

BELIZE**No. HR26/1/11****HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES****Thursday, 26th March, 2015****10:18 A.M**

Pursuant to the Direction of Mr. Speaker on the 15th March 2015, the House met on Thursday, 26th March 2015, in the National Assembly Chamber, Belmopan, at 10:18 AM.

Members Present:

The Hon. Michael Peyrefitte, Speaker
 The Hon. Dean O. Barrow (Queen's Square), Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
 The Hon. Gaspar Vega (Orange Walk North), Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture
 The Hon. Erwin R. Contreras (Cayo West), Minister of Trade, Investment Promotion, Private Sector Development and Consumer Protection
 The Hon. Patrick J. Faber (Collet), Minister of Education, Youth and Sports
 The Hon. Manuel Heredia Jr. (Belize Rural South), Minister of Tourism and Culture
 The Hon. Anthony Martinez (Port Loyola), Minister of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation
 The Hon. John Saldivar (Belmopan), Minister of National Security
 The Hon. Wilfred P. Elrington (Pickstock), Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs
 The Hon. Rene Montero (Cayo Central), Minister of Works and Transport
 The Hon. Pablo S. Marin (Corozal Bay), Minister of Health
 The Hon. Santino Castillo (Caribbean Shores), Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
 The Hon. Hugo Patt (Corozal North), Minister of State in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture
 The Hon. Herman Longsworth (Albert), Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
 The Hon. Mark King (Lake Independence), Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation
 The Hon. Edmond G. Castro (Belize Rural North), Minister of State in the Ministry of Works and Transport, Deputy Speaker
 The Hon. Omar Figueroa (Cayo North), Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister
 The Hon. Elvin Penner (Cayo North East)
 The Hon. Francis Fonseca (Freetown), Leader of the Opposition
 The Rt. Hon. Said Musa (Fort George)
 The Hon. John Briceño (Orange Walk Central)
 The Hon. Florencio Marin Jr. (Corozal South East)
 The Hon. Michael Espat (Toledo East)
 The Hon. Julius Espat (Cayo South)
 The Hon. Dolores Balderamos Garcia (Belize Rural Central)

The Hon. Rodwell Ferguson (Stann Creek West)
 The Hon. Oscar Requena (Toledo West)
 The Hon. Ivan Ramos (Dangriga)
 The Hon. Jose Mai (Orange Walk South)
 The Hon. Ramiro Ramirez (Corozal South West)

Members Absent:

The Hon. Michael Finnegan (Mesopotamia), Minister of Housing and Urban Development – Absent due to the death of his mother.
 The Hon. Marco Tulio Mendez (Orange Walk East)

MR. SPEAKER in the Chair.

PRAYERS by Pastor Conrad Arzu.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

MR.SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please allow me to make two acknowledgements. I would like to acknowledge some students here all the way from Corozal, from the Corozal Community College. They are here to observe the budget debates and I hope we don't disappoint them over the next two days or if just for the day that they are here today. So welcome students from Corozal Community College (CCC). Enjoy and learn and thanks for coming.

Secondly, Honourable Members, if some of us may notice some of us, the glaring absence of our beloved colleague from Mesopotamia. I would like to take this opportunity to say to the Finnegan's and Myvette's family, our condolences for the passing of his mother. The Minister for Housing has indicated to me today, and yesterday as well, that he would not be attending the debate, we'll surely miss him. I ask all of you to keep him in our prayers and to wish the family well during their time of bereavement.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, If you would allow me simply to join you in offering condolences to the Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for Mesopotamia. As most people in this House will know, Minister Finnegan and I have been friends from our teenage years, which is a long, long, long time ago. It means that I have known his mother, Ms. Esmay, for those very many years, and, in fact, there is another dimension to the connection, she is the grandmother of my eldest child.

I, therefore, feel her death, personally, as well as of course very much so on behalf of her son, our colleague, and her other children. She was a fine lady, a tower of strength, tremendous mother, and wife, and certainly a sort of the earth Belizean. So, I am grateful to you for allowing me to associate myself with the condolences you expressed on behalf of the entire Chamber. Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF REPORT FROM COMMITTEE

HON. J. SALDIVAR (Minister of National Security): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the Report from the Finance and Economic Development Committee on the Alba Petrocaribe Belize Energy Limited Loan Motion, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that Report is ordered to lie on the Table.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL

1. Petrocaribe Loans Bill, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a Bill for an Act to make special provisions for borrowing money from Alba Petrocaribe (Belize Energy) Limited; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

The Bill has the recommendation of the Cabinet.

And perhaps I should say a few words in explanation upon the introduction of this Bill. I noticed that on the news last night, some of the people from the other side had all sorts of absolutely untrue things to say, kind of continuation of the effort that we saw right from the start, to demonize the government with respect to the Petrocaribe funding and signaling their intention once again, to try to derail what has been a wonderful initiative that has powered development and transformation all across this country. (Applause) Mr. Speaker, we are not going to allow that to happen.

We have come to this House. There was just the Report from the Committee with respect to the latest Resolution, the latest Motion that we introduced into this Chamber with respect to Petrocaribe Funds. We explained time and again, the peculiar nature of the arrangement. The fact that it is not properly provided for, in terms of the current laws on our statute book, the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, and that every effort we have made in terms of bringing before this House, retro-respective loan motions to validate the borrowing, supplementary Bills, now Acts, to in fact, retro-respectively again, validate the spending under Petrocaribe. Everything that we've done has set out on each occasion every last detail of the spending done by way of Petrocaribe to make sure that there is utter and complete transparency with respect to what has been taken place by way of the transformation. Notwithstanding that, I repeat, there has been this insistence on the part of those on the other side that they will do everything to try to take away from the country of Belize, the tremendous boom, the tremendous windfall that Petrocaribe represents.

They are advised by lawyers who pick at every last little thing they can find to try to question and to quarrel with Petrocaribe. It is in that context that our own legal advisors made the recommendation to us that we now pass a special Act to deal with Petrocaribe and the funds flowing there from, in a way that will make the provisions that we simply can't extract a piece out of the current legislation dealing with loans and dealing with the spending of loan monies. So, that is all this Bill is seeking to do. Consolidate what has already happen, retro-respectively, validate what has happen by way of this specific Act, focusing on and dealing exclusively with Petrocaribe and provide that going forward, there is now the authority of the House to borrow in the peculiar circumstances that prevent us from beforehand, bringing to the House the details of the borrowing since we can't know what the sums are going to be, given the sliding scale, given the, as I said the peculiarity of the arrangement.

I won't even call his name, one Member on the other side, you know let me try to restrain myself, said that under this Bill, if it were to be passed, I would be able to write a Petrocaribe cheque to my family. How ridiculous! How absolutely outrageous! Mr. Speaker, if this Bill is passed, all it does is to put beyond question our ability, the authority, the jurisdiction to continue to borrow from APBEL, to continue to make use of the Petrocaribe Funds. All the monies will still be a part of the Consolidate Revenue Fund of this country. The Central

Bank will continue to keep the monies in the special account. Every time there is any withdrawal to continue to fund the transformation of this country, it goes through the Ministry of Finance under the complete supervision oversight of the Financial Secretary and all the officials in the Ministry of Finance, who have time and again, come before the nation to say, this is all above the board and here are the details. It cannot change as well the oversight that Venezuela, continues to maintain over the funds. This is a bilateral program and we account to Venezuela. And unlike them who diverted the \$20 million for Housing, (Applause) taking the Venezuelans completely by surprise, we, periodically, send them or meet with them, and provide them with the figures, with all the details of the spending. We will continue to do that. And while if this Bill is passed, it puts beyond doubt our ability to continue to engage in this borrowing which the Belizean people will absolutely be grateful for.

Periodically, again, as we spend, we will come to the House with the supplementary Bills to, in fact, indicate where the spending has reached at a particular point in time. Allow a debate on the spending that has taken place, and then try to pass the Supplementary Appropriation. In fact, I am undertaking that we will do that half yearly. I have already signaled that we will come back with a mid-year budget, we can do it then, or if they want we can do it every three months. There is nothing to hide. We want the Belizean people to know the details. We want them to continue to be impressed by how very much we are spending on the transformation of their lives, on the transformation of this country. (Applause)

So, Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure in introducing this Bill which will put the matter once and for all, in my view, and in the view of our attorneys beyond any possible doubt, beyond any possible legal challenge. You can continue, by the time you all come back, we will already called the other election and run you out of the House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Member.

HON. F. FONSECA (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say because my understanding is that the intention is to pass this Bill through all its stages although the Prime Minister has not said that this morning. And I want to place on the record that we object to the passage of this Bill through all its stages today, Mr. Speaker. This is not only a scandalous piece of legislation, it is unconstitutional and the Belizean people should have an opportunity to read this Bill, and to understand this Bill, and to express their views on this Bill before it is passed through this House. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that Bill is referred to the Finance and Economic Development Committee for examination, consideration and report.

Bill read a first time.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): It does not surprise me that he said that while we intend to pass the Bill through all its stages, I had not so indicated. He doesn't even know the Standing Orders; he doesn't even know the Order of the day. It is now that I say it, Sir. You have been there too long to be so absolutely ignorant.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order No. 49 (1), now, at the appropriate point, I move that the Bill be taken through all its stages forthwith. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the next stages of this Bill be taken forthwith.

HON. D. B. GARCIA (Belize Rural Central): Mr. Speaker, may I make a point of order?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Member.

HON. D. B. GARCIA (Belize Rural Central): Mr. Speaker, it is disgraceful that the Prime Minister of this country is using that kind of unparliamentarily language in this House.

MR. SPEAKER: What was the language, Member?

HON. D. B. GARCIA (Belize Rural Central): It is an absolute disgrace.

MR. SPEAKER: Say it, what did he say? Say it, Member.

HON. D. B. GARCIA (Belize Rural Central): Calling people ignorant.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the next stages of this Bill be taken forthwith.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it. (Applause)

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I move, and again, this is the appropriate time for those who are ignorant, which means lack of knowledge. When you are ignorant, it means you lack knowledge.

I move that at its rising today, the House adjourn to Friday, 27th March 2015, at 10:00 AM.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the House at its rising today, adjourn to Friday, 27th March 2015, at 10:00 AM.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, it has been agreed that the Petrocaribe Loan Bill, 2015, pass this day.

As you are well aware, under Standing Order No. 74, all proposed Legislation, Messages, Petitions, Motions and other matters relating to the subject mentioned under the title of each Standing Committee shall be referred by the House to such Committee for examination, consideration and report to the House.

The only logical way for this to be done, other than by suspension of the Standing Orders, is for me to suspend the Sitting to enable the Finance and Economic Development Committee to examine, consider and report to the House

on the Bill.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

The Sitting is therefore suspended until the Finance and Economic Development Committee has concluded its business.

Sitting suspended at 10:37 A.M.

Sitting resumed at 10:50 A.M.

PRESENTATION OF REPORT FROM COMMITTEE

HON. J. SALDIVAR (Minister of National Security): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the Report from the Finance and Economic Development Committee on the Petrocaribe Loan Bill, 2015.

In considering the matter referred to them, your Committee held its meeting on the 26th March, 2015. Your committee considered the Motion and has agreed that it be returned to the House for adoption.

Copies of the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held is attached and forms part of this Report.

HON. J. BRICEÑO (Orange Walk Central): Mr. Speaker, as a Member of this Committee, I, on several instances, I have reported that the Minutes does not reflect what happened in the Committee Meeting. This morning at the House Committee Meeting, I asked the Chairman of the House Committee Meeting to have somebody from the Ministry of Finance, to sit down with us and to walk us through the proposed Bill and they refused to do so. I said that I wanted it to be reflected in the Minutes that I objected, that I asked for somebody from the Ministry of Finance to come in and to explain to us about this Bill, and it is not reflected in the Minutes. So, I am appealing to you, Sir, to ask the Chairman and the people that prepare this Minute to correct this Minutes because it is not a 100% reflecting what took place in that Meeting. And then I walked out because it was just a travesty that was taking place up there, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: But there are rules, Member for Orange Walk, when a Report is ordered to lie on the Table. What is the purpose for the intervention?

HON. J. BRICEÑO (Orange Walk Central): Mr. Speaker, because this does not reflect what happened in the House Committee Meeting that's my point.

MR. SPEAKER: Is a person from the Ministry of Finance entitled to be in the meeting?

HON. J. BRICEÑO (Orange Walk Central): Mr. Speaker, we in the House Committee, we are entitled to ask anybody what we want from the Ministry, and from the government to come and explain any piece of legislation. (Applause) My colleague from Belize Rural Central, every time that we go to House Committee Meetings, we ask for them to give us a paper explaining the proposed Bills that they are presenting. Many instances, we also, in this House Committee, we have asked for people to come from Finance. Today we are saying this is a very important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, it is not one that we should just take lightly. We are not trying to grandstand. Mr. Speaker, if you would allow me, Sir, we are not trying to grandstand but this is an important piece of legislation. And at the very least, we need the genius that came up with this law or the proposed Bill

to come and explain it to us, that is all we are asking, Mr. Speaker, and it is not reflected in the Minutes. That is all I am asking.

MR. SPEAKER: Member, let's be frank, if you did not want to grandstand, you wouldn't be raising it now. You could have easily indicated that to the Chairman of the Committee and say that you wanted it corrected. Let's be fair.

HON. J. BRICEÑO (Orange Walk Central): Mr. Speaker, I asked, I said it over and over before I walked out that I want that the Minutes reflect what was my request, and that I walked out but it is not reflected in the Minutes. That is what I am bringing to you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Fine! And we will do what we need to do to reflect it if that's what you wanted it to reflect.

HON. J. BRICENO (Orange Walk Central): Thank you, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that Report is ordered to lie on the Table.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

A. Government Business

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the debate on the second reading of the General Revenue Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015, is about to be resumed.

Before we begin, I would like to draw Honourable Members' attention to Standing Order No. 64, which says that, 'Presentation and the second reading of the Appropriation Bill', especially paragraph 5 which reads, and I quote: "After the Motion for the second reading of the Appropriation Bill has been resumed, under paragraph 4 of this Standing Order, the debate shall be confined". And remember Honourable Members, we have students in the building who we want to follow instruction during the exams. Anyone who has a problem with what I am saying, you can leave!

"...The debate shall be confined to the financial and economic state of the country and the general principles of government policy and administration as indicated by the Appropriation Bill and the Estimates."

Please remember, I have to listen to thirty-one of you.

Members are therefore asked to confine their debate within the prescribed limits of the Standing Order.

I would like to remind the Honourable Members of other parts of the Standing Orders, specifically Standing Order No. 42 (b), which states that an Honourable Member shall maintain silence while another Member is speaking and shall not interrupt, except in accordance with these Standing Orders. Honourable Members are fully aware of the need for the Chair to voice this at this in time and I ask you to please comply.

I would also like to remind visitors in the Galleries that they must preserve silence and must conduct themselves in a fit and proper manner during the Sitting.

We now have the resumption of the debate on the General Revenue Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015.

HON. F. FONSECA (Leader of the Opposition): Good morning, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the debate on the General Revenue Appropriation Bill for fiscal year 2015/2016. At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I wish to offer two preliminary observations based on the introductory paragraphs of the Prime Minister's Budget Presentation.

First, the Prime Minister boasts that this is the shortest budget speech he has ever read. He justifies this boast by explaining that he is sparing the nation the oral presentation of the review of the economy, 2014. While, I for one, Mr. Speaker, welcome less talk, the House record should reflect that the true reason for the speeches brevity is its absolute lack of substance. The Prime Minister apart from his usual political, rhetoric, and grandstanding has nothing to say. And the budget speech has nothing to offer the Belizean people. Mr. Speaker, it is not only the shortest budget speech, it is the emptiest budget speech ever read in this Honourable House. I will expose that emptiness a little later on but sufficed to say that, in neither the year past 2014/2015, nor the year ahead, 2015/2016, Mr. Speaker, do they offer us any meaningful sustainable path to economic growth and development. What they do offer Belizeans is more of the UDP agenda of tax, borrow, and spend.

The second preliminary point, Mr. Speaker, is our recognition of the Prime Minister's confirmation of his Government's policy of UDP first, Belizeans second. After three years of punishment and petty partisan victimization of the Dangriga and Punta Gorda Town Councils, he must now find in his words, immediate relief for the new UDP councils and promises central government money to assist in their return to progress. This, Mr. Speaker, is governance at its worse. And we, on this side of the House, condemn it in the strongest possible terms. (Applause) Mr. Speaker, while we wished for voters not reward or submit to this UDP Government for punishing and starving their municipalities, we must trust the pragmatism of the people, who recognized the petty vindictiveness of this UDP Government. You see, Mr. Speaker, the people recognize the problem, they see it clearly. It is this corrupt incompetent and increasingly autocratic UDP National Government. And, yes, they are waiting patiently to deal with the Prime Minister and the Ministers. In these two preliminary observations, Mr. Speaker, we lay bare for all to see the essence of this budget, empty, political, rhetoric, grounded in petty vindictive UDP first governance.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is really simply a re-hash of the last few years. As I have said it offers nothing fresh, nothing new, no real change that will lead tangible national development. It present to us a dark and risky future grounded in massive debts and no sign of any plan to manage and deal with this in the years ahead. The UDP policy of spending and pushing up the debt without stimulating economic growth is a high stake gamble with Belize's future. And even with all the spending of borrowed money, Mr. Speaker, the economy is still simply limping along like a wounded dog. Ask Belizeans except for those, of course, well connected, a part of the family and friends package, ask Belizeans if they are better off now than they were seven years and the resounding response is no.

Mr. Speaker, where is the plan to take Belize forward? Borrowing money and pouring concrete is all well and good but what about our people? What about their futures and the future of our children? What are the plans for the development of our beautiful Belize? Our rising public debt places us in the top 20 worst countries in debt to GDP ratio, at almost 80%. This excludes the contingent liabilities of settlement for BTL and BEL. The batch nationalization,

Mr. Speaker, which despite the government's best efforts to ignore and pretend don't exist are very much real and will cost us hundreds of millions of dollars. But the more important and instructive measure, Mr. Speaker, is debt to revenue and this is even more alarming with an overall public debt of some \$2.7 billion at more than two and a half times that of our revenue. Even with the so called concessionary terms of our borrowing, our debt servicing is projected at \$180 million for the upcoming fiscal year and begins to spike significantly thereafter as our debt profile matures and the grim reapers come knocking at our doors. Debt service commitments are projected to grow by at least 10% per annum as interest and principle payments on our debt pile begin to fall due, Mr. Speaker. At the same time there are no new sources of revenue, no increase in the tax base, no real growth in the economy to drive revenues upward. Only the favored players in the engineering and construction industry are smiling and we know why. In the absence, Mr. Speaker, of any plan for economic expansion, we are soon to be left with the most undesirable, but likely, inevitable option of raising taxes to increase revenue, God forbid. This, Mr. Speaker, is the future we face since for the past seven years, there has been no true development, no creation of long term jobs, no increase in skilled labour, no sustainable stimulation of the Belizean economy. And while debt is growing fast, Mr. Speaker, the economy is slowing down with a forecasted contraction of economic growth to some 2% for 2015/2016. This, Mr. Speaker, as you know, in spite of all the spending and the use and abuse of Petrocaribe Funds.

And while we are slowing down here in Belize, Mr. Speaker, the world on the other hand including all the third world developing and developed countries grows by over 3% last year according to the IMF. That means that our neighbours both rich and poor, Mr. Speaker, are all doing better than Belize, are all getting richer than us here in Belize. And while the world is starting to take off, Mr. Speaker, Belize is still limping along, and creeping along, and the question we have to ask is why? Why are we limping and creeping along, Mr. Speaker? And the clearance says that because no one has any confidence or trust in this UDP Government to invest in Belize. Nobody has confidence to invest in Belize, Mr. Speaker. Corruption is rampant and management is so incompetent that the rate of return on investment has to be extremely high to offset the risk associated with investing in Belize. Naturally, Mr. Speaker, because there is generally not a favourable reward for such risk, people are simply not investing or taking their money elsewhere that is the reality. The banking system, Mr. Speaker, demonstrate this reality very, very clearly. Excess liquidity in banking system today, Mr. Speaker, is at an all time high, at over \$1.5 billion. As lending and borrowing have severely contracted, more critically, Mr. Speaker, banks are now shine your way from any commercial lending, from any lending to the productive sector, that is where we are. So, where does this place us, Mr. Speaker? Perhaps, right where this Prime Minister and this UDP Government wants us to be.

The entire economy then becomes dependent on the largest of government. But we must then ask ourselves, Mr. Speaker, but where does this largest ultimately come from? And it can only come from you and me, Mr. Speaker, it can only come from the Belizean people. So, every Belizean man, woman, and child, all the Petrocaribe Funds are simply loans that have to paid back by the Belizean people, by you and me. All the revenues, Mr. Speaker, of the government are simply taxes that are paid by you and me. Sure, the loans maybe concessionary and we want to take advantage of that. But what are the plans moving forward for our country? The unbridled spending spree, Mr. Speaker, seems all impulsively centered on political game. As the Prime Minister confessed to Jules Vasquez of Channel 7, in a recent interview, "Jules, you know," he said, "You know, I don't think beyond the next election." Well, Sir, where is your plan for the country? Your obsession with power, your obsession with a third-term

render you rudderless and clueless as to Belize's future. (Applause) Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister intoxicated with power can continue to thumb his nose and offer up the middle finger to the IFIs. But he does so, Mr. Speaker, at Belize's peril not at his own peril, at Belize's peril, as he continues to drag us recklessly down a path of unsustainable borrowing and spending.

In 2015, Mr. Speaker, unemployment and underemployment continue to devastate our Belizean families, particularly, our women and youth, for whom it is most difficult to find meaningful employment at living wages. Despite the Prime Minister's cruel empty rhetoric, the fact is, that as we meet today, Mr. Speaker, more than 30,000 Belizeans actively seeking a job cannot find one. This budget offers them no hope. Poverty too, continues to widen and deepen. Again, the budget offers empty political rhetoric. But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that as we meet today some 150,000 Belizeans are living on less than \$5.50 per day for food. Many in the middle-class, Mr. Speaker, find themselves faced with an uncertain future. A growing number of Belizeans are living from pay cheque to pay cheque, working to pay bills and unable to save for their children's higher education or for retirement. The weekly newspapers largest earnings comes from notices of foreclosures, selling off assets, which in many cases people have worked a lifetime to earn and own. Money lenders and loan sharks have swooped in across the country, Mr. Speaker, offering predatory rates of interest to a growing number of those who have nowhere else to turn.

And while real incomes fall, Mr. Speaker, the price of basic goods continues to rise. In the past year alone, red kidney beans of \$.70 from \$2.25 to \$2.95 a pound; baking powder up a \$1.10 from \$2.09 to \$3.19; local vinegar up from \$1.89 to \$1.95; luncheon meat and chopped ham up \$.20 from \$3.95 to \$4.15; corn beef up \$.50 from \$4.09 to \$4.59; local jam up a \$1.06 from \$4.39 to \$5.45; evaporated milk up from \$1.75 to \$2.25; condense milk up from \$1.99 to \$2.35; soap powder up \$1.36 from \$2.49 to \$3.85. And we could go on and on, Mr. Speaker. That is the Belizean UDP reality today and 2015/2016, budget, Mr. Speaker, offers no relief, no answers, no hope of anything better to come.

Mr. Speaker, the 2015/2016 budget is a borrow and spend budget. It is a budget funded upon no consultation as usual and grounded in no economic development plan. It offers no new investments in the Belizean economy, no new tourism projects, no new agricultural investments, no manufacturing projects, no new investments in housing development, no investments in arts and culture, youth and sports, no tax reform, no governance reform. Mr. Speaker, if we are indeed serious about Belize's growth and development, if transformation, Mr. Prime Minister, is to be more than a catchy political slogan, then it is these types of investments, Sir, that we must attract and make as a nation and people.

We on this side, Mr. Speaker, fully support putting our unemployed, unskilled people to work rebuilding and upgrading our streets roads and bridges. But we continue to express concern about the inequity and waste associated with so many of these infrastructure projects. There is a concern as well that the same small pool of UDP connected contractors are hugging up all the contracts in what, Mr. Speaker, many view and describe as a well designed UDP campaign financing scheme with the money flowing from central government coffers to the UDP contractors and then into the UDP treasury chest.

We also recognize and highlight the need, Mr. Speaker, for urgent efforts to create jobs for our young graduates. Many of whom leave six form or university with no prospect for employment becoming increasingly frustrated and hopeless as they continue to sit in their parent's living rooms. In pursuing

investments, Mr. Speaker, it is all about creating decent jobs with living wages for our people. Jobs for our young graduates, jobs for women, jobs for our skilled workers, jobs in tourism, jobs in the information technology sector, jobs in the financial sector, jobs in agro-processing and manufacturing. The private sector, Mr. Speaker, must be viewed as full partners in development and enabled to attract and undertake investments to grow their businesses and to create jobs. Government must reduce its bureaucratic spending while focusing on its core functions of delivering reliable quality affordable public services. The truth is that in 2015, Mr. Speaker, we remain a long way off from the levels of reliability and quality required for meaningful economic advancement. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we must remain firmly committed as a nation and people for those most vulnerable among us, especially, the poor and the disadvantaged. We must fully accept that growth is not real progress, if in spite of it families are losing their homes, children are going to bed hungry, and remain out of school.

And on the issue of tax reform, Mr. Speaker, year after year, budget after budget speech, Mr. Speaker, we heard it again this year. We are treated to empty platitudes from the Prime Minister about the need for tax reform. But year after year, none is delivered. Tax reform, particularly, in a small developing economy like Belize's, Mr. Speaker, is directly linked to job-creation. Taxes must be strategically designed to stimulate, not to stifle growth to stimulate growth. The multiple layers of taxes, fees, levies, and duties imposed by municipal and central governments must be subject to a comprehensive rational review with the objective, Mr. Speaker, of lowering the cost of production, lowering the cost of goods and services, and particularly, Mr. Speaker, if we are serious, to target growth in the export of goods and services. And while on the issue of reform, Mr. Speaker, we on this side, once again, extend our hand of cooperation to the government across party political lines. Let us rise above the politics and work together on meaningful reforms to governance in Belize. Let us appoint the 13th Senator, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) Let us review the structure composition and powers of the Public Accounts Committee. (Applause) Let us review the structure composition and powers of the Election and Boundaries Commission, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) And get on with the business of a badly needed re-registration exercise. (Applause) Let us review and strengthen the role and function of the Integrity Commission. (Applause) And let us work together, Mr. Speaker, to formulate and pass fair reasonable campaign finance laws. (Applause) These reforms, Mr. Speaker, will not fix all our problem, of course, but they will help us to move as a nation towards a more solutions based approach to governing and development that is so badly lacking today in Belize.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a few comments about technology, crime and border security. First technology, in its 2015; New Year's address to the nation, the Prime Minister declared that this year would be the year of technology. I don't know if even he remembers that he so declared. Well the 2015/2016 budget, Mr. Speaker, exposes the absolute emptiness of that boast as simply another example of UDP pre-election trickery and deceit. (Applause) The year of technology began and ended with the municipal election tablet give away. Mr. Speaker, another good PUP initiative destroyed by an incompetent politically opportunistic UDP Government. (Applause) Connecting, as you know, Mr. Speaker, connecting our young students to technology is something that we can support, but handing over tablets to students is meaningless if there is not a plan in place to support the effective use of those tablets. The original PUP idea and plan, Mr. Speaker, was to load those tablets with the student's books and other relevant educational material. (Applause) Regrettably, Mr. Speaker, this was abandoned in pursuit of political expediency. Creativity and technology must be the new pillars of our education system, Mr. Speaker, allowing our students, our teachers, and parents to

collaborate and cooperate in the work of nation building.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of crime and border security the budget for fiscal 2015/2016, offers no sense of purpose, no sense of direction. Law abiding citizens continue to live in fear across our country as crime and violence eat away at our social fabric. Sadly, there is growing distrust of our police and system of justice. The Prime Minister waxes poetic about a social citadel of peace and protection, Mr. Speaker. Well we know not of this social citadel, but we do know, Mr. Speaker, that 123 persons were killed last year and some 370 of our citizens were murdered in the past 3 years. We know, Mr. Speaker, that people are routinely robbed and their houses, their homes burglarized. Crime and violence are the order of the day and the stormy waters of hopelessness, despair and lack of opportunities remain the social reality of Belize today. Border security remains an ongoing challenge as well, Mr. Speaker. Our nation, of course, will never forget September 25, 2014, when our very own Special Constable Danny Conorqui was cowardly and tragically executed by Guatemalan bandits on the hallowed grounds of majestic Caracol. To date, Mr. Speaker, sadly, no one has been brought to justice for this cold blooded murder. At the same time our country remains under siege in the Chiquibul from Guatemalan nationals engaged in agricultural incursions, illegal logging, Xaite extractions, hunting and wild life poaching, gold panning and looting of our Mayan sites. Most recently as you well know, Mr. Speaker, group of Belizean volunteers, territorial volunteers, as they call themselves visiting, I believe, the Gracias Adios Markers Tournament were illegally detained in Belizean waters by Guatemalan military officials. And what response have we gotten from our own government? Nothing. The issues of border security and crime, Mr. Speaker, are national issues and here, again, we extend to the government our hand of cooperation. The Belize people expect and deserve that we act seriously and responsibly together in confronting these challenges. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues will expose the many other glaring shortfalls in this year's budget in the areas of education, health, housing, youth and sports, rural development, agriculture, to name just a few. But in the final analysis, Mr. Speaker, the budget for fiscal year 2015/2016, is not only short in length, it is short on vision, it is short on substance, it is short on ideas, (Applause) it is short on purpose and direction. It is short, Mr. Speaker, on solutions to the serious, social and economic challenges confronting our beautiful Belize. It is a budget that boasts of unprecedented progress. The question is, Mr. Speaker, unprecedented progress for whom? For the Prime Minister and his family? For the Ministers and their cronies? For the high paid contract officers, consultants and diplomats? But who else, Mr. Speaker, who else is feeling this unprecedented progress? Mr. Speaker, this is a budget delivered by a Prime Minister and a UDP Government full of themselves as I said earlier, intoxicated by power and consumed with their so called historic destiny of a UDP third term. (Applause) Well I say to you today, Mr. Speaker, I say to you today and to the Belizean nation, it will not be, it shall not be! (Applause) Let them, Mr. Speaker, let them beat their chest and enjoy the party while it lasts. Arrogance and corruption shall yet bring them to their knees. (Applause) To the Belizean people, Mr. Speaker, we say do not lose heart in doing good for soon you shall reap if you do not grow weary, Galatians Chapter 6 verse 9. (Applause) Mr. Speaker, we shall not lose heart. We shall not grow weary. We love Belize. We believe in Belize. Mr. Speaker, the great Martin Luther King Jr., once said, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars. Today I want to say to our many supporters across the country that we see you and we appreciate you. And to the independent voters out there, Mr. Speaker, to the independent voters out there we pledge to work even harder to prove to you that we are a better party, a party of women and men worthy of your support and confidence. A party, Mr. Speaker, that will at all times

be on the side of the everyday man and woman. Scripture reminds us, Mr. Speaker, scripture reminds us that after the long night comes the dawn. After the long night comes the morning. We are down but not out, we shall rise again, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) The work continues and the war shall be won. (Applause) And whenever, Mr. Speaker, let it be very clear, whenever the Prime Minister calls the elections, we will be ready, that, Mr. Speaker, that is our solemn pledge to all our people across the length and breadth of our beautiful nation. We will be ready. We pray God's continue blessings and guidance on our nation and people. I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

HON. J. SALDIVAR (Minister of National Security): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution in support of this year's budget. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, the last time I heard the Leader of the Opposition shout in as loud a voice as he could managed, it was indeed to say call the elections now. But that is now history, we know that right after that we had the bi-election in Cayo North and the trashing that was put on their candidate is now for the records. But I also recall that after that trashing at the bi-election, after that trashing, he said, "Don't worry about that, man, the people are waiting for the municipal." And then the municipals came, in fact, he did promise his faithful soldiers that there would be enough money for the municipal. Then the municipals came and they took an even bigger whipping, Mr. Speaker. And now, they are saying, "No man, no man, the people are still waiting, the people are now waiting for the general elections." Mr. Speaker, I recall my first presentation in this National Assembly 2008, when we became the government I foretold from then, and I say it again, the people of this country will never ever vote the People's United Party (Applause) will never vote the People's United Party into Government with the same leaders that led us in the worst ten years of corruption that this country has seen. (Applause) And try as they may, Mr. Speaker, to bury their heads in the sand and not recognize that reality, election after election, the people are telling them we have not forgotten. (Applause) We have not forgotten and we will not forget. It will not be like a little breeze as long as they keep rearing their heads, Mr. Speaker, I will retire, no I will not retire, I will wait for the next one and I will come back again and as long as those people continue to be around the People's United Party they will never see government again. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the Leader of the Opposition musters the strength to get up time and time again, and repeat the same rhetoric over and over and over, rhetoric which every know is empty. Empty because their record in government says that they do not practice, they did not practice what they are now preaching. (Applause) Mr. Speaker, I have to remember Election Day, this past Election Day, March 4th, when especially in Belmopan, throughout the day the Member for Cayo South and his people...

HON. R. FERGUSON (Stann Creek West): This man has not mentioned anything that has to do with the budget so far. What are we talking about?

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Stann Creek West, there was mention by your Leader of the Opposition, of Elections and about arrogance and corruption and he has to address it. (Applause)

HON. J. SALDIVAR (Minister of National Security): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) They want give but they can't take. I want to go back to Election Day when, if you only listened to what was being said on the radio by those PUP operatives, you would have really thought that Belmopan was going to go blue. It reminded me of that old story about the mother who went to Price Barracks for that passing out parade and her son was passing out, but they were

marching, they were doing their march by and her son Tommy was really the only one marching out of step, but she turned around and said, “Why can’t the rest of them can’t learn to march like my little Tommy?” That’s what the PUP has become. The rest of this nation my fellows and there madam, the rest of this nation is marching in tune with the United Democratic Party. (Applause) Of course, history of that wonderful day in Belmopan will tell you that they received the biggest whipping that they have ever received in the history of Belmopan. (Applause) I await his return for the general elections.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Freetown started out his speech by saying that the brevity of the Prime Minister’s presentation was because it lack substance. Well, I believe that is your eight presentations, right Prime Minister, since you have been the Prime Minister. And if I am to judge by how the people have responded to the first seven, and they responded to the first seven on March the 4th, they do not concur with the Leader of the Opposition that this budget is empty. That resounding 62 to 5, again, I remember little Tommy. And then the Member speaks, Mr. Speaker, about tax, borrow and spend. Like I said I don’t know where he gets the strength to come up here with that type of rhetoric that described what prevailed between 1998 and 2008, you know, that is what has landed them in the Opposition where they will remain for a very long time. (Applause) That same tax, borrow, I want to change the word “spend” but I might be unparliamentarily, my choice of words if I were to say what they did with the money because it was certainly not to spend it on the people.

Talking about borrowing, when the PUP came to power in 1998, our national debt was just a little above \$500 million, I recall. In the 10 years that they were the government, they took that figure up to \$2.2 billion with a ‘B’. I am going to make sure that I verify the actual figures, it’s in the budget but I didn’t bring my copy with me today, but even if I were to use the Leader of the Opposition’s \$2.7 billion which I think is a little over stated but even if I were to use the Leader of the Opposition’s statement that the national debt is currently at \$2.7 billion. It would mean that this government has not borrowed in its 2008 to now, is that 7 years, in the 7 years that we have been in government, we have not even borrowed half a billion dollars yet. (Applause) So, I don’t know to what he is comparing the \$400 or so million that we have borrowed. It is certainly not to the \$1.7 billion that they borrowed when they were the government. So, they are certainly not describing my government, us on this side, when they talk about tax, borrow and spend. Talk about tax, I can’t remember the last time this UDP Administration has raised tax. (Applause) It must have been sometime early in our administration, the first administration when we were trying to fix the problems that they created for this nation, but certainly, if my memory recalls for at least the three budget presentations, we have not had a raise of tax. So, where is he getting this tax, barrow and spend?

Mr. Speaker, he dared us to ask, ask any Belizean if they are better off? Lord Almighty, they have spoke. The Belizean people spoke on March 4th; they said resoundingly that they are living in a better country under UDP than under the PUP. (Applause) Debt servicing, he mentioned, talked about the fact that our debt servicing is projected to go up 10% per annum and is going to spike or balloon is the term we can use in a few years time. Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister and his team in the Ministry of Finance did a great job of re-negotiating the super bond. However, we did not eliminate the super bond; I think we got a haircut. We got a reduction in the amount that we owed but the super bond is still there and though we have negotiated some wiggle room, some space, so we can have the kind fiscal space that we need to transform the country. The Super Bond is still there and the people, of course, on that other side don’t want us to mention it but, yes, there is a balloon payment that is coming June very shortly, and we are

going to have to find the money to pay it. But it is not because of any reckless policy on the part of this government. It is because we are still and will continue for the next two decades to pay for the reckless borrowing of the People's United Party. (Applause) And they don't want us to go back, to that they say, we have gotten passed that, stop blame the PUP. But if we still have to pay \$60 million a year for that super bond, I can't see how we can stop blaming the PUP. And that is why, and it has only now being refreshed in the minds of the Belizean people with the tape that surfaced from the Honourable Member for Orange Walk Central, that has helped to refresh the minds of the Belizean people, that has helped them to be reminded of what took place in the 10 years of the last PUP Administration. To there to say that we are abusing the Petrocaribe Funds, what hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker, what did they do with the Petrocaribe Funds when they had access to it? Do they think that we have forgotten Universal Health Services? Do they think we have forgotten how they tried to pay a private debt with monies that were gifted to the Belizean people, which we only found out after the 2008 election when the Venezuelans came knocking at our doors to say, "Please explain to us how you spend the money?" I imagine that if they had been re-elected to government back in 2008, we would never known that we were given \$20 million. (Applause) And now here we are spending Petrocaribe money on roads and streets that people can see, bridges that can be seen, social programs, education programs, food programs, tablets, the National Bank. Do I need to list all the things that you visible see, blind eye Jamesy can see what we have done with the Petrocaribe money, to say that we are abusing it? Again, March 4, the Belizean people did not agree with you, and it is time for you to change. (Applause) It is time for you to come up with a new political strategy because that is not going to work. The Belizean people are seeing what we are doing with Petrocaribe money.

Talk about nobody wants to come to invest. Let's talk about those multi-laterals, Mr. Leader of the Opposition that ran away from you all. Who did not want to lend your administration a single penny. Let's talk about World Bank, CDB, let's talk about IDB, let's talk about all these multi-lateral lending institutions that didn't want to lend to a People's United Party Government, so much so that they had to go to the private banks and borrow at outrageous interest rates. Well, note, to the Opposition Leader, those institution are back in Belize. (Applause) Those institutions are lending to Belize. I will talk later on about my ministry but I can tell you \$30 million from CABEI, (Applause) for our National Security Strategy. I can tell again, of another \$30 million for the construction of a new Belmopan Hospital. (Applause) That is just about the multi-lateral lending institutions that are coming back. They have such confidence and this might be just a small part of why our Ambassador has been elected as the Deputy Secretary General of the OAS. (Applause) But it is because these people respect us. These people respect Belize. (Applause) We have restored respect and confidence in our country. (Applause) Talk about the private sector and investment. I'm sure when my colleague, the Minister of Tourism, the Member for Belize Rural South gets up to talk, he will tell you about all the wonderful private investments that are taking place in the tourism industry in San Pedro, and in Placencia especially. But you can take a ride on the George Price Highway right about Ontario, I think, where you can see those silos that have been put up that is investment in agriculture. If you take a ride down the Valley of Peace Road, where you have Green Tropics investing in agriculture, investing in the sugar industry when you know that ASR has invested already by buying out the sugar factory but are now investing millions, tens of millions more in our sugar industry and you talk about people not wanting to invest. I recall that call that, I would have to refer to him as a white man because I think that was some American what's his name that talked about how the then People's United Party was high jacking him from monies relating, I think, to petroleum, I believe he said the lying, thieving, and use some

words which I can't pronounce here in the National Assembly. That was when investor confidence in Belize was at its lowest under the People's United Party, under our UDP investment is coming and continues to come. (Applause)

And I lonely put this one in for style but to talk about how our Prime Minister refers to the IFIs when, in fact, if you will recall, you remember that budget that they had called "The Home Grown Budget" presented by the then Minister of, I believe it was finance, by then but he could have budget planning, Ralph Fonseca, when he said, "Stick it to the IFIs we are going to do it home grown. We are going to do it our way." So, it is over that side that has been the type that would stick their middle finger as did Maxwell Samuels, that would stick their middle finger to the IFIs. Then, Mr. Speaker, to talk about unemployment and to say that oh joblessness of people and so on. I will be the first and I am sure my Prime Minister will admit, yes, we still have unemployment in our country that is more than we would want. We still have to continue creating jobs but what you should say is that unemployment rate in Belize was at 14, we took it down to 13, we took it down to 12, and it is now down to 11.2. (Applause) So, don't look at the glass as being half empty, recognize that it is this government and its economic policies that have been bringing down the unemployment rate over the last 5 or so years. (Applause) And if given a third term, we are going to continue to bring down the unemployment rate here in Belize. (Applause) Because there is one definite reason and you can read any of the World Bank publications on corruption and development and they will tell you that corruption is the single most dangerous thing in terms of standing as an obstacle to development. So, when you look at what took place in the ten years of the PUP and you look at rising unemployment, stagnating economy, bankruptcy, you look at all that was happening to this country under the PUP and you will know that corruption was the number one cause. And when you look now conversely at what is happening to Belize now as much as they would want to bury heads in the sand and not recognize Belize is growing among all the other economies of this region. Whether it be Central American or Caribbean, and even Latin American, Belize is one of the strongest and has one of the strongest and growing economy, that is the reality of our Belize today.

I made a note here, Mr. Speaker, about his statement about campaign financing reform. Must have been a joke on his part because everybody knows that the reason they haven't found money yet for their election is because their Lord, their, t-h-e-i-r, their Lord has not committed yet to providing them with the finances. And the only time the People's United Party will have money to fight any election is when Lord Michael Ashcroft decides to give them money. In fact, that has been what their leadership musical chairs has been all about. But you see, the problem has been that the Lord has not been comfortable with any of them as leader. Partly because he doesn't believe that they will do what he wants to say but mostly, also because he knows that none of them qualify to be Prime Minister of this country, and so he doesn't want to bet on a losing horse. But, ten years in Opposition is long enough and I don't know that the Lord whether he likes them or not, whether he is comfortable with them or not, he doesn't want to see his desires postponed for much longer and so, I do believe the Lord will give you some money this time around. But I don't know that it will make a difference because the people have for the first time, seen a back-to-back UDP Government, UDP Administration, this is the first time we've been able to, in the first term clean up your mess and in the second term, show you what we are made of. (Applause) And I do believe that the people are happy about what we, the UDP, are made of and will give us a third-term whenever the elections are called. (Applause)

And to dare to criticize our, and I know the Minister of Education will deal

with him and anybody else that comes up to criticize the Tablets that were given out but for them, on the other side, and for the Leader of the Opposition to criticize that program when he was the Minister of Education, I believe, when INTELCO, (Applause) if it's not him that they bring back, Cordel but it's one of them but they were the government. When they paid for it, I believe, they paid for the 5,000 computers that were supposed to be given to every child in this country. And it took the United Democratic Party ten years later to come and finally deliver on some technology for the students of this country. (Applause) So, don't criticize our Tablet Program because when you were there all you ran was a scam which Michael Ashcroft, don't forget, described as a retirement...

MR. SPEAKER: One second Minister, there is a motion that we have to move at midday.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 (8), I move that the proceedings on the Order Paper may be entered upon and proceeded with at this day's Sitting at any hour though opposed.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the proceedings on the matter on the Order Paper may be entered upon and proceeded with at this day's Sitting at any hour though opposed.

All those in favor, kindly say aye; those against kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Proceed Minister, sorry.

HON. J. SALDIVAR (Belmopan): Before they changed the very leaders that were a part of the worst ten years of corruption that this country has ever seen. But let me turn now, Mr. Speaker, in whining up to my ministry, the Ministry of National Security. This budget, Mr. Speaker, if you allow me to read, will not only provide for the efficient execution of the various functions of the government but also to ensure that they continuing of the transformation of our beloved country. Mr. Speaker, you will note that there have been significant increases in this proposed budget for my ministry that are designed to ensure that government's priority areas are adequately resourced. It pleases me and I am certain that our citizens are also equally pleased to see that the Ministry of National Security, again, was given the type of budgetary attention that will allow it to continue with the maintenance of a peaceful democratic society and to the stability of our nation.

The huge rise in recurrent expenditure in the ministry generally is a result of my ministry's plan to invest in capacity building for our human resources in the Police Department, in the Defense Force, the Coast Guard, and National Forensic Science Service. It is also attributed to an increase in allowances for police officers, which, to put in the words of our Prime Minister, addresses a historical injustice and puts police officers on par with the rest of the public service with respect to certain allowances. Mr. Speaker, you will agree that when we compare this fiscal year's draft estimate with recurrent expenditure, you will see that the, particularly in programs for National Training Academy, Community Police Services, Crime Prevention, Criminal Investigation, Maritime Security, National Security, Intelligence And Defense, there is an undeniable fact that this government is serious about our nation's security.

Mr. Speaker, the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the Ministry of National Security is proposed at a \$132,991,515.00. This is up by \$15.4 million. (Applause) Of this amount \$96 million or so is scheduled for Personal Emoluments, \$891,000 for training, \$35.9 million for Operating Cost and Services. This will allow us, Mr. Speaker, to continue with expansion plans for our law enforcement and military forces in the recruiting of needed personnel to effectively carry out our mandate. The significant increases, Mr. Speaker, that are reflected in this proposed component coupled with the commitment of support coming from our friendly nations will provide for capacity development of our law enforcement and military personnel during this fiscal period.

Mr. Speaker, allow me at this time to thank those friendly nations, the United States Government, the Republic of China/Taiwan, the Canadian Government, the Venezuelan Government, Mexican Government, the British Government, Central American and Caribbean nations that continue to partner with us to strengthen our national security apparatus. Their contributions certainly helped to cover the gaps that we would otherwise be challenged with, to provide for our nations security. The provision of fully sponsored training courses at all levels of our uniformed services, the numerous grants contributions and provisions of various types of transformation including helicopters, Mr. Speaker, that will now be gifted to us by the Government of Taiwan. (Applause) You will note, Mr. Speaker, that during the last budgetary period some \$3.5 million was estimated for the National Police Training Academy. This year we are pleased to report that that amount was increased to over \$5.5 million. The key program strategies and activities of the training academy will aim at improving performance within our police officers, men and women. There will be improved human rights training. We will have training geared at enhancing professionalism in all aspects of police operation with great focus in training and in investigation. Prosecution and administration will also receive attention at the training academy. In our Maritime Security, the budget has also provided for an increase in maritime security. In the 2014/2015 financial period some \$6.5 million was approved. In this budget, Mr. Speaker, some \$9.1 million has been made available to Maritime Security. This is in keeping with the Coast Guards long-term-strategic-plans to incrementally and progressively, increase the size of the Belize Coast Guard by to nearly 565 by the year 2020.

Like maritime security, Mr. Speaker, the defense budget for the Belize Defense Force has also seen its amount increase. The estimated amount for 2015 is \$40.7 million while last year, it was \$35.6 million. We are determined and committed to ensure that the military continues to have the human and other resources necessary to effectively carry out its mandate. Community Policing Services, Mr. Speaker, because we do believe that the way to seriously attack our crime problem is through improved community policing. This program has therefore also seen a substantial increase from \$39.5 million in the last fiscal year to \$45.4 million in this fiscal year. Zone beat liaison officers, Mr. Speaker, conducted over 11,000 visits to schools, 7,696 home visits, and 35,594 visits to the business community, all as a part of our community policing efforts. Key programs strategies for 2015 aim at improving performance and development of the intelligence mechanism to provide effective intelligence support to the Belize Police Department. We are targeting threats to national security, conducting intelligence coordinated meetings, disseminating vital information related to threats of national security. We are coordinating a joint multi-agency task force in information sharing and multi-agency cooperation locally and regionally and internationally with respect to trans-border intelligence and information sharing.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident with the funds that have been approved for the Ministry of National Security, we are going to continue to make inroads in dealing with the crime situation here in Belize. I will end here, Mr. Speaker, by thanking the Prime Minister for his support over the last year in helping to expand the Belize Police Department by over 260 new officers, the Belize Defense Force by over a 150, and the Coast Guard by close to 80 that we are moving towards our goal of placing more emphasis on these institutions that help us to fight crime. I support this budget, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

RT. HON. S. MUSA (Fort George): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and with your permission I will refer extensively to my note.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member.

RT. HON. S. MUSA (Fort George): Mr. Speaker, San Pedro, Ambergris Caye has been described as La Isla Bonita. It is a beautiful island or perhaps more accurately, a beautiful peninsula with long stretches of white sandy beaches protected by the spectacular Barrier Reef, luxury homes, fabulous hotels, and condominiums. But, Mr. Speaker, there is a dark side to this beauty and opulence and that is the *back-a-town* areas of San Pedro. Like *San Pedrito*, and like *San Mateo*, there you will find people, workers living in swamp, filth, and abject poverty. There areas where children have to wade through stinking disease ridden, mosquito infested, rat infested, dung and garbage on their way to school. So, what we have here, Mr. Speaker, is a San Pedro that has become two towns. One that glitters for the tourists, the other that is a ghetto where hard working families live. And that is a symbol of what the country of Belize is fast becoming. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we may say we are living in one nation, a Belize sovereign and independent. But in Belize of today, our society is deeply fractured, deeply divided, two Belize. You may ask what does this have to do with the budget. I would answer, Mr. Speaker, it has everything to do with the budget and with the economic policies of the government, because in the midst of plenty as the Prime Minister tells us the country is enjoying, the easy money of Petrocaribe, this Petrocaribe bonanza, in the midst of all this the poor struggling working families of Belize, they are not feeling it. We hear of poverty elimination or poverty alleviation but the truth is that while few well connected well off, yes, rich are getting richer; the poor in Belize are getting poorer. This is a fact that perhaps we don't like to talk about, Mr. Speaker, but the truth is that there is growing poverty and growing inequality, growing economic inequality, and social inequality in Belize today and this is a very dangerous thing that is happening in our country, Mr. Speaker, and the truth is I don't see what this budget is doing about it. Yes, it is nice to have cement streets, the tourist and the motorist, they love it, but who are the ones who suffer when it rains, it's the people in your constituency, Member for Port Loyola, yes, the people who's downstairs of their homes are flooded out whenever it rains. So, Mr. Speaker, and what about the hundreds of the dilapidated streets that remain abandoned with potholes and the thousands of families in rural communities across Belize and the thousands of farmers, small farmers, whose feeder roads are forgotten. And, yes, the hundreds of the dilapidated shacks that people live in, right here in the south side of Belize City, while the Minister of Social Transformation is transforming his housing stock by the dozens. (Applause) And the hundreds of unemployed young men and women, some in gangs, yes, but most of them just chilling on the street sides and street corner, hopeless and jobless. Oh, says the ministers, the mothers can get food pantry and BOOST. That is what a former US Senator, by the name of Patrick Moynihan once described as benign neglect. Benign neglect of the poor people, benign neglect of the black and other marginalized people of our country. It's not only them, you know, Mr. Speaker, what is worst the many mothers who are branded PUP can't even get any food pantry. They are denied food pantry, they

are denied BOOST. They get nothing from this UDP Government.

And the second fundamental flaw in this government's approach to development as illustrated in the budget estimates themselves. It comes out of the reckless and overweening drive for big government spending on infrastructure, yes, but most of which is none productive and all of which is unsustainable. They are squeezing out and driving into the ground the little people, the small farmers, the small business people. Look at the rice industry. The rice industry in Toledo has virtually been killed and what about the local existing rice industry? Well, they are now facing the threat of being flooded with imported rice because they want to give in to this supporter of theirs, (Applause) yes, to the detriment of all local producers of rice in this country. Yes, they might say look at the onion industry, Mr. Speaker, to give you a classic example of what is happening to the rice industry. The onion producers of the north, let us not forget not so long ago, they watched as their crops rotted in the fields as the imports flooded in by a corrupt incompetent marketing board. The only people, Mr. Speaker, who are benefitting are the well connected family related contractors, yes, and the big few multi-nationals like ASR, and the people who have become the new owners of Caye Chapel, and the Norwegian Cruise Ship owners of Harvest Caye and their local partners who are getting millions of tax exemptions for many years to come. But yet you know, Mr. Speaker, that will still not encourage genuine investors who were being scared off by this administrations pensioned for confiscation in the name of nationalization, because it is not only BTL and BEL, what about the hundreds of hard working Belizeans, whose only sin in the eyes of these UDP rulers is that they supported or are suspected of supporting the People's United Party. They have all being punished by seeing their farm lands, their house lots, leases and titles cancelled by a callous iron fisted government. The villagers of Silk Grass and Santa Cruz, are but two examples of the cruel abuse perpetrated by a corrupt dictatorial Minister of Natural Resources. The gazette is filled with notices of leases cancelled farm lands and poor people losing their lands for compulsory acquisition at the whim and fancy of this incompetent Minister that is destroying our agriculture base in this country.

The PUP, Mr. Speaker, had a balanced approach to economic development. Our economic policy was...

MR. SPEAKER: One second, Member. Members of the gallery when the Members are addressing on this side remain quiet, if I cannot single you out, you all will have to go. When the Members on this side are addressing over here, remain quiet, it is the same thing. Please. Continue, Member, sorry about that.

RT. HON. S. MUSA (Fort George): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our balanced approach was based on the twin pillars of development: agriculture, agro-industry on the one hand, tourism and the service sector on the other. This is how, Mr. Speaker, we expanded food production for the local market. Rice, beans, corn, chicken, meat, fruit and vegetables were all expanded during the ten years of the People's United Party. This is how we expanded the sugar industry, the citrus industry, the banana industry, the papaya and cocoa industry, the fish and shrimp industries, yes, aqua-culture started under the People's United Party. This is how all these industries came to fruition for the local and export markets to bring in the foreign exchange and create employment for our people. I hear all this talk about the wonders of tourism under the UDP, well, Mr. Speaker, it was during the People's United Party that we saw cruise tourism as an example increase from 94,000 to 1 million arrivals. The new oil industry, BNE, was an added industry that earns substantial revenues and created hundreds of skilled jobs for our people. So, yes, they love to talk about the debt, Mr. Speaker, this administration with its so called muscular approach, has a one track economic

strategy as the Leader of the Opposition pointed a while ago, this morning. It's a strategy of borrow and spend. When the UDP came into our office in 2008, the total external debt of the country was \$1.7 billion, that's right. Not what the Member for Belmopan said a while ago, its \$1.7, the figures are right there, you only have to look at the budget of the very same Prime Minister, Dean Barrow, in 2008/2009, \$1.7 billion.

Today after seven years of UDP reckless and unaccountable spending and mismanagement of the debt, it is now \$2.7 billion. Now, unless if something is terribly wrong with my addition that is a \$1 billion more of debt accumulated by this UDP Government, \$1 billion with a B. This government has indebted the nation by \$1 billion in seven years and that is not including the hundreds of millions dollars as the Leader of the Opposition reminded you all this morning, that does not include the hundreds of millions that the Government of Belize, which ever government is in power will have to pay for the takeover of BTL and BEL. Just think, Mr. Speaker, it took successive governments from 1981, the time of Independence to 2008, it took us 27 years to reach an external debt of \$1.7 billion. It took the Barrow Government 7 year to virtually double the national debt. The UDP has doubled the so-called Super Bond, so what are we going to call it now? With all the restructuring of the super bond, they have increased the debt by doubling the super bond, yes, \$2.7 billion.

To add insult to injury on the very day when the Prime Minister presented his budget, Friday, March 13, the Prime Minister moved through all its stages in one day, loans amounting to an additional \$142 million. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister boast that he will take full advantage of the Petrocaribe bonanza, what he called, quote, " This extraordinary opportunity gifted to us by Venezuela." Well, the first thing to note, Mr. Speaker, that this is no gift, you know. These are loans that have to be paid back. This \$286 million and counting, because it keeps going up, of Petrocaribe money, \$286 million, is not a gift. It may be a generous subsidize fuel, subsidy, yes, but it's a loan that has to be paid back.

The second thing is this, Mr. Speaker, yes, it is highly concessionary and you would think that the government would not only express gratitude to Venezuela for this very generous subsidized loans at 1% interest, but they should also express solidarity, man, solidarity with the government and people of Venezuela, who are facing their own difficulties right now. Mr. Speaker, is this government we have in Belize today so mealy-mouthed, so compromised by another nation that he, the Prime Minister, is unable to take a principle public stance in support of the democratic right of the Venezuelan people to hold free and fair parliamentary elections due later this year. Their rights to self determine their own destiny and sovereignty, free from any external intervention or interference. Why is this government scared of joining the rest of the Caribbean in expressing that kind of support and solidarity? Well, Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of a party at the time, the People's United Party, which negotiated the Petrocaribe initiative in 2005 as the party in government which secured generous grants, yes, from the Government and people of Venezuela, grants not loans. As the party in government which secured from the late President Hugo Chavez, grants for housing, for healthcare, to promote NHI program, to invest and save a hospital which the very law partner of the Prime Minister has taken advantage of because the PUP was able to save that Universal Hospital. (Applause) As the party in government which many of you on that side have been to Healthcare Partner, yes, when you got sick, yes, (Applause) and now you begrudge that we had taken a decision to save it and call it divergent, to assist in the Marion Jones stadium, Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation to publicly express our performed gratitude of the Government and the people of Belize to the Government and people of Venezuela. And to further express our solidarity and support to this friendly Latin American

nation and I call on the Prime Minister to do the same. I won't say that if he has any *cojones*. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister can boast of his government's muscularity in spending millions of borrowed money he makes no apology for running up a huge budget deficit of a \$141 million over 4% of GDP. And even more disturbing trend to anybody who has any basic knowledge of economics is that while he profess that he would have a budget, a primary surplus of over \$37 million in 2014, it is now showing that there will be a primary deficit of \$50 million. Mr. Speaker, just for the record, when the People's United Party left office in 2008, the primary surplus was over \$100 million in the treasury, yes. (Applause) So, how does the Prime Minister explain this gross mismanagement and miscalculation of the finances? He blames it all on his ministers, yes. He is saying it is the political directorate. Mr. Speaker, you see they are all so desperate to hold on to power and the Prime Minister is so obsessed as the Leader of the Opposition reminded us today, so obsess with the third-term business that they will continue to spend. This spending spree will continue. This *piñata* bursting will continue of the people's money, yes. And they are not concerned about the mess that they are leaving behind as the Prime Minister himself said, "To hell with statistics, damn statistics." He said, "To hell with the dire consequences of unsustainable spending." The future be damned, they will continue to borrow and spent because you will only need to look at the budget book and I had great difficulty reading it, I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker. Because for some reason and I want to think that there is trickery involved here, they made the print so small and the figures so small, that I certainly had difficulty reading it and I can see you shaking your head, Mr. Speaker, you must have had some difficulties too. They don't want us to read the budget, man. They don't want us to read it. They don't want us to try and understand it. Because what they are showing is that there is another projected financing gap of a \$174 million. What kind of budgeting is this?

Well, the Prime Minister boasts that he is not raising taxes. Well, I don't know but when I look at the budget, the little prints, what I see is that from 2010 the revenue has increased from \$751 million than in less than five years it has increased to \$818 million, that is a \$67 million increase, you know. Income tax will go from \$210 million to \$265 million where is that coming from? That \$55 million, don't tell me about efficiency because you are squeezing the people that's where it's coming from. (Applause) Talk about efficiency looks just like the GST. They don't want to admit that they raised the GST from 10% to 12.5% so now they want to get \$339 million. Yes, Mr. Speaker, they can shout all they like about no new taxes but the people out there are feeling it, you know. The people are feeling it when light bill went up, water bill went up, trade licenses went up, food prices went up as the Leader of the Opposition graphically illustrated to you all this morning. Basic medicines have gone up. In fact, everything have gone up. The poor people can't take it no more. They can't take it no more. What you should be doing is reducing the taxes on the poor people.

The Prime Minister talks about creating jobs. The infrastructures projects have generated some jobs yes. But for most of these workers these are poorly paid temporary jobs, and the ones who are making the millions are the well connected contractors like Emer Hernandez yes. You asked for it. An estimated 5000, they boast that they created 5000 jobs. Mr. Speaker, there are at least 35,000 young people coming out of school over these years who are without a job today. That's right. The Prime Minister deceptively stated that unemployment fell by 10%, well, even his own statistically unit is saying the unemployment figures went from 12.9% to 11.6%, that, Mr. Speaker, is a drop of 1.3% not 10%, Mr. Prime Minister, 1%. We all know that you have given to histrionics, yes this Prime Minister is good at histrionics, good at gross hyperbole but what a

monumental deception for a Prime Minister to say in his budget speech that he is been able to reduce the unemployment rate, the Government has done it by 10% when it is only 1%. Why this need for a deception? And let us remind this Honourable House and this they can't take away from the PUP, you know, that when the People's United Party left office in 2008, the unemployment figure was 8%. (Applause) You on that side of the House have a long to go yet to bring it down to 8%.

Mr. Speaker, the budget continues with the old tired UDP policy of squeezing the productive sector just to benefit the government. Exports are down, listen and learn something Mr. Minister. Exports are down and the imports are up. We, now, have the highest trade deficit for the past 5 years with a widening trade imbalance of \$337 million. Mr. Speaker, let me spell this out. This past year at 2014, merchandise exports fell to \$588 million. While merchandise imports grows to \$925 million. So we are importing \$337 million worth of value of goods more than we are exporting. Now is that a good way to develop this country, Mr. Speaker? A widening trade deficit, widening deficit, growing unemployment, growing inequality. We note again, Mr. Speaker, just to be a little specific now, I am getting near the end, that once again, the plea of the third branch of government, the judiciary, who have been asking for an increase for years, every year, but there is no increase, their plea has fallen once again on deaf ear. In fact, the budget for the Judiciary like last year, is less than 1%, less than 1% of this boasted billion dollar budget. Similarly, for the Office of the DPP, the Auditor General, no real increase now, Mr. Speaker, I noted from a recent article that the OAS Committee and this, of course, is of interest of the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, the OAS Committee in charge of seeing to the implementation of the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption following a visit to Belize last April, recommended to government that it should increase resources to the independent Office of the Auditor General. (Applause) But this has fallen on deaf ear just look at the budget. The Committee also recommended that the Public Accounts Committee be restructured and that the Integrity Commission be appointed and made functional, but this government has done nothing about it. Nothing about it, and they talk about transparency and accountability and fighting corruption. Well, by their action they are showing otherwise, Mr. Speaker. The government has so far done nothing despite their boast about transparency and accountability.

I was telling, Mr. Speaker, a while ago, that I had difficulty reading the budget book, the estimates, but I was with the use of a magnifying glass able to detect that in the Ministry of Finance, the government has paid out a whopping, and this is in two years, you know. A whopping sum of \$13.8 million for legal and professional fees. Well, we all know, Mr. Speaker, where the bulk of that money has gone. The Prime Minister should tell us. Is it not to his family, family lawyers? And then again, I also saw a thing called "ICT- Information Communication and Technology" which is clearly a euphemism for blatant UDP propaganda, and they are spending or have spent \$7.5 million, this is where the people's money is going, \$7.5 million. And then for the purchase of new vehicles every year these ministers seem to want to change their vehicles, \$2.9 million, next year going up to over \$3 million. Yet, for national health insurance, the NHI, even though last year they budgeted \$1 million, Mr. Speaker, for the roll out in the Corozal District, somehow they only spent \$250,000.00, only \$250,000.00, a quarter of the budget.

Talking about health, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure others will deal with more details on the health issue. It, to me is unbelievable that government would cut the hospital medical supplies budget from \$15 million to \$9 million when already there is a shortage of supplies in the hospital and clinics of this country.

(Applause) Is it any wonder that patients have to find their own money to buy their medicines and go to the drug store pharmacy, is it any wonder? But we are rolling in Petrocaribe money, Mr. Speaker. We are rolling in Petrocaribe money but the people's health is going to hell, yes. It's a downright shame that the KMH does not even have a functioning sterilizer in the operating room of the ICU, not even a functioning basic necessary sterilizer, Mr. Speaker. Many patients had to be turned away instead of getting their surgeries, but we are rolling in Petrocaribe money.

The Bliss Center for the Performing Arts, Mr. Minister of Education, aren't you for Culture too? Oh no you are not for Culture, that's with tourism that is what has become now a tourist exercise. The Bliss Center for the Performing Arts has been without a functioning air condition system, you know, for over a year. But the Petrocaribe millions are rolling. For too many young people, far too many young people still are dropping out of school because their parents can't afford the school fees that are right. But the Petrocaribe millions are rolling. They have spent so far on the Marion Jones Stadium \$16 million and they tell us they have millions more to go but there is nothing in the budget for the reconstruction of the Belize City Center, even though they spent over a million dollars, you know, to demolish it. And nothing I notice for the Punta Gorda Sports Complex which like the City Center was demolished just in time for the municipal election with the promise that we'll be getting a new one but yet there is nothing in the budget for the people of Punta Gorda after they went ahead and voted for the UDP. I suppose that is why we are having another budget in six months time. That's why you see even though they are rolling in Petrocaribe money, they are rolling in Petrocaribe money. But the people out there are suffering, yes, people in their health care, in their education. (Applause) Berger Field is still a deserted waste land but we are rolling in Petrocaribe money.

And turning to security, Mr. Speaker, I have to talk about national security since the minister spent I think 80% of his time talking about politics and everything else under the sun, except national security. So, the government spent \$114 million on national security in 2014, so they say anyway. But yet Belize has the inglorious distinction of having one of the highest per capita murder rates in the world. Belize City has become a killing field for our young people. Families have been crying out for justice for the past seven years, but many so many murders remain unsolved. The resources are going to the GSU, yes, to search and arrest youths with a stick of weed, but yet so little is given to the CIB, the Crimes Investigation Branch. They are left weak and under funded with the result that most investigations go nowhere and people get acquitted by over 90% for homicide. The purposed budget for 2015/2016, yes, has an increase to \$32 million and I would hope that now the Coast Guard forwarding base at Hunting Caye by the way, which was being built by a Guatemalan company right under the nose of this UDP Government. I did not and the PUP did not sign any such agreement. (Applause) It was signed by your minister. Why are you continuing to perpetrate lies? The UDP Government are the ones who signed up this Guatemalan company to build that Hunting Caye forwarding base. (Applause) Well, I would hope now with their increase in the budget, Mr. Speaker, it looks like the minister has been fooled by the Minister of Finance or whoever, maybe the Minister of National Security told you that lie. But the fact is go and check the record when the People's United Party made any agreement for building of any forwarding base it was done with Belizean contractors, yes, that is correct. (Applause) What is patently obvious, Mr. Speaker, is that with all the millions that was voted for the Ministry of National Security, crime and violence in Belize continues to rage and our national security as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, has been blatantly breached when this young constable Danny Conorqui was on guard at Caracol was brutally and cold bloodedly murdered by Guatemalan bandits. What

do they have to say about that? What has become of that investigation? What is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, is that with all these crimes of violence in our country, crime and insecurity, the Ministry of National Security's budget when you look at the details was cut back whether through deliberate short sightedness or gross incompetence in 2014, Mr. Speaker. Because police training was cut by \$900,000.00 crime investigation was cut back by \$700,000.00 national security intelligence was cut by \$500,000.00 the defense budget for the BDF was cut back by \$761,000.00 even though uniforms, boots and equipment are in short supply. And the budget for the Minister going ahead with this referendum, but you again his boss the Prime Minister is having second thoughts. You see, he is too obsessed with his third-term ambitions. So we are going to watch this one carefully, Mr. Speaker. And perhaps the minister will explain why they only budgeted \$25,000.00 and while still on the budget, Mr. Speaker, and national security even though we were promised program indicators, of how each government was performing the results and so on, I only needed to look at one ministry and that is the Ministry of National Security.

On page 165 of the budget book, and the question is asked in the notes, number of crimes reported blank, number of investigations blank, number of arrest blank, number of complaints made about the police blank, number of convictions blank. Mr. Speaker, this budget is all *papisho*, you know this is a *papisho*. (Applause) And I say it is *papisho* because the very Prime Minister is saying it is *papisho* (Applause) when he is telling us that he is coming back in six months time with another budget. So, why is there a need for another budget in six month time, Mr. Speaker, if this one here is not *papisho*, if in this one government's budget figures mean absolutely nothing and they are just wasting people's time. When you know in his conclusion the Prime Minister seems to be reminding himself that in cycle of economics where, now the government is rolling in money but it will not last forever. And then all those loans will have to be paid back and the tragedy, the sad thing is that it is not them that will pay it back. It is the Belizean people that will have to pay it back. (Applause) You see but they cannot resist talking about taking full advantage of the plenteousness of the era. Mr. Speaker, like all Shakespeareans tragedies, pride does come before the fall, you know. And the arrogance and what the Leader of the Opposition called the intoxicating effects of the power and money that this party in government is experiencing will induce them to continue to bask in the glory. They will bask in their glory of selfishness and greed. But it will be to the detriment of the Belizean people. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Belmopan kept speculating about where Mr. Ashcroft's money is going. Well, he shouldn't have to speculate because the only person in this National Assembly who is benefitting from Ashcroft's money, who is drawing cheques on Ashcroft's money is the Prime Minister Law firm. (Applause) The Prime Minister's law firm representing the Belize Bank, they are the ones benefitting from Ashcroft money, nobody else in this House. Yet, the PUP, after the disastrous results of the municipal elections, yes, we are down but you know something, Mr. Speaker, we've been there before, you know. We know how to lose. We have suffered defeat before. Yes, Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition said, we are down but we are not out. (Applause) And just like the wondrous work of nature in the universe, when the moon eclipses the ray of the sun, there is darkness but it only last for a little while. (Applause) A bright sunshine soon returns and under the firm determine an honest leadership of the Honourable Francis Fonseca, with the support of the Belizean people, the PUP will rise again.

HON. P. FABER (Minister of Education, Youth and Sports): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my presentation on this proposed estimate for the financial year 2015/2016. Mr. Speaker, I begin by pointing out, of course, that my friend the Rt. Honourable Member from Fort George, in his presentation at several points he made it clear, Mr. Speaker, that he might be moving on and moving up a bit because he's not quite aware of what is happening, three examples:

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, he seems to not be aware that he is in Belmopan and not Belize City, he kept on referring to "right here in Belize City". Then, of course, Mr. Speaker, he was confused about the portfolios. And then, of course, he complained about not being able to see the book and the figures because they were too small. So, Mr. Speaker, I agree my friend from Belize Rural Central said to me, yes, I will get to that point as well, and that is true, Mr. Speaker, and I am glad that she was in a way, silently wishing me long life. Mr. Speaker, but I can assure you that while I might be living by the time I am 71, I am not going to be in this Honourable House. I know when to get out, Mr. Speaker. That is why I started early, very early, 12 years in this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, I don't care what they do, that's correct. They are not going to get me from here until that time is right, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, he begun by speaking about the conditions in San Mateo and the outskirts of what he refers to as the peninsula of Ambergris Caye. And, Mr. Speaker, he is right but he is also very deceptive, Mr. Speaker, when it is he who tries to paint the picture that it is this administration's neglect of that area of the country that has caused those conditions there. Mr. Speaker, we all know its kind like my opponent in the Collet constituency, who goes on the London Bridge, Mr. Speaker, and fling her false hair, and tell the people about the conditions there. (Applause) They are disingenuous, Mr. Speaker, because they know that these conditions to some extent, are created outside the planning of the administration, outside of the planning of the government because people, Mr. Speaker, squat in these areas, inhabit these areas, because of their need to survive. And so, it doesn't matter, Mr. Speaker, what conditions exist or what kind of planning exist for an administration from time to time you will have these situation. Everybody knows that in San Pedro that is an area where we have the boomingness of the tourism industry, Mr. Speaker, and everybody goes to San Pedro to find employment. To show the point even further, Mr. Speaker, you will know that in fact, even in education we have problems placing all the children in because it is hard to plan for this development. Everybody goes there it's hard to see how many people are going to come in and, of course, these people have to live some place, the living conditions by nature of it being a tourist destination is often very high and so the people have to live somewhere, and so they go into these swampy areas, it's an island, it's not fully filled up and these conditions begin. And the administration, Mr. Speaker, has tried its best like it has in the outskirts of Belize City to keep up with this movement of people in these areas, Mr. Speaker, but it is sometimes very difficult. So for my friend, the Rt. Honourable for Fort George to have come and to talk about the Petrocaribe millions that is rolling and to talk as if San Pedro is not getting its fair share of the monies in terms of the work plan of the United Democratic Party Government, Mr. Speaker, is disingenuous.

He talks, Mr. Speaker, about what is happening in some of the rural areas and you notice, Mr. Speaker, that all of them on the other side when they speak in this Honourable House or when they speak on the air waves, Mr. Speaker, you notice they can't discredit the government for the infrastructural works that are going on because this country has never ever before seen that kind of infrastructural work. (Applause) It is unprecedented, Mr. Speaker, so he went off and what happens in the rural areas, well, Mr. Speaker, my duty as Minister of

Education takes me all over this country. Mr. Speaker, and it is a downright lie for him to try to perpetrate in this House, that the kind of transformation that the Prime Minister speaks of is not happening even in the remote areas of this country in the rural areas. I want to invite them and my friend, the Member from Toledo West can attest to go to San Antonio and see the roads and the sidewalks in that village, a very remote village, say it ain't so. (Applause) Go to Pueblo Viejo and go to Santa Ana and Santa Cruz, right there in the Toledo West Constituency and see the roads in those villages, Mr. Speaker, all shoots of the highway, the beautiful highway in the rural parts of this country. I went to Corozal, Mr. Speaker, over the weekend and I decided to cut off, I don't know what the road is called right in front of Corner Stone Presbyterian School, help me my friend from Corozal, that little dirt road that comes out before you reach the border, Concepcion Road. Mr. Speaker, and the road was not paved but it was like a highway so much that the people had to put their own makeshift speed bump, Mr. Speaker, proof that this administration is working even in the rural areas, in the sugar roads where the cane farmers are working so for him to be saying that, Mr. Speaker, is utter nonsense. (Applause)

We have listened to the Prime Minister time and time again, talks about the millions of dollars that are spent in the rejuvenation of those sugar roads, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell you not by anybody's testimony, Mr. Speaker, but by my own observation that the transformation that is taking place is not local to Belize City alone. You know, I was asking why they remove the bus stop from off the main road there at Roaring Creek by the Agricultural Show Grounds, somebody told me, "you can't see that it is a roundabout they are building here." Transformation, Mr. Speaker, and if you go down south, in fact, you heard when the Prime Minister presented his budget two weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, how the entire Hummingbird Highway and my friend from Stann Creek West, I am sure when he gets up because you know, he is very articulate, Mr. Speaker, and he's very verbose, so he will tell us and he will give high words of praise to the Prime Minister, for all the works that will happen through the Hummingbird Highway, Mr. Speaker. All these single lane bridges that we have become accustomed to over the decades, Mr. Speaker, will be no more. (Applause) It doesn't matter how long it will take and so when they talk, Mr. Speaker, about all the borrowing that is going on, we can see where this money is going. And I'll get to disputing the nonsense that the Rt. Honourable Member for Fort George, spoke of just now in terms of the debt. Well, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when he talks about neglect in all of these areas its nonsense. The development in Cayo, anybody can see that. In the rural areas as well as in the town, the municipality itself. You go to Orange Walk, Mr. Speaker, you see the same kind of development. You go to San Pedro, Mr. Speaker, I remember when I use to go to San Pedro for a little weekend or so and you rent your little golf cart, Mr. Speaker, and you are driving along, God forbid that it rains because it gets worse. But even when the road dry the hole in the lane, bang from the south side of the island to the north side of island and the next week you will have back pain because of the bad roads. Mr. Speaker, San Pedro Town has been completely transformed from the genk to genk with garble stone roads or cement pavements now. Development, Mr. Speaker, transformation and as the Prime Minister said this transformation will continue. (Applause)

It is not for some, Mr. Speaker, it is for all, all. They criticized the tablet thing and all that which is Petrocaribe money, they didn't ask the children or the young people because these are six formers and adults, in fact, which part of the country you came from so you could know it is nonsense he is talking. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when I went down to Toledo at the University of Belize's Campus for the tablet distribution, we saw people from Crique Sarco, from Jalacte, from Barranco, who are students of the University of Belize there in Punta Gorda and

beloved of the United Democratic Party, the Government, the transformation of the United Democratic Party Government, Mr. Speaker, is countrywide. It is that large, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) I could not believe, Mr. Speaker, that he would actually get up, but then again, this is the Member for Fort George, you must remember because as my friend the Honourable Member for Mesopotamia, Mr. Speaker, would say and I join with the Prime Minister, and, of course, the Speaker, who gave condolences to the Honourable colleague on the passing of his mother, I too join with him, Mr. Speaker, but as he would say, that man has more nerves than ten bad teeth. (Applause) Mr. Speaker, he gets up in this Honourable House and he behaves and it is almost like he believes it now, Mr. Speaker, because he has said so many times that I think he start believe his own thing or as I have said, because of his age he is getting, and I don't want to be unkind to him very much for his age, Mr. Speaker, but you must know when to give up and when to decrease. Because, Mr. Speaker, this as my friend from Rural Central said it may well happen to all of us. But, Mr. Speaker, to criticize the initiatives like the BOOST Program and the Food Pantry, Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder why they can't win in Belize City, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) Because there are hundreds of families even in the Toledo District and my friend from Toledo West, you know he is very articulate as well; in fact, he is even more articulate than my friend from Stann Creek West. So, he can tell you as well, about those families even in the most remote part of our country who are benefitting from BOOST, who are benefitting from Food Pantry, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

So, Mr. Speaker, for the Member for Fort George to get up and to criticize this initiative, talking about single mothers not getting pantry and so on from the government and so on is a lie, Mr. Speaker. And if anybody does not believe that it is a lie, they can check the results from the city council, the municipal elections just gone, Mr. Speaker, check the March 4th results. (Applause) If it were, Mr. Speaker, that the Belizean people were not satisfied with those initiatives, they would have been creaming us off in Belize City. My poor plastic friend would be smiling forever more, and would not have needed any surgery to get that smile up. She would have been smiling all the way, Mr. Speaker, in the Collet Constituency but she is not smiling. In fact, she run down the people, Mr. Speaker, calling them prostitute and drunkards, sell out for an elephant foot and all of that, disgraceful, Mr. Speaker. But we are waiting for her.

And then, Mr. Speaker, my friend from Fort George went on to talk about, I don't understand him, Mr. Speaker, he spoke about the rice industry then and what is currently going on. And he accused this administration of colluding with the business people to shaft the Belizean people, Mr. Speaker. Something that again, he should know better than that, Mr. Speaker, because he was Prime Minister, he was a head of a CARICOM nation. He attended these heads of CARICOM Summits, Mr. Speaker, and he knows fully well about our Caribbean Single Market and Economy and he knows, Mr. Speaker, that you cannot well box out products that come, goods and services that come from our region, Mr. Speaker. Yes it is, we want to protect, Mr. Speaker, the Belizean producers, yes, we do, and my friend from Toledo West, again, he can attest to why it is that the rice farmers from down there are, why the production fell and why that became the case, Mr. Speaker, because, yes, you are right, because the farmers down in the south were subsidized by the government. And, Mr. Speaker, the producer from the north especially the Mennonites started complaining that they were expected to do the same thing without the subsidies that the southern farmers were doing and the government had to play a fair role and said, well we have to stop it. That is the fact, it is not subsidized anymore because it was discontinued and as a result, we saw the departure of many of the farmers, Mr. Speaker, from there. But, Mr. Speaker, it is a very very delicate balance that we have to perform in government. We have to balance off protecting our producers, Mr. Speaker, but

it is also the case that we have sign on these regional and some international agreements, Mr. Speaker, that bind us. And for the sake of our students who are in the audience and those who might be listen, Mr. Speaker, this is why Belize and the other CARICOM countries are a part of the Caribbean Court of Justice because the court also has jurisdiction to adjudicate on issues having to do with the CARICOM'S Single Market and Economy so Belize might well find itself in trouble if don't play the game right. So, for him, Mr. Speaker, somebody who should be more knowledgeable than any of the other Members on that side because, Mr. Speaker, he was a head himself and he was probably the signatory to that kind of agreement, he should not have raised it and try to blame the government, Mr. Speaker, for that.

And then, Mr. Speaker, he went on to talk about investments and he was, they really need to sit down, I understand they had a Parliamentary Caucus to discuss strategy for the debate on the budget. You and I both know the real reason they had that meeting was to talk about the tape that my friend the Member for Orange Walk Central was caught on. But they didn't want to admit, Mr. Speaker, that the real reason why they were meeting was to deal with that tape so they put out their mouth piece Godfrey Smith, to blurt out a lot of things and to talk about, and then they dubbed a session to prepare for the budget debate. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is evident that they failed to prepare, because what one is saying, the other one is saying the contrary too.

The Leader of the Opposition said people are afraid to invest in Belize that there are no investors. But yet my friend from Fort George was forced to name some of the projects were the investment happens, he criticizes them but he admitted that these projects existed. And I am grateful to my friend and colleague from Belmopan, Mr. Speaker, who highlighted some of the successful projects that are evidence of this investment. And then, Mr. Speaker, he said that the reason why the Member for Fort George went on to criticize, and he said that the reason why there is no real investment even though he just named off the few, he said he name of a few, and of course, those are major investments, the ASR Investment, the Green Tropics Investment, I think my friend from Fort George mentioned the Caye Chapel Investment, and he also spoke about the Norwegian Investment, Mr. Speaker, all major investments. And he criticized, of course, about the fact that they are given tax holidays and so on, but in all of that, Mr. Speaker, if he failed to make the adequate comparison. It is true, Mr. Speaker, and we make no apologies for it, that quite often when these investors come, we have to do something to help to keep them here. But, Mr. Speaker, whatever it is the administration does, any administration, Mr. Speaker, it must be something that you are willing to stand up for and defend. And that is why he should have when he stood up just now defended the projects that is his friend and colleague and Former Deputy Leader and Deputy Prime Minister, the Member from Orange Walk Central, dealt with in detail, like Galleria Maya, Mr. Speaker, where millions of dollars disappeared. That is the kind of investment he should have talked about. Mr. Speaker, he painted the picture that our administration has to give all of this kind of fluff, if you will, and gifts away to the people who are investing, but he give away everything, the baby and the bath water, when he was in charge of the ship. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I hold in my hand because he said, oh by the way before I move off the investment that he spoke about, he talked about nationalization you remember, Mr. Speaker, and criticized the government for acquiring back BEL and BTL and that that is what scared off the investors he said. Well, there is only one person we could blame for that. If indeed we are to take what he is saying as the truth, was it not he, Mr. Speaker, who presided over the sale of BTL and BEL over and over, one time even when he buy it back from Prosser and take it back

into his hand, he still tried find ways and illegal ways at that, Mr. Speaker, where he was giving away everything. Do you remember the secret Accommodation Agreement, Mr. Speaker? It's not only me that says that, Mr. Speaker, these things have gone to the court and who still don't want to believe the court, believe the Member from Orange Walk Central. (Applause) Because as I have said, Mr. Speaker, it's like that, there are two little Creole saying, "Wen fish kom fahn riva batam an tel yu haligeta have beliayk, beleev ah. He was at the river bottom." (Applause) And, Mr. Speaker, another one, "Wen a tel yu de haas wait, da bikaaz a hav di hayr eena mi han." He had the horse hair in his hand; he could tell us exactly what went on, Mr. Speaker, exactly what went on. But for the benefit, again, for our students what the Accommodation Agreement was he sold BTL to the Lord, and then he promised the Lord that if he did not make the kind of profit that he wanted to make, I think it was at least 15% profit, that hear what now, if you don't make that genuinely from your business practices in BTL, don't worry about it you can still get it you can just deduct it from the taxes you would have paid the government, imagine that. That was what the Accommodation Agreement was and he didn't bring it to the Honourable House, he signed it in secrecy. He signed it behind closed doors. In fact, when the UDP got into government and then Ashcroft came and said, "well, this is the deal." We said, "We don't know what you are talking about." And then Ashcroft pulled out the agreement and said, "here is it". And I won't tell you all, maybe I should tell you all, I think we deserve to know, the students deserve to know that the co-signer on that agreement is the same man that is sitting down beside him right now, the now Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Freetown, who wants to be Prime Minister of this country. (Applause) Those guys don't have any shame. They have no shame, Mr. Speaker, and it is not casting aspersions when I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that those guys huffed Belize's money, that they diverged our money. I noticed when the Honourable Member for Fort George spoke about Universal or integral or whatever it is called, Mr. Speaker, Health Partners whatever it's called now, he said that some of us go there for healthcare, petty, small, doesn't matter. What matters was that he diverted \$20 million of the Belizean people's money to pay a private debt then when they raised that to him just now, he behaved, Mr. Speaker, like he knocked his head, "It's not true, it's not true, it's not like that." I want to think that he knows well of what he is doing.

Mr. Speaker, it was funny to hear him criticized the economic policies and the economic practices of this administration. He said, Mr. Speaker, that under his watch and what the People's United Party believes in is an economy that is built on twin pillars, he says. He said that the tourism and service industry and the agricultural and aquaculture industry. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you this, long before this administration came into office we knew that the sugar industry was in problem yet they did nothing to solve that problem in their 10 years of being in government. They knew, Mr. Speaker, well in advance, but you see when you have people in the industry that is wrapped up with them, it's hard to see the problems but there were problems in the citrus industry from way back. There were problems in the rice industry from way back. All of these industries were in problems, Mr. Speaker, and they did nothing. So I am always amazed when they turn around now and they pretend like the government should be the ones to do all the rescuing and solving of the problems of these industries. And Mr. Speaker, it is don't get me wrong, it is the responsibility of the government because we do want to see these industries prosper so it is the responsibility of the government to give general guidance assistance where it is possible to help to make sure that these industries don't go under in the very much same way the larger countries do. Do you remember when Mr. Obama rescue the banking and financial industry and, of course, the auto industry, Mr. Speaker? But he said that under his watch, Mr. Speaker, that the entire country's agriculture aquaculture was looked out for and everything was good. But he failed to remember, Mr. Speaker, and he think

we the Belizean people don't remember, and you know we have to watch ourselves in Belize, I am glad to see so many of the young people in our Galleries today because some of the young people who just turn 18 years old and so don't remember, Mr. Speaker, they don't remember the ills that the People's United Party put us through as a country. And I could spend a little time on that but maybe this is not the place you might remind me that we are to be talking on the budget but those guys creamed this country. When my friend the Member from Belmopan said that this is the first time in history that the United Democratic Party has been given an opportunity to prosper or to share the prosperity with the Belizean people after fixing the economy after it has been wrecked by the People's United Party, it is a fact. It was in 1984, Mr. Speaker, when the UDP first came in, we were in an IMF standby agreement. Mr. Esquivel rescued us in a matter of one year and something months and set this country back and part and then we lost the elections in 1989 and by 1993, again, the PUP had derailed our economy. So, we went one in, one out, one in, one out, let me deal with what the Former Prime Minister said, he's talking nonsense, I challenge the students to go and find their manifesto, what does it say, it says the national debt, these figures \$1.7 billion and that is a downright lie, I don't know where he gets that figure. The figure that my colleague used the \$2.2 billion is the accurate figure. That is what the national debt was, he said, at the end of the PUP reign.

In 2008, well, Mr. Speaker, in 1998, when they took over the administration on the first page of their Manifesto for that election, they said, and you can go check the words verbatim, "The UDP Government has left this country with a whopping." That is the word they use, "whopping debt of \$567 million." You know, now from 1981 to 1998, all that was wrapped up was \$560 odd million dollars. That is half, 50%, 2 out of 4, 2 quarters of a billion, billion with a 'B'. And by the time the PUP left office in 2008, 10 years later, the national debt was at \$2.2 billion with a 'B'. Within 10 years, they managed to rake up the debt by \$1.7 billion with a 'B', again. And in the 8 years of the UDP Administration, if we are to listen to the figure of \$2.7 billion where the debt is now, we have gone up another half a billion, \$500 million, so don't let them trick you all, like I don't know what is happening with this man. They want to trick the Belizean people. So, Mr. Speaker, this government has been very responsible with the debt. And, of course, I don't need to tell anybody what my colleague, the Minister of National Security said was true. The kind of borrowing that the UDP did is not the kind of borrowing the People's United Party did. I watch with amazement just now how my friend from Fort George, actually criticized. He went to great pain to tell you that the Petrocaribe money is not a grant, that it is a loan, that we have to pay it back. And he is correct. But you know what the rate is for the Petrocaribe Loan, 1%. (Applause) And I dare you to check the record and to see that every bit of borrowing done under this United Democratic Party Administration has been at libor or has been at very low concessionary rates, 1%, and 2%, and 3%, and 4% and maybe if you stretch it, 5%. But you check when those guys were borrowing when they were borrowing, Mr. Speaker, because, again, what my colleague the Minister from National Security said is true. They could not borrow, nobody wanted to borrow. The Musa Administration's name was stink. Nobody wanted to lend them, Mr. Speaker. Nobody wanted to lend, the IDB don't want to hear from them. The World Bank don't want to hear from them. The CDB don't want to hear from them. Nobody wanted to lend them money, Mr. Speaker, and as a result, you know what they did? They needed the money because they were on a crack head kind of high. They needed all of this money so they went to borrow money from the commercial sector, Mr. Speaker. they went to the Royal Bank of Trinidad, remember RBTT, like every time you turn on the news back then you will hear about RBTT and the International Bank of Miami, where they were borrowing money from 13%, 14%, 15%, 16% and then when it became unsustainable, the G7, Mr. Speaker, round them up headed

by my good friend, the Member from Orange Walk Central. Yes, he was the Deputy Leader, remember at one time they even remove him from Deputy Leader and Deputy Prime Minister then they started hugging back, they gave him back, do you remember that?

When the G7, Mr. Speaker, when the G7 took things to him then he said, alright then but that was the position under the People's United Party, Mr. Speaker. So, these guys really, Mr. Speaker, they really have the face of brass. When things got really bad, Mr. Speaker, and the G7 came in and then they decided, "Well we have to float bond to cover all of this." And this was what became known as the Super Bond. This was what became known as the Super Bond and that started at trajectory, Mr. Speaker, of down, down, down, down for Belize. Moody, standard and poor, the IMF, well they always are jumping up but we don't have to listen to them all the time, you know. But they started downgrading us, we drop from B to C to I don't know where we were. I really don't remember where we were but we were really low, we were so low that I think I stopped watch because I was ashamed. And when it was, Mr. Speaker, that this United Democratic Party Government took office we saw the change. The Prime Minister had to go to Miami, had to go to Washington, he did whatever he needed to do to fix the relationship, Mr. Speaker, with the IDB, with the CDB, with the World Bank, with CABEI and everybody else, the IFI's. So, Mr. Speaker, that we could borrow and borrow at concessionary rates, Mr. Speaker, so that is the big difference between the United Democratic Party and the People's United Party. Don't let them tell you young people, and my Belizean people that the UDP and the PUP are the same thing because it ain't so. It is not so, Mr. Speaker, and we should not let them get away with that.

Then, Mr. Speaker, again, like I told you whatever preparation they did for this budget debate, seems the preparation failed. My friend the Leader of the Opposition, he jumped up and said the practice of the administration is to tax, borrow and spend. By the time it got to the Member for Fort George, he drop the tax part, he only say borrow and spend. Well, the reason he might have had to have done that was because my friend from Belmopan pointed out to him that under this administration, no new taxes have come for quite some time. So, we have, Mr. Speaker, not put in place any new taxes and I could not understand for the life of me, why my friend from Fort George would go on to point to you as his example, his proof if you will, Mr. Speaker, that the reason why he could tell you that taxes were implemented was because the revenue increase. Well, he doesn't know Betty Ann Jones, he should know her because Ms. Betty Ann was from around his time, but she wasn't at income tax or maybe its GST, she's at you know, and he doesn't know Kent Claire, because those two public servants works tirelessly for the last couple of years to collect as much as they can in terms of those taxes from the Belizean people and that is why the revenues of this country are going up.

I want to give some credit as well not that I am discrediting the last Comptroller of Customs but the new Comptroller of Custom looks like he is really cracking at tight whip. And we will look forward to getting some more increased revenues from customs.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Fort George at every chance he got referred back to when he was Prime Minister and the budgets that were presented, when he left office. And I will be kind to him and say that the reason why he probably can't remember is that he has now left office for so long that he can't remember. I won't use the other excuse that I can give you. But, Mr. Speaker, let me remind him that in those months after he left office and the Honourable Prime Minister took office from this administration, the Prime Minister had to come and read a

new budget. Because, Mr. Speaker, not because we said so at the time, his own Members from that side, the then Member for Albert Division who is no longer in their party, their Former Leader, no longer in their party now, you see, they change leaders very frequently. But he was the one who accused them of cooking the books. So, that when the Former Prime Minister from Fort George now gets up in this Honourable House and tells you about all the surplus that was there, the primary surplus and all of what was there. Everybody knows, Mr. Speaker, that those were bogus figures. When he talked about 8% unemployment, in which world was he living in? At that time, Mr. Speaker, at that time the Statistical Institute of Belize was not what it is today. Those times he used to call over there, Mr. Speaker, and give them instructions, “This is what I need inflation to be. This is what I need unemployment to be. I want it to look like this because I am going to go and present the budget.” And you know how you could tell that it was nonsense, that what was happening then compared to what is happening now because, Mr. Speaker, the independent SIB, now they put out reports even just before election. Some of it is not altogether favourable to the government, in fact, yesterday they put out some figures before this debate, maybe they were trying to help them because you know the last quarterly figures went down a bit. But over all we still saw fair enough growth in this country and that is what we should be happy about. That is why we should celebrate the success of this United Democratic Party Government.

And then, my friend from Freetown, he went on and on about prices all of a sudden now he is a price expert. He goes shopping. I think he is buying at Brodies; maybe that’s why the prices are high. I buy at Brodies sometimes too so I could tell you. It is convenient for me when I am going home, on the highway. I like Brodies but the prices are a bit high from time to time. I do go to Save-U too, I want to make that clear. I do go to Save- U rather.

The last point I want to touch on, Mr. Speaker, that he spoke of, my friend from Fort George, was the fact that he said he didn’t see anything in the budget for BIL. And, again, Mr. Speaker, it’s like I don’t know what is happening with him, he was Minister of Finance; he was Prime Minister. This man should know, Mr. Speaker, that the monies for BIL will be under CAP III.. And, Mr. Speaker, there are monies allocated in CAP III for the Belize Infrastructure Limited Projects. So, we just need to look for it. But maybe, Mr. Speaker, I will give him the benefit of the doubt; he said the print too small and the eye is playing tricks on him so maybe he never see it. In wrapping up them, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that I continue to be amazed and I think the Belizean people continue to be amazed by the gall, he whispered under his breath something about the Prime Minister earlier claiming he doesn’t have, I won’t use the unparliamentarily word, Mr. Speaker, although he did and it came over the microphone and I am sure it went over the air waves. But, Mr. Speaker, he has guts to stand up and to talk about corruption, to stand up and talk about accountability, entering back the Chamber and to stand up and talk about love for the poor people of this country when they give us \$20 million, Mr. Speaker, for the poor people housing and he diverted to help rich people business interest. (Applause) How can he have the gall, this guy really really, and, Mr. Speaker, like some other people, it’s like he boils your blood when he talks. Because, Mr. Speaker, don’t tell me to calm down, you need to calm down because you 71 years old and I am 37 years old, (Applause) I don’t worry about me. I have, to steal the words from one of your former colleagues; I have mental and physical agility. Don’t worry about me. (Applause) But, Mr. Speaker, he really has some strong guts, some strong nerves, to stand up in this House and to talk on those topics, corruption, love for the poor people, I really really, Mr. Speaker, I’m waiting for that day when he departs from this National Assembly and departs from public life. And I hope when he goes, Mr. Speaker, he takes the Member for Freetown along with him because they are

joint at the hip in terms of the corruption. And we should not let the Member from the Orange Walk Central escape neither, because, Mr. Speaker, he is not squeaky clean either. But you see, he was the one talking on the tape so he won't talk about himself when he was talking on the tape. But you know, he is in things too.

Mr. Speaker, sorry I meant to mention this before I get on to the business of education. There is no time limit you know that right, you have been here much longer than I have. And you see, if, my friend isn't here so I will put in a two words for him and then I know my friend from Belize Rural Central will get up later on and she will talk a lot of nonsense about education. And if she would promise me secretly right now that she won't talk any fool about education, I would cut it short on education. But she can't do that, I know she can't do it. So, I'll take the time to explain and to go through what is in the budget for education. But, I want to draw attention to this because the Former Prime Minister, spoke about agriculture being one of the two pillars of the PUP Administration's economic theory or practice. This, Mr. Speaker, is an Auditor General's Report on a special Soy Bean Project. Did you know that we had a Soy Bean Project? Many Belizeans don't. We spend, let me tell you all, \$19.4 million was invested in a Soy Bean Factory Project and we didn't produce any bit of Soy Bean, yet. When the Auditor General went to investigate where the machinery is, everything was missing. And this was something that the Public Accounts Committee dealt with. Sorry, my friend from Cayo South isn't here, but you see he is the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee but he will never know that the Public Accounts Committee dealt with this because he didn't show up at the meeting. He didn't show up. He didn't think it was interesting. He didn't have any concerns about this, Mr. Speaker. He wanted to try to embarrass the current administration. But he don't have to try that, Mr. Speaker, everybody in this party isn't perfect. You have seen things happen and you have seen it being dealt with as well, because that is the kind of ship that our Prime Minister, our Party Leader on this side of the House runs, not like what goes on, on that side, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, turning to education. I will start off by pointing out, because they like to go back when they were in power. Well, when they left office back in 2008, they spent about a \$160 million on education. That is what it was in 2008. Mr. Speaker, if you look in the big book and you find what is being spent on education today, I will tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, We're on page 89. If you look, Mr. Speaker, the total budget that is being allotted for education for this 2015/2016, budget is a whopping \$240,296,000, it is \$240 million, Mr. Speaker, what was budgeted was \$228 million and what was spent, Mr. Speaker, was \$235 million. So you see growth is happening. I want to hear what nonsense they will get up and say. Mr. Speaker, if you study the figures on page 289, you will see that under strategic management and administration of our ministry, the figures have gone up from \$21 million last year, we are going to spend this year, \$23 million on that administration. And that is important, Mr. Speaker, because quite often when we have a budget looking at this amount of money, people say well, all this money is being spent. We are spending on pre-school education, we are spending on primary education, we are spending on secondary education, we are spending on tertiary education, and we are spending on transportation, text books, feeding programs, but very little is often spent on administering the Ministry and all of these finances. And this government, this Minister, the ministry is now looking to make sure that there is a mechanism to properly govern by the now former Chief Librarian, Ms. Joy, said "Minister we are glad you are responsible for this Ministry." But of course we can't take credit for all because without my Prime Minister this would not be possible, (Applause) but we have improved tremendously on the kind of spending that we have given to the National Library Service. What we are spending on youths support services is going to go up. What we are spending on sporting development is going to go up. And for all the

naysayers because they are going to get again, Mr. Speaker, I am telling you and they are going to talk nonsense. Let me tell them because one of the things that I am proud of as Minister of Education is that we proudly proclaim, we proudly point out what is wrong in our education system in order that the players know that we are trying to fix it. So, they can't shame us. (Applause) They can't say ah but this and that. You know how they know half the time when they know something is not correct, we tell them and we tell them because, Mr. Speaker, they are stakeholders like everybody are stakeholders in the Belizean education system. We want them to join force with us to try to fix it. So, they will tell you, yes, but the money you all are spending on sports, your monies that you all are spending on youths is a bit light. And I agree, Mr. Speaker, we need to find more monies to put into our young people and to put into sporting activities in this country. But, Mr. Speaker, whatever it is now it is a far cry from where it used to be under the People's United Party Administration. (Applause)

And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that once we clear the hurdles because we already seeing developments now, we are seeing the \$60 million investment in the Belize Infrastructure Limited investments, sporting facilities across this country. (Applause) The Marion Jones, I am told got a soft opening yesterday by our Minister of State from Albert. They talked nonsense about the City Center; the City Center is going to go up. The Punta Gorda Civic Center is going to go up as well. Rome wasn't built in a day, and these things takes time but unlike them who go and spend money recklessly, lawlessly and then the projects fall apart in a brief quick time, we are not like that; (Applause) we need to take our time, Mr. Speaker, and we need to make sure that we are getting value for money putting in the proper planning dotting all the "I's" and crossing all the "T's." That is why, Mr. Speaker, we may have taken a bit of time but these projects are in the pipeline. So, the kind of spending that is going on now, Mr. Speaker, white it is not all together desirous is not at the level where we would want to see it. If they didn't borrow all the money from us, we might have a little more money. They wouldn't have all those commercial borrowing, if they didn't went according to my friend from Orange Walk Central to spend on those white elephant projects like Galleria Maya and so on, we would have more money and spend, Mr. Speaker, on the young people of this country. But I want people to understand that \$240 million in excess of 25% of the national budget of this country being spent on the young people and on sports and on education is unprecedented in this country. (Applause)

So, Mr. Speaker, what is it that we are doing with this money. We are spending it yes, in all of these areas that I mentioned but, Mr. Speaker, like I mentioned to you we also have projects that are very very important. And if you look in CAP II, Mr. Speaker, and if you look in CAP III you will see. Let me try to find, if you look on page 202, Mr. Speaker, you will see what the CAP III monies are being spent on, Mr. Speaker, and we are very proud of these initiatives. You will see at item 1068 under 21, Education Sector Improvement Project. You will see under 1591- Marion Jones Complex because we still have to finish up a bit there. You will see, Mr. Speaker, 1735 - Enhancements of Policy and Strategy Framework of the Education Sector. You will see, Mr. Speaker, 1754 - Child Survival Education. You will see 1858 - The Education Quality Improvement Project (EQIP) Mr. Speaker. Let me tell you where we get the monies fund for these initiatives.

For the Sector Improvement Project we got the money from the CDB. Before this administration was in, we didn't get any money from the CDB. The last thing that they were able to secure was the money for the building the construction of the ITVETs. Do you remember that? They got \$50 million from the CDB and I believe that that is the same projects that caused the CDB to cut

them off. I listened as my friend from Freetown beat his chest and said and also the Member from Fort George from time to time proclaim that he was the champion for the Center for Employment Training and it was them that secured the \$50 million to build the ITVETs all over the country. Well, Mr. Speaker, if you visit the ITVETs, well, maybe not now but back in the time when we just took over, you would have seen all the nonsense that they did. And then they are talking about contractors, and corruption with the contractors when the buildings were leaking out, Mr. Speaker, some of them built the building with no wiring inside for lighting and no phone, I could not believe. The only ITVET that was built under the United Democratic Party Administration was the last one in Belize City and you can go and see proof of it, it is a quality constructed project because it was done under the watch of the United Democratic Party. (Applause) So, Mr. Speaker, the Education Sector Improvement Project, \$5million came from the CDB, comes from the CDB; the Enhancement of policy and Strategy Framework, again, this is a part, this is the strengthening, sorry was not \$5 million, it was \$20 million, the enhancement of the framework, the mechanism was what we got \$5 million from the CDB for and this is to strengthen the capacity of the ministry to better enhance the sector policy and strategy plan. And then, Mr. Speaker, the IDB recently you saw us go on a road show with a little school bus commercial on the TV, Mr. Speaker, that initiative is been sponsored by the IDB to train teachers. And, Mr. Speaker, under these initiatives I could go on and on and tempted to stop but I know my friend from Rural Central, Mr. Speaker, she will come and talk a whole lot of nonsense and you won't allow me to get up back and answer her, I know.

But you see, Mr. Speaker, they get up the other day, I watched them and I listened, just now in fact, as they boasted that tablets distribution was something that they conceived. Remember they had a press conference the other day to talk about that how they are going to revolutionized education. And what is their idea about revolutionizing education to put electronic tablets and computers in the hands of the students and make everything electronic, everything will be well, don't worry the students will learn. Well, let me tell you something, they missed the boat big time, Mr. Speaker, because education in this country, our education system is concerned with technology, yes, but it's concerned with so much more. It is concerned with teachers giving their quality instruction to the students. It is concerned, Mr. Speaker, with getting parents to do a better job and (Applause) not sending their children, to school, Mr. Speaker, relying on the school to feed them, relying on the school to be a parent to them and to teach them some of the very basic, Mr. Speaker. Education in our country, Mr. Speaker, is concerned about physical infrastructure, making sure that our students have comfortable learning environments with teaching aids on the wall. The use of technology, yes, making sure that they are not getting wet, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that their feet is not on mud floors, to make sure that they have text books, Mr. Speaker. It shows you how lost they are. How terribly misdirected they are, that they believed that by dropping a tablet or a computer in the hands of a student with the best apps and electronic test books that that will solve the problems of education in this country. They are lost. They are misguided. To truly solve the issues that we have, Mr. Speaker, it will require a complete effort on the parts of stakeholders. It will require stronger management of those who own our schools especially the churches and the government as well because our government schools have a lot in terms of what they need to do in order to live the quality as well. So I am not only casting aspersions at the churches who own schools in this country. We need, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that our children are in an environment conducive to learning that is what these projects are about. The sector strategy improvement making sure, for instances, Mr. Speaker, that our children are getting a strong start from early childhood, making sure that where those speak Maya, Garifuna, and

Spanish that they are in our schools early from 2 and 3 and 4 so that they can grasp the English language which is the official language of our country. (Applause) And then they are able to cope with learning in Infant 1 as oppose to have to struggle with learning the language in Infant 1. That is what improving the quality of education is about.

We have to tell them, Mr. Speaker, and I won't be unkind altogether. If you look at the statistic, Mr. Speaker, my friend from Fort George was quick to point out that there were some empty spots in terms of what the activities of the ministry's are, you see, because maybe he wasn't seeing correct or maybe he doesn't understand, but the new budget book is structured a bit differently. It is now into multiyear budgeting and they now have goals and objectives targets that you set out and that you must meet within that year and that you will report on next year. It is new and so some ministries have not yet gotten on and that is why the thing looks empty but he got up and say that we are doing nothing in those areas there, he is lost. He is lost or confused or purposefully trying to misguide the Belizean people. But if they would look in the education portion, they will see that the number of classrooms for instance, at the early childhood level has gone, more preschools, more preschool teachers. (Applause) More training of our early childhood teachers and I have the statistics if my friend from Rural Central wants, I could tell you exactly the percentage improvement in teachers at the early childhood preschool level if she wants me to. But I will not be unkind as I said, the initiative to add-on preschools to primary schools, and to improve on delivering early childhood education was started under the last administration, under my friend the Leader of the Opposition. You know why I am pointing that out because, Mr. Speaker, it is time in this country that we stop playing politics with education. There are some things we can't play politics with and it's not because one administration puts in place something and you know it's good for this country, especially for education system which is the vehicle that can deliver all of us out of poverty, you will run it down.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that while when we got into government many of these initiatives, some of them were underway already. They needed a lot of tweaking. They needed a lot of rescuing but they had a few good ideas. And so, Mr. Speaker, that is why we have seen an increase in preschool education. Fixing what is wrong with education, Mr. Speaker, that this budget of the transformation continuing speaks to, Mr. Speaker, and gives money to is improving the quality at the primary level as well. And, Mr. Speaker, we have seen improvement in the number of trained teachers at the primary school level. We are spending money on that every day, Mr. Speaker. I spoke just now about the EQIP Program, Mr. Speaker, that is funded by the IDB that we went around to do the road show but I can also tell you about the European Union Banana Support Initiative that saw a 100%, are you all hearing me, it's not mis-speak I am mis-speaking when I tell you a 100% of the teachers in the Stann Creek and Northern Toledo District were put into training programs and one or two of them didn't make it so we have at least 96% or 97% now that the training is finished. Trained teachers in those districts at the primary school level, and you know of course that our administration through successive years, Mr. Speaker, but it continues in this budget. This same budget to offer a Certificate in Primary Education Program, a training program that delivers pedagogy and for the sake of people that don't understand what pedagogy, mean. Sometimes our teacher have qualification, they have degree after degree, but they were never trained in how to teach children or adults. (Applause) That is what pedagogy is.

So to be an effective teacher you need to be smart, yes, you will have to

have content, which is a problem, why we struggle in Mathematics, some of our teachers are afraid for Mathematics, they don't know Mathematics so it doesn't matter how much strategy you have to deliver but if you ain't got the content, you ain't got it. But this is the kind of discussion we need to have and we need to talk about frankly. This is the real deal. And this budget and this minister, and my ministry, I can tell you for the last 7 and a half years, have been targeting, delivering better training for our teachers especially at the primary levels so that we have seen massive increase. We have gone from just over 40% to over 65% of trained teachers at the primary level paid for by the big book numbers over successive years, and our partners like the European Union and the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank, our partners. So when you want them to know, they jump up and where we are borrowing money from. Where the money is going? I can tell you \$20 million Sector Strategy Improvement Project, \$5 million to enhance the framework for it to operate, \$20 million in the EQIP Project to help to train teachers at the pre-primary level, at the primary level, at the secondary level and in leadership because that is the next thing.

Let me get off of primary and let me go to leadership. Because you train, Mr. Speaker, all of these teachers now they are getting the training and when the teachers get back to the classroom and they get back in their schools, when they try get up for deliver now what they have learnt in their training, the principal looks at them and say, "Well, what are you are trying to play now and what is that now? Are you coming with something new? No, no, no, you will do it how I want you to do it." And, of course, the principal has no training; and so the principal is not exposed to the kind of pedagogical training or even leadership training, administrative training. And, yes, we allow all kinds of political games and church games, religious games because you have all kinds of politics you know, you have church politics, you have village politics, you have UDP/PUP politics, all kind of politics exist. And we allow these games, but when the teachers gets into the classrooms and then he start to bucks his/her head against the ceiling called the principal, oh my goodness, its better if the teachers didn't get any training because they can't execute it.

So, Mr. Speaker, when this budget allocates money and it partners with our international friends, Mr. Speaker, to deliver training like it did in the north of this country with the European Union Sugar Measure. Mr. Speaker, to see sixty primary school principals train and then we expand that project now to see another amount of principals in the north being trained and then we expand it to the west to see the Cayo principals now in training, Mr. Speaker, and then the EQIP Project from the IDB drops in, Mr. Speaker, with \$20 million a part of which will be spent on leadership training again, oh my goodness! Now, we are beginning to see transformation in the education sector. (Applause) The EQIP Project, Mr. Speaker, will finance this training early childhood teachers, primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, leadership, the principals, Mr. Speaker, the managers because that is the next problem, our churches put in place, father this and reverend that and pastor this, and I love the churches and I love the church-state-system of education. Nobody get me wrong. Nobody misquote me. I am a product of the church-state-system of education. I think it is a great thing that there is that kind of partnership and who is vexed with that vex. Nobody can accuse me of trying to break up or this administration, this Prime Minister on this side of the House. We do not want to see that partnership breakup but there are a lot of things that we want to see improve. (Applause) So, when I say that, Mr. Speaker, I don't want anybody get vex and catch fever or catch feelings because that is not what we're trying to do. But we want to equip our managers, Mr. Speaker, as well. The training that the budget allocates monies for, Mr. Speaker, will train the managements of our school, so that when they are making decisions

about who to hire and who to fire, and who is going to evaluate, and who is going to check what is going in our schools, because while it is a function of our ministry it is also a function of those who own and manage the school to know what is going on and to be able, Mr. Speaker, to deal with those problems. So, all of that, Mr. Speaker, is included in the EQIP Project.

Mr. Speaker, then at the secondary level, you know that we are spending monies on the \$300 subsidy. If anybody wants to know why it is the figure that I gave you earlier to tell you what we are spending in education, shot up, sky rocketed so much, to get to \$240 million. Let me tell you, big amount that is the fact that teachers will be getting a raise again. (Applause) They got a raise last year, you know, Mr. Speaker. Do you remember it was 6%, Mr. Speaker, and they are getting the Prime Minister said, and I think I am not misquoting him when he said the placeholder is 5% but when the figures come in it might well be more. You see that is thing I love about my boss, you know, the figures hasn't come in yet, but he is making an attempt, he is standing out on a limp, because the last quarter figures might be so bad as we have seen from some of the reports from the industry, from the SIB Reports last night it might be so bad that we can't afford that 5% but he has already committed to that 5% and he will do whatever it takes to deliver on at very minimum, that 5%. (Applause) So, Mr. Speaker, that is if you are adding up, are you following me, Mr. Speaker, 11% since last year. It is serious money. But that \$240 million, Mr. Speaker, also includes things like the paying for the Certification Education Program that I spoke about earlier, some of the training, grants to principals and so on even though we are being help by the European Union Sugar Measures and the European Union Banana Support and the IDB and the CDB. We still have to put some funding of our own sometimes. So, we are spending on all of those things. Of that \$240 million as well, Mr. Speaker, we are also spending on school transportation. Mr. Speaker, when they were in government they allocated a measly \$4 million for school transportation, and it was a kind of thing to get the south of the country on board. Maybe that is why we never win no seats in the last election, you see, they bribe the people. They talk about bribing. But, Mr. Speaker, if you check the book on what is allocated this year for school transportation \$7.6 million. They want to talk about where we were and where we are going, (Applause) \$7.6 million so, that we can provide transportation for children to get to school in those remote areas but, Mr. Speaker, included in that figure just because I know that I need to express this to some of the teachers, included in school transportation in some districts is also transportation for teachers. Like in the Stann Creek District, you know why, Mr. Speaker, because many a times in the rural areas, the teachers, they don't have teaches, so we have to move teachers from the municipalities into the villages. And, Mr. Speaker, sometimes the little travel allowance or the hardship allowance or whatever allowances that try to ameliorate the conditions, simply is not enough. So what we have to do now is provide bus runs for teachers in some instances, that is how we improve the quality of education, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) Not by giving computers loaded with apps and, oh my goodness! Sometimes I wonder if they knocked their head, you know.

Included in that \$240 million as well as I have said, Mr. Speaker, is the money for the subsidy and I take this opportunity to announce to the nation but especially to our friends and the population in the south of the country, Stann Creek and Toledo, that while I had previously announced, it was our intention to make the subsidy applicable by the mean survey that was executed in last year. The same means survey that you remember we took to use for the CSEC or the CXC that you might be more familiar with, the same payments remember that there were some glitches still and remember the kind of confusion that that caused. Well, I went to the Cabinet on Tuesday, and I ask them, and please let us not use that system because it will cause problems until we get it right. Let us

continue to offer the subsidy to Stann Creek and Toledo without needing to apply every child, every standard six child that graduates from Stann Creek and Toledo will continue to get the \$300 subsidy. (Applause)

Nobody asked you, Mr. Speaker, “Did your mom voted for UDP?” “Did your father voted for PUP?” We are not interested because we are a government for all, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) The teachers in the banana belt area received 95% of their training courtesy of the Government of Belize and our friends in the international world, and nobody asked them if they voted for UDP or PUP. The students, Mr. Speaker, who got their up to six CXC payments, CSEC payments paid for, not one of them was asked, “Did you mommy vote for UDP? Did your daddy vote for UDP?” Because, Mr. Speaker, the United Democratic Party Government is a government for all. (Applause) And, Mr. Speaker, we have started a transformation that will never be derailed. There is no turning back. We are moving forward. We take a glimpse like any good driver does, in the rear view mirror and on the two side mirror, to check what is going on behind you, and to make sure that the PUP is far far behind. And I am sorry our Prime Minister is very kind. He feels sorry for them when they are down. My philosophy is kick them while they are down. (Applause) They did not have any pity for the people of this country when they were signing Accommodation Agreement, when they were raping the coffers of this country, when they were diverting the \$20 Million, no mercy. They were kicking the Belizean people when we were down. Why should we have any sympathy for them? (Applause) I hope, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister calls the election now. I want him to call it. I have already had a test run in Collet and we are firing and we are firing and we will drop it on them when they come again. (Applause)

So, we are progressing well, Mr. Speaker, and this government is putting the monies when, yes, we are borrowing at concessionary rate, we are putting these monies into developing the quality of education in this country. We have seen increase in the number of enrollments at the pre-school level, at the primary level, at the secondary level because of the subsidy. Children were not attending school in Stann Creek and Toledo, now they have money and do you know, what it cost, Mr. Speaker, when they get the subsidy now, the schools are running all around, Minister where are we going to put them. We have double the application numbers now, where will we put all of these students? Schools like Julian Cho Technical, schools like TCC, schools like Ecumenical, those schools have like 800 or 900, students Independence High School, Georgetown Technical, you go and check now, these schools now they are bursting now, they are looking to reach at a 1,000 students or more. (Applause) Let me tell you when they cry and want more, my Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, and our Ministry of Education, we give them more. (Applause) And that is why, Mr. Speaker, if you go down south but not only in the south, you notice I am spending a little time because that is where we are putting in a lot of resources because of the poverty because they like talk fool about being the party of poverty. No, no, no, if you check the record, Mr. Speaker, you will see that the only time people ever care about poverty is when the United Democratic Party is in government. When they are in government, the only poverty they care about is their own poverty, they try change their status, and they turn millionaires or even billionaires with a ‘B’. I would want to check the record to see how many of them, and, this is why the Member from Orange Walk Central had to tell them to bring back the millions because you see tangibly, Mr. Speaker, they got fat overnight. Anybody who wants check on me, you can check me, I owe my soul to Scotia Bank and my house and everything, I don’t own a thing because you notice \$240 million is allotted to Ministry of Education but Faber ain’t got none of it in his pocket. (Applause) You never heard anytime they say a lot of thing about Faber but they can’t say I am a thief and they can’t say none of that money has been diverted,

every cent. And we heard about that, the man need to carry back that money. But in the south when the partner started crying, I say but you give them students now \$300 subsidy, what is it that you are going to help. We started to roll. We opened Corazòn Creek Technical High School in the remote area of Toledo. That is what my friend the Member for Toledo West, must talk about because he don't talk about the good, you know, every time, nay, nay, nay nay. (Applause) And I can't fault him altogether, that is what a Representative is supposed to do. But, Lord, man, give praise where praise is due.

We open Providence Adventist High School, we supported the Adventist management in opening that school, right in San Antonio, right in his constituency. But he hasn't come one day in this Honourable House, the first graduating class graduated in June of last year, all of them received scholarship from this administration to go to junior college but he hasn't come one day in this House and say thank you to the Honourable Prime Minister. (Applause) Late last year we open buildings at TCC, we opened buildings at Julian Cho Technical High, we opened new buildings at the said Corazòn Creek Technical High School. All of these high schools received more buildings, more classrooms, we increased school transportation runs so that the students can get to school, this is how you transform a nation. (Applause)

You don't transform a nation by diverting \$20 million for the poor people them into a private coffer. You don't transform a nation by signing to rich a billionaire the taxes of this country. You don't transform this nation by spending \$8 million on white elephant projects like Galleria Maya. You don't do that. If you want to see how you transform nations, you read the book, written by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Member for Queen's Square. (Applause) It is through education, Mr. Speaker, and at the tertiary level, I am getting to tertiary now, Mr. Speaker, we have been giving, you know, a lot of people say like when we gave out the tablets, there was criticism, you know, by the way let me deal with that tablet issue before I deal with what we spend on tertiary. Listen to the nonsense these fellows talk. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister in his New Year's address declared 2015, to be the year of technology. As part of that, he agreed, he made a pledge that he was going to give every tertiary level student a tablet. By the way, in 2008 and I like go back, in 2008, I remember 2005, they nearly break up the steps of the National Assembly on him when he was Prime Minister. So, when University of Belize tried to raise the fees, the Leader of the Opposition now, who was Minister of Education then, said, "no, no, no we can't raise the fees we have to absorb," and so they started a thing where they started to pay the fees but at that time University of Belize only had a little over 2,000 students. And if you add it up, all the junior college, and tertiary level students in this country, it was at a merely over 4,000 students. Today we are venturing pass 8,000 tertiary students in this country, what does that tell you, that there are more students who are getting to that level, so that when the Prime Minister decides when he will give away free tablets that was the amount of tablets we had to find, 9,000 tablets was what he ordered. By the way we are doing the reckoning now and we believe that we will have those additional 500 tablets and we are going to give them to the National Library Service for distribution across the libraries of this country. (Applause)

But, Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister said that he was going to give tablets, there was criticism. They jump up, and of course, they said why the Prime Minister stole our idea. Well, let me be clear, I don't see how they think something what they stole from somewhere else, could be original in their head. Because this is what you do, you look at the trends of what is happening in the world, and the world is dictating my friends, my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, that we move in the step of technology. How can it be another idea for them that we are

distributing tablets? And I want to be clear, Mr. Speaker, as I make clear at every one of the tertiary levels institution that I visited when the tablets were being distributed. That the intention of the tablet distribution was not solely to assist tertiary levels students with their academic journey, you understand me. It would be good if the schools can utilize the tablets with the apps and the technological books that are available, electronic books and so on, that is a plus to the whole thing. The reason we distributed the tablets to tertiary level students is that: we give all the time to high school and to primary school, they get free text book. High school gets the subsidy and they get CSEC payment. We wanted to give a little to tertiary. If by coincidence and by chance it so happens that it comes around the time of the election, it is mere coincidence that is all it was. And you know, the Prime Minister promised in January that he will give it, we had to get it from Taiwan. It took a little time to travel, by the time it reach here around the same time of the election. I don't know how you can turn around and blame the UDP to use it as gimmick. It just so happened that it arrived at that time and we thought that we should deliver it quickly because the year of technology is going. If we waited for too long then the Prime Minister would had have to change the thing and said the half year of technology. And so, we gave it out as quickly as possible.

But, Mr. Speaker, the intention of the tablet distribution was to bridge the digital divide, that was what the Prime Minister said was the aim. So, it was not solely for the students to use for academic purposes, if they do it for that, fine, that's a plus. And for those who don't understand what the digital divide is it means that in this country as it is in the world, there are some who know how to use the technology and some who don't. Some who has access to the technology and some who don't. And there is a big gap in between those who know and those who don't know. And then, you have some older heads who were born in the dinosaur age, and I am not against older people, I am fast approaching it, but they don't know about the technology and in education circles we call them, technological immigrants. So, for them to learn they have to come in afresh, they have to come in new while the younger folks, and I am not one of those younger folks either who was born into the technology. When I was born in the age of cassettes and TV, well not even TV, TV came to Belize in 1981, and I was three in 1981 when we got Independence. But the older people, the immigrants, there is a gap between them and the natives, the natives are the one who were born in technology like young Patrick Faber Jr. who I have to consult for anything that I want to know about on my iPod. You know, and he is seven and he could do that from he was two. So, we had to bridge the divide, so, the Prime Minister gave out 9,000 tablets, killed two bird with one stone. Those students who want to use it for studying can use it for studying, but they can also carry it to their village to Jalacte, to Crique Sarco, to San Vicente, to Red Bank, to Red Creek, to San Antonio Corozal, to Sarteneja, to Copper Bank, to Duck Run 1, and Duck Run II and Duck Run III, and Los Tambos, they can take the tablet there and they can give it to their granny and they can make their granny Skype their auntie and their uncle in New York or Miami, that is bridging the digital divide. (Applause) That is the purpose, Mr. Speaker, of the distribution of the tablets to bridge the digital divide. So even if, did you hear the little rumor that they are saying they were selling the tablet, well, even if they sell the tablet somebody will get them and they could go and let their granny and grandpa Skype on it. That is what it was for, Mr. Speaker, so for them to jump up now and talk fool about, you should have done this and should have done that, well you all should have done it in ten years that you all had. (Applause)

And I want to signal that the Prime Minister's year of technology is only just beginning. Mr. Speaker, it will be coming to you shortly. But, Mr. Speaker, a proposal will be brought for us to go paperless in this Honourable House and hopefully in the other Chamber, the Senate, so that we can use technology and

then we will see some of the dinosaurs squint for real. But thankfully, I can tell my friend the Member for Fort George, that with the use of technology, you can increase the print. You can change the font, you can make it bigger, so you don't have to worry when you have the budget book print small, it will be electronic, so you can pinch and drag. Member for Fort George. Mr. Speaker, we are engaging in that kind of thing in the year of technology.

There is also going to be as you've heard the Prime Minister say a hotspot in all of our municipalities so that the students can take their tablets or whatever other devices we have, so that they can log in, Mr. Speaker. So we are moving and make no mistake, their ideas about using or improving ICT in school is nothing new, in fact, it is in our sector strategy and if they want I can go through all of it, I have it right here, show them the plans that we have, Mr. Speaker, about where we want to go but we have to be responsible. We have to first teach our teachers, make sure that they are capable of delivering the content but they also have the pedagogy. We have to make sure that the learning environments, that our children are in, are conducive to a good quality education. We have to make sure our managements are trained. We have to make sure principals are trained. We have to make sure that there is access to education at the pre-primary, at the primary, at the secondary, and at the tertiary level. And, Mr. Speaker, the figures are there clear as daylight, every single level from pre-school, early childhood up to tertiary level over the last seven years the enrollment has increased. (Applause) And anybody can tell you that that is a sign of movement that is a sign of transformation that is a sign that we are moving in the right step. (Applause) They wonder why the people have not turn their backs on the Prime Minister and on the people of the United Democratic Party in their respective constituencies. You wonder why the plastic woman would never beat me. Mr. Speaker, the reason is that this is a government for all. It is a government that is moving in the right direction. That is investing in health, that is investing in education, that is investing in security of it citizenry, that is investing in all of these important areas, infrastructure again, roads for the agricultural people, as well as for the regular folks. I listened to him talking nonsense, the Member for Fort George about how the people in Belize City are complaining, yes, Rome wasn't built in a day. We have a very good Mayor that is why they vote for him again. (Applause) We have very good mayors all over this country and in the time that he has being Mayor and some of our other Mayors like Hilberto Campos and so on who has been there forever, looks like he is not going nowhere no time soon. He is a Mayor for life and Trapp in Cayo and Benque Viejo, they switch every minute, Mr. Speaker, but they could win. They know how to win. But the kind of transformation that we have seen over the years, the short period of years, Mr. Speaker, is a signal to the Belizean people of what is to come, that is why they voted for the same party again. The transformation will go on, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I will wind up. I know that I have been a bit long not very long but a bit long. And I want to be kind to my colleagues, and, of course, to those who are listening. But, Mr. Speaker, I would be reminisce if I don't, of course, put on the record, my gratitude and, of course, express my commitment to continuing as the Representative for the wonderful people of the Collet Constituency. (Applause) Mr. Speaker, over the time that we or that I have been the Representative and I never just came like some on that side over there, Mr. Speaker, 12 years, I have been in this Honourable House and it has been a pleasure to serve the people of the Collet area. (Applause) All of these Johnny come lately, ones that are popping up and flinging their hair on London Bridge and so, who think that they can come and trick the people, the people of Collet No, Mr. Speaker, the worst of my leadership in that constituency, they know that while there are struggles that we struggle together. Because you see, Mr. Speaker, I didn't just stumble one day and dropped into Collet and I will run here. I live in

the Collet constituency. I am still registered there. I vote for me. My family home is at 1034 Vernon Street, because they might very well put me out from the one other where I stayed that is my address. And Mr. Speaker, I have lived at numerous parts in the constituency while I was growing up on Raccoon Street, especially, where, Mr. Speaker, I have lived the plight of the people of the Collet area. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that any band-aid effect of giving them this and that, while, mind you, Mr. Speaker, I will be the first to tell you that you have to help the horse while the grass is growing because while the grass is growing the horse is starving if you don't feed him. Well, Mr. Speaker, if you check the operations in the Collect constituency, out of the Collet Education and Resource Center, you will see that there are programs, Mr. Speaker, work to do just that, to develop the quality of life for the people of that constituency by giving them enough education which I make no apologies for. Charity begins at home. And I have assisted in my capacity as Minister of Education, the entire nation, even the PUP led constituencies and I challenge anyone of them to get up and say it ain't so. They've all received contrary to when the Member for Fort George was Prime Minister and you used to write to him and ask I have to apologize to my friend Dr. Carla Barnett who was the Financial Secretary at the time, I had written a letter and at Christmas time, I'd posted the letter where she had written back on behalf of the Prime Minister to tell me, no money for you, for your children in Collet for a Christmas party, I was begging for \$3,000. I know that Dr. Barnett was just doing her job at the time that it was the meanest of my friend from Fort George, that we didn't get any assistance. And that was his nature, Mr. Speaker. Everything that the UDP Representatives wanted, No! No! No! And so, we struggled in the Collet area, we struggled, Mr. Speaker, for ten long years because even when the Nacho, God bless him was there, the people didn't get anything. So, we struggled and those people in the Collet area, Mr. Speaker, struggled along with me. It was a major struggle, five years when I was not there and five years when I was their Representative, we never got anything, they didn't give us any community vote, Those ones over there now, Mr. Speaker, they are lucky. I don't want to impugn improper motives, Mr. Speaker, it would be wrong of me to impugn that they took the money and spend it on themselves and don't spend it on their constituency, so I won't say. But even blind eye Jamesy could see that some of them don't even have office, Mr. Speaker, and they collect the monies for community vote which they didn't use to give us while in Opposition and they turned around and talk about bad-minded Prime Minister and vindictive, they were the boss of that. But the people of Collet stood alongside me, we struggled, Mr. Speaker, and so now our efforts when we deliver our programs in breast feeding, when we deliver our programs to single mothers, when we deliver our programs to train them in the use of computers, when we work with our churches to do our every souls for Christ crusade, yes, the politician and the church wrap right up and love one another. I worked closely with my pastors and we deliver for the people in their congregations, who are also the people in my constituency, because we work for the same master, that crowd over there, I am not sure, I listened to the Leader of the Opposition this morning, quoting the bible to no end. Well, I won't judge him but I am telling you I don't know how you could claim to love the people and you sign Accommodation Agreement. How could you claim to love the people and you shut your mouth when your Prime Minister was diverting \$10 million? How could you claim, well I guess Galleria Maya might have been before his time because he and I came the same time, but still to side with them and behave, that is what we have to tell the others on that side who are new too because they behave like, "Oh that was before my time." Well you are wrapped right up with that crooked crowd. (Applause) You are to pay for their sins as well. But my point is we, in the Collet area, try to do our best to alleviate, to ameliorate, if you will, the conditions of the people in that area. When you have people who dropped out of primary school and the single mothers who used to come to my office and say, "Mr. Patrick, can you please help me get a job." And I

counsel them and say, “Listen, it is hard to find a job for you because you don’t have the requirement even to get into the public service, a high school diploma and three CXC, one of which must be English.” And I said to them, “You think if we open an adult program if you will go.” And so I make no apologies for opening the adult program, smacked in the center of the Collet area. (Applause) It won’t only serve Collet, you know, although my boss tries all the time to signal that it does and it’s my baby. But it is an institution, the Gwen Liz High School Evening Division that now has over 600 adult learners. (Applause) Half of them are from Collet. Don’t tell anybody that I said that, half of them are single mothers from Collet who are now able to get out there in the job market, who are now able to do things to be productive. (Applause) Some of whom are now enrolled at SJC Junior College and Wesley Junior College not because they were single mothers and they dropped out of school, Mr. Speaker, means that they don’t have any brains and they can’t do Math and English and Social Studies. They are smart. They made a little error in their life and this is why, Mr. Speaker, we tried to encourage the established high school, the day schools, to be lenient on students who make errors. When you put out a student, it should be as a last resort. Because when you turn a student out there, it becomes a problem.

So, Mr. Speaker, our single mothers, our young men have been receiving work in the Prime Ministers projects. They have been and we, in the Collet area, we have one of the lower number of crimes in terms of the south side statistics. It is because we work on making sure that people improve their standard of living. (Applause) And, yes, there is a lot to be desired in terms of our infrastructure, yes, there is a lot of poverty still existing but these things will change not by the Government handing anybody anything all the time but by the Government equipping allowing people to be equipped on their own to pull themselves up so that they don’t have to come back. The PUP way, I dare say the George Price way, was to hand out, give him \$5 and a \$10 to people when they come and then under the current Member for Fort George, he perfects the George Price thing and he start to engage in, when its election time. Mr. Speaker, that is not our way in Collet. We believe in equipping people so that they can develop themselves it is the UDP way as well. And once you help those people, it doesn’t matter what kind of bribery and trickery when election comes that is why, it doesn’t matter how much ad you run, it doesn’t matter how much likes you buy from Facebook, it doesn’t matter what you do, beating Faber in Collet and beating the United Democratic Party across this country, and stopping the transformation, and trying to derail Petrocaribe will not work because the people know the benefits.

Mr. Speaker, it is for that reason that I close by proudly putting the support of myself and the entire number of residents of the great Collet constituency behind the Prime Minister in the passage of this budget for the fiscal year 2015/2016. I, thank you. (Applause)

HON. J. BRICEÑO (Orange Walk Central): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Members of the Gallery on this side, absolute silence! Officer the first person that says a word, take them out. Go ahead, Member.

HON. J. BRICEÑO (Orange Walk Central): I could assure you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Remove that person. Proceed Member.

HON. J. BRICEÑO (Orange Walk Central): Thank you. I could assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I will not speak for 1 hour and 45 minutes. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: You are free to.

HON. J. BRICEÑO (Orange Walk Central): The Minister spoke about what his mental and physical ability. But I think that his mental ability is slipping, Mr. Speaker, and I would take just a few of the things that he brought up. For instance, when he said that they are spending about 25% of the budget in education. I would like to point out also, that if he were to go back to previous budgets, the last budget of the PUP Government in 2007/2008, we were almost at 25%, actually it is when we only got into government in 1998, that is when we started the transformation and investment in the Ministry of Education that he can so boast about today, Mr. Speaker, as he pointed out, they continued to build on what the PUP Government did when they were for ten years in government.

And when he speaks about the ITVETs I think it is unfair when he just throw a net across all the ITVETs. Because even he was going to be the first, to admit that when you go to the ITVET in Orange Walk Town, it is the best ITVET that is being managed in the country today. There is none that is better than the ITVET that is being managed in Orange Walk and that was built and opened under the People's United Party Government, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

And, when we talk, I think we need to give this man to valium, Mr. Speaker, he needs some valium. He is on something that is not normal. But we will worry about that afterwards. When we talk about the tablets, when we speak about the tablets, Mr. Speaker, in no instance were we in any way suggesting that by giving tablets to the students that it would have been the *panacea* that is going to solve all the problems in education. What we were saying when we issue the tablets it needs to be, it should be programmed that there has to be more than just giving tablets because yes, the young people when they get the tablet, every young person would appreciate getting a tablet. Everybody wants one of them. But the idea behind the tablet is that we wanted to assist in making education more affordable. The idea behind this was that we were going to get the books that they were going to use in their classrooms. We were going to put it in electronic form and put it on their tablets so that when they go to school that they don't have to buy all the books that they have.

MR. SPEAKER: Little lee ways are given to Members in the Chamber; you can feel free to do the same thing when he gets up to speak. Members of the Gallery, please, but if you want me to ask him to stop, I'll ask him to stop. You want to proceed?

HON. J. BRICEÑO (Orange Walk Central): Yes, I'll proceed, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I am under the impression you like the exchange. You want him to be quiet or...

HON. J. BRICEÑO (Orange Walk Central): We are friends, hold on, man, hold on.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister, allow the Member to make his presentation.

HON. J. BRICEÑO (Orange Walk Central): The point is that the idea or the concept that we were talking about the tablets is that it was going to be used, yes, to narrow the digital divide that the Minister of Education, was talking about, but also it was to make education more affordable. And when they are talking about when they are going to make the internet available in the parks, that is what the Prime Minister said and the Minister of Education alluded to. Well, I

want to tell them something, Mr. Speaker, the PUP Town Council in Orange Walk with Mayor Kevin Bernard, we are doing that from 3 years ago, Mr. Speaker, (Applause) from 3 years ago. So, what they are doing it, they are copying the ideas the PUP, that is all they could do. They are copying the ideas of the PUP. We thought about the tablets so they quickly jump, they are in government, they could write a cheque and hurry give out the tablets, of course, they could. We are not in government as yet, but we will get there soon. Sooner than what they expect.

Now, they are boasting about how they gave the teachers raises. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind this Honourable House that when the PUP was in government, Mr. Speaker, over 3 years, we gave a total of 30% salary raises to our teachers, to our nurses, to our policemen, to the BDF, to every single worker of the government, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) So, I could talk about so many other things but I promise you, Mr. Speaker, that I am not talk for an hour and 45 minutes.

But, Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Belize, particularly, the good people of Orange Walk Central, to make my contribution to 2015/2016 budget debate. On the onset I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and his team, for compiling the data and preparing the estimates so that we can examine the budget in a manner that the Belizean people can be kept aware of what is being done with their tax dollars. But for god sake, Mr. Speaker, you are spending about a billion dollars; you must could spend a extra few hundred dollars more to make the budget more readable. They make the numbers so small and yes, I agree with the Honourable Member from Fort George that you need magnifying glass so you could read the numbers but maybe it was a trick, you know, they didn't want to spend hours to try look at these things because your eye will get tired of looking at it. But, I want to appeal to the Prime Minister in the next year to do a little effort, you know, to have the numbers a little bigger so that it be easier to study.

As has been my practice, I would like to thank those in civil society, in the private sector, in the unions, and those in my constituency, and those who share their views with me on this year's budget. I will do my best to represent their concerns and recommendations in my presentation. The primary responsibility of all of us who have been elected to serve in this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, is to uplift the lives of each and every Belizean to create a society that is as they say truly fit for everyone. After all the role of any administration that prophesizes good governance is indeed to help all people. To uplift those that have less upwards and to deliver opportunity that will allow for greater prosperity for everyone what I like to call the promise of prosperity. To properly carry out this task requires that we listen to the people we represent and make decisions in the best interest of everyone. Mr. Speaker, this year's budget comes at the heels of another successful election where the will of the Belizean people prevail. I join the Leader of our party and others in congratulating Prime Minister Barrow and his party on their recent success at the poles. Perhaps I can be somewhat move generous in my congratulations, considering our own victory in Orange Walk Town where our young dynamic Mayor Kevin Bernard, and his team equally share in the triumph of victory. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, Orange Walk remained strong, avoided the enticements and the gimmicks and Orange Walk remains blue!

Of course, like all political elections the results provides an occasion for learning. There is plenty of data to analyze and interpret. And as is the case in every election, a clear message is being sent to the people. But a word of caution to those on the other side, while there is a cause for celebration, there is also room for pause and reflection. In Belize City close to 60% of your people, Member from Port Loyola, of registered voters did not go to the polls. And in the rest of

the country more than 30% of those in the voting register did not turn out to vote. All sides are to reflect on this and see to find out why there seems less enthusiasm and more sinicism creeping into electoral politics in Belize. With the elections now behind us, it is time to move on to the business of governing the nation.

Mr. Speaker, the budget presentation and debate is an important part of our legislative responsibility. It is a crucial exercise for it provides us the opportunity to raise those important issues confronting our nation's development. In this time of billion dollar expenses and billion dollar borrowing, the budget debate is of even greater importance. Nowhere in this exercise is this exercise more impactful on the Belizean man, woman and child than in the area of taxation. Last year alone, government collect from Belizeans over \$804 million in taxes and this coming year intends to collect \$816 million, \$12 millions more than was collected this last financial year. The largest portions of these taxes are being collected from everyday hard working Belizeans through GST, tax on incomes and profits, property and the like. In consideration of the fact that we have collect from the people almost a billion dollar in taxes last year and intends to collect even more this year, I must insist that the Honourable Prime Minister tells us how he and his administration distributed these many millions of these tax payers' dollars across the nation. I am still waiting for him to report on the effects of his government's activities on reducing poverty on how these efforts are helped those who struggle every single day just to make ends meet. You see, Mr. Speaker, when I speak with the people of Orange Walk Central and with people across the nation, they tell me that they want a government that will work hard for those who have and even harder for those who have less. They want a Prime Minister who seeks possibilities for every Belizean and not only those who claim to support the UDP. They want what they proclaim every day on television by this administration that uses our tax dollars to say to the Belizean people that they are a government for all. This is why we in Orange Walk, UDPs and PUPs are alike, were also dishearten when the Prime Minister, in a recent television interview, responded to a question about using Petrocaribe funds to help with development in Orange Walk Town told the media that Petrocaribe was running low and funds were not readily available. Imagine my surprise when only days later on Friday the 13th of March in this Honourable House, the Prime Minister stated that the citizens of Dangriga and Punta Gorda, have a right to expect immediate relief. He later went on to say and I quote, "It will take Central Government money to assist in their return to progress." The idea that because these municipal in the south are now UDP Town Councils that they deserve more and I agree that they do, but that my own home town Orange Walk is undeserving because we are PUP is a despicable display of partisanship and shows the rank hypocrisy in the trite and overuse expression, a government for all, shame, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) Shame, Mr. Speaker!

Essentially, Mr. Speaker, my problem with this budget is that it is by no means a road to transformation. There is no transformation for the poor when you can only grow and economy by 3% and by this coming year by 2%. There is no transformation for the struggling middle class when you say no new taxes but expect to collect in taxes and goods and services, an additional \$9 million or \$339 when our hospitals continue to deteriorate because of waste and corruption in the Ministry of Health. We cannot have no real transformation if crime and violence continues to keep us incarcerated in our homes. No, Mr. Speaker, these are not halcyon days. These are the days of political pork issued under the guise of Petrocaribe roll it and it is unsustainable. This is band aid style economics.

Now, allow me, Mr. Speaker, to start off by giving also joining our side of the House and the Prime Minister, my condolences to our colleague, Minister Finnegan in the lost of his mother. But I need to refer to him at this time on my

presentation. I am reminded of years gone by when my friend, the Honourable Member from Mesopotamia, used to talk about some of our initiatives to finance the budget, by comparing our action to dressing up a monkey to make it look pretty. He spoke of a monkey in a blue dress, and accused us of putting wool over people's eyes. Well, the only difference with the Honourable gentlemen's analogy then and what we are seeing now, is that this monkey is wearing a red dress. And as he would say, a monkey in a red dress is still a monkey, Mr. Speaker. You can go ahead believe so, you are fooling yourself. To say that we are transforming, Belize by cementing streets while huge companies like Fruta Bomba is packing up and moving out is not meaningful transformation. If after 7 years in government all that they can offer people on or below the poverty line is a part time job and Christmas and Mother's Day cheer in the form of hand out, instead of a good job is not meaningful transformation. Or should we say that we are condoning a culture of malformation, Minister from Port Loyola?

It is in reality an offence to Belizeans who are told to imagine the possibilities. Here is what I believe Belizeans expect from their government, Mr. Speaker. They want a government that is truly interested in expanding the private sector as the major means of creating and distributing wealth. Throughout his entire presentation, the Prime Minister spoke with great pride about infrastructure work and how government created 5,000 short term jobs with borrowed money through Petrocaribe. I guess it something but the question remains how many new businesses got start over the past year. Belizeans want to know what the Prime Minister is doing to help the productive sector. They want to know how the citrus industry expanded under their new management. How about bananas and aquaculture, how are they doing? What is the future of the rise industry given the current revelation about importation? Actually, what the Prime Minister told us about industry and enterprise was that on the whole performance was down. For sure, the Prime Minister is right. For when it comes to the citrus industry, the situation is not uplifting. Perhaps the Prime Minister is aware that currently, the factory is unable to pay the farmers what they normally give them on first payment. The first payment to the farmers should be 65% of the estimated price. However, they are only able at this time, to pay 40%. Is the Prime Minister aware that his Board tried to find new investors for the citrus company, the very company he said to have saved? And did they tell him that the best offer they could get was \$.20 on the dollar?

Looking at rice since it is all the talk these days, what will happen to a rice producer if we flood our markets with imported rice from Guyana? What will happen to the small rice farmers in the south who are being threaten by subsidized rice from Guyana? Our rice producer employs hundreds of Belizeans and have invested millions with little or no support from their government. I believe and it has been proven that growth that is private sector driven, is the best way to create good jobs, jobs that last. This is the best way to increase wealth and to allow for more people to have careers as oppose to just having a job. Enough is not being done to push private sector growth and this should be priority one in meaningful transformation since it would take some of the pressure off from government when it comes to our Wage Bill which for last year was \$411 million and we are climb to \$427 million next year.

Next, I believe that they would want their government to do more to protect vulnerable Belizeans. Mr. Speaker, last year I said and I say again, that I am not opposed to any programs aimed at helping Belizeans who are most in need. Yes, the BOOST Program is one that is celebrated regionally, Minister from Port Loyola. But how many of those who started on BOOST or food pantry have

moved off the program, get a job and are now able to make ends meet? We need to develop programs that will lift people out of poverty instead of creating more citizens who are depending on the state. A Belize that works for everyone is a Belize that fosters more self-reliant citizens. (Applause) The Prime Minister likes to boast about bringing down interest rates but here is the thing, on average banks pay Belizeans 1.7% interest on savings. Yet when they lend Belizeans that money, they charge 10.1% interest rate, almost a 9% spread on our own Belizean money that is what they are charging and the Prime Minister is boasting about this, Mr. Speaker. I want to suggest that he and his team do more to further lower interest rates on smaller businesses. Some of the millions of Petrocaribe money that is going to the National Bank should be used to bring down interest rates for small business developments even lower. Perhaps we could reduce interest rates to as low as 5%, after all he will only be paying back to Petrocaribe an interest rate of 1% so why not give to those just starting a business, and those with small businesses a chance to borrow at a rate that they can better manage.

On the social side, I know that all of us want a health system that is working; an education system that is relevant; a system of security that protects us from threats at home and abroad. So, what is the state of the nation? Well, we continue to borrow to pay our bills. For example, this year we had a primary deficit of \$50 million about 4% of GDP. This means, Mr. Speaker, that we did not have enough money to pay our light bill, water bill, salaries, fuel bill and so forth. You know what will happen to a poor Belizean, Mr. Speaker, when they can't pay their light bill? BEL cut off their electricity. What will happen when they can't pay their water bill? WASA cut out their water. What will happen when they can't pay their rent? The landlord takes them out of the house. But government what did they do? They go and borrow more money so that they can continue waste taxpayers dollars, Mr. Speaker. That's why they have a \$50 million deficit primary deficit when they said they were going to have a surplus of \$30 million. They wasted and miscalculated over \$80 million, Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister was working in the private sector, if he was working for a company, he would be fired, Mr. Speaker. That is what they would've done with the Prime Minister to make such an \$80 million mistake.

Our economy is not growing as much as is need to drive development. Every year more is being extracted from Belizeans by way of taxes. Crime and violence remain at an alarming high rate we are today poorer than we were at the start of the new millennium. Our poverty rate is still over 40%. Our young people continue to die violent deaths due to gang related activities. And resources like our petroleum that the PUP find, is running lower and lower. This is the real state of our nation; the true picture and this is what we should all be concerned about over and above politics and everything else.

During his presentation on the fiscal performance of 2014/2015, the Prime Minister projected an overall deficit of a \$141 million. He went on to suggest to hell with the statistics for him the end justifies the mean. But not so fast, Mr. Speaker, let us look at the \$141 million deficit that now he has plans to make up for it. He says he is going to borrow \$41 million from wherever, \$33 million from multilateral lenders, and \$73 million from, guess where? Petrocaribe roll it, Mr. Speaker. What we see here is actually borrowing so he can operate his billion dollar government, boxing out our credit card to support their lifestyles, Mr. Speaker. In explaining his revenue shortfall of a \$141 million, the Prime Minister stated that revenues from petroleum decreased and some of our other industries in the agriculture sector saw declines. He went on to say, however, that revenue was buoyed by collections from the shipping and the International Business Company's Registry, as he put it. These were quote on quote, "The key drivers of the heighten revenue performance of the previous fiscal year." Could you

imagine, a company that was strong away and that is what he's depending on. Here is the thing, Mr. Speaker, I know I shouldn't be laughing because it is really a serious matter, Mr. Speaker, but here is the thing, these companies that save the day were privately own companies that government took over and is yet to pay for, like BTL, and BEL. We have to pay back for them, but before we pay, we will be taken through the entire court process, spending millions and millions of tax payers' dollars in private legal representation. So, according to our budget book, it's not my number, it's the Prime Minister's number, Mr. Speaker, they have spent already about \$13.8 million and no end is in sight yet. We are going to spend a lot more billions of dollars before we settle and at the end of the day, we still have to pay for these companies, Mr. Speaker. Something is not right here. My friend the Prime Minister says, "Statistics, damn statistics." Well damn the statistic all you want. But we all know we are going to have to pay for these acquisitions and this will cause our debt to increase tremendously. That equivalence of 76% of GDP is not the true ratio when you add the cost of acquiring of these companies. In fact, even now the IFIs consider this debt a contingent liability on the nation's balance sheet.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side have been criticized for our borrow and I know we are going to get it again from the Prime Minister at the close of this debate. But do you know that since taking office this administration has borrowed over \$700 million, Mr. Speaker? If you go through your records in the House, you will come up to the \$700 million. Do you realize that so far from Petrocaribe roll it alone; we've borrowed \$286 million? Did you notice that in the budget that this year government intends to borrow another \$100 million this year, and it doesn't include the Petrocaribe yet because he wants to change the law, Mr. Speaker, so, he can just borrow as will, but we will oppose that, I want to make it known one time. We will not allow him to borrow at will, he has to come to the National Assembly, but then, anyway we will deal with that later. So, he will borrow another \$100 million and yet he hasn't told us how much more he will borrow from Petrocaribe. Mr. Speaker, may I also remind you that on November 2014, at one Sitting of House, this UDP Administration authorize, they haven't gotten the money yet so that is why he is not counting it as a loan yet, but they authorized borrowings totaling \$120.5 million, Mr. Speaker. It's his record not our record. Of course, the Prime Minister continues to say it is not the kind of borrowing like a drunken sailor but borrowing is borrowing and somebody have to pay it back. According to international standards, we are stretching the rubber band too thin and at the rate that this government is going we are going to burst that rubber band very soon, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister seems okay with this kind of borrowing for he say and I quote, "The policy of this government will therefore be to continue to exploit current access to concessionary hounding." Well, I think by now, if the Prime Minister is not drunk he is certainly high by now with all the borrowing that he is doing.

Mr. Speaker, at every Sitting of this Honourable House I try to address the issue of poverty and I continue to support those meaningful government initiatives, on poverty alleviation and social transformation. I think we can all agree that the ministry that does most of the tangible work in the area of poverty alleviation is the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation, and Poverty Alleviation. That is the "Boots" ministry so to speak. Last year of the billion dollars the government spent, it only spent in the ministry that is responsible for poverty alleviation \$15 million or about 1.5% of our total budget. We have a poverty rate of more than 40% and we spent just \$15 million of more than \$800 million collected in taxes in the ministry that is actually on the ground delivering the goods and the service to the people. Do you know how much this work out for the poor people, Mr. Speaker? This works out to \$0.28 for every of our poor person because we have over 150,000 Belizeans that lives on \$5.50 or

less, \$0.28, that's all we are doing. And this is the government that is talking about transformation. We should be able to do more than that if we really want to bring about social transformation and eliminate poverty. Yes, I know we tried to address poverty from multiple areas but it is through this ministry, this ministry that we directly interact with the people on or below the margins.

Next, I want to talk about the Ministry of Housing and it is a pity that the minister is not here. I continue to wonder why I keep seeing so little being invested in housing \$1.4 million last year for this budget, and for this budget \$612,000.00. Where is the money for starter homes for the poor or for home rehabilitation? Do we not plan to assist these kinds of initiatives, Mr. Speaker? And, since we are on this topic of poverty and the programs that are being carried out in the name of the poor, let us talk a bit about fiscal responsibility and use one area as an example of what we should not be doing with the tax payers' dollars. According to this performance driven budget, there is an ongoing program known as "Restore Belize". The objective of Restore Belize is to provide targeted social assistance to families, children, and youth in Belize City, so as to improve the lives and reduce violence and gang related activities in Belize City. By the way, Mr. Speaker, the head of this Belize City base program earns about \$20,000 more than the Prime Minister or about \$140,000.00 annually but let us move on. The programs under restore Belize includes something called, I am Belize, for which we are paying out, I think, \$38,000.00 for whatever that is. Then there are some scholarship programs for the northern district, I am not sure how that got in there since it is a Belize City based program. There is a school feeding program based on need, a peace in the park program, and a conflict meditation program. According to the budget estimates, 8 persons will manage these programs, Mr. Speaker, costing tax payers, \$481,382.00. Do we know how much of this will actually be spent directly on programs for our young people through Restore Belize? Only \$300,000, once you remove the \$38,000.00 for the "I am Belize" program. It will cost significantly more to manage Restore Belize than what we actually spend on our youths, for manage \$483,000.00 and for the young people \$300,000.00. Yes, it is a shame, Mr. Speaker, really. I mean, and I will use an example, Mr. Speaker, there is charitable organization in Belize called Lifeline, the President of Lifeline is the Prime Minister lovely wife, Mrs. Kim Barrow, and together with a small group of enterprising Belizean women, Lifeline Foundation has raised and distributed about a million dollars in pretty much all across the country and I have to mention also they have help St. Peter's School in Orange Walk Town, a very well run school in Orange Walk. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that through their work in Lifeline that they are not spending any \$483,000.00 for manage their organization every month. I could assure you that and I am sure that the Prime Minister, if he were to ask them they will tell you that they are not spending those kind of money on their selves and spend less on the young people. The point I am making is that we seem to be spending more on administering these Pro Poor Programs or creating jobs for special UDPs than we are actually spending in deliverables for the poor people, Mr. Speaker, and that is ashame.

In line with poverty alleviation and social transformation, let us now turn to the health sector. The Ministry of Health is one of the places where I look to see how we are dealing with the needs of our people because as they say, our health is our wealth. First I congratulate the government on the just announced \$30 million EU funding for the new Belmopan Hospital. I trust the minister in his presentation will give Belizeans especially those in Belize City and Orange Walk, his assurance that in terms of capacity that he will find competent and capable nurses and doctors and specialist to work in this new hospital without pulling from our other hospitals like Karl Huesner, and the Northern Regional Hospital. But we are very happy for the people of the west.

Oh, the Ministry of Health, Mr. Speaker, somehow they seem to never be

free from scandals and conflicts. First there was the scandal with the medical supplies, remember that one. Then there was the issue with the doctors and nurses taken to the airways because of working conditions. There was a problem with the operating theatre at the Orange Walk Hospital, the tragedy of the babies who sadly died at Karl Huesner in the Neonatal Intensive Care Ward. The missing money from the hospital in Dangriga; then the misappropriation of monies at the Central Health Region where the alleged culprit was transferred to the Western Health Region. And wasn't there misappropriation of monies also in Punta Gorda? There was also trouble with the appointment of inexperience and less qualified Chief Pharmacist. And in Orange Walk right now, you can't get an operation because there is a shortage of anesthesia, Mr. Speaker. And the list can go on and on. Yet, the Minister of Health and his CEO who is always smiling, remain on scale by it all. I heard Gary Longsworth is gone. Thankfully, Perera is gone. But I am told that he is resurfacing at PUC. Yeah, you see how they recycle these rip off artist, you know, so, I mean I want to bring to the attention to the Ministry of the PUC that Perera is there so he better watch out because Perera is going with all the money. But, Mr. Speaker, with those two gone, we still have Honourable Pablo and his always smiling CEO, it looks like he can't go anywhere. But Papas will take care of that when the time comes, Mr. Speaker, Papas will deal with the Member from Corozal Bay.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I saw on the news that the Karl Huesner did not have a functioning sterilizer to prepare the equipment that our doctors and nurses need. Has this problem being fixed? Last year, \$110 million tax payers' dollars were spent in the Ministry of Health, yet the most important hospital in the country is without a sterilizer. Is this not gross incompetence man you need more than one; you can't tell me that all of them broke down at the same time. And how much does it cost, out of \$110 million. Is this not reason for us to be seriously concerned? Let us pray that another sterilizer in our only national referral hospital, we don't get one of those fulminant infections caused by bacteria like the one we know so well that killed our neonates. I am being told that there is also a new problem at the hospital. There is a shortage of beds at Karl Huesner, and because of this shortage, they have to roll beds from one ward to another, \$110 millions and they can't buy enough beds for Karl Huesner, Mr. Speaker. I mean can you imagine a shortage of beds. What are these people in the Ministry of Health doing with this \$110 million that they are getting in their budget? If we are serious about the health of the nation, if we are serious about social transformation, then the nation's primary hospitals have got to be a priority. At last year's budget presentation, the Prime Minister proudly announced that the Minister of Health will roll out NHI in Corozal town. They were thinking about Town Council elections. I guess the Minister of Health failed to tell the Prime Minister the truth since no NHI was rolled out in 2014/2015, and once more, we are hearing NHI will again, be rolled out in Corozal. But here is the big whop being put on the people of Corozal, Mr. Speaker, the NHI program will only be rolled out in some of the villages of Corozal North and in the Bay, of course, because that is the area where the Minister of Health represents. In places like Progreso, Sartaneja, and all the villages of Corozal South East and San Narciso, Santa Clara, and other villages of Corozal South West, they are not included in the NHI. Do you realize that in Corozal, we have two UDP Representatives and two PUP Representatives and they are so barefaced, Mr. Speaker, and shameless that they have decided that they are going to punish Corozal South West and Corozal South East and they are only going to give it in the area where we have UDP Representatives, Mr. Speaker. So much for a government for All. *que descracia*, Mr. Speaker, it is a shame. Since we already looking ahead with the roll out of NHI in Corozal, the second poorest district in the nation, let us see what is coming for all of us in the north in 2015/2016.

We know that Fruta Bomba, a Corozal based company is leaving. We know that the Corozal Free Zone, one of the largest employer of Corozal residents continue to generate less and less income and less and less jobs. These businesses, Mr. Speaker, are important to the economies of the two northern districts. By looking at the appropriations for the coming financial year, all we can expect is that more taxes will be squeezed from us via GST and taxes on business and profits. After all the government is hoping to increase the amount of taxes collected by \$13.4 million this year. Of the \$195 million proposed spending in capital expenditure, other than the work being done in the Santa Elena Border, there is nothing else. We will get no infrastructure overhaul because there will be no rehabilitation of the Northern Highway pass Sand Hill. Petrocaribe will not roll it in Orange Walk Town because we remain blue. And we will not get a bridge for San Esteban, Mr. Speaker, because we are blue. Of course, like the rest of the country, we will have to bear our share of the burdens of yet another year of increase in governments spending and of course, borrowing.

Mr. Speaker, today I pointed out some issues I believe are important to all Belizeans. Like I said some of these issues I picked up talking with people who believe that their government should be working harder to create the proper climate to generate and redistribute wealth. They want a government that will do more to protect the vulnerable instead of creating more dependence on the state. The small business people who put their houses on the line to create jobs deserve more support from the government and they want the benefits of government initiatives to be shared and distributed equally. This budget not only fails to offer assurance of any of these things but also it is not transformative as the Prime Minister suggest. How will it help to transform our poorest Belizeans and move them from the status of poverty to prosperity? How does it do more by way of access to education for the thousands of children out of school? From what has been outline this budget offers no hope to the thousands of young people who in two months, will be marching down the aisle at graduation from our junior colleges and universities. It will not improve health condition for all the people of Corozal as was promised. It will not transform our justice system that most Belizean has lost all faith in. And it will do little if any, to make life better for average Belizeans. Of course, if you are not a normal Belizeans things might be looking up for you.

Mr. Speaker, every Belizean has a dream or an idea of the kind of Belize they want to live in. Good governments strive as best as possible to fulfill those dreams. No matter their eulogy or party, all of us who represent people endeavor to create a Belizean society that is at its core free from fair and from want. That is why we enshrine it in the preamble of our Constitution. What each of us should aspire is to build a country where no one is poor, where our children can grow up healthy and strong, where our minds and hearts are imbued with a desire to reach to our best potential. To build a nation of achievers and of people who believe in right over wrong and good over evil. Yes, some of you would say it sound like a dream yet all the great things that happen in our lifetime starts out just like a dream. In striving to achieve the best we can end up with amazing results. For my own part from the day I entered electoral politics in 1993, I have tried to do right by my country and our people. The good people of Orange Walk Central who send me here expect from me no less than dedication, determination, hard work, and they expect from me to conduct myself in a principle manner. I have tried every day to do right by my family, my country, my party, and the Belizean people, Mr. Speaker. So, as long as I remain here as a Representative of the people of Orange Walk Central, and by extension the people of Belize, I will do all in my power to be a part of the work of nation building, and do right by all manner of people. Mr. Speaker, I still believe in Belize. Thank you very much. (Applause)

HON. G. VEGA (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to express my support on the Draft Estimates of Revenues and Expenditure for 2015/2016. But before I begin, Mr. Speaker, before I begin my presentation I would first like to take this opportunity to thank all Orange Walk residents for their support three weeks ago, especially our people in Otro Benque, Orange Walk Central, and Orange Walk East constituencies, thank you for your continued support, trust and confidence in the United Democratic Party. While we did not get the outcome we had hope for we are proud of the advances made and now, our presence in the Orange Walk Town Council presents the platform for this council to deliver on its responsibilities to the people of Orange Walk Town. Mr. Speaker, I promise to myself that I will stick to the budget debate; I will not try to prove how hypocritical, how corrupt the people on the other side are. However, I want to take this opportunity to thank our Almighty God for guiding, for enlightening, giving some strength to the Honourable Representative from Orange Walk Central for informing this nation of how corrupt his colleagues are. (Applause)

So, now, Mr. Speaker, I turn my attention to the matter at hand. The Transformation Continues. As we travel throughout our jewel we see transformation. We feel the transformation. Even the PUP and the naysayers, Mr. Speaker, cannot deny that this is a fact. Unlike those on the other side, Mr. Speaker, when the UDP transforms Belize it transforms Belize for all Belizeans. After all, yes, we are a government for all Belizeans. Mr. Speaker, the 2015/2016 budget sets the stage for this government to continue its efforts to transform the infrastructure of our wonderful country. While at the same time, improve the living conditions of each and every single Belizean through investment, in poverty alleviation, health, education, and national security. These areas are the most critical areas for development by investing in these, we build a solid foundation for sustainable growth and at the same time, we are creating the conditions that will enable a better quality of life and prosperity for all our people. Once again, investment in education is the cornerstone of this present administration. A healthy, educated citizenry thriving in a clean and organized society is the foundation for wealth creation and sustainable development. The Belizean people want development and this UDP Government is delivering. It is this UDP Government that is bringing the transformation everyone can see, 62 of 67 seats went to the UDP that means that we on this side don't have to waste our time proving to the people what the naysayers think we need to prove for they can see what we are delivering. Belizean throughout the length and breadth of our jewel spoke loudly clearly and emphatically. They made it clear that they want this United Democratic Party Government to continue transforming Belize. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I have travelled throughout this beautiful country of ours. From north to south, from east to west, during these visits, I met and interacted with small farmers in Bella Vista and rice producers in Big Falls, Toledo, met mothers in Bullet Tree, businessmen and residents in Belize City, fishermen in Caye Caulker, and the cañeros in Orange Walk and Corozal Districts. As I travelled, the people praised the work of this government. I have reassured those who are waiting to see and feel the transformation in rural areas that there time is coming and coming very soon. Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget will take transformation to our rural areas in an unprecedented way. After all we are a government for all. For this reason and many more, Mr. Speaker, I am even more compelled to express my full support for this budget. You see, Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that will continue dramatically change this country and change it in a positive way. This United Democratic Party is not stopping, Mr. Speaker, we have one goal and that goal is to reward all the Belizean people for their continuous support and for their vote of confidence in UDP Administration. Mr. Speaker, in

my own ministry we are insuring that we do our part to deliver and improve being fully cognizant that there is always room for improvement. The Lands and Survey Department remains the focus of the reforms. We continue to clean up the mess even as the misdeeds of the previous administration continue to haunt us. Even so, Mr. Speaker, we are determined to continue with the transformation of the lands and Survey Departments. We are in the process of completing the transformation of the department from an unreliable, unaccountable, chaotic lands department that was crafted under the last PUP Administration to a department that is modernized, efficient, reliable, customer focus, and one that restores confidence for the members of the public that we serve.

In the last year, we commissioned over 20 government surveys for community expansions and regularization projects for areas of long occupation. This exercise yields the allocation of over 3,000 house lots available for the lease to the residents of Cristo Rey, Xaibe, and Finca Solana in Corozal District, Yo Creek, Guinea Grass, Trail Farm in the Orange Walk District, Lemonal, Hattieville, Caye Caulker, and Lords Bank for Belize District. Even more recently, 108 lots for Bullet Tree, 560 lots for San Pedro, 162 lots for Silk Grass, and even more recently 162 for small farmers in Bella Vista and 261 lots in the Trio Village. Our 2015/2016 budget will allow us to build on this expansion program to work with our colleagues and allow for land to be made available for deserving hard working first time Belizean land owners. Mr. Speaker, the figures show that we have processed over 275, 000 land transaction during the period of February 2008 and January 2014. We have also improved revenue collections through the collections of stamp duty purchase price, land tax and rent. During the last fiscal year, the Ministry of Natural Resources has collected over \$32 million in revenue. The collections of revenues is still a challenge for us, Mr. Speaker, the quantum of uncollected revenues have prompted the efforts to institute a flexible more convenient, online payment option, the platform is being designed to allow for the land management system, land folio to facilitate the processes involved in accepting payments online. On 2015/2016 programs also focus on updating the critically important national land use policy. This is of urgent priority. Upon its completion, the policy will allow us to responsibly manage regulate and ensure the proper use of lands and add a natural assests at a time when our country is aggressively promoting sound and responsible investment opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, water is also equally critical. As such our ministry is serious about safeguarding this vital natural asset. We maintain our commitment to work with our partners especially our private sector partners to sustainably and responsibly utilize this vital resource. Mr. Speaker, consistent with government transformation program, we are working steadfastly, to expand the Solid Waste Management Project to the northern and southern corridors. Belize City residents can recall the unsightly hazardous and unsafe dump site at Mile 3, on the George Price Highway. For years now residents are no longer subjected to the foul and putrid smell and smoke from burning garbage instead that dump site was transformed to a state of the art transfer station where garbage is properly handled. Similarly, we have closed the dump sites in the San Ignacio/Santa Elena, Benque Viejo areas. We have constructed an operationalized the modern regional sanitary land fill and auxiliary facilities at Mile 24 on the George Price Highway. Furthermore, we are very soon expecting the completion of the transfer station at Caye Caulker and San Pedro to complete this project. Mr. Speaker, the success of this project has attracted commitment from our partners. And our plans are to design and replicate the world class regionally impressive, ecologically and environmental sensitive sanitary lands fill an accompanying transfer station in the northern and southern corridors of country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a bit about agriculture. As I have said it here

in this Honourable House and everywhere else when I speak of agriculture. The mantra of this ministry and the sector must be quality product with a consistence supply and at a competitive price. This forms the basis for the enabling environment we have been working so hard to foster. Total agriculture and food production for domestic consumption and export now stands at over BZ\$600 million per annum and it is only set to continue grow. This success, this growth is being experience by all, because we are a government for all. Mr. Speaker, from the massive expansions occurring in the Mennonite communities in particular, Spanish Lookout and Little Belize, to the programs being implemented in rural Toledo, to the screen house program for seniors to the active promotion of school gardens, we are touching everyone. This budget presented will provide us the fuel for more of this to occur. Mr. Speaker, the livestock industry and cattle in particular is one product that demonstrates how effective government policies can benefit producers. Since the national cattle sweep started to test for disease prevalence and establish a cattle registry. The price of beef and therefore, the cattle industry has more than doubled in value just in the last two year. This is because we have since obtained formal market access to México and even Guatemala. This in turn is driving new investments in this sector. The drive to improve animal genetics, improve feeding programs and produce, to meet specific market demands is repositioning the industry. Although we are not there yet, talk is already focusing on private sector investment in a certified slaughter facility to begin exporting carcasses and cut meat. The enabling business environment has never been better for beef, and we will continue to work to make it even better. Later this year, in conjunction with Government of Taiwan, we will commence a Sheep and Goat Improvement Program that we are sure, will also drive the expansion of that sector. This budget continues the required funding allocation for these programs.

Mr. Speaker, a few politically driven individuals without regard for the interest of the farmers, attempted to reign confusion over the northern sugar industry by promoting confrontation amongst stakeholders. They have deliberately deprive the north of enjoying Christmas in 2013, and 2014, and had planned to this as their strategy to create hardship and discontent leading to the next general election. They did not care that the farmers would lose income and could not provide for their families. They did not care that confidence in the industry would be lost. And they did not care that this would do irreparable damage to our beloved country. However, Mr. Speaker, amidst all the noise, true leadership prevail and we were able to help bridge the divide, and today, the sugar industry has a 7- year agreement to govern their commercial arrangements with an option to revisit after 3 years. Sugar cane farmers and the millers are now working hard to produce what could be another, yet another, record year. Led by the ministry stakeholders are now engaged in the formulation of a strategic development plan for the industry that will provide the blueprint to face the challenges on the horizon, in particular the European Union Market Reform slated for October 2017. Mr. Speaker, with ongoing interventions such as affordable financing at the DFC, substantive investment in SIRDI and investment in improved roads infrastructure.

This government through this budget, is providing the enabling business environment for the sugar industry to thrive. We are the government that found a solution when the Belize sugar industry tethered on bankruptcy. We found a solution when a new commercial agreement seemed illusive between the partner in the industry and together, we will all find solutions for the long-term threats facing the sugar industry. Mr. Speaker, there are a multitude of programs that the ministry is currently implementing and time will only permit me to mentioned a

few. In December last year you will recall we visited with the media our agriculture outreach station and BAHA inspection point near Jalacte in Toledo. We have started implementation of a comprehensive engagement plan for six communities in the area to assist them in improving farming techniques towards a more sustainable agriculture based, a sustainable school gardening program, introduction of new plant and animal varieties to improve nutrition and post harvest handling of grains to improve food security of the communities. The needs are tremendous in this part of the country and we will engage all collaborators in the area for us to achieve true sustainable development for the people of these communities. BAHA has already started inspections at the Jalacte station and as soon as the road construction is completed in this area, we will erect a permanent inspection canopy to allow 24 hour monitoring of this critical point.

Mr. Speaker, what needs to be recognized is that we will go anywhere in this country including very remote areas to provide the enabling environment for our people to work and prosper. We are also including our youths, exposing our children to the positive benefits of agriculture. For the last 3 years we have taken the world food day exhibition to schools including Escuela México in Corozal, Independence High School, and last year the ITVET in Belize City. We have since began deeper collaboration with these institutions. Last week a small ceremony was held at our research unit in Central Farm where together, with the Saint Barnabas Primary School Students harvested the fruits of their labour from a small school garden. This module is already being implemented in one school in Belize City, namely, Saint Martin De Porres. And with three urban gardens in south side and will be implemented countrywide. In addition to our active protective structure of screen housing farming program, over the last year, we implemented an Innovative Screen House Pilot Program for senior citizens in the Orange Walk District. This provided structures to 15 senior farmers to allow them to grow vegetables in a controlled environment to feed themselves but, also, so that they can earn supplementary income from such project. Mr. Speaker, for the second half of last year, I had the honor to chair the Central American Agriculture Councils of Ministers as Belize assume the presidency of SICA. Belize decided to place agriculture health as the core team for our presidency. This was chosen as we have significant threats to our agriculture production already present in the region and we believe much more needs to be done at the regional level to mitigate such threats. The Belize Agriculture Health Authority has been working diligently to prevent the introduction of new disease but their work in this regard is very dependent on cooperation from the travelling public. Whether it is a single mango introducing med fly, or shrimp infected with the bacteria causing early mortality syndrome, or any other of many diseases is simple indiscretion to import infected material could cause millions of dollars of losses to producers and in extension, to the Belizean economy.

Such an indiscretion occurred and we now have severe economic losses being experience by the poultry producers in the Spanish Lookout area of the Cayo District. As a low pathogenic strain of the H5N2 Avian Influenza has infected the flock. While the birds show little clinical signs of the infection it is necessary to depopulate the infected farms in an attempt to eradicate the virus. This virus can mutate to highly pathogenic strain and this would be catastrophic to the industry. Mr. Speaker, in conjunction with the producers and community leaders almost half a million eggs were destroyed. Over 50,000 birds were unitized; this has cost farmers approximately \$3 million. Government has also allocated additional emergency funds to BAHA to conduct increase monitory and quarantine. Mr. Speaker, we can understand that patience will wear thin as farmers witness their investments being destroyed, but this is inevitable if we are to contain the outbreak. I wish to urge all poultry producers to continue cooperating with the BAHA officials, as we work together to contain this

outbreak. It must be noted that the virus has been detected in back yard poultry in the neighboring village of Buena Vista and depopulation of their flock has also commenced. It is a very difficult situation but it is a very necessary measure to combat this scourge.

Mr. Speaker, the last few days much has been said about trading in CARICOM single market. The reality is that Belize is benefiting from increase intra-regional trade. In October last year BELCAR of Spanish Lookout did its first ever bulk export of corn to Trinidad and Tobago. While containerized corn exports to Guyana has increased tremendously. This is in addition to our established trade of various beans, corn meal, citrus juice, shrimp, and pelletized animal feed to the region just to name a few. We are very well placed to expand this trade to eventually include poultry and beef. Of course, we must also be open to trade from CARICOM members states and we are supportive of this as long as it does not caused severe injury to our domestic production. We must ensure that trade is fair and balance and we must ensure that Belize continue to maintain its strategic objective of food security to ensure we do not suffer from the very turbulent global food commodity trade. You will recall that during the food crisis of five years ago, many countries were experiencing civil unrest, including riots, due to shortage of basic commodities. Our policies must be balance to prevent this while ensuring food remains available to all. Mr. Speaker, we are utilizing our resources wisely to deliver the best possible service to the farming community and the country as a whole. We appreciate and applaud the cooperation of the private sector stakeholders as we continue to build a dynamic agriculture sector. Let me once again, reiterate this government's full commitment to the agriculture, aquaculture, and food production sectors of the economy. With the funding contained in this budget and the continued cooperation of private sector partners and external project funding agencies, we expect that agriculture and food production will only continue to expand for the benefit of all.

Mr. Speaker, please allow me an opportunity to address an issue of national concern. Over the last week the media has been relentless discussing the rice industry and the possible importation of rice from a CARICOM single market country. These are the facts; a well known importer has used one of his companies, Pet World Imports to apply for a license to import rice. This was formally brought to the attention of my ministry on the 5th of February, 2015, via copy of a letter written to the Supplies Control Office. A meeting was convened by my ministry on the 17th of March of this year, with several government ministries and domestic rice producers to apprise them of the import request and commence a review of this sector with a view to improve the competitiveness of this products. Please note that this meeting occurred before this matter became a media story and not as a result of some one's to screwy as a result of both severe rains and then very dry conditions during 2013 and early 2014. Last year it was necessary to import rice to cover shortfalls due to this partial crop failure. It was best for the Belize marketing development to import paying all taxes and giving the producers an opportunity to wholesale the rice so as to give them the means to help cushion the losses they experienced. Rice was imported from Guyana as rice from this source does not pay custom tariff. Guyana has tremendous rice over production for which they haven't found markets and it has become a serious political issue for them and calls are being made for this rice to be exported at whatever cost. In 2014, they reached a record breaking 633,000 tons of production. Belize is a much smaller industry that produces around 11,000 tons. Approximately half a million pounds of this production is done by small farmers in the Toledo district. Over the last 3 years we have been working to bring the Toledo rice farmers closer to the realities of our product, of our protected domestic market by introducing a payment by quality system and paying closer to our protected domestic market prices. Imagine what will happen if we totally

liberalize rice importation, Toledo rice productions will die instantly and the others will follow shortly thereafter. We realize that Guyana is a sister CSME country and the trade rules are much tighter, however, they will also understand that must balance regional trade with our own food security needs and in this respect, we must ensure that our industry is not irreparably harmed. Mr. Speaker, of course, the consumer's interest is our interest, we must and we will find an acceptable solution to this issue. This is precisely what we set out to do when we had our first meeting on the 17th of March. This is a complex issue with many producers on the line. We must balance the needs of the milpa farmers in the Toledo, with the mechanized farmers in Orange Walk and Cayo Districts, and with delivering cheaper rice to the consumers. We must also balance our respect for the CSME with our need to maintain food security in a world of very volatile food production and prices. I am certain, Mr. Speaker, that after we finish our consultations together, all the parties will come to a point where everyone will be satisfied. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

HON. D. B. GARCIA (Belize Rural Central): Pleasant good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. This is the 2015/2016 budget, and I would like, Mr. Speaker, with your permission, to begin by saying that for me it is a privilege to serve the people of Belize Rural Central. Every single day and every night, when I say my prayers the most important thing in my professional life right now, is the representation of the good people of Belize Rural Central. I would like to acknowledge also, Mr. Speaker, that this is women's month, we are coming to the close of it, but we, of course, want to acknowledge the hard work, the arduous task of the women of Belize of many times, upon whose backs a lot of the work and the progress and the development of this country takes place.

My introductory comment on the budget, Mr. Speaker, is in appropriating over a billion dollars, does this mean that life will become better and that there will be better development for Belizeans and for the people of Belize Rural Central? We have to ask ourselves that question in light of the fact that appears to us on this side, that this is a borrow and spend budget, and we have to think, Mr. Speaker, about who will repay and when will the repayments be made? Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of poverty and growing dependency and cynicism in our government and in our country today, about the government I should say, and about the political directorate. With the same expenditures, pretty much, in most of the line items of the budget, I want to ask myself, how, when you do things in the same way, pretty much, how do you expect different results? I wouldn't maybe go so far, Mr. Speaker, as calling it insanity, but certainly I would submit that it is not a good idea to be doing things in the same way, and to expect different results. In this budget, I see no serious vision and I see no sustainable development and the kind of radical reforms that we need in our country today. There is no hope and no real and true national development planned. Yes, there is muscularity as has been called in this spending spree, but there is no cognitive muscularity, no brain trust for the true betterment of the country in my view.

What is the budget for (BRC), Belize Rural Central, that is? I look first of all, at the Mile 8 communities of West Lake, Sunset Park, and Western Pines which make up together, Western Paradise and this will be my refrain in speaking about the many communities of Belize Rural Central, Mr. Speaker. That there is a litany of neglected streets and infrastructure, no provision of water, no expansion of electricity, and a general situation in which people are getting by because, trying to get by, because of the neglect. I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that giving you one example, the government of the day has refused to put the proper filling to complete a small infrastructure project at Mile 8. And why because the culvert was actually put there by the Chairman and friends of the Chairman, and because the Chairman happens to be PUP. We are not seeing the support to complete the project so that the people can have a better access into their

community. I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there is a crying need, I could not come here today and not put before this Honourable House that there is crying need to slow down the traffic going through the George Price Highway at Mile 8 in particular, and also the Philip Goldson Highway at the new airport junction. We have been seeing too many accidents and too many fatalities, Mr. Speaker. Just the other day, a young child going to Stella Maris, was knocked down and he died in the hospital a few days later because of the refusal, I say, of the persons who are in authority to do something to slow down the traffic. You could put the smaller speed bumps, the ones that slow you down like the ones by Hattieville and you can also put in lights, you can put in a slow down, sign. The lady who was knocked down, to glory by the driver of a minister of this government, never had a chance because that vehicle was passing through that community at between 60 to 70 miles an hour, Mr. Speaker, if you just look at that video. Mr. Speaker, I am calling and please, what's the saying, "Waild graas di groa di has di stav". Please don't tell me that you have to wait until the full upgrading of highways with all these massive loans that are being taken out. That was the excuse that was given to me by the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Works, about not putting in the pedestrian crossing at Our Lady of the Way School in Ladyville, but I am saying that we cannot wait for another accident and fatality, along the highway, by Mile 8, and also at the airport junction in Ladyville.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to go on by saying that making lots and land available to Belize City residents are not the people of Ladyville and Hattieville, is an abomination. You cannot neglect the people of communities and then expect to get support, and then wanting to paint on the bus shelters, "Transforming Belize Rural Central." When you neglect the needs of the people of who live in communities and giving the priority to people who come from elsewhere that, Mr. Speaker, to me as the Representative of the people, is complete unacceptable. There is no access to finance for home repair. There is no support for the expansion of the health center in Hattieville for example, Mr. Speaker. The building has been extended but the Ministry of Health has absolutely failed, to even visit nurse Burgess and say to her, "Nurse, this is how we are going to help you to expand the services of the Hattieville Health Center because there is a growing community. And while I am at it, let me talk about the Ladyville Health Center, Mr. Speaker. The Ladyville Health Center serves not only close to 10,000 residents of Ladyville and Lord's Bank, but it is also serving people from the north rural communities. The health center is a tiny building, the staff are over burdened, there is a lack of medication, the poor nurse has to get on the bus to take boxes of medication because there isn't even a vehicle to assist her to take the medications to the health center. And yet the Ladyville health, with paltry resources is being called upon to service 15, maybe 16, close to maybe 18,000 people and that, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely unacceptable as I address that need to the Minister of Health.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of playing of power politics. And in Gracie Rock, for example, there is no proper attention to the road. In La Democracia and Mahogany Heights, why are you neglecting a combined community of over a thousand and odd inhabitants? There is severe unemployment in the area and there is absolute neglect especially of Mahogany Heights. In Freetown Sibune more attention needed to the roads. And I go, Mr. Speaker, to the community that I call my own home and that is Ladyville. There is scandalous neglect of the streets and roads in that part of the constituency. I was on Scissortail Street and Mantaray Boulevard yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and I have called the people from the Ministry of Works, and I have to say that they try their best. But when I called the people they tell me, "Ms. Dolores, the grader is in Belize Rural North or the grader is in San Pedro." What happen to Belize Rural Central? Why can we not have the services of the grader to at least upgrade the

streets and keep things going? The people in Vista Del Mar, Mr. Speaker, it is like curtains when you try to think about the hardship of the people because of a complete neglect. And yet they are playing power politics, giving out land to who they want, recommending jobs for who they want, and just playing that complete UDP politics of UDP first, Belizeans second and PUP last, as if PUP are not even Belizeans. Mr. Speaker, I stand here to represent all the people of Belize Rural Central, not just PUP, not just UDP, and not just no P but every single 'P' for person, and every single 'P' for the dignity of the people who I try to represent.

Mr. Speaker, there is no ambulance at the health center in Ladyville. There is over crowding as I have said, this is unacceptable. Only a few people benefiting from the giving out of land. And to hear the Mayor of Belize City, talked about a possible toll into Belize City, Mr. Speaker, that is what I call absolute madness. The amount of people who have to use the George Price Highway and the Philip Goldson Highway to get into Belize City just to take their children to school, how can you even think about taxing people more, and then a total neglect of the communities that they come from? In Gales Point and Gales Point has a special place in my heart, Mr. Speaker; the people are industrious people. It is a challenge community but there are little cottage industries, there could be a lot of potential for tourism; they make arts and crafts; they make their coconut crust; they get the little oranges, the fish whatever it is, they are industrious people but the government needs to provide more of a support for self-sufficiency and to see where we can improve the community for a bit of tourism. I see my Honourable friend from Belize Rural South, and I hope that he would support us in saying that we have to help people to help themselves.

Mr. Speaker, let me close off my comments about all the communities of Belize Rural Central, by saying that I, for one, can never forget in 2012, when the Prime Minister said, "We pledge that we will respect the rights and entitlements of each and every community, and each and every constituency." I still question, and my answer would have to be no, that you are not keeping your pledge to respect the rights and entitlement of everybody. Its kisses be favor and if you're UDP, or if you voted for a UDP Representatives, you will come first and everybody else could suck salt.

Mr. Speaker, I turn now to some issues that I would like to mention in relation to the women of our country. Where is the real trust towards equity and equality? Where are the incentives for our women? The unemployment rate for women is twice that for men. There is a political driven implementation of the pantry program. BOOST, Mr. Boots, BOOST in principle is something good, but the way it is being implemented again goes towards this business of UDP first. If everything is partisan political driven, how, Mr. Speaker, can we really advance the issues for women, children, families in our country? Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that we need, and this comes in the PUP's Women's Agenda Manifesto. We need a sustained job creation program for women. Women bear a disproportionate economic and health burden in this country. The rising cost of living affects women and families. Those are the issues that we have to put on the table. I do want to paused though, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge the women in politics who have recently been elected, for example, the Lady Mayor of Punta Gorda, and all the women that have been elected, especially, Ms. Rosel Arana in Orange Walk. She is a champion of our women. (Applause) I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there are too many stories of women who lose their jobs because they are pregnant. Let us move in the implementation of our labour laws to a more aggressive policing of what employers in this country are doing. Let us do that, it is not impossible. And I would also like to say, and this is one of my particular pet peeves, and it's a little baby I think I have. Where is the fundamental revamping of the social security rules and regulations? Where is the fundamental

revamping? There is a need, Mr. Speaker, for serious reforms, the none contributory pension for seniors will help because women live longer and women are nation builders.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I will try to move along as quickly as I can, but there are things that need to be said, and I would like to make some comments about education, and about health this afternoon. Massive spending, Mr. Speaker, but if you don't have a radically different approach, how can you expect radically different results? It is not the hard working teachers and administrators in the system that is the fault. But it is a lack of leadership and a lack of vision, and that goes to the top of the ministry, not the officials who are doing a very good job of trying to administrate but when you have a lack of leadership and vision, Mr. Speaker, that is when we get into problems. We have to as I said last year, Mr. Speaker, create more bang for the education buck. We have to question where is the value for money. The budget figures themselves will tell the story of recurrent expenditures of \$234 million with a combined with CAP.II and CAP III, \$240 million, Mr. Speaker, spending almost as much on administration as on tertiary education, on management and consultancies over \$4 million, only a paltry, \$327,000.00 actually spend on the improvements of buildings. Now, in the budget, Mr. Speaker, there are beautiful goals as to what is going to happen in education and our vision, our mission, and our performance indicators, beautifully laid out. But we have to question, are the goals being realized? Percentages for satisfactory grades are not measuring up.

You look at the performance of our children on the P.S.E, Mr. Speaker, an some of the more radical thinkers in Belize are telling us that perhaps we should do away altogether with P.S.E. Look at this situation. You have under 50% even the 30% percentile of satisfactory performance in mathematics, the performance in English is a little bit better but still sadly lacking, Mr. Speaker. We have to do things in a different way if we are not to lose the generation of our children. The Minister of education, the Member for Collet doesn't like to hear it, but I am not here for a popularity contest with him. I am here to point out the shortcomings so that together we can try to work to make them better. The primary school completion rate, 75% going up to a 79% but still I have to ask myself, what about the other 20%? The secondary completion rate 66%, what happen to the other 33% and something percent? The TVET enrollment, Mr. Speaker, and this is a really crying shame. The TVET enrollment, 928 persons when we have thousands of young people out there who may not be able to perform academically to the standard that would be acceptable, but who have the talents to engage in training for technical and vocational activity. I say, Mr. Speaker, we have to call out the government for not jump starting and making sure that the enrollment in the ITVETs throughout the country can be dramatically increased. Our children are calling for it.

In youth services, Mr. Speaker, personal emoluments, \$2.3 million. And guess how much is spent in training \$29,000.00. Now get a load of that. Personal emoluments, \$2.3 million. But a mere \$29,000 allocated for training. Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable. In sports, \$1.3 million, 2 training workshops were held; 4 recruitment camps. Percentage of school in primary school competition in sports between 30% to 60%. But the percentage of students actually participating in sports for their own self development is between 1% and 6%. In track and field in this country, Mr. Speaker, only 1% of our children are engaged in track and field. There is going to be no Husain Bolt coming out of Belize. Despite the fact of the massive talent of our Belizean children and I cry shame on this government that better cannot be done in sports. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I would like now to refer to the education sector performance

trends and this was given at a retreat by the Ministry of Education in 2014 and we are looking at the fact that even though the pre-school enrollment has gone up somewhat, it is still very low so we do have to work on that. We also are looking at the fact that the primary school enrollment, it did go up in 2011 to 2013, but in the 2013 to 2014, it seems to be dipping slightly once again. We also look at the primary school net enrollment ratio of 88.5% which I have to say, is something that we have to work on to improve. In the secondary enrollment it has been up but again, there are too many secondary school age children who are still out of school. In the net enrollment ratio for secondary schools we are seeing 51.6%. So that is telling you that many children of that age are not in school. And then in the percentage of trained teachers, we are looking at for primary 63% and in secondary 40%. Mr. Speaker, it is still relevant there are many people who may not want to hear it, but it is still relevant and it bears repeating to say, that Belize is paying a lot for education but getting little. More youth are outside the school system than in it, and many fail to make the transition to the work force. More and more youth drop out of school and become involve in gang activities. Action is needed if Belize is not to lose a whole generation of youth. Mr. Speaker, the reality may continue to be inconvenient and inconvenient truth, however, we have to bring it forward and we have to speak truth to power, and make sure that we put on the table that this is not acceptable, and that we still have a lot of work to do. I would like to propose that there needs to be radical change, not just little incremental change here and there and doing the same things over and over.

I would like, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, to make some quotes from the presentations of our Belize Youth Movement, President Alberto Vellos. And he said that, "Five years ago, the study by social anthropologist, Dr. Herbert Gale, showed that there is a large correlation between gun violence in our country, and the lack of education." Dr. Gale's Report found that, "High levels of crime which are not disconnected from the education system, puts it probably more better, as a mis-education system." If we are failing our girls and boys, you are giving them basket to carry water. The school system and I do want to thank young Alberto for allowing me to quote extensively from this. The school system is outdated and structurally flawed. In major attack on access to tertiary education the government announced that tuition fees at the national university were going up instead of down. While the government of Belize has prioritized an invested heavily in education over the past few years, the outcomes in terms of education access, quality, and equity are disappointing. I also want to quote to say that because of these disappointing results many families continue to wake up in poverty. The above official responses to the crisis in education system are unwise as I have said, and are led by political urgency and not national purpose or rational thought. Maybe, I don't know if I was talking with young Alberto many times during the past week, but I think independently of each other we may have come up with very similar conclusions as to what is happening in our country. We need Ministry of Education and Minister of Education to overhaul the curriculum to give it real purpose, technology and innovation must become a transformative tool. We cannot afford any backward thinking. And finally we call for value for money. Does the investment match up to the result, and clearly the evidence everywhere shows that it does not. The perpetuation of the status quo will drive Belize into further crisis. Thank you for that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, reform for improved outcomes, absolute reform for improved outcomes. Let me see how I can wrap up something that could take a long time because I need to speak a little about health as well. But let me say this, The blatant vote-buying-scheme by the UDP of that tablet-giveaway it gives us paused and we have to examine where do the teachers fit in all this if teachers are nation builders? Why didn't the government also undertake a program to give all the teachers tablets? We are hearing so many stories, Mr. Speaker, about all the

students who sold their tablets why? Because you are just handing somebody a device. In the education agenda, we should be giving the e-books, the programs, the videos, along with the device so that the teachers, and the students, can work together to transform the education system. This could be a first step in a greater plan to focus on developing the skills of teachers so that they can connect with students. Because they don't care, the UDP we are talking about now, the government, don't care about hard work that is required to change our antiquated education system. They are concerned more with power and vote-buying and gimmicks. Why didn't the government work with the schools and other partners to develop a program so that the materials could have been access from the device? This is what we are talking about, Mr. Speaker. In education a People's United Party Government will collaborate and cooperate with teachers as nation builders. We will aggressively pursue scholarship opportunities for those who need it. We will use technology and creativity as pillars of the new education system. (Applause) And we see arts, music, sports and history as integral parts of the learning process and not just a little side show. We will see to it, Mr. Speaker, that collaborative learning is a foundation for preparing students for a life of work and success. Mr. Speaker, in wrapping up on the issue of education, I would just like to reiterate a few points: teachers are nation builders lets work with them more. And, secondly, there has to be a greater focus on innovations for students. Arts and cultures are key; and sports must get much greater support. Last but not least, the use of technology must be harness so that the talents of our young people can be promoted for purposeful learning. We are not seeing it happening and it is time to jump-start the education system with the massive spending, so that there can be better results.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission now, I would like to make some comments on health and I will refer to my notes if you allow me. The current Ministry of Health budget has gone now to a forecast unprecedented spending of a \$119 million. How can this amount of unprecedented spending justify the current chronic crisis in our health care system with corruption and gross managerial incompetence, in all four of the regional health hospitals and the plummeting of moral among health care workers and patience? It is a terrible indictment, Mr. Speaker. The budget statements under mind the ministry's vision and mission, oh they are beautiful at setting out vision and mission, but they are very terrible at living up to those stated goals. How can there be a proper strategic prioritizing of service delivery, human resources, medical technologies, and sustainable financing leadership and government if there is that gross managerial incompetence and corruption? Fifty-seven million is proposed as spending for strategic management and administration. This immense sum of money almost half of the entire health budget is destine to regulate the provision and quality of health care and administrative and technical support for the health regions. More than \$50 million was spend destine to the regional health areas, but it is plagued by allegations of gross financial irregularities and this is a terrible indictment of the UDP Government's managerial inefficiency, and scandal ridden track record of incompetence. There have been allegations of serious embezzlement. There have been, for example, audit investigations, which could not properly account for a freezer and x-ray machine being bought from cronies but not able to properly function. The KHMH budget of over \$25 almost \$26 million, it is common knowledge that there is no functioning sterilizing unit at the KHMH. And that all the time there is chronic breakdown of the most basic medical equipment. The budget allocates for medicine and technology \$11 million plus, but there is a lack of basic medicine, x-rays, ultrasounds, CT scan at the KHMH and all the districts.

The other day, Mr. Speaker, we saw a terrible frustration of an individual being played out, and I think it is an excellent metaphor for the frustration that the Belizean people are seeing in terms of what is happening with our health system.

The person punched in the glass, cut up himself, but it showed the frustration of lack of adequate care in a timely manner. And it is useless, Mr. Speaker, as our doctors have been advising us to have a tenders committee with technical experts if the recommendations of those persons will not be implemented. Mr. Speaker, the budget allocates over \$9 million for medical supplies in contrast to a whopping \$19 million for the payment of contractors. Also we have seen, again, a scandal ridden track record which explains the overall breakdown of the national health system. There is blatant disregard for the tendering process as I have said medicines are exorbitantly priced because you are giving the contracts to friends and cronies, instead of trying access the medications at the cheapest cost so that you can pass on that cheaper price, to the Belizean people who are burdened by rising taxes and rising cost of living. There is terrible high staff turnover. There is disenchantment, there is ministerial interference. There is under reporting of unprofessional practices and I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker. Also, when we saw the terrible, and it bears repeating, Mr. Speaker, when we saw the terrible deaths of 13 babies. What could be more damning than the hospital acquired infections that caused these babies to have died? People wait months for basic procedures. There is a blatant disregard and a failure to expand training and to give good attention and respect and dignity to health care professionals like doctors and nurses.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with almost \$120 million budgeted in health, where is the excuse for the UDP's failure to upgrade the Karl Huesner Memorial Hospital? This I say, Mr. Speaker, is unacceptable, there are some more details in this report, the preparation of it was done a lot by the doctors and I have been privileged to present it to the House but only to say, Mr. Speaker, that better has got to be done with the massive sums of money to the Belizean people. You are raising money through taxes and what monies are not being raised to through taxes there is a lot of borrowing spree. My good friend the Honourable Member for Caribbean Shores, has reminded us that it is easy to spend money; it is hard to pay it back. Mr. Speaker, I don't wish to engage in the political back and forth, I mean, we had to listen to the Minister of Education, the Honourable Member for Collet, screaming for an hour and forty five minutes, man. I will never ever say to him that we are not in this together, we are in it together, but you are the ones at the helm. The Minister of Health and the Minister of Education and the UDP Government have to do better (Applause) and we must get more bang for the buck. Once, again, Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to serve. I leave the Honourable House with those words this afternoon. Get away from the political spending and the politizing of everything within our country. Spend money, yes, equitable. Look to tomorrow, and let us be concerned about the future of our children. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

HON. A. MARTINEZ (Minister of Human Development, Social Transformation, Poverty Alleviation): I want to be quick, Mr. Speaker, because obviously those on the other side, are not going deep into the budget at all. But anyway, let me just do what I need to do. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the debate on the General Revenue Appropriation Bill for Fiscal year 2015/2016.

Mr. Speaker, I will have to risk sounding like a scratch record because I say it every year, but when something is a fact you must have to acknowledge that it is. And the simple fact is that the Prime Minister and his technical team at the Ministry of Finance, must be congratulated. This is the eighth time in a row that Our UDP Government has put forth a very solid and serious budget. The eighth time that the Prime Minister have clearly laid out a part for this country's continued development. Despite all criticism and doom, and gloom that we have heard, and will continue to hear, from our friends across the aisle, I feel very

confident that we are on the right path; I know that this UDP Government is using the people's money in the right way. It is very obvious to everybody who wants to open their eyes and see, it is literally all around us in the infrastructural upgrade countrywide, the jobs that have been created, the social protection system that have been strengthen and extended. I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, what makes me absolutely confident that we are on the right track is that the people have told us so, through the by-election in Cayo North and the municipal election, the people of this nation spoke loud and clear. They approve of the way our Prime Minister is managing this country. I don't want to take anything away from my colleagues at the municipal level who work very hard but we all know that the municipal election is a report card for Central Government, and Mr. Speaker, it is obvious according to the Belizean people, we pass in flying colors.

The Honourable Prime Minister in his budget speech has clearly articulated how we will stay the course the transformation will continue both physically and socially. We are continuing on the parts that have served the people of Belize so well since 2008, and my ministry is an integral part of the efforts to transform our society. We have made good stride in strengthening our system especially those that support the most vulnerable in our society. And so, in the spirit of accountability, I would like to share with this Honourable House, and with the people of Belize, what we have accomplished last year, with the people's money. During the last financial year the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation, and Poverty Alleviation provided clients center services for over 28,000 children, adolescence, and adults. These individuals and their families were provided with a wide range of services including social economic support, psychological intervention, and other form of case management support, all aimed at helping them to normalize their lives and restore family function.

Breaking down the numbers a bit, over 4,000 persons received quality protection services from our three departments. These include the 1,300 children, child abuse and neglect cases that were investigated, court ordered and voluntary service were provided to 830 young persons who were either juvenile offenders, or at the risk of coming into conflict with the law. In addition, 385 children were cared for in the children's or foster care placement, one hundred elderly and homeless people benefited from residential and in home support. Another 100 young people deemed to be beyond parental control or who had been convicted of crimes workplace at youth hostel. There was a 140% increase in the number of clients that receive services from our counseling center which serve 725 children, adolescences, and their families during the financial year. And our women department serves approximately 1,200 clients with domestic violence, life skill enhancement, economic support, and other complimentary services. This is apart from the support they provide to 38 women group countrywide.

The Conscious Youth Development Program provided services for over 1,000 gang involve youth and youth at risk of joining gangs, helping them with employment support services and conflict management intervention. But, Mr. Speaker, once again, it was through our social safety net that we truly serve many of our most deserving citizens. This past financial year over 2,200 individual benefit from cash or enhance assist. Over 1,200 units of public assistance were delivered to individual and families in the form of emergency food, medical care, education assistance, burial assistance, or rent assistance. The Food Pantry Program continues to assist family in the Belize, Cayo, and Toledo District to maintain a better standard of nutrition by providing their staples at a subsidized cost. That means over 12,500 people are eating better. Many children are going to bed with their bellies full. And that, Mr. Speaker, is due to the unwavering commitment of the Barrow Administration to bring relief to the poor. Our BOOST Program have assisted close to 9,000 children, elderly and disabled person from

3,500 household through direct cash assistance. The BOOST is not a handout as our clients, as our critics like to paint it, Mr. Speaker, it is a partnership. Families have to ensure that their children go to school and get their vaccination in return for the cash assistance and if they are not holding up to their end of the bargain, their benefits are cut. And we are finding out that families are holding up to end of their bargain, and making sure the health and education needs of their children are attended to.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report to this Honourable House that last academic year, 273 young people who were on the BOOST Program graduated from high school. That is the nature of these social safety network program, they provide direct relief to those people who are most in need. Yes, another part of this government are working towards increasing the level of foreign investment and creating more jobs. But in the meantime people need something to tie them over and that is what the social safety net programs are designed to do. It is the classic case of ensuring that the horse doesn't starve before the grass grows. Mr. Speaker, we are serious about our social safety net program and we will ensure that they remain robust, and technical sound. Not only do we owe it to our beneficiaries and the people of this country of Belize in general, but we know that our programs are being used as examples in the Caribbean. In May of 2014 with support from the OAS and United Nation, my ministry hosted a delegation of over 20 senior officials from eight Caribbean countries. These countries are all interested in learning from what we have achieved here in Belize in terms of our safety net program and ICT framework. And we will continue to push the envelope. We have already secure technical assistant from UNICEF and UNDP, to do an evaluation on BOOST, that is how serious we are, not afraid of scrutiny.

And on this note, please let me pause here, Mr. Speaker, to tell my Honourable friend from Toledo West, that we are still waiting for the names of the person that last year he said was on undeservingly receiving BOOST. I know that my CEO have personally contact you about this situation and no respond so it's either so or it's not so. My CEO has personally contact you to say if you have a problem and something like that is happening, bring it forward. And I think in all fairness to my CEO, I don't think he/she is lying on you by saying he/she hasn't contacted you. Now, we are not talking about the office, we are talking about that you made mention in this Honourable House that some people were on BOOST Program who didn't deserve it. And we are saying that if that is so, then you bring it the necessary attention of the authority, up to now you haven't. If you talk about more people want to get on the booster that is another case but don't say that people that don't deserve it is on it. Then we challenge because we want to make sure that the program is running right too, that is why we called you to give us the name and you haven't still replied up to now, Sir.

My Ministry, these social safety net program, Mr. Speaker, are significant investment, my ministry want to make sure that the people of Belize get good returns on their investment so we are proud of our programs. And we will continue to invest in our people through these programs, we will continue to build up our human capital by making sure children have food in their stomachs and they are healthy and that they go to school.

Citizen security is extremely high on the national policy agenda and understandable so while significant investment are being made on the law enforcement side, equal attention is being paid to the social economic and environmental deterrence of crime and violence. Our UDP Government has made the historic move of obtaining a loan to strengthen the juvenile justice system through the Community Action for Public Safety (CAPS). We have constructed the Gateway U Center on the compound of the Gwen Lizarraga High School, this

center is now being managed by the Ministry of Education and will provide a ray of services to young people to keep them off the street and away from the gangs. Through CAPS Project we also constructed a new dorm and a resources center on the campus of the youth hostel, and we have significantly strengthen the quality of rehabilitative service being offered to the adolescence of that institution. The Ministry of Human Development is also the executing agency for the complementary project called the Youth and Community Transformation Project or (YCT). This project will fund the building of an indoor basketball and sports auditorium and that will be a part of a community resources center located in the Lake Independence area.

Apart from sports many other social development programs in the areas of literacy, skills training, and life skill will also be delivered to the community from this resource center. The project will also finance the upgrade of other south side community, assets such as the Samuel Haynes Institute for Excellence and the Wilton Cumberbatch Field which is in the Port Loyola constituency. The strives that we have been made this financial will continue into the next. As the Prime Minister have said, the transformation will continue and the 2015/2016 budget of the Ministry of Human Development certainly reflects that. Apart from government and more is coming, apart from government funds we have leverage an additional million dollars through a SICA Regional Project to address violence against women and girls. Our government continues to value the partnership with our civil society stakeholders. We continue to recognize that the needs of our people are great and that the government cannot do it alone. That is why the Official Charities Fund and the grand stone organizational line in the budget have been replenished. Through my ministry alone, \$1.9 million have been allocated to assist none governmental and community based organization that provides service to the most vulnerable organization, such as: Help Age Belize, the YWCA, the YMCA, the Belize Council for the Visually Impaired, Haven House, Hand in Hand Ministry to name a few. And there are other organizations that receive assistance through the Ministry of Education and Health. So, the transformation will indeed continue, Mr. Speaker, and my ministry intend to continue to be the heart of this social part of this transformation. That is why the people of Port Loyola definitely, have to support this budget here.

And apart from that the South Side Poverty Alleviation Project especially that will affect my area, is being roll out next week. We are already crediting sand, we are already putting down foundation. And let me explain to this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, the People's United Party talk about Housing, but it was the United Democratic Party who relieve the people of this country for those housing thing, you know. Even the people, that they build houses for, who had to pay, it is this government here who wrote off all of those houses. (Applause) And you know, when we says it is a government for all, it is quite good for me because like those house the former representative built, on Jane Usher Boulevard, where the people had to pay \$400.00 a month for, and they don't have a job. Well, do you know what happened? Thanks to the United Democratic Party Government we write them off and those people are voting UDP now. (Applause) I never forgot, you know, and maybe my good friend from Orange Walk Central, maybe he might have talked at the wrong spot, but I don't think he is a liar because he is a cancer just like me. I never forgot. We are July alike. Do you remember they had that press conference 2008, you know, right at Independence Hall, when his then Leader the Member from Fort George get in front of all of them and said, "Well, we got \$20 millions from Venezuela." He didn't tell them US\$20 million he told them \$20 million. And do you know what happen when government get back, and they spent the \$20 million? I was a Representative then. Do you know, and we never get anything. When I was in opposition, we didn't got any community vote nothing, you know, no Christmas cheer, no nothing, you know. Then, when we get

back the next \$20 million which we had to fight Mr. Ashcroft for, you all got your share equally. All of you who were Representatives that was here. (Applause) Including Honourable the Member for Orange Walk Central, all the old Members that were there, Hon. Marin. As a matter of fact that the Ministry of Housing took the purchase order to the Member from Fort George's office and then he is one of the first to get. So, when they are talking we are not hypocrites,, we believe in helping people and by helping people, people have a conscience and people will support who help them. Why do you think that you all are taking those hard lick come the 4th of March, and you think we are finish there, you watch when the Prime Minister ready to call the next general election, it will be worse. (Applause)

And then, you see, they like talk about, corruption this and corruption that. Well boy, I don't know, but the Member for Orange Walk Central said it right too, you know. Well, I don't know, I think he was in the correct frame of mine because up to now the man is not apologizing, and the man will not apologize because he knows what he said was the truth. So, at the end of the day, the main thing, in my view, of politics, Mr. Speaker, is to serve. Once you serve the people you will get your reward. And I think that's stem at constituency level, and that's stem at a government level. Do you know since 2006, the PUP hasn't won any election? It started from there, you know. They haven't won any election. And then, Member for Orange Walk, do you remember now that you had 7 seats at Orange Walk, you are short of two and you said that you were so strong. Well, don't ask about the Leader of the Opposition, well, he can't even explain how his mayoral candidate Ms. Shackron lost in his constituency. Now, you look at that. Well guess what he said in his defense. "Well, you know the people of Freetown, they have a mind of their own and they think on their own." Well, let me tell you something that is the same mind they will have towards you going into the general election to come you know. In other words they are saying that the people from Freetown are looking to pick viable candidates who they can rely on obviously and according to him, it looks like they couldn't rely on Ms. Shackron because she lost in his own constituency. And so, well, he can give up his pay anytime when he wants. He must be working somewhere else, so he can still give it up that won't stop him from give it up. But, Mr. Speaker, the people of Port Loyola, I want to assure them, that services are under way now, services are coming, and more and more, will be coming. So, I am telling you the next general election, the Prime Minister and the United Democratic Party can count on Port Loyola because its back there we will put it hard on them, Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

HON. F. MARIN JR. (Corozal South East): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With you indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to refer to my notes. Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, this is the eight budget presentation that I have been participating in, and I believe that the mask has come from all the glitter of this government. After eight years Belizeans finally heard some humility from the Prime Minister as oppose to his boasting from previous budget presentations like his, 'free to fly budget' or the 'release the economic engine budget.' And it is clear to see that this government has saddle Belize with now over one billion dollars in additional debt and nothing to show for it. What is there to see is that we have no proper accountability to see how monies...

MR. SPEAKER: Speak more into the microphone, Member, please. Speak more into the microphone because we need to record what you are saying.

HON. F. MARIN JR. (Corozal South East): Hello, good. It is sad, Mr. Speaker, that in the previous decade and in this current one, Belize should have benefitted from two different petroleum fund. The first is from our find in Spanish Lookout and the second from Petrocaribe. Both of these funds could have been utilized for great benefit to Belize, such as truly overhauling our education system

and our radical upgrading our highways and other projects just to mention a few. From the first fund it is utilized in the general fund to help maintain the government to meet its yearly expenditures. Why, because this government after eight years, has no new industry, no new foreign direct investment from which jobs are created and revenues garnered that. We have no new significant source of sustainable revenue to bolster of this budget were it not for these two funds. From the Petrocaribe, it seems that the government seems to be in a hurry to spend it all. I guess because they feel that they will not get their third mandate. The issue is that no proper accounting for these expenditures that are being presented to the Belizean people to see that they are getting value for money. Mr. Speaker, Belizeans are not feeling the rolling out of Petrocaribe. Last year government boasted of the liquidity in the banks, one does not hear them speak of that again because we all know that banks needs to lend money to operate. Too much liquidity in the system is a sign of an economy not moving, there is no boast of that this year, Mr. Speaker.

In the previous budget, let me just go to my area, one of the thing that I fault, I see a lot of things missing out from my area, Mr. Speaker. Where, again, in this eight year how the PUP left it it's how the government has it. One of the first things, Mr. Speaker, is that I think the government is failing to realize that even in Corozal South East, they have supporters, like my good friend from Belize Rural South, would know. They have supporters so one would feel that they would at least help this area. Under the accompanying measure for sugar, we are getting word that the Buena Vista to Caledonia road which should have been paid has been cancelled. And we hearing that it's being move to my friend from Corozal North to Patchakan. Might I remind this government that this village is a UDP supporting village, they are cutting their nose to spite their face. Progreceños are still waiting for the fixing of the sugar roads and not to mention at least not to mention the road from San Estevan to Progreso. This road should have been paved now, eight years now, and we still can't get it paved as yet. As I mentioned last year, Mr. Speaker, this is the most surveyed road in the country and nothing has happened as yet.

In the village of Chunox, another UDP supporting village, there is no room for village expansion anymore. All the land grabbing by cronies of this government have left no room for village expansion; as well as there hasn't been an electricity expansion long needed for this village. Remember this is another UDP supporting village in my area, Mr. Speaker. As well, Mr. Speaker, the reverse osmosis system that we have in there, the reverse osmosis is not working anymore we still have pumping water but with the reverse osmosis, Mr. Speaker, it is essential because this water is not safe for drinking. And I believe, that the government need to put serious effort into fixing this reverse osmosis system as well, as put in a polyclinic in the area of Chunox. The remoteness of this village puts a strain on the village to access proper healthcare facilities. Mr. Speaker, if I didn't mention it last year in my budget presentation, I believe this government would have not moved on fixing up the water system in Sartaneja and for that I have no qualms in thanking them for that aspect. But I do want to ask the governments intervention whoever is the minister that deals with water boards that for them to please take consideration of the schools right now they are overcharging the school an exorbitant bill for water, of which the school didn't consume it during the summer or Christmas holidays but somehow there is an exorbitant bill. I want to ask this government and the minister or whoever is in charge to consider writing off this bill because the school clearly is short of funds and the money would go for much more important stuff.

The village of Cooper Bank still needs potable water and this was in the last PUP budget as arrangements were already in place along with the system

from Caye Caulker. In Cooper Bank as well, Mr. Speaker, the duly elected village council is being bypassed for land issues. One, Nelma Cano, from Progreso Village is conducting meeting about land for the garbage disposal, with complete disregard for the elected village council. And I might remind this government is a mixed village council, not even their own they seem to respect. As for the other villages, Mr. Speaker, like in Sarteneja, Ranchito, Progreso, and San Joaquin, we are not getting any electricity expansion in these villages. I remember one of the arguments for nationalizing BEL was that this would make it easier; we have had none in this area. I think sometimes maybe I speaking like a song, Mr. Speaker, or repeating what I said last year, but again, Calcutta, Progreso, and Caledonia needs some extra classrooms nothing of it is accounted for in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, the next thing too that I want to talk about is the issue of the NHI. How comes Corozal South East, is not participating in it? I don't agree in any which way, that this program should be use politically. All of Corozal South East must be participating in this program (Applause) especially because of the remoteness of it. It is the biggest division in the Corozal District and the villages are not close from the main municipality. Mr. Speaker, in Sarteneja Village, the government has seemed to have abandoned the health clinic. Since before last year's Christmas there is no assigned doctor for the health clinic. This, again, in Sarteneja, this creates undue hardship for this village. Only a few years ago, Belizeans from all over use to travel to this district in search for jobs, Mr. Speaker, sadly that has changed and the people from Corozal have to travel now out district for work. Remember we have been relegated to the second poorest district in the nation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a little comment on the sugar industry. I won't say much on this industry, Mr. Speaker, because the emotions would run too high, but I think one word would describe what happened in this industry, betrayal. It is been a pattern, Mr. Speaker, from the time I believe where you witnessed when a Belizean was murdered, Mr. Speaker, from then no support the government gave to the sugarcane farmers. They got no support when they ask for help in the froghopper. When the Banco Atlántico deal was there and the farmers raised the money, the government moved the goal post. Mr. Speaker, the farmers came together and everybody supported the ASR/BSI deal. All the farmers had asked was to get the same exemptions and tax breaks that the factory have gotten. This they did not get. And now, we are where we are in this industry, Mr. Speaker. And like I said I won't belabor this point, but I can only assure you guys, that we will clear all of these issues up in here. We will clear all of these issues when the People's United Party forms the next government. Hope is on the way for the sugar industry, (Applause) and hope is coming in the name Francis Fonseca, who will be the next Prime Minister. He will be sitting right there when the government call elections. I suggest you mind your sweet, Belize Rural South, you might not come here, you know.

Also, Mr. Speaker, a little bit on the natural resources. First of all, we don't know if it was strategically timed or what, but we saw some breaking news in the week talking about land fraud. Supposedly, there are people falsifying land documents and that there will be zero tolerance in this ministry. However, Mr. Speaker, it has come to our attention that perhaps some fraudulent actions are happening in this ministry described as the 'hot bed of corruption' by none other than the Prime Minister with collaborators of this government. In previous presentation, Mr. Speaker, I spoke of one, Miguel Ortiz, who I cannot find in Progreso, who in the course of one month in November 2011 got a land that was taken away from Antonio Patt from Chunox. This guy is lucky, he got his lease and title, and sold this land in the span of one month. We all remember, Mr. Speaker, the famous millionaire for a day. Do you remember that he is from San

Pedro, a poor guy whose name was used to take away a piece of land, and so sadly the man didn't get anything for the sale of it. As well, Mr. Speaker, we remember last year, sadly, when Mr. Ramon Cervantes was murdered, curiously some land issue about Goff Caye came up with supposedly of someone with the same name. These actions, Mr. Speaker, which are just a few, speaks to the real fraud that is going in this 'hot bed of corruption' ministry. Belizeans so much so that Belizeans are frustrated that some of them are taking it to themselves to just squat on land because they cannot get the documents, they cannot get the ministry moving for them.

Mr. Speaker, in referring to some of the numbers in the budget like on page 196 in the CAP. II section as in all of the years the government keeps underutilizing these important some sums of money by not spending about 40% of approved estimates from last year's appropriations. The approval was for \$217,000.00 and only spent was \$131,000.00. In these particular line items, Mr. Speaker, these are critical investments that are usually made from outside financing. Year in year out, I pointed out to this government and they keep underutilizing CAP.II. People complain of the slowness of the land ministry perhaps this proper utilization of these funds would speed up the ministry.

Continuing, Mr. Speaker, when you look at surveys and mapping, they had approved \$500,000.00 they only spent \$311,000.00 statistical collection and analysis, they had approved \$175,000.00 only \$114,000.00 was spent, land policy development \$65,000.00 only \$32,500 was spent; land filling \$100,000.00, only \$30,000.00 was spent. These add up to a total of \$409,000.00 underutilized funds in this ministry; functions that we believe would greatly facilitate the speeding up of the services of this ministry. But, again, Mr. Speaker, CAP II there are also funds that are overspent. What jumps out immediately on page 111 under the strategic management and administration is the whopping money spent on land development "Acquisition". This is where monies are paid to those who need to be compensated for the land acquisition or is made to give back to the government. Over the course of this government we have heard in the news many well connected UDPs who have been compensated.

The original budget was for \$10.5 million but spent was \$14.06 million. This is \$3.5 million more than previously budgeted, which makes a whopping increase of 33% than the original budget. From the looks of it, Mr. Speaker, looking at what is budgeted this year, and what is forecasted, it seems that this government, at least in this area, plan to keep continuing with business as usual. On page 110, Mr. Speaker, comparing the overall numbers of the strategic management and administration at line items 056, one can see that in general it is land compensation payments that explains why this item originally budgeted at \$15.4 million the estimates are revised upward to \$18.9 million a difference of \$3.5 million. yearly, this number is similar to the \$3.5 million that is paid out in the line item for land development "acquisitions".

The next item to consider, Mr. Speaker, is the item of Wages and Un-established staff. For some reason the presentation of the estimates from last fiscal year to this fiscal year has changed as last year these wages un-established staff were itemized by the different administration center throughout the country. This year it seems to be all lumped up into one account under strategic management and administration. However, not to be discouraged, in my presentation last year, I totaled up all the un-established staff for \$810,282.00. This number could be a type error, but it contradicts this budget year estimate for \$1.1 million. There is need to explain that, Mr. Speaker. However, on page 111 of this year's document, the amount spent on wages un-established staff was only \$276,486.00 we might say well, alright they are saving, the money for it. However, if you look up on the

line items at the top. I know you like to tend to follow these, its page 111, Mr. Speaker, one can explain this discrepancy. Budgeted in salaries last year, was only \$1.6 million and spent \$2.6 million, a difference of \$1 million. These are huge anomalies in the budget, Mr. Speaker, from one item going down to another going up significantly. It may seem that these unestablished staff has become salaried staff in the Ministry and according to the numbers presented on page 111, it seems that it is well forecasted that this bill will continue again because they have it for \$1.1 million for the next year, and \$1.1 million forecasted for the year after that. Mr. Speaker, I believe that a good forensic auditor, I don't know if he would have fun in seeing all the discrepancies in this ministry or would it be a night mare going through all that is happening in this ministry.

And one last thing, Mr. Speaker, not to get too personal because it should not be but it is a serious issue that needs to be addressed because it deals with a school that I support in Sartaneja. The government and my purported opponent in their haste in trying to score political capital issued a lease to a school. The problem now, and because it is a problem it has come to me, is that this same property has a deed of mortgage at one of our financial institutions. So, clearly someone is not doing their homework at this ministry for a lease to be issued out when there is a deed of mortgage in the bank. This issue I appeal must be cleared up by this ministry, no politics in it, it has to be clear up. I want to see this school succeed in Sartaneja.

Mr. Speaker, in closing off as I have tried to show in the Ministry of Natural Resources, the issue with lands as you can see I have looked at all the anomalies and the discrepancies of it, Mr. Speaker, as well as speaking a little bit about the sugar industry which like I said, its summed up in one word and as my friend from Corozal South West last year mentioned, there is nothing in this budget for South West he said; well there is nothing in this budget South East, Mr. Speaker. I cannot support this budget, but I want to tell the Belizean people that hope is along the way. The PUP will win at the next general elections and Francis Fonseca will be the next Prime Minister. Thank you. (Applause)

HON. R. MONTERO (Minister of Works and Transport): Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would refer to my notes. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this year's budget. During the current fiscal year 2014/2015, aggressive efforts through substantial investment in rural infrastructure were targeted to principally enhance movement of goods and people, improve connectivity, enhance roads user safety, and build more resilience in our road system to guard against damaging effects from natural disasters. These investments in road infrastructure have been equitable distributed across the country at strategic and vulnerable areas over the entire road network. Mr. Speaker, in fiscal 2014/2015, road maintenance disbursement amount to \$14 million and additional allocation of \$2.375 million for restoration of sugar roads in Orange Walk and Corozal Districts, \$24.89 million for public roads and \$7.24 for municipalities. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Works and Transport as per its mission statement is responsible for the maintenance of 2,806.1 miles of public roads, and of this total 400 miles are paved, 1,960 are gravel roads, and 206 miles are simply earth roads. As an integral part of the road infrastructure we have approximately 300 bridges of various spans ranging from 14 feet to over 500 feet. Despite the many challenges with equipment and financial resources available to us, the Ministry of Works team has once again, during fiscal year 2014/2015, done a stellar performance.

The ministry was strategic in terms of its intervention addressing maintenance needs in a timely manner to ensure adequate access and satisfactory riding quality. You see, Mr. Speaker, road maintenance impacts all of us. From

the hard working farmer who needs to transport his produce to the day highway users who travel the roads for business and social recreations. I, therefore applaud the 342 men and women who have together made the Ministry of Works proud with their hard work and sterling efforts in the upkeep of the 2,806.1 miles of roads throughout Belize. In the Corozal District, the Corozal maintenance team opened surface 1,600 of feet of new road in Sarteneja Village, installed and replaced 40 culverts over 549 miles of its road network, placed 48 loads of premix on the 27 miles section of highway in the Corozal District. Special emphasis was placed on 272 miles of sugar roads where \$1.1 million was recently invested to ensure adequate access for a successful sugar crop. One mile section of boulevard, 7th Avenue in Corozal passes right through the center of town has been concrete paved at a cost of \$4 million. Mr. Speaker, I hate to state the obvious but the work in Corozal has not only beautified the community but has also created much needed jobs. In Orange walk, an aggressive effort throughout the fiscal year was noted resulting in a significant number of streets and farm roads being resurfaced with suitable marl and 150 units of culvert to address drainage problems were addressed over its 575 miles of road ways. Special emphasis was placed on the sugar roads where as in Corozal \$1.3 million was invested to ensure a successful sugar crop. The team maintenance also completed new San Roman Bridge and road approaches thus removing the load restriction which existed on the old San Roman Bridge. This, Mr. Speaker, is only possible under our Prime Minister Dean Oliver Barrow and a UDP Government.

Two miles of a proposed total of four miles on the Philip Goldson Highway that stretches through the heart of Orange Walk Town was rehabilitated with hot mix Asphalt. Phase one of this project was at a cost of \$1.6 million while phase 2 at a cost of \$2.2 million. Also in the vicinity, a 1.2 miles section of the San Antonio Road between the fire station and bridge at a cost of \$2.3 million is near completion. Mr. Speaker, it is because of the commitment and dedication of the UDP Government that the people of Orange Walk are seeing millions upon millions of dollars being spent to uplift their town in an accountable and proper way. Mr. Speaker, when money is spent the right way the end result is progress and you can take that to the bank.

In Belize District, the Old Northern Highway from its intersection with the Philip Goldson Highway and proceeding 5 miles in the direction of Maskall was rehabilitated with asphaltic concrete cement at a cost of \$3.5 million. Efforts were also step up to improve road conditions in San Pedro and Caye Caulker. In the north side of Ambergris Caye there has been construction of 3 miles of rigid pavement at a cost of \$3.4 million. Additionally, 3 miles of new road construction has been approved at a cost of \$4.5 million.

In the Cayo District much efforts was placed in up keeping roads in both towns and rural areas. In Santa Elena, the new Hill View Boulevard linking George Price Highway and Hill View was opened and surfaced thus provided a much needed a more accessible road to the resident of that area. The Bishop Martin Orchid and Perris Street were cemented and Mariana Gonzalez was paved. The Loma Luz Boulevard has been paved and modern street lights have been installed. Additionally, eight miles of street were resurfaced with process in materials, 300 lineal feet of drainage channels and excavated and cleaned. Also, five units of 48 inches diameter culverts were installed for drainage improvement in that municipality. Mr. Speaker, much more needs to be done in Santa Elena and with the support of our Prime Minister, we will continue to roll it. In San Ignacio, 3 miles of streets are being resurfaced with clutch all in and cleaning of 2,000 linear feet of drainage for drainage improvement. In Benque Viejo, Jose Martin, Nazarene, Howard Smith, and a section of Guerra Street were cemented. Furthermore, there was a substantial completion of concrete paving of Hudson

Lane, Caracol, Guerra, Victoria, and Columbus Street. In the villages, 8 miles of village, street in San Antonio, Cristo Rey, Bullet Tree, and Buena Vista were resurfaced. Twenty farm roads in various villages and communities was spot patched to improved access for farmers and villagers and 40 culverts of various sizes were installed over its 551 miles of road ways. Several small sections of the George Price Highway were rehabilitated and a 1.4 mile section has its second application of chip and seal applied. The Buena Vista Bridge was rebuilt and a new La Gracia Bridge is under construction. All these efforts are invested to build more resilience in the rural communities in the Cayo District. Other major maintenance work in Cayo District include the application of a second layer of chip and seal complimented with drain improvement works on a 1.4 mile section on the George Price Highway through Camalote Village. The rehabilitation of 3 section totally .85 miles on the Hummingbird Highway, specifically near Alta Vista Village and between the National Bank in Belmopan, and the roundabout entering Belmopan at a cost of \$1.5 million. The construction of a concrete line drainage channel in Roaring Creek Village to provide flood relieve to the residents of Roaring Creek at a cost of \$168,000.00

In the Stann Creek District much drainage work involving excavating of 300 additional feet of drainage channels and installation of 67 units of culverts were installed throughout the 474 miles of road ways in the Stann Creek District. A total of 32 streets in Dangriga and 10 miles of roads in the rural communities were upgraded to make access more satisfactory to the public. Additionally, 45 miles of village and farm roads was spot patched. A new bridge is under construction in Red Creek Village and 3 additional wooden bridges in the rural areas have been rebuilt. In the Toledo District, roads in Toledo were also greatly improved, 80 culverts were installed to build resilience over its 374 miles of road way. Over \$800,000.00 recently spent on resurface streets, clean drains, and install culverts in Punta Gorda. And in Crique Sarco, a new bridge is under construction providing full vehicular and pedestrian road access for the first time to the resident of Crique Sarco Village. In Dangriga, there was concrete paving of La Isla Road, Church Street and section of Benguche Street as well as Ramos road and completion of the Ecumenical Drive. A further \$630,000.00 was invested in drainage improvement and resurfacing of 30 streets in Dangriga. In Punta Gorda, there was concrete paving of West Street and substantial completion of Olivia Centino and Cayo Streets.

Mr. Speaker, our government has heeded the cries of the people in rural communities and has budgeted \$12 million under the National Road Infrastructure Program specifically to improve the conditions of village roads, village streets and farm; to address the concern and needs of all Belizeans in the rural communities; especially Toledo West. Given the aggressive efforts of substantial investment in road infrastructure, any government with prudent fiscal management in mind understand and accepts that sustainability must be considered in the equation of fiscal management when using the people's money. In this regards, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Work and Transport, establish a dedicated road maintenance unit with the primary responsibility of planning and programming of road maintenance, as well as conducting extensive field surveys to determine the extent of back log maintenance. Coupled with this local initiative, the CDB is complimenting our efforts by funding and institutional study which will provide the practical recommendations on reforming the current legislation and practices in respect to road maintenance and road management in Belize. This is testament to a strong result and determination to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of road maintenance, to raise the quality and standard of road maintenance to a level which is acceptable to all Belizeans. This collaboration with the CDB, Mr. Speaker, is also testament of the confidence and the trust international funding agency have in the Government of Belize, a UDP Government that is honest,

transparent and working the money not stealing it.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Works and Transport, has noted a 15% reduction in road traffic fatalities for 2014 and we are convinced that the enhance vigilance of the Department of Transport, the police and accommodate the needs of the growing modernization of our society and creating the enable environment for future growth of our economy. Mr. Speaker, never before have we seen such development in our road infrastructure throughout the length and breadth of this country for which the people of Belize showed their appreciation by their unanimous support in the recent municipal elections. Mr. Speaker, the UDP records has showed excellency in putting the people's money to use, the right proper and accountable way. Mr. Speaker, this UDP Government has spent and will continue to spend millions and millions and tens of millions, for the development and transformation of our country. My team and I at the Ministry of Works and Transport are proud to be part of this development and transformation. Mr. Speaker, I fully support this 2015/2016 budget, because it addresses the needs of all Belizeans. A government for all under the leadership of our Right Honourable Dean Barrow. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, given the time, I hereby suspend the meeting until 9:00 A.M tomorrow.

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