that the Government boasts of. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Joanne Thomas (*St. Ann's East*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you to contribute my portion towards this Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it was just over nine months ago when this House approved our biggest budget in the history of Trinidad and Tobago for \$61.3 billion, and today I want to give focus to my constituency because in some areas we are considered forgotten and left behind.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the main areas that impacts on my constituency is tourism. Now, when we look at tourism and we look at the allocations given to this Ministry from 2010, we are looking at \$155.5 million in 2010; \$246.9 million in 2014 and now we have an additional \$7 million, bringing it to \$253.9 million overall for 2014. But I ask, Madam Deputy Speaker, what has been done for tourism in this country? What exactly has been done? And I looked back at the *Express* article of June 10, 2014, and you see in the article about the officers making trips to Argentina unapproved and you wonder: is this how our money in the Ministry of Tourism is being spent?

Miss Hospedales: They called it branding.

Mrs. J. Thomas: As my colleague just told me, she probably went to do some branding. Madam Deputy Speaker, I Googled the travel advisory for Trinidad and, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is amazing what is noted in that travel advisory for Trinidad and I would just read exactly what it says:

“Trinidad has huge divide between Rich and Poor, for a country with plentiful Natural Resources. The corruption of the successive government has failed to lift the standard of living of the people.

The level of poverty across the general community has led to a variety of crimes-including”—murder and muggings.

And what they noted to persons wanting to come to Trinidad:

“All general rules for travelling in Poor Nations apply for Trinidad.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, the *Hansard* record here would show how much I have pleaded for attention to be given to the north coast, because when you look at tourism in Trinidad and Tobago, the most trafficked area is the north coast. And in that same travel advisory, Madam Deputy Speaker, it describes beaches, and when you go to the site that says, “visit the beach”, it says:

“The beach at Maracas Bay is a lovely spot to swim in and enjoy the cool blue waters of the sea. The bay area is worth visiting for it’s scenic beauty.”

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is noted on the site, which gives further emphasis to my plea for attention to be given to the north coast.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as regards the Maracas Bay facilities, consultations have been held with the various interest groups and commitments have been given by the Government. Initially, the amount committed was \$78 million, but when I look at the allocation amount for Maracas Bay, it has now been reduced to \$20 million. Madam Deputy Speaker, I want the Minister to tell the residents of Maracas Bay and the national community, exactly what are we to receive for this \$20 million, because it is \$58 million short of what was committed.

I just want to remind the Minister, they did us the same thing for the Fort Abercromby. I know many of you here have heard me speak about Fort Abercromby in Las Cuevas. First, we had the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande in his capacity as Minister of Tourism, and he gave his word. He promised the people that the Fort Abercromby site would be refurbished and they can have it for use for visitors, and the residents of Las Cuevas, they would maintain the facility. Madam Deputy Speaker, all that was done, they sent a contractor and they painted and fixed one toilet facility. A contractor came and that is what he did. You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, he gave his word.

And then, after that now, we had the Member for Chaguanas East. He, too, said yes, yes, it would be done, we are still waiting. Nothing more has been done. And then the Member for Fyzabad. Of course, the Member for Fyzabad, he did not even respond to any of my requests. I wrote him letters to get feedback on this project that is supposed to be completed that was committed by the various two Ministers, nothing. Nothing, nothing was done! Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say the people of Las Cuevas and Maracas Bay and the north coast, we are not fools and they are taking us for fools.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to look now at the Ministry of Food Production. Now, I heard my colleague, the Member for La Brea, talk about the allocation amount requested for Other Contracted Services, and this amount is

required to meet the cost of maintenance and repairs to the agricultural access roads. I ask, Madam Deputy Speaker, could the Minister identify the agricultural access roads? But then we got our report as we came into Parliament today, and I got my answer. The answer is, no. Nothing for Maracas Bay or Maracas St. Joseph where a lot of the agricultural lands are situated in my area.

And then we look at the Agricultural Incentive Programme for the farmers for \$5,733,900 and, again, I ask: does this list entail any farmers? We asked for this list, as my colleague, the Member for Arouca/Maloney indicated. We asked for this list in our list of questions in our meeting on Monday. We did not get a response to that, but I can just guess that answer is no as well. Madam Deputy Speaker, Members on this side, the PNM, just keep getting shaft each time—each and every time we keep getting shaft.

I want to go—the Minister of Health is not here, the Member for Barataria/San Juan. When he first came in, I spoke to him about the Maracas St. Joseph Health Centre. Madam Deputy Speaker, if you see this health centre. The room where the doctors operate to see patients, it is smaller than even our bathroom facilities here in the Parliament. When you look at the window panes, they are broken. So the room, of course, is hot. The toilet facilities, you will not like to go in and see the state of the toilet. The door is in a bad state; the toilet bowls, they are horrendous. So, of course, the nurses do not even use there, and then you look at it—you know, when I walk in the health centre and I see all these senior citizens sitting down waiting patiently, and when you go and see where they have to be attended to, it is just total cobweb and woodlice is the order of the day. The Minister, Dr. Richards and a team came because of my constant pleading and looked at it, and the Minister gave me his word, yes, it would be attended to.

In the budget presentation for 2014, when I looked at the listing for health centres, nowhere is Maracas St. Joseph Health Centre there. Even then I asked him, I said, “Minister, I am not seeing Maracas St. Joseph Health Centre, would this be attended to? He said, “Yes, yes, I have the allocation for that.” Madam Deputy Speaker, we are now going into 2015, just now we will be coming to do that budget and, look at! Nothing for the poor people in Maracas St. Joseph, and yet \$40 million have been allocated for district health facilities and for health centres. But, of course, again, Maracas St. Joseph is not there.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when you look at the allocations and the notes that were placed in the supplementation report that we have here, under Ministry of Community Development, you are seeing allocations to private promoters for the

Chutney Soca Monarch and the International Soca Monarch in the amount of \$11.95 million. Right?

4.45 a.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Note said Cabinet agreed to the provision of support for Carnival 2014. This was under community development. It is my understanding that something like this should come from the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism. However, I have great concern for taking people's money and giving to private promoters to do the shows, because these promoters get sponsorship from other corporate customers as well. Apart from that, they charge huge sums to go to these shows, and at the end of the shows they are walking away with their pockets filled, and yet this \$11.95 million that can do so much in my constituency.

It could, at least, start the Maracas St. Joseph Health Centre. Even Fort Abercromby, it could get some work done there, so the people of Las Cuevas could maintain that facility and have a form of living. I am totally against taking money to give to these promoters who—a question was asked by the Member for Diego Martin North/East on Monday, when we were going through the report, and by the Member for Chaguanas West, for us to get a financial report on these private promoters, because moneys are expended there and there is no report on it, and you have people in our constituencies suffering. Madam Deputy Speaker, that money could have gone to do a lot of things in my constituency.

I want to go to the Ministry of Sport. There is the amount allocated for the Ministry of Sport and for the programme Taking Sport to Rural Areas. I do not know if any of my colleagues here can attest to having any kind of programme like this in their areas, and I doubt very much, but yet moneys are allocated for that; \$7 million for non-profit institutions. Who are those institutions? Where are these moneys going to? You see all these nice headers sounding very nice, Taking Sport to Rural Areas and, of course, the question is to be asked—which was again asked on Monday—can we get a listing of the areas where these programmes are being conducted? I know for sure there is none in Santa Cruz, none in Maracas Bay, none in Las Cuevas, none in El Luengo Village or even in Laventille Road in Febeau Village.

We all here have our office hours, and constituents come to meet with us. We all can attest that if 20 people come or 40 people come, 75 per cent of the persons are coming to request housing—at least 75 per cent and, of course, they ask us for letters. Sometimes you do the letters, but you know deep down nothing would be

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done, and you could see some of these persons have great need for the housing. The same thing applies to my constituents in Maracas, St. Joseph. There is a lovely development up there, and the constituents ask me: How is it you are seeing other people coming in and getting allocated to these houses? And when you do some checks, a lot of these persons have not gone through the lottery system in the HDC. They are friends of senior members of staff of the HDC. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not right; this is not fair. Then, of course, everybody voices it is equity across the board, but maybe equity for one side, because definitely our areas are not benefiting from this system at all. I really want the Minister to tell us what is happening at HDC. What is happening with the allocation of houses? I am sure he has many, many letters from all of us. What do we tell our constituents?

I have another issue my constituents asked me to bring to the attention of the Parliament. Madam Deputy Speaker, are you aware of what is happening at the passport office? Many persons have not been able to get their passports. You would not believe that persons have missed their children's graduation because of not getting their passports. When they go down to the passport office, every day they go it is locked up; they meet closed doors. You tell yourself there are people there managing that whole Immigration Department. So is it because the department was closed for OSHA regulations by the PSA, can they not operate somewhere else? There are branches in Sangre Grande, in Chaguanas. People are really frustrated with that as regards to a simple thing to collect your passport, and you are having serious trouble.

I just want to also alert the Member for Mayaro—who is not here—as regards to community centres in my area. I just want to remind him: the Gasparillo Community Centre in Santa Cruz—he started the centre and I keep reminding him. He stopped. You make complaints, you ask a question, he would come. They would do some little thing, “chirrup, chirrup” and it gone again. Since 2010, this small community centre is being constructed, and yet is not completed.

When you ask the Member a question, the first thing he shouts across to you is, “Why all yuh did not do it when you all were in power?” That is the first thing he shouts across to you. But if he could just extend to us the courtesies that the Member for Port of Spain South extended to him when she held that portfolio, it would be nice. Just to reciprocate the courtesies that were extended to him, that is all we ask for.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to remind the Member for Tabaquite again, I constantly make the appeal for the fixing of the La Hoe Road in the Laventille Road and, of course, the completion of the La Canoa Road.

I also want to remind the Member for Naparima, the Minister of Public Utilities, he has done some lighting for me. I just want to remind him again—I keep reminding him about the Gasparillo Recreation Ground. He promised that he would do it for me. I just want to remind him again.

Of course, to the Minister of Sport, that Brian Lara Recreation Ground in Santa Cruz, it started, we were supposed to get the pavilion, but just like other Members here experienced: they come, they tour with you and they give you a promise, and nothing after that. It is just a farce. You know, they just come, “Let us just pass and just fool them. Make them feel that something is happening.”

Hon. Member: Fool the people!

Mrs. J. Thomas: Again, the people are not stupid. The people in my constituency are not stupid—the people in our constituencies. We have waited so long, and if needs be, it is just a couple of months away; we will get it done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*): Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to join in this debate, the supplementation of the appropriation for 2014. Before I begin and, of course, I am going to be very brief—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Thank you.

Miss M. Mc Donald:—I am now here 15 hours. It is almost five o’clock. I would like to extend condolences to a couple of my constituents who died over the weekend very tragically: Mr. Kishorn Daniel, 19 years old, from Desperlie Crescent, he died on Saturday, June 21; to Mr. Sean Ayres, 15 years old, from Saint Paul Street, he died on June 22; to Miss Salandy, that is the mother who died with the baby. She died on Sunday, June 22.

The one that hurt me really, really bad, is Mr. Ralph Peters from Picton Road. He got killed at the corner of Duncan Street and Prince Street. I pass there all the time, because I must go up Duncan Street and swing back right into Prince Street to get to my office. Mr. Peters would always flag me down. He sold oranges, bananas, little stuff, dinner mints, cigarettes, et cetera and that is how he made his

living. I recall on Saturday was the last day he sent one of the activists to the area with four oranges and whatnot for me. I always get my little stocks. I just want to say that may God be with them at this point and may they rest in peace.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on Saturday I was in the constituency of St. Ann's, this is up at the Maracas Bay. I had a little problem up there, and I had cause to visit the Maracas Bay Police Station. I will tell you what, when I looked at the allocation for the National Security Ministry and I looked at the Maracas Bay Police Station, it is in such a mess. The furniture, the fan, I do not understand how those officers operate in that police station. I want to call out woman police Constable Singh. There was not even water, if you wanted to drink inside of there, and she asked me to wait for a patrol van to come back, so I can take them to an incident that happened. She came out to the car with a bottle of water. I had two other persons in my vehicle, and she served us the water. I was not expecting it, but I just want to say to woman police Constable Singh, I really appreciated it, and despite the fact that she is operating under those dire circumstances at that Maracas Bay Police Station, I want to tell her to keep the faith, things will change sooner than later.

I know the Prime Minister made a lot of statements, but I think that I would want to comment on what the Prime Minister has said, as I develop my very brief, brief contribution. This for me is like deja vu all over again, and I keep using that word in here, because we seem to be doing the same thing over and over and over again. It was just nine months ago that we came to this House with the budget for 2013/2014. You will recall at that time that the budget expenditure was \$61.3 billion. The Government is now seeking \$3,820,601,879 of further expenditure. This to me, as far as I am concerned, is scandalous. We are now saying that this figure, we are now putting our expenditure to \$65.1 billion for this financial year.

By way of expenditure, I just want to go back a bit and see what this Government has done over the last four years. Just to remind you, remind this House and remind the national community, in 2011 the expenditure when they came was \$49.9 billion, a further supplementation of \$2.7 billion. In 2012, the allocation was \$54.6 billion, a further supplementation of \$3.1 billion. In 2013, \$58.41 billion; further supplementation of \$2.9 billion. And now 2014 they came with \$61.3 billion and now this supplementation of 3.8.

5.00 a.m.

So, I am looking, based on these figures alone, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the past four years, we are looking at something as \$237 billion. And this is really

a worrisome trend to me, you know, because we are getting higher and higher Government spending. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are in the fifth and final year, and this Government has spent \$237 billion, and I ask myself whether citizens in Trinidad and Tobago have received value for their tax dollars.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when I look at this figure, to me, it is symptomatic of a lot of things. It is symptomatic to me of the Government's lack of ability to properly plan the country's programme. It shows a government that cannot get their budget arithmetic correct, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will tell you why. The budgetary process, although the Prime Minister quoted section 113, subsection (3) of the Constitution, that this is perfectly all right. Yes. But I do not think that the section envisages a situation where you would deliberately leave out expenditure, knowing full well that you have these projects going on; it is an ongoing process. You know that you would have to do certain things during the year. Because I remember when I was a Minister, we would have requested it from each department—let us hear, what is your planned expenditure for the year. Okay. They may come in and say, we want—assuming—a hundred thousand. It might be about 110, 115 or whatever, but the point is they submitted something; something was submitted. It seems to me, because these figures are so high, that there is a deliberate—there is a perception—approach in not declaring exactly what your true expenditure is when you come here to do your budgetary approvals. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, it raises other questions as to how will the projected revenues and this new level of proposed expenditure affect the deficit?

Now, the Prime Minister spoke deficit—and it is not a bad thing. I have always stood here and I have said it ad nauseam that deficit spending is not bad. It is used worldwide by governments in order to rejuvenate your economy, to get your economy back online, but the problem I always point out is, once you are there you have to also plan your exit. As you come in you plan your exit strategy out of the deficit spending. And we are going into the fifth year with deficit spending. And that to me is where the problem lies, not the fact that you are using it. In fact, what I am worried about, I have no problem with going, you know, the approach of deficit spend, my problem is, getting out of it. What is this Government's exit strategy to get out of the deficit spending in light of the fact that you keep increasing and increasing your expenditure? So that is why I say, there is a worrisome trend in the increase in expenditure every year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on Saturday, May 24th there was a celebration of sorts in Chaguanas; their fourth anniversary. Of course, Members were in a

celebratory mood down there. But I asked myself—I sat down at home and I looked at it—what can these people be celebrating? What are you celebrating when transparency, accountability, good governance have all been thrown aside, Madam Deputy Speaker? Crime rate is spiralling, rampant nepotism, bid rigging, wanton wastage and corruption, and they are celebrating. On top of that, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister spent over an hour, over an hour, bashing and—how should I put it, let me “doh” use that word in here; let me “doh” use that word. [*Crosstalk*] You are sure right. You are sure right. “Bashing”—I think that is a good word—the Opposition leader for well over an hour. And I am saying well why do you not talk about your plans and whatnot. I am looking at it, you know, talk about your plans, what “yuh” want. Tell us about the deficit. Tell us how you are going to get out of it. Give us, you know, something to hold on to.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have to use the language that I used here last year, and it came from the Member for Chaguanas West when he said that this country has become a “dungeon of despair”. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, over the past four years they are celebrating—four years—but over the last four years they have killed off the entrepreneurial spirit in this country. And if you look at the Central Bank report they will tell you that the borrowing by the private sector is very—they used the word—“tepid”. In other words then, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am scared about that because consumer lending has gone up, but who you really want to borrow—the people you want to borrow—the sector you want is that private sector because the private sector would be the ones who would be generating the jobs. As they borrow and they expand their businesses they are able to create employment. Those are the people you want to target and they—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: They are not borrowing, they are pouring back in profits.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Could you allow me please. I did not—Madam Deputy Speaker, “protect meh nah”. Oh God at 5.00 o’clock in the morning, protect me.

Madam Deputy Speaker: You have my protection, Member.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Member for Tabaquite, go back to sleep, please. [*Laughter*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, in four years we are witnessing the breakdown and non-compliance of established rules and regulations in our institutions. And I will tell you what, the evidence of poor budgetary planning can be seen from the following Ministries. As I said, I am not going to be long because my colleagues on this side did quite a good job, and therefore, I could be very brief.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have only selected just a few and those would be the large numbers. At page 33, that is under the Ministry of Tobago Development, under the development programme, I notice here that the Ministry—Ministry of Tobago Development, yes—\$34 million for the construction on building the meteorological services. And I am wondering, why was that not in the 2014 budget in September? It is not something “yuh” just get up overnight and say, “I am going to build, you know, this centre”, and you have to go out now and look for \$34 million. It could have been placed in the 2014 budget. I am first just giving you examples of how your budgetary planning process is very poor.

Let us look at page 37 under “development programme”; \$48 million, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am looking at that under “development programme”. Tell me, is it “development programme”? Yes. And this is under the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development—surveillance of Chaguaramas peninsula, \$4 million; strategic plan for Chaguaramas Development Authority, \$4 million; relocation of police post, \$2 million; boardwalk phase two, \$18 million; hosting of the America Competitiveness Forum, \$20 million. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we did not know this? The CDA board was not aware of all this expenditure. They were not aware of all this expenditure, Madam Deputy Speaker? And it goes on and on. I think my colleague here from Laventille West spoke about the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources with that \$95 million. Then we talk about the Ministry of Tertiary Education with their development programme of \$121,390,000. Then the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration, \$32,000 for all those festivals. And I recall when I was a Minister, they had to give us—to the PS—we had to submit to the PS, what will be for Indian Arrival Day, what will be for Eid, Divali, Emancipation and whatnot. Why were these figures not in the 2014 budget? Why? And it shows me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that they are not getting their budgetary arithmetic correct, and of course, they are not planning. I am saying, there is a perception now that this is deliberate. So therefore, if you had come here and you would have shown—[*Crosstalk*] why do you not have some class, and hush while I am speaking? Why do you not? Madam Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: You are protected, Member; go ahead.

Miss M. Mc Donald:—he is continuing.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, allow the Member to speak in silence.

Miss M. Mc Donald: And he wants to be a leader—no manners. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, and the thing about it is, you needed to submit these figures, and so you will know what you are doing. And I am saying, there seems to be a perception because if this Government had come here last September and said to this country, our budget, our expenditure is \$65 billion, it might have caused a hue and cry. But the thing about it is, why is it you come with a smaller figure, \$60 billion, and then nine months thereafter we come back to get almost \$4 billion.

Dr. Rambachan: Have you ever come back for funds? You are doing as if the PNM never came back to look for funds.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Madam Deputy Speaker—Madam Deputy Speaker, again I call for protection under Standing Order 40.

Madam Deputy Speaker: You have my protection, Member.

Miss M. Mc Donald: I am looking at the second issue here that worried me about these figures, and that is the issue of Contract Employment. And I want to highlight the following Ministries because there seems to be a lot of this thing called “Contract Employment”, and something called “Short-Term Employment”. Under the Judiciary, contract employment, \$19,026,864 million. Ministry of the Attorney General, \$5 million; Ministry of Legal Affairs, \$10 million; Ministry of Food Production, \$14,873,000; Ministry of Tobago Development, \$4 million; Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, \$5 million; Land Settlement Agency, \$3 million, giving you a total, Madam Deputy Speaker, of \$60,900,264.

You know, what I would like to find out, Madam Deputy Speaker, what is the Government’s policy on Contract Employment? And I hope the Minister could answer, and also too, on Short-Term Employment. And how does the Government explain the number of vacancies in the public service. And then to put up with the level of hiring of contract labourers. What is happening here? What is your policy on this? We have a lot of vacancies in the public service. Can we not try to fill those vacancies, as opposed to hiring all this contract labour to the tune of \$60.9 million?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Public Service Commission—[*Inaudible*]

Miss M. Mc Donald: Well, let the Minister explain it “nah”? Let the Minister explain it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would not say anything about the sports because I know that the Speaker had said that there is a substantive Motion to be debated, and so there are other things that I want to talk about, but I just want to go quickly, in the interest of time, to constituency matters.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to read from a *Hansard* here of September 16, 2013, at page 43. And this is the *Hansard* of the Member for Oropouche East speaking in his capacity as the Minister of Housing and Urban Development in his budgetary debate last September. And this is what he said—when you are talking about their achievements. He said:

“...this is our dream and our vision. When you leave the Mount Hope Hospital and you are driving south, you will see the COSTAATT headquarters and the science city at Chaguanas, Endeavour. Minutes down the highway, you will see a children’s hospital, with an overpass that goes to a car park on the western side of the highway, and you will walk over the highway into a children’s hospital.

Mr. Speaker, you go down that highway, you will then get on the highway to Point Fortin, built by the Partnership. On one side, you will see the building that is the Chancery Lane Hospital, and when you reach down further, you will see the University of the West Indies, South Campus.”

5.15 a.m.

“And when you continue driving you will eventually pass La Brea and Point Fortin to get to our heavy industry energy sector in Point Fortin. That is our vision.”

I think it is a wonderful vision. I do not begrudge those people anything whatsoever. What he perhaps forgot to mention when he was taking us on his journey, is the aquatic centre in Couva—remember that, the National Cycle Centre in Couva?

The establishment of a skills and technology centre in Debe, Penal; the establishment of a training facility in Woodford Lodge in Chaguanas; the National Centre for Non-Communicable Disease in Penal; the construction of a drilling school in Ste. Madeline; [*Desk thumping*] the establishment of UWI south campus in Debe; [*Desk thumping*] the construction of an open campus facility in Chaguanas; [*Desk thumping*] the construction of a headquarters for the Ministry of Science and Tertiary Education in Chaguanas; [*Desk thumping*] the construction of headquarters for YTEPP [*Desk thumping*] for the NTA; and then they asked the question—Mrs. Mc Intosh, Port of Spain North said, “and when you driving through Port of Spain”, and Mrs. Gopee-Scoon said, “what will you see?”—and in just one sentence this is what was said—“you will see a brand new port at Sea Lots, you will see a redevelopment project in east Port of Spain that will bring financial/commercial activity to the people of Port of Spain.”

And I listened to him, that was September 2013, and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I combed the budgetary documents and saw not one cent was earmarked in that budget for any development in east Port of Spain. Nothing! And the Government now has returned here today to get another \$3.8 billion and nowhere in those proposals—I read this document about three times—is there any room and not a cent for any development in east Port of Spain. In all the development programmes that I have seen listed here, I have seen nothing for any development in the east Port of Spain area.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have been begging for roads. I have been begging for roads at Plaisance in my constituency, Clifton Street, Basilon Street, Annissette Street; nothing. I have been begging for housing, because the housing stock in east Port of Spain is almost at its end, and nothing. Only empty promises. I have been asking for that dance theatre on Picton Road, and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to tell you that there was a little outburst by the Member for Mayaro here last week, which did not go down well with my constituents.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I had started when I was in office a dance theatre on Picton Road; the foundation is down, and what was intended there was to hone the skills of the young persons in that area where they would have found a place where they could learn to dance; they could have done “drumology”, et cetera, at that centre. It would have been the first dance theatre in east Port of Spain.

Dr. Douglas: Member, would you give way?

Miss M. Mc Donald: Madam Deputy Speaker, I had placed a question on the Order Paper in 2011—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Douglas: Member, would you give way a “lil” bit?

Miss M. Mc Donald:—to the Member for Naparima, who was then the Minister of Community Development, that Minister said by next year, he had no funds, by the following year he would try to assist, but, of course, you know they change around Ministers here very quickly.

Dr. Douglas: Member, would you give way a “lil” bit?

Miss M. Mc Donald: And, Madam Deputy Speaker, by the following year, the Member for Mayaro assumed the position of Minister of Community Development. I placed that question again on the Order Paper early last year, at which time the Minister said in his response, that, yes, it would be built by the end of the 2014 financial year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I checked the budgetary documents, it was not there. I decided I was going to place it again. The financial year for 2014 comes to an end on September 30. So, I placed the question there for the third time—the third time on the Order Paper, and when I asked, when he got up, he was annoyed, that I must go and ask—then decided to instruct me that I must go and talk to my elements. He referred to my constituents as elements in the community and, you know, he would have to look at national security.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I did not need national security to come to build any centre in east Port of Spain. That same Member for Mayaro, I built three community centres. [*Desk thumping*] I went a weekend with that same Member, a Saturday—two I opened, a Saturday with him, and one a Sunday, I opened with that Member. Even for Siparia, I built three community centres in the constituency of Siparia and accompanied that Member to open the community centres. It was equitably distributed. I, as a Minister, made sure that each and every one of us, and my colleague the Member for Caroni East, he knows that too.

So that little outburst he had here today certainly was not warranted. It was not warranted. I look at you as a distinguished gentleman, and that is why I feel hurt here today. Look at what happened in my constituency over the weekend. It is very sad, but I recall last year, I think it was from July, the Opposition Leader, we led a team to the Prime Minister's office with our 10-point crime plan, and in that crime plan one of the points there was policing of the communities; increasing municipal police in all communities across Trinidad, especially those constituencies that are deemed the hot spots.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if we had only done that, because we suggested 100 per constituency. And, there was agreement on the part of the Government with respect to that proposal from our crime plan, and nothing happened. You see, there is a lack of trust and confidence, but if we could go back to that policing in our community where you build the relationship between the members of the community and the police, you would find that things would work much better.

That is why I said you need to get a holistic view, approach it in that manner, and that is why the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and Leader of the Opposition, made such a suggestion last year—made that type of suggestion, and nothing has transpired. I am not—and as I said and I would say it loud in this Parliament, “I will not support violence; I will not support “badjohnism”. Not at all! But, we have to go back to that old mechanism of policing in our communities. [*Desk thumping*] That is where we have to go back. And, I will tell you what, talking to members of my constituency—I am not talking about those

elements, as the Member for Mayaro referred to, but they feel marginalized; they feel as if they are forgotten; they feel as if they are left behind.

Take, for example, the St. Paul Street recreational ground since 2010, and it is only one ground I am asking for, eh. Since 2010 I have been asking the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, the Minister of Sport; I have been behind him, "assist us with that recreational ground"? He will not do it. He will not do it, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I will say that the Member for Caroni East, the Rose Hill Primary School is almost completed and we thank the Minister for that intervention there over Rose Hill.

But, outside of that, Madam Deputy Speaker, what else is going on? What else is going on in east Port of Spain? What else? As an Opposition MP you do not have resources at your fingertips to do things in your constituency. You do not have it, so, therefore, you have to come to the Government Members in order to source goods and services for your constituents. And when you are treated like this, Madam Deputy Speaker—we may think that our constituents are not looking on, we may think that they are unintelligent, but they are quite intelligent.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I make a plea here again today, that there are certain outstanding issues in Port of Spain South, because what they are doing now, they are looking at other areas and that is being set up as what you call "a demonstration effect". That is what is happening. So, look what is happening across so and nothing is happening on my side.

As I said before, that there is definitely an inequitable distribution of resources and the City of Port of Spain is being systemically dismantled. And I hope that this Government will take heed, because I said, "we are at a melting point, a boiling point at this point in time". I listened to my colleague the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, and she more or less has the same—shares the same views as I have said here this afternoon—well, this morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And with those few words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy (Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Desk thumping*] and after having listened to the Member for Port of Spain South and all those on the opposite side, you would think that nothing is being done in the Opposition's constituencies, and I think that the position that they have adopted during this debate is really designed to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

Because, the truth be told, there are policy positions as it relates to the development within the relevant Ministries of the development of all the constituencies of Trinidad and Tobago. And having listened to the Member for Port of Spain South, she took the opportunity to use some choice words as it relates to—during her contribution—scandalous and worrisome and so on, and then she went on to speak about vacancies in the public service, and also concern about the amount of contract labour within the public service of Trinidad and Tobago.

Being a former Minister of Government, I think that it was indeed, again, misleading on her part to attempt to say or insinuate that the Ministers of Government were directly responsible for the issue of vacancies in the public service and, also, contract labour which exists within the public service of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is public knowledge, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the hiring or the filling of vacancies within the public service falls under the jurisdiction of the relevant service commissions and the Director of Personnel Administration, and in addition to that, short-term contract falls under the purview of the relevant Permanent Secretaries and so on, in the respective Ministries within the framework of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Additionally, I did not hear from the Member for Port of Spain South, what is their position as it relates to the public service and contract labour. [*Desk thumping*] I do not know if the position has been signalled already by the Member for Diego Martin West, and their political leader, when he said that if the PNM becomes the next Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the Government will abolish the Ministry of Local Government and will also abolish of Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration, which, as a person who has been involved in labour relations and so on in this country, I could only conclude that your policy is mass retrenchment of the public servants in this country.

5.30 a.m.

And I did not hear, Member for Port of Spain South, what is your party's position as it relates to contract labour and the filling of vacancies. I want to warn the public servants of this country and to warn the trade unions of this country to be very wary of those on the opposite side who are now adopting a pro-labour policy, attempting to embrace the arms of labour when their track record has been one of anti-labour, anti-worker and so on, since 1956. And the records are there to

say whether it is from the Industrial Stabilization Act, through the IRA and “Bloody Tuesday” and so on, and we could go on and on about the anti-labour position the PNM has adopted in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, again having listened to those on the opposite side, you will feel that they were never in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and they had no experience with this particular Bill which is being dealt with here. When the Finance Committee met last Monday and approved the supplementation of appropriation for the fiscal year 2014, in the sum of \$3,820,601,879, this is indeed expenditure that is needed for the continued development of Trinidad and Tobago and also to meet the needs of the citizenry of this country. Because out of this sum of approximately \$3.8 billion, I wish to reiterate the point that \$1.2 billion will be utilized for servicing or meeting obligations as a result of collective agreements which have been signed between the Government and trade unions in fulfilling our sense of responsibility to, again, the workers and citizens of this country.

And I make the point, Madam Deputy Speaker, that they seem to want to send a message to the population of this country that something unusual is being done in the Parliament today. And this is the furthest thing from the truth, because what is being done today is clearly outlined in procedures and policies within the legislative framework of this country and clearly it is not unconstitutional, clearly there is nothing to hide, there is nothing surreptitious or clandestine as it relates to the debate which is taking place here today. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the right place where this Government has come to obtain the appropriate authorization for the urgent and critical expenditure. There is no other place where we can go and seek the approval and seek what I would call the legal backing to do this supplementary appropriation.

Again, I wish to remind those on the other side, and I will come to the issue of the answering of questions and so on, because their policy position in this debate is that this seems to be something out of the blue. This seems to be something unconstitutional and so on, and I want them to answer the question, if in the years that they have governed Trinidad and Tobago, they as a Government did not come to this very said House to seek increases in budgets during what you would call, after the mid-term review?

I just want to reinforce and reiterate, and tell those on the other side, tell the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Deputy Speaker, in 2006 the PNM Government of the day sought an increase in the budget from \$30.6 billion to \$38.046 billion which was an increase of \$7.46 billion. In 2007, the PNM came to

this House for the budget to be increased from \$31.493 billion to \$32.618 billion, an increase of \$1.125 billion. In 2008, the PNM came for two such measures totalling \$8.6 billion, and the budget moved from \$36.4 billion to \$44.5 billion.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the trend did not stop. It continued in 2009, and the budget was increased by \$1.074 billion. I am forced to repeat some of the questions that were posed by a number of speakers on the other side, if during their tenure in Government they failed to come to the conclusion that in the execution and implementation of projects and so on, there will always be the need to increase expenditure and so on. And this is why I asked the question if this is something that they did not experience when they were in the governance chair of Trinidad and Tobago.

So based on what I have unravelled here or what I have read into the record, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is clear that the position adopted by the PNM during—or those on the other side, during this particular debate, is propaganda, is part of what I would call politicking, a smear campaign that is designed to make the Government look as if it is not in control, if it does not understand what it has to do in fulfilling its responsibilities to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

And I want to tell, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this Government which has been led by the hon. Prime Minister and Member for Siparia, understands its true responsibility to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. This is why in the shortest possible time, the Finance Committee met on Monday and today we were able to ensure that the majority of questions that were posed to the Chairman of the Finance Committee were answered. Because a recurring theme, for example, the Member for Arouca/Maloney, the Member for St. Joseph and the Member for Port of Spain South and so on, was that the Government was not forthcoming, was not willing to answer questions that were posed during this debate and the answers to this or the answers to the questions posed can be found in the information that was circulated to all Members during the debate today and also could be found in the schedule relating to the supplementation variation of estimates, 2014.

And yes to read into the record again and to indicate the Government's willingness to answer the questions that were posed to the Chairman of the Finance Committee, I just want to read into the record a couple of the responses that were provided to all Members in this House and during the debate. For

example, the Member for St. Joseph sought to find out the provision of information regarding the community comfort programme. And the response that was forthcoming:

Cabinet agreed to the implementation by the Ministry of National Security or a Community Comfort Patrol pilot programme for a period of four months with effect from February 2014. The Community Comfort Patrol Programme involves increasing the visibility of law enforcement in defined geographical areas through implementation of mobile patrols, effected by protective service agencies of the private security industry.

It is proposed that the CCP be aligned to the Rapid Response Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. The intention is to align both deterrence and detection with responses. Implementation using private security companies was approved by the Private Security Network Commission, a body registered with the Ministry of National Security. The patrols will be on a 24-hour basis, and the CCP vehicles would be equipped with GPS technology, communication equipment and swivell strobe lights. It is expected that the CCP would provide the necessary manpower to support the TTPS and maintain an immediate response time to emergencies and non-emergency situations which allows the TTPS to focus effectively on core policing activities.

I am saying to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to all those on the opposite side, that in the thick bundle that was provided, this is a clear-cut indication of the Government's willingness to answer questions that I want to put to rest—[*Desk thumping*]*—*to rest, the attempt to paint the Government in the light that it was not willing to answer the questions. There is a very thick and heavy bundle of responses here, Madam Deputy Speaker, and this is in keeping with the overall policy position of this Government and responsibility that we have displayed over the last four years in answering questions that were posed to all Ministers of Government during parliamentary proceedings and all sessions of this Parliament, so far, under the tenure of the People's Partnership Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when this Government went to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and sought a mandate from the people of Trinidad and Tobago, we focused on a theme of human development and prosperity for all. We focused on making no big promises, just sustainable development with you the citizen at the centre. And we focused on a commitment to inclusion and to equity, with a focus on accountability, transparency, representation, consultation, participation and inclusion, prosperity and equity, planning and development with the future in mind; quality of life today, sustainability tomorrow.

5.45 a.m.

During the debate, as the debate evolved, a number of those on the opposite side attempted to paint this Government as the “box drain” Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Well, I want to say that the construction of box drains is part of a holistic plan of infrastructural development in Trinidad and Tobago, and this is something that the people in the 41 constituencies wanted. They wanted it as a result of the rural neglect of the PNM—the 40-odd years of rural neglect that has led to widespread flooding and drainage problems in all of the 41 constituencies.

The infrastructural development will continue apace under this Government. And people-centred development must not be only seen in the context of infrastructural development, it must be seen from the point of view of the lighting of recreation grounds, construction of walking tracks and jogging tracks, pavilions, which has been forthcoming through the Ministry of Sport and the Ministry of Local Government and so on.

So there is an overall thrust of people-centred development under the People’s Partnership Government, and I wish to say that those on the other side really cannot connect with people-centred development and improving the dignity and quality of the lives of persons and citizens. That is why they have a problem with box drains being constructed.

Hon. Member: They want the box drains too, “yuh know”.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Well, I know—[*Crosstalk*] Madam Deputy Speaker, I know for a fact—I was listening to this entire debate, even the Members for Port of Spain South, Laventille West and so on, were posing questions to the Member for Tabaquite and the distinguished Minister of Works and Infrastructure: “When will I get my box drain?” They want to know which road will be paved, when. The Member for Arouca/Maloney kept badgering the Minister of Sport: “When will you develop the grounds” and so on.

Miss Hospedales: “What yuh want meh to do?”

Hon. R. Indarsingh: In 10 years, the Member for La Brea apparently got nothing. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Arouca/Maloney, the moment the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy got up and started to make his contribution, you have started to carry on. I know you are trying to

stay awake. All of us, as well, are trying to stay awake. I want to ask you to allow the Member to speak in silence so all of us can hear him. You may continue, Member.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I need no protection from the Member for Arouca/Maloney or any of those on the other side. I could take them on collectively. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I was saying, this whole focus of people-centred development is something that those on the other side really cannot connect with. I think they envy the level of delivery that has occurred under the People's Partnership Government led by our hon. Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, for the last four years in terms of what they have been seeing occurring in their own backyards, and this is posing a threat to them in terms of the dynamics of the politics which will evolve in 2015 and so on.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to take the opportunity here, in winding up, to re-emphasize some of the salient points which have been expressed by the Minister of Finance and the Economy. The economy of Trinidad and Tobago continues to expand and is, what I would call, at a critical juncture in terms of where we are at from a robust growth rate and so on, and as indicated, our economy is projected to expand, or to grow, by 2.9 per cent in 2014 and projected to grow by 3.2 per cent in 2015. Inflation rates remain well controlled because of what we have done over the last four years and with four successive, progressive budget presentations, which has moved Trinidad and Tobago from negative economic growth to positive economic growth. Foreign direct investments are continuously increasing.

I just want to quote from an article that was written by Mr. Aleem Khan, published on Thursday, June 12, 2014: Trinidad and Tobago, the sixth largest foreign direct investment recipient in the region in 2013. I quote:

“T&T received the sixth largest inflow of foreign direct investment...as a percentage of gross domestic product...in Latin America and the Caribbean...in 2013, according to a UN ECLAC Briefing Paper released in May. On the flip side...T&T was the largest foreign investor in the Caribbean, registering US \$603 million in the first three-quarters.”

And this has been further emphasized by what is to take place in relation to foreign direct investment in the energy sector, where recently, in 2010, according to the Central Bank, foreign direct investment stood at US \$501 million in 2010. That figure surged in 2012 to US \$2.3 billion and it is expected to increase to approximately US \$3 billion by 2015.

I wish to also reiterate and re-emphasize, there is no foreign exchange shortage in Trinidad and Tobago. I wish to reiterate because during this particular debate led by the Leader of the Opposition and, I think the Member for Diego Martin North/East, they attempted to create, again, this state of panic and fear within the minds of the citizens of this country—and Member for St. Joseph, you were part of that irresponsibility on the part of the Opposition of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*] Well, I do not know if you—I know that you are supposed to be well-read, but I do not know if you read from [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Wednesday, June 11, 2014, an article entitled: “Businessmen: US\$ supply has improved”—in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Member: He “miss” that.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: I want to just read into the record again, Madam Deputy Speaker, because—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: He is being sensationalist.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—they are just being sensationalist; they are trying to instil a sense of confusion, panic, fear and hysteria in the minds of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and this has been the dishonest and disingenuous politics of the PNM over the last four years, and we can go back to 1956. Come from 1956 up to 2014, this has been your track record; this has been your DNA; this has been your mantra over the years [*Desk thumping*] in terms of how you approach the politics and how you attempt to engage the citizens of this country.

“Two members of the business community yesterday stated the supply of US foreign currency had improved. Anthony Aboud, chief executive officer, Genetics Pharmaceuticals Ltd yesterday said the company received the full amount of US foreign currency it requested from the bank. Aboud added that within the last two weeks, the company has been able to settle its bills comfortably...”—and so on. [*Desk thumping*]

In addition—and I am quoting from the article, Madam Deputy Speaker:

“The Central Bank injected US \$50 million”—in June—“and US \$200 million in May.”

So, just to further reiterate:

“Dominic Hadeed, managing director of Blue Waters Products Ltd, who also banks with a commercial bank, said the supply of US foreign currency had improved. ‘It’s back for us, how it used to be prior to the change in the system that caused the problem’.” [*Desk thumping*]

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, these are two very experienced businessmen, two distinguished entrepreneurs within the business community of Trinidad and Tobago. This is nobody on this side saying it. Two distinguished businessmen, who employ hundreds of workers in Trinidad and Tobago, telling the national community that the system in terms of the supply of foreign exchange is back to normal in terms of what experiment, or what measures or policies had been put in place by the Governor of the Central Bank.

And you know what worried me too, Madam Deputy Speaker? I would have heard from those on the opposite side, the contempt, the disdain that they displayed for the office of the Governor of the Central Bank when some of them referred to the sitting Governor of the Central Bank as an OJT. I think that anybody who is aspiring, or trying to become the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and would look at your Governor of the Central Bank in such a callous and derogatory way, I think that the population of Trinidad and Tobago needs to take a second look in terms of whether they are ready to be the next Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: “Dey eh ready yet.”

Hon. R. Indarsingh: So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to put on the record that the foreign exchange system has been normalized, according to the views which have been expressed by members of the business community of Trinidad and Tobago. During the debate, the Minister of Finance and the Economy again reiterated that there will be no fire sale with respect to the assets of Clico. There will be no fire sale. And, again, you know when the Member for Diego Martin North/East gets up to speak, he seems to always become over-awed by the occasion, and in becoming over-awed, again, he becomes sensationalist; he misleads the population and so on, with false information, half-truths and so on, and falsehood.

This Government has continued to display a sense of responsibility in dealing with the issues of the financial system and bringing about a sense of stability to the financial system since we assumed power. We had to deal with the collapse of Clico and CL Financial, the Hindu Credit Union and so on, and today, whatever we do, we will do it in the interest of ensuring that the investors and depositors who had their investments will get the largest returns on their investments and also to ensure that there is continued confidence in the financial system of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

From where we sit, too, we are putting all the appropriate systems in place to ensure that there is proper accounting and recording of expenditure and revenues.

This is why this Government, led by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, has not been afraid to institute and to carry out audits and forensic audits and so on, in terms of where allegations have been made as they relate to expenditure and so on, and where expenditure and accounting have been questioned in certain operations of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, we have been very progressive. We have been very aggressive in taking a position that is designed to ensure that there is accountability and transparency in the operation of business and in the operations of Government.

6.00 a.m.

I cannot recollect, I do not know if anybody, the more experienced Members on this side could guide me, did the PNM ever conduct any audit—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: No.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—or any forensic audit in terms of when questions arose with respect to the way that they would have spent moneys in state enterprises and Ministries and so on? So that is the difference in terms of what the people of Trinidad and Tobago voted for. The people voted for change in relation to what they wanted in terms of transparency and accountability, and that is what you are getting in terms of what we are doing. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to say to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we have been able to deliver goods and services throughout the country while maintaining good macroeconomic fundamentals. I want to reiterate and turn to some of the specific issues raised by Members of the Opposition during this debate. Mr. Speaker, that first issue relates to the LifeSport Programme. Madam Deputy Speaker, sorry. I want to categorically state that there will be no release or disbursement of funds for this programme until the present audit which is being conducted is completed, and a thorough and proper review of the findings are done to the satisfaction of the relevant stakeholders and the Corporation Sole.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another issue raised by the Opposition, is why debt financing was not used to fund the Point Fortin Highway. The allegation here is that lenders would scrutinize payment. However, on the other hand, when the Government borrows, the Opposition is of the view that we are mortgaging the future of this country. And, I also want to say to those on the opposite side that they seem to be concerned or obsessed with the business of the National Gas Company.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what they will not tell you is that when they were in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, they used the funds of the National Gas Company for purposes outside of the energy sector. They will not tell you that they used the funds of the National Gas Company to engage in the rehabilitation or the building of the Camden Road in Couva—not the Camden Road sorry, but the Rivulet Road in Couva. Much has been said of the joint venture between WASA and NGC as it relates to the waste water plant, but, this is needed in terms of—it will support projects on the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. In relation to the concerns which have been raised here during this debate, as I said, a number of the responses could be found—or the question—in the papers which have been circulated and also the supplementation. I am trying to ensure that I point to the right document, the schedule relating to supplementation variation of estimates 2014.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we will continue to build Trinidad and Tobago with a sense of responsibility to ensuring that there is accountability, transparency in whatever we do. We will ensure that we spread the resources of Trinidad and Tobago equitably across the 41 constituencies [*Desk thumping*] and we will ensure that there is progressive development in this country under the People's Partnership Government, under the leadership of the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this House adopt the First Report (2013/2014) Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2014 Appropriation.

**FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION
OF APPROPRIATION) (FINANCIAL YEAR 2014) BILL, 2014**

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy (Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh): Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move:

That a Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation (Financial Year 2014) Act, 2013, be now read a second time.

I beg to move.

Finance Bill, 2014

Thursday, June 26, 2014

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Question put: That the Bill be read a second time.

Miss Mc Donald: Division.

The House divided: Ayes 18 Noes 5

AYES

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.

Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.

Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.

Seemungal, Hon. J.

Roberts, Hon. A.

Cadiz, Hon. S.

Baksh, Hon. N.

Griffith, Hon. Dr. R.

Baker, Hon. Dr. D.

De Coteau, Hon. C.

Douglas, Hon. Dr. L.

Samuel, Hon. R.

Indarsingh, Hon. R.

Roopnarine, Hon. S.

Ramdial, Hon. R.

Partap, C.

Sharma, C.

Ramadharsingh, Dr. G.

NOES

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Finance Bill, 2014

Thursday, June 26, 2014

Hypolite, N.

Deyalsingh, T.

Thomas, Mrs. J

Hospedales, Miss A.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

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 Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Madam Deputy Speaker, at 6.13 in the morning, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow, Friday, June 27, 2014 [*Laughter*] at 1.30 p.m. Madam Deputy Speaker, that day is set aside for Opposition business, Private Business, and I will ask the Opposition Chief Whip to serve notice as to the matter for debate at that sitting. I beg to move.

Miss Mc Donald: Madam Deputy Speaker, I hereby give notice to the Government that we will be doing Motion No. 10 under Private Business, that will be the Motion on the LifeSport Programme, tomorrow, Friday, June 27, 2014.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.14 a.m.