



Feature Address

By

Senator the Honourable Conrad Enill
Minister of Energy and Energy Industries

At the

**Celebrating Excellence in La Brea
Constituency Awards and Dinner**

Vessigny Government Secondary School

La Brea

Saturday 7th November 2009

Mr. Andy Johnson, Master of Ceremonies;

The Honourable Fitzgerald Jeffrey, Member of Parliament for La Brea and other Members of Parliament;

Brigadier Edmund Dillon, Chief of the Defense Staff;

James Philbert Agt. Commissioner of Police;

Ashford Sankar, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Agriculture;

Awardees;

Specially invited guests;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Evening.

I am delighted to be able once again to address a group of constituents and citizens, who by hard work, dedication and sheer determination have been able to produce the results that we celebrate tonight. It has been said and generally accepted that the quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of Endeavour.

This person must have been from La Brea because our awardees represent the best that is Trinidad and Tobago from:

- religion to medicine
- law enforcement to politics
- from ordinary to extra ordinary.

All of us, united, because we have chosen to be examples of positives rather than negative conversations, in a sense we have chosen to do excellent work.

To those whom we honor tonight you will realize that this is just the beginning, because you are yet to unleash the full potential of your talents and creativity, and when this happens, you will be making your own special contribution to the development of our twin island Republic, like many of our distinguished leaders have done.

You've only just begun to discover the depth and breadth of your vast capabilities. And in this journey, you are not alone.

You are at the centre of this Government's vision for our nation. It was a short eight (8) years ago we articulated a vision that would see us achieving developed nation status by the year 2020.

What was stated was very simple. It was a commitment to doing whatever it took to make things better. In 2001, the Government launched its plan for developing Trinidad and Tobago. In this plan the hope was that our resources would be shared in a manner to benefit most of the people.

The focus of the first five years was Education, Health, Housing, Social Services and National Security.

This term it is Infrastructure. But after eight years in office what are the facts. Let me warn you that for you to evaluate something you must be able to measure it, if you can measure it, then you can improve it. So let's measure some things.

A society, any society can determine whether it is going forward or going backwards by the direction of the results.

	2001	2008
<u>Real Sector Fundamentals</u>		
	Million of TT\$	
Gross Domestic Product	55.007	163.325
Unemployment Rate	10.8%	4.6%
Gross National Savings	\$13,316.8	61,491
<u>Debt Sustainability</u>		
	As % of GDP	
Total Public Sector Debt/GDP	56.9	24.3
Public Sector External Debt/GDP	18.7	5.7
<u>External Viability</u>		
	Million of US\$	
Private FDI	777	1,858
Reserves	1,876	9,380
Months of import cover	5.6 mths.	11.5 mths.

These statistics paint a picture, one which says we're not doing too badly. These statistics tell us where the money was used; it was used in the development of people.

Let's see why I can say this:-

1. **Wages and salaries** from approximately TT\$3.6billion to TT\$6.9 billion.
2. **Household social services** from roughly TT\$3.9 billion to TT\$10.9 billion. This includes spending to improve education, health, development of small and micro enterprises and other social services.
3. **Poverty Reduction**
From 35% to 17.4% a decrease of 50.3 %.

Today Trinidad and Tobago is known as the largest exporter of methanol and ammonia from a single site, the largest exporter of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to the United States, an adult literacy rate of 98.6% and a Gross National Income (GNI) Per Capita of US\$14,480, which places us squarely among the high income earning countries of the world.

How did this happen? All of us are beneficiaries of the policy, decisions of the present and past Governments.

The major discussion today in this community is of course Governments' intention to develop an Aluminum Industry, which is being handled by Alutrint.

Dr. Eric Williams in 1976 made the following statement:

"There have been attempts to persuade us that the simplest and easiest thing to do would be to sit back export our oil, export our gas, do nothing else and just receive the revenues derived from such exports and as it were, lead a life of luxury – at least for some limited period. This, the Government has completely rejected, for it amounts to putting the entire nation on the dole. Instead we have taken what may be the more difficult road that is, accepting the challenge of entering the world of steel, aluminum, methanol, fertilizer, petrochemicals. We have accepted the challenge of using our hydrocarbon resources in a very definite industrialization process."

Today we have the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, with its various gas-based industries and its impressive infrastructure, including the improvement of the Port of PLIPDECO and upgrades in:

- Electricity generation;
- Water supply;

- Telecommunication system;
- Roads;
- A pipeline system for the transport of natural gas; and
- Harbour facilities in support of the heavy petrochemical and metals-based industries.

Point Lisas illustrates, that it is possible to succeed where others have failed. Today while others have little choice, we have a few options. The continuation of the Governments policy has now brought to us to our next stage of development, we have selected to do this in the south western Peninsula and more specifically, in the communities in and around the Union Industrial Estate in La Brea.

Data from our Central Statistical Office (CSO) confirm that, areas around the Point Lisas Estate have a lower rate of unemployment, lower even than the national average. This can be directly linked to the creation of direct and indirect jobs, as the industrial estate expanded. In 2003, the rate of unemployment in Caroni was 8% when compared to the national average of 10.5%. Whereas the district of St. Patrick recorded an unemployment rate of 13.4%, that is 3.1% above the national average and 5.4% above the rate in central Trinidad.

Again, the 2005 Survey of Living Conditions for Trinidad and Tobago shows the Borough of Point Fortin among the regional corporations with the highest prevalence of poverty, some 24.6%.

It seems appropriate therefore that the selection of this area of Trinidad will not only have an economic benefit but also a social one. We intend to use our resources in a manner that secures for the people, and future generations a better quality of life, while preserving our environment.

The same industrial expansion model that has generated considerable social and economic development within communities surrounding Point Lisas, is being replicated in La Brea and environs. The people of La Brea are entitled to enjoy the benefits of industrialization, just as other communities are doing.

We are therefore approaching in a serious and systematic manner, the establishment of an aluminium industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

There have been earlier attempts including a 1998 Agreement signed by the Government at the time, to build an aluminium smelter in Couva.

Today, we are pursuing the establishment of an indigenous aluminium industry, because we are convinced that this will bring very significant benefits to La Brea and the national community. Aluminium is used in a wide variety of manufacturing activities, from household goods to transportation and from the airline industry to the pharmaceutical industries.

The establishment of an aluminium industry therefore, presents excellent prospects for greater industrialization, economic diversification, technology transfer, wealth generation and the creation of sustainable jobs in Trinidad and Tobago.

But as is the case for modern Trinidad and Tobago sometimes the facts are hidden, so let me restate some facts.

1. Health:

It is a fact that modern smelters like the one planned for La Brea have no recorded incidents of adverse health effects in the communities that host them. This includes any risk for cancer or fluorosis. We are ensuring that our industry is employing international best practice standards in the conduct of its business to ensure the health and safety of both their workers and those who live in the host community.

The technology to be utilized, will convert aluminium oxide into aluminium based on an electrolytic reduction process, using the pre-baked anode technology. This technology, along with the work procedures at the Plant, will ensure that more than 98% of all fluoride emissions will be captured and recycled, before they are released into the air. The Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment has advised that the data indicates that cancer is not an issue in this discussion.

Disposal of hazardous waste:

It is a fact that the electrolytic production of aluminum is undertaken in large smelters containing carbon-lined pots in which carbon acts as the cathode. Eventually, the pot lining is incapable of performing electrically and an industrial waste product with some hazardous material is created. Like any other industrial waste, planning and management will enable the proper and safe disposal of solid waste residue.

Canada a developed society , have successfully exported the spent pot lining from the aluminium smelting process, while Brazil, has been able to successfully convert it into a valuable product for inclusion into their cement industry. We intend to follow the Canadian option in the first instance.

3. Alternative use of our gas resources:

An aluminium industry is intended to allow resources to be available for the development of support and related industries whose ownership will be the people of the communities.

This is so because it will create avenues for entrepreneurship and technological development, as all of the output will remain in the country for the development of local downstream activity. This project will create employment opportunities, for those who are now unemployed with the requisite attitude towards work.

The intention is that virtually all of the plants output will ultimately be converted within Trinidad into downstream value added products,such as rods.But rods can be used for other things so that we can see the business opportunities of this approach intended to have ordinary people involved.

This approach will therefore generate downstream businesses requiring investment on a scale that would be quite attractive to the local entrepreneur.

My question is , are we preparing to be part of this or are we busy focussing on other peoples agendas. If we do not grab these opportunities, generations could be challenged.

We have demonstrated that it is possible for our people to create and innovate; the LABIDCO fabrication yard is a case in point. Local entrepreneurs and local talent have, to date, fabricated eight (8) offshore platforms, with another three (3) planned for the near future.

And now let us look at our history, La Brea it is said is the undisputed birth place of our petroleum industry- beginning with the first attempt to find oil in 1875 by the Merrimac Company, in the vicinity of the world famous Pitch Lake. Though oil in commercial quantities was not discovered before 1908, history tells us that La Brea was the unofficial industrial capital of Trinidad and Tobago.

This was the home to our early oil refineries and asphalt mining facilities.

Commercial activity in the area declined when the multinationals, simply left as global oil fortunes changed in the early 1940's.

The Union Industrial Estate brings with it, opportunities for direct and indirect employment, and business enterprise in support of its main operations.

A highly skilled, talented and knowledgeable workforce, capable of laying hold of the new opportunities that are soon to be evident, is the requirement for this new industry.

These opportunities will require a solid educational foundation, in order for you to be able to acquire the specific skills that the new technologies will require, or to put another way for you to participate in a knowledge based society.

There should be no difficulty for anyone in La Brea or indeed in Trinidad and Tobago because your government in thinking things through have supported the National Energy Skills Centre (NESC) and the Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme (MUST), two interventions which deals with the challenge.

I therefore take this opportunity to congratulate each and every award recipient. It is my sincere wish that the examples that you have set, will stand before the next generation of Youth in Trinidad and Tobago in general and in La Brea in particular. The choice is yours.

Thank you.