

THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1981-86

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, December 6, 1983.

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 12.15 p.m. o'clock.

PRESENT

His Honour C. L. Bolden, LL.B., (Deputy Speaker)
Hon. L. S. Craig, (Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House)
Hon. H. B. St. John, Q.C., LL.B., (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry)
Hon. Miss B. A. Miller, (Minister of Education)
Hon. L. B. Brathwaite, (Minister of Housing and Lands)
Mr. J. G. Odle, B.Sc., (Chairman of Committees)
Hon. V. L. Johnson, M.A., (Minister of Transport and Works)
Mr. L. L. Sisnett, (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Tourism)
Hon. Dr. R. L. Cheltenham, M.A., M.Sc., (Econ.), (Minister of Agriculture, Food & Consumer Affairs)
Mr. R. E. Brathwaite
Mr. A. Truss
Prayers were read by Archdeacon F. A. Cayless.
Mr. B. M. TAITT and Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN entered the Chamber and took their seats.

MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of the Meeting of Tuesday, November 29, 1983.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the Meeting of Tuesday, November 29, 1983 be taken as read.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If there are no objections or observations, let the Minutes stand confirmed.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to give notice of the following:

A Resolution to approve the guarantee by the Minister responsible for Finance of the payment of the principal and of interest necessary for the redemption of the bond issue in the sum of \$10 000 000 under the Sugar Industry (Support Prices) Act, 1982.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, last week I laid the Annual Report and Accounts of the Barbados National Bank for the year 1982.

"The Report shows that despite the fact that the year 1982 was an unfavourable one for the Barbadian economy, and indeed economies beyond Barbados, the Barbados National Bank was able to reverse the trend of the first four years of its operations by recording a small profit. As can be seen from the Financial Statement, after having made a provision of \$669,000 for the new Tax on Assets for the years 1981 and 1982, and a further provision of \$2 million against loan losses the Barbados National Bank recorded a consolidated profit of \$191,000.00.

"During the year 1982 the administrative structure of the Bank was improved. The functions of Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer were separated. The Chairman of the Board is now a non-executive Director and the Chief Executive Officer who is now designated Managing Director also sits on the Board. The Committees of the Board have been reorganised to allow for greater participation by Directors.

"As you examine the report you will notice that the general economic environment prevailing was reflected in the activities of the Bank. The Agricultural Sector disbursed approximately \$1.5 million less than the year before when a total of \$26.5 million was disbursed. This disbursement emphasises the importance of the Sugar Industry as the major portion of that amount went into sugar. However loans for agricultural projects were almost double the previous year's figure of \$1.2 million.

"Restrictions on credit to the personal and distributive sectors posed challenges to the Commercial Division and loans grew by only 14.8% as compared with 41% in 1981. Deposits continued to grow during this period, albeit at a slower rate, with the exception of time deposits which showed a remarkable growth and at the end of the year were \$16.5 million higher than at the beginning.

"The assets of the Trust division increased by over 100% during this period, but the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company Limited found difficulty in raising funds, and consequently was unable to service as many loan applications as the year before."

It is hoped, Mr. Deputy Speaker and honourable Members, that the present trend, as outlined in this Statement, will continue.

Thank you.

Applause.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES and Mr. N. K. SIMMONS entered the Chamber and took their seats.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to move that Government Business be now the Instant Order of the day.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Government Business is now the Instant Order of the day.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move, Sir, that Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of today's sitting.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Order No. 1 was called – To move that the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the grant of sums of money for the service of this Island.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN entered the Chamber and took his seat.

On the motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. J. G. ODLE in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee of Supply.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1983–84 No. 12 – \$663 949

Head 13 – Services Commission.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to move, Sir, that Head 13 stand part.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 15 – CABINET OFFICE

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to move, Sir, that Head 15 do now stand part.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.
12.25 p.m.

HEAD 25 – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to move that Head 25 stand part.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: I beg to second that.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES (St. Michael South Central): Head 25, Subhead 1, Item 5 has an amount of \$8,400 to meet travel for staff of the Agricultural Credit Bank in the collection of the delinquent accounts.

Mr. Chairman, I am very concerned about what has happened to persons who are interested in agriculture and who, with the transfer of the agricultural portfolio to the Barbados National Bank, have found themselves in a situation where their collateral for borrowing has remained tied up with an institution which formerly provided the credit. Indeed Sir, they are not in a position to use their collateral, which is usually their half acre of land, and probably the home on it, in order to obtain further loans until they have met their obligations under their previous arrangements.

This is not in the interest of promoting more farming and a more viable small farming unit in this country, which is essential not only if the Government should meet its target in sugar production, but equally important if the people of Barbados should be able to provide more food for themselves.

It is my understanding that those accounts have, by and large, been less delinquent than the much larger accounts which were previously held by the Sugar Industry Agricultural Bank and transferred to the Barbados National Bank.

It is also my understanding that, in the first two or three years, when an officer was assigned largely for the purpose of collecting money from that money that was loaned out under the previous lending institution, that the intake was very good. I think a figure of something like \$3 million was collected in one year. In fact, instead of being plugged back into the small farming sector, there was one particular year when that went for lending to the larger estates in this country.

I believe that the time has come when we have to look at the criteria for lending to the small farmers. We have a situation in Barbados where we follow the traditional lending, that is, that a man must have X amount of property in order to borrow X amount of money to pursue an agricultural career. But when you look at a detailed analysis of the various activities in the small farming sector, you would find that some of the most efficient farmers in this country are, in fact, landless and without collateral. There are many people who have been raising cattle and sheep for years, many people have been renting a piece of land, many people who have been occupying a piece of tenantry land and producing over 10 or 15 years, but cannot expand their production, because they cannot have excess credit, because of the criteria used by the lending institutions of Barbados.

It has been long recognised that in any agricultural lending institution involved in agriculture, particularly in relation to small farmers, it is essential that that institution has extension officers, not only for the collection of money, but also for the assessment of credit worthi-

ness on different sorts of criteria — criteria such as knowledge, liability and the track record of the individual. Unless this is done in Barbados, you will always find that any policy which will seek to integrate the small farmer into the overall agricultural production unit of Barbados will, nevertheless, be unsuccessful.

I do not propose to deal with matters that are not vital to this particular Resolution, such as marketing. I am dealing specifically with the area of credit, collection and criteria for the extension of credit.

Another very sad thing is that we find in Barbados today that the actual credit needs of the small farming unit are not being met. I think if you will review the past five and six years, you will probably find that the total credit extended to the small farming sector was approximately 15 to 20 per cent of what it really should be, when you correct for inflation over that period of time.

There have been some excellent objective studies done on this. I am not talking about studies coming out of the Ministry of Agriculture. I am talking about studies emanating from academic sources, and I believe that one of those studies might well be the subject of an important thesis which has been accepted elsewhere, if my information is correct, a very detailed scientific study on the credit needs and credit evaluation of the small farming unit in Barbados.

So I will urge upon the Government, once again, to look very carefully and see what has happened to those farmers who were brutally and mercilessly cut off from credit with the change of the lending institution. When I made the call then, the only voice to rise on the floor of this House and support me, to point out that it was cruel, was the honourable Member for St. Andrew (Hon. L. B. Brathwaite), who supported the position that these people should have continued access to credit.

12.35 p.m.

When in the very first year of the transfer of that banking function only 22 accounts were taken over, then you will understand the extent to which the rest were left in limbo. When you recognise that \$3 million in repayments in one year were extracted from those who were left astray, you will realise the amount of money that was taken out of the small farmer system and has never been put back, to the best of my knowledge.

I would also urge that more attention be paid to getting money to the small farmer in a reasonable period of time. There is a seasonality in Barbados that is attached to all forms of agriculture, as far as I am aware, unless you are growing hedges or something like that. You plant canes at one time of the year and you reap them; you plant potatoes at one time, you plant cassava,

and very often you may find that when a small farmer has made a commitment to a particular crop and has made an application for a loan, by the time that loan is processed, then it is hardly of any use to him in relation of the particular crop. So the farmer may get two or three years' setback as a consequence of that.

Sir, I speak out of experience as a small farmer myself, and as someone who is constantly in touch with people who have these sorts of problems. I can speak for the small farming community and for the problems relating to credit.

I also think that there is a need for a different type of collection system for small farmers. Many small farmers do not receive salaries, say, like a man who is working in the Public Service and has a mortgage on his house, and who can go to the bank and say deduct X amount every month. The small farmer often does not have a chequing account. The small farmer often has transport problems in getting to town and so on. Therefore, the banking institution should have an extension service for collections that would service the needs of the small farmers and understand the seasonality and the variations in the cash flow of the small farmer.

It all boils down, in fact, to the ultimate need for a separate institution to deal with lending for agricultural purposes at all levels, because it is only in that context that you would develop a corps of expertise in the area of lending in agriculture which differs very significantly from the usual type of lending which is done by banking institutions. We would have avoided all the problems we had in relation to lending to the large sugar estates, and we might well have avoided the kind of problems that we have here in this Resolution for collections, or possibly the extraction of another \$8,400 from the small farming sector.

Their overall financing and credit needs should be looked at with the greatest degree of creativity, and understanding, that when you are dealing with small farmers, you are dealing with the most honest people in Barbados. The poorer you are in Barbados, generally speaking, the more honest you are when it comes to financial transactions. The experience of the Barbados National Bank and of the Agricultural Credit Bank would bear that out.

Poor people pay their bills. If they cannot pay them at a specific time they usually have the decency to say they cannot meet it this month, they will meet it next month. I believe that lots of the problems of delinquency might well relate to the insensitivity of the institutions in handling the problems of credit overall, and in particular the problem of collections.

Sir, I have tried to air one or two of the problems relating to the small farmers. I speak on behalf of a class of people to which I belong. I know what the problems are, and I hope that the Minister of Agriculture would not only indulge in rhetoric on the question of small farming, but seriously address himself to this question of an institution that is sensitive to the needs of the farming community. I invite him to get up on the Floor of the House and say that he disagrees with all his other colleagues, in that he believes and supports the view that there is a need for a separate banking institution to handle agriculture in Barbados, and that there is a need for a subdivision within that institution that caters for the specific and peculiar needs of the small farmer.

Thank you very much.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN (St. Philip South): Mr. Chairman, I am coming from a different angle altogether. My angle concerns the complaints of the small farmers, especially those in the parish of St. Philip.

Last year all the small farmers received levies on their tax bills. These farmers were of the opinion that these levies were placed on the tax bills to encourage them to cultivate their land. Most of these farmers went out and borrowed money, put themselves in a lot of debt, cultivated the land, only to see that this year the tax bills have come out with the levies on again, and in some cases the levies are higher. The impression was given that the levies were put on to get farmers to cultivate their land. Having cultivated their land, the levies are still on the tax bills, and these farmers are complaining.

This levy seems to be an across-the-board levy depending on the size of the plot that you have. It does not matter what type of land you have. I believe that the honourable Minister of Agriculture knows that in certain parts of Barbados there is land that is only capable of growing ground nuts. It is not vertical rock, but it is almost vertical rock, and I believe that the honourable Minister of Agriculture should get his extension officers, or some people from his Ministry, to go out and check on these different types of land. I believe there is some way in Barbados where you could know where land is good for cultivation of sugar cane or for other things.

I believe that the honourable Minister of Agriculture will discover that there are persons receiving levies of three and four hundred dollars who should be paid to cultivate their land, instead of being taxed after they have cultivated it. A perfect example of this is in Foul Bay, St. Philip. It is good for building houses on, not for growing anything other than nuts, and there are a lot of complaints coming in about this from that area.

Another complaint, Mr. Chairman, is this. Time was when people in St. Philip paid their taxes in St. Philip, and people in St. John paid theirs in St. John. Within the last year or year and a half, this has been changed, and these persons from St. Philip and St. John have to go to Oistins to pay their taxes. The reason given is that you are trying to computerise everything so you have to put everything in one place.

12.45 p.m.

If this is so, Mr. Chairman, I want to know how it is that farmers from St. Philip can go to Oistins in Christ Church, paying bus fares and all of that sort of thing, only to be told after querying the levy that they do not have the forms that you have to fill in; you have to go down to Cumberland Street for the forms. You cannot tell a person who is accustomed to paying his taxes in Four Roads or Six Roads to come to Oistins to pay it, and when he gets there you tell him you do not have the forms for him to use; he has to go to town now to get the forms. That is extra bus fare again. That is what is happening in Barbados, and that is another complaint that people are hearing.

There has been a lot of talk recently, within the last year or so, about agricultural development in Barbados. I have stated before, and I would state again, that if anyone tells me there has been agricultural growth, I will tend to agree, but I do not believe — I repeat, I do not believe — there has been any agricultural development.

In my view, agricultural development depends on how the people who depend on it for their living are benefitting from agriculture, and I do not believe that in the past few years those people who depend for their living on agriculture have been benefitting from agriculture.

Many agricultural plans have come out over the past number of years, all or most of them repeating what has been said before. I believe that the problem with most of the agricultural plans is that the people who put forward these plans do not seem to understand that agriculture is a special field.

I am sure neither one of us in this Honourable House of Assembly has ever heard about a sale in Bridgetown on fertilisers. I have never heard about anybody having a sale on fertilisers. You hear about a sale on other things, but you have never heard about a sale on any input into agriculture. That is why it is a special field.

Traditional subsidies and incentives that work in manufacture and those areas will not work in agriculture, because agriculture suffers from what, I believe, the economists call "a price cost squeeze." you have to take the prices on the demand side and you have to take what prices are given to you on the supply side.

When you are buying a tractor, you have to take the price that is stated. When you are selling what you produce, you have to take the prices that they give you, otherwise the people do not buy; and if it is perishable, you have to give it away or throw it away. That is why agriculture is so special and that is why it has to be treated in a special manner. Traditional subsidy policies will not work.

The traditional agricultural plans, I believe, Mr. Chairman, have tended to put the cart before the horse, because if you give farmers subsidies, or even incentives, and your marketing is not up to standard, no matter how much he produces, he will still be worse off after he has produced it if the marketing system is not up to standard than before the incentive was given. That is why I am saying that the honourable Minister of Agriculture needs to take a special look at agriculture, because it is a special field, and traditional policies will never work in agriculture as they have worked in other areas.

Thank you.

Mr. B. M. TAITT (St. Michael West): Mr. Chairman, I am looking at the same Head. I just wish to look at one aspect of the agricultural policy of this Government which is contributing to the difficulties which have been alluded to by my colleagues.

I think one of the most successful hoaxes performed in this country during the last few years has been the propaganda which has been put out concerning the Barbados Marketing Corporation. It has successfully been whittled down to almost nothing, and it has been so done while, at the same time, the propaganda machine has been putting forth that the Barbados Marketing Corporation is doing well. It has reduced considerably the number of persons who were able to benefit from the activities therein. And what it does now is what it was doing at the time when the Government came to power in 1976, which was abolished by one of the Ministers of Agriculture, which was swept away, and recently the present Minister of Agriculture has come around to some of the policies which they found in 1976.

I recall, Sir, that the Barbados Marketing Corporation had been divided into two divisions. One was the Development Division and the other was the Commercial Division. The Development Division, as I recall it, concerned itself with such matters as collection of produce. I recall that there were a number of stations around the country which were designed for the small farmer, especially to be able to get his produce to market.

I recall that there were a number of programmes, undertaken with assistance from other institutions, which allowed for a grading system to come as part of the

marketing of produce in Barbados, and the people in the agricultural sector of this country had started to become accustomed to proper grading and proper packaging.

I recall that the Development Division also made a number of inputs into experimentation with some of the products of Barbados into further processing and preserving produce. I recall that it was indicated that this was happening at some cost, that a profit was not being made, but, as the Minister of Agriculture has recently said, when you are looking at developments in agriculture *per se* you cannot always look to see whether there is a profit *per se* in the aiding agency.

If the Government is performing an aiding role, the Government cannot be seen to be making a profit *per se*. What the Government is doing, or ought to be doing, is providing a stimulus for the farmers, who are the ones who would be making some kind of profit from their activities.

But along came another Minister of Agriculture, and he changed that policy considerably. He moved away from the Development Division and, to all extents and purposes, closed it down. He then moved into the area of the commercial sector of the BMC, and BMC saw a new era where there was a high concentration on profit-making and the inclusion of a number of areas and sectors to assist in the profit-making. Thus we found that the BMC extended the agricultural base, quite correctly, from a technical point of view, found itself a duty-free shop at the airport selling rum and other liquors.
12.55 p.m.

You see, Sir, we had moved away from the aspect of the agricultural development that the Act which set up the Marketing Corporation had recited in its preambular and operative paragraph, and we had moved into other areas. And I have lived to hear a Minister of Agriculture saying that they went to the shop at the airport so that they could make some money to assist the other areas.

There are other people who had had other views as to why they went to the airport, but I myself am not concerned about the exact reason that has been given or deduced by any particular individual. What I am concerned with is the change in philosophy which could see a Government going and competing with the private sector to have a gift shop at the airport — well a duty-free shop; I am sorry, gift shop seems to create a problem, so let me say a duty-free shop at the airport — and at the same time we have a propaganda going, with the other side saying that it is a change towards the private sector. I want to suggest, Mr. Chairman, that competing at the airport with the duty-free shop is a greater incursion against the private sector than having an outlet for the produce of the farmers in Barbados at the BMC.

So what have we got? For all of the time that the Barbados Marketing Corporation had a supermarket — I will call it a supermarket — the supermarket always made a profit.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The supermarket always made a profit for the time that I know. The BMC as a whole might not have shown a profit at the bottom line, but the supermarket always made a profit. Suddenly propaganda started coming out that the BMC had no right in a supermarket, that the BMC ought not to be involved in the private sector, that the BMC was not to get involved in this kind of thing, that it was a matter for the private sector — and very slowly the whole system was whittled down.

If I may use an analogy, it was like a man who had agricultural land who wanted to sell it as building land, who allowed a certain amount of grass to grow on it over a period of time, and people came to assume that it was rab land. Then he applied for permission to subdivide on the basis that it is rab land, while underneath it is good agricultural land. That is what happened with the BMC supermarket!

Now, Sir, the same location, the same building has been transformed into a supermarket, and if you pass there on any given weekend, there are great numbers of people in this supermarket which has been properly promoted, that has spent a relatively small sum of money to provide the facilities which were envisaged as part of the policy for a commercial BMC. Food World is now where the BMC supermarket used to be, and Food World has been able to demonstrate to the public, utilising the same kind of building, the same approach that the Barbados Marketing Corporation used to utilise; Food World is now being projected as a fantastic supermarket by Food World.

My problem is not that we had four men weighing a pound of flour or any of these things. It is that there is a certain philosophic concept which has been allowed to go abroad in this country, that the Government is incapable of doing certain things and it does not matter, and what is unfortunate is that members of the Government allow themselves to succumb to this kind of propaganda, and as a result they exercise a death wish.

If one looks at a number of agencies in this country which have been efficiently run and efficiently run while under the ownership of Government, one does not have to go far to know that this running down of the philosophy is a waste of time. I am not here arguing public ownership versus private ownership. What I am arguing is that the small farmer in Barbados requires assistance from the Government. That is the first thing.

Secondly, in order for the farmer to enjoy a quality of life commensurate with the effort he puts out, and in keeping with the standards of his neighbours, he requires some kind of guaranteed market.

We in Barbados as a whole have said that to the European Economic Community. We have said that, as a country producing a primary product, we need a guaranteed market. That is why the EEC in the Lome Convention gave us a guaranteed market for our sugar. Similarly, if we take the analogy into the microcosm of Barbados, the farmer requires some kind of guaranteed market if what he does is to be worth his while. He cannot get such a market in this country, as has been so admirably pointed out by my colleagues, in the circumstances where if carrots start to sell, the large farmers, because of their capabilities, would immediately put more carrots in the market place than any small farmer can ever put, and invariably the small farmer has to turn his back, or, as my colleague said, give them away. That is part of the problem.

While you are saying to the small farmers in Barbados, and there are 20 000 of them according to the statistics.....

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I do not know; I have never counted them. But the McGregor Report must have been accurate. He said there are 20 000 small farmers.

Let us assume there are 2 000 because statistics coming from that Government always have to have some correction. You have to correct for inflation when you read statistics coming out of that Government. Let us suppose there are 2 000. The 2 000 small farmers in this country have a right to expect a reasonable living for their activity. And for as long as you continue to tell farmers that they must produce or perish, you tell them that they must grow more food and you do not supply them with some kind of guaranteed market, you are wasting their time, and indeed you are being unfair to them.

One of the ways in which you attempted to provide some kind of guaranteed market was a kind of quota system that could operate with an outlet that is controlled, and it has worked. In those times when the systems were functioning, you could see that a rationalised market has worked. There are some products which are not susceptible to that kind of arrangement, but for as long as you continue to allow the larger farmers, the farmers whose specialty it is not to grow the same products which the small farmers grow, to dominate, and then you do not provide the smaller farmers with any market facility, you do not provide

them with the collection points, you do not allow them to have any advantages vis-a-vis the other plantation farmers, you are bound to be spinning tops in mud, as they say in Trinidad.

On the one hand you are putting out propaganda saying one thing with the left hand, and on the other hand you are defeating the very purpose which your propaganda is supposed to support.

There are other areas, Mr. Chairman, along the same lines, which could bear some examination, but the time will come again.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM and Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN rose.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM (Christ Church East): Mr. Chairman, much as I have been enjoying.....

Asides.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: I do not necessarily have to reply; anyone on this side can reply. We are all equipped.

Mr. Chairman, much as I have been enjoying the grandstanding of the last honourable Member who spoke, I think the time has come to put the records straight in relation to a lot of matters, particularly his references to the Barbados Marketing Corporation.

I wish to state as an incontestable fact that when the Barbados Labour Party took office in 1976, the Barbados Marketing Corporation owed away \$1.9 million: \$1 million to the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, \$500 000 to Barclays Bank; that the supermarket, either under the chairmanship of my distinguished friend on my right or under the management of the Democratic Labour Party, has never made a profit; and that the honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt), who has just sat down, engaged in signing letters of comfort to the banks in this country, letters of comfort that were not worth the paper on which they were written.

1.05 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, order.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: According to the Duffus Report.

Mr. B. M. TAITT rose.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I cannot have two honourable members on their feet.

(Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: On what do you rise?)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Chairman, first of all

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, order, please!

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir: The honourable Member must remember that in this House, his colleagues said that the supermarket made a profit. His colleagues said so in here. He cannot get up and say so now.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please take your seat. No point of order!

Hon. V. L. JOHNSON rose.

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Oh Vic, sit down.)

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, please!

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Mr. Chairman, I just wish to say, with respect to the reference made to the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works, who at one point was Chairman of the Corporation, that we have no memory of his ever saying in this House that the Supermarket was making a profit and the Records of this House will not reveal that.

It is a fact, however, and we wish to make it clear for the Record, that while you, as Minister of Trade — I am speaking about the honourable member for St. Michael West — had responsibility for the Barbados Marketing Corporation, you repeatedly had to seek money from the banks to rescue the Corporation and gave them letters of comfort, which the Duffus Commission pronounced upon and said that they were not worth the paper on which they were written.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, please.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, we must have order!

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, please!

Asides.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Not that the BMC was under investigation by the Duffus Commission.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, the reporters must do their work.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: But the Duffus Commission did address the question of letters of comfort.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Chairman, the honourable Member is misleading this House. On a point of order.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please, please.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: He is misleading this House.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I cannot have

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Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir!

Mr. CHAIRMAN: the honourable Member jumping to his feet.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: No, Sir. But this is a very serious point of order.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Now, please. Let.....

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The honourable Minister.....

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please, please. Order, order, please! An honourable Member is on a point of order.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Chairman, the honourable Member has just said that the Duffus Commission reported on letters of comfort for the BMC. The Duffus Commission had nothing to do with BMC.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Please, Mr. Chairman, I did not say that.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, order.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The Duffus Commission did not enquire into the BMC, and it is wrong for him to try to give the impression.....

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: that the Duffus Commission spoke to the BMC.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please take your seat.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Mr. Chairman, I think the Record will reflect that I did not say that the Duffus Commission sat on the BMC. But it looked into letters of comfort which were signed by you on behalf of the BMC in your capacity as Minister of Trade. That is all that I was saying. But we must not waste too much time on that.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please, please.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: The basic fact is that this Government has come to the conclusion that it did not make sense in 1983 for the Government to be operating a supermarket when we were well served in this country by private supermarkets.....

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, order, please.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: operations, and when the supermarket, in particular, was making a loss and had become a charge on the Treasury of this country.

Aside.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: The position was that there were at least four men and women to every weighing scale at the BMC by the time it was closed down. It was being used as a welfare department, a place where anybody could just go and work. It made no difference whether the organization wanted you or not. And I, in my capacity as Minister, was not going to tolerate that sort of operation.

Aside.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: You sent them to ACTO and the Government paid for them.)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: We.....

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, order, please. No interruptions.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: We have reached the point.....

Asides

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Mr. Chairman,.....

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I cannot have these interruptions.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: where we have decided that the BMC must have a few centres of profit in order to pay for the services which it offers.

The duty-free shop at the airport is a centre of profit, it is in that context that the duty-free shop at the airport has got to be seen. It is one of the centres of profit at the Barbados Marketing Corporation which is supporting the service centres at the organization.

I feel that the BMC should no longer continue to be a charge on the state and that while continuing to offer services to the farming community, we should try and make the organization self-sufficient. So on one hand, we have profit centres, and on the other hand we have service centres, which are subsidized by the profit centres.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Selling scotch whiskey.)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: This is not the occasion for any full-fledged debate on the Barbados Marketing Corporation and so I do not wish to say anything more about that, except to say that it does look as if, within a short time, we are likely to see the organization break even for the first time for a long, long time, if ever.

The honourable Member for St. Philip South (Mr. H. A. Blackman) raised the interesting question of the legislative efforts that have been made by the Government to address the very critical problem of idle lands in this country. He made the point that levies are imposed on all land owners, whether or not they have cultivated their land.

I just want to say, Sir, to begin with, if you have less than two acres of land, you are exempted from the levy system.

(Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Two hectares.)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Two acres. I think if you check, you will see it is two acres, with great respect.

In any event, the burden of proving that you have cultivated your land and have made more than \$1 200 per acre is on the owner of the land. You receive the levy notice and you then have to fill out the form, supporting it by necessary bills, showing that you have made more than \$1 200, which is what any reasonably diligent farmer can make off an acre of land. When you do that, immediately the levy is waived.

But I wish to make a more important point. I have come to the conclusion, and I have said so publicly in

recent times, that the whole question of our approach to licking the problem of idle lands is an area in which we have got ourselves into the act of prescribing before diagnosing. This is not the only area in agriculture in which this has happened.

You will recall that for many years in this country, Mr. Chairman, everyone thought that they had the answer to the problem of cane fires. They were supposed to be politically-inspired, workers from the islands were supposed to be burning the canes, the white people were supposed to be doing it, local Barbadian workers — everybody was blamed. And the answer was supposed to be for all of us community leaders to go on radio and TV and, if you could, into the pulpits and appeal to the people.

I have always resisted that, because I always rejected the cause of analysis that has been given. It is only within the last three years that the first limited investigation, which was done by Barbados Shipping and Trading, revealed that the fires were industry related, and it was because we knew that that we were then able to prescribe measures to address the particular cause which was established by scientific investigation.

We have assumed that we know why it is that lands are idle in this country and we have gone ahead and we have prescribed, using the carrot and the stick methodology. It has not worked.

We are putting money into next year's Estimates to carry out a study, so that we will really know, for the first time, what are the multiple factors at work in explaining why is it that some people have land and do not cultivate the land. It is only when we know for sure what are the reasons that, it seems to me, we can really design a sensible legislative policy. In the past, we have worked on hunches and I am satisfied that the hunches have not been valid and reliable.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Eight years you have been in power and look what you said!)

(Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Are you going to recommend the withdrawal of the levy?)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Turning, Sir, to

(Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Johnny, it is a straightforward question. Are you going to recommend the withdrawal of the levy?)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: No. The levy, obviously, will remain operative until some other legislative remedy can be thought up. I am satisfied, and these things should be said, that it has not been as effective as the architects of it had expected.
1.15 p.m.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Mr. Chairman, they speak as though I cannot speak impersonal of myself.

I now turn, Sir, to the point made by the first contributor to this debate, the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central (Dr. R. C. Haynes). The point which was made is not a new one. We have heard it in this House, and I myself had, when I was on the back bench, addressed the whole question of whether the organisational structure which we have in place for servicing the credit needs of the farming community, large or small, is the best that we could put in place, and whether it is really effective.

There are two schools of thought with respect to the organizational structure that needs to be put in place to service the credit needs, which are real of the farming community. One school thinks that the present arrangement, where we have an Agricultural Division within the commercial bank, can be made effective, although there are organisational problems. The other school of thought is that we really need a separate credit institution to service the needs of the farming community.

I think that only meets part of the problem. The real question is, in this era of high interest rates and expensive money, how do you get cheap money to the farming community unless you are prepared to subsidise it? You sang the praises of the old Agricultural Credit Bank. I have no doubt that it had great advantages and brought many benefits to the farming community — it had its weaknesses too — but for the most part it operated in an era of low interest rates. We are now in an era of high interest rates, and regardless of where you have the window located, whether it is a separate institution or within the existing commercial bank, you are going to be confronted with the question, how you are going to get money to the farming community in this era of high interest rates unless you are prepared to subsidise those rates? So the location of your organisation may only be part of the answer to the problem.

I agree that where the bank is presently located, where persons are recruited and have the right to be transferred on promotion, as soon as a person shows any competence and they are in the Agricultural Division, and there is an opening in another division which is available to that person on transfer or promotion, immediately they go, and we have not been able to develop that specialist knowledge within the Agricultural Division, based on experience. If we have one single institution, for example, this would have been one of the advantages that would qualify.

But it is not an easy question, and, for now, the position is that we have an Agricultural Division within

the commercial bank. Until that policy is changed, it will remain like that. But I can tell you that there is a school of thought within the Ministry and Government that it ought to be changed, but these things take time to evolved.

We find the limitations of the Agricultural Division within the commercial bank particularly in relation to the financing of one of our new initiatives, that of food farming, where it takes at least three to four years after the planting of the fruit trees before you can eat the first fruits. During that time, using strict commercial criteria, the commercial banks cannot wait three or four years for repayment of that loan, because they are not accustomed to operating with that sort of loan request. So again that points to the limitation of operating within the commercial bank. But it is totally wrong to assume, notwithstanding all of that, that nothing is being done for the small farmers in this country, perhaps more than ever has been done.

On the question of marketing, it is almost impossible in a community like Barbados, where we have high technology now in farming and a small market of a quarter of a million, to guarantee outlets to the small farming community. A small piece of land, well cultivated, can more than supply the requirements of the domestic market, and once you go into the stimulation of the export production, where only 60 per cent of every thing produced for export can be exported in terms of quality.....

Aside.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: The point I was making is that 40 per cent of everything for export falls back on the domestic market. So as soon as you begin to emphasise export production, you put additional pressure on the small farmers who are producing exclusively for the domestic market.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW (St. John): Mr. Chairman, it is rather ironic that on the same day that Government approaches Parliament for a further subsidy for the sugar industry, which is owned by a relatively small minority of people in this country we are hearing all of this.

I think the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and I are, unfortunately, products of the sugar industry of Barbados. Both of our grandfathers were factory owners and planters. I make no apologies for it. I had no control over my ancestry. My grandfather and grandmother decided to go to church and get married and therefore I am a product of the plantocracy of Barbados, as is the honourable Member, but that does not prevent me from criticising the sugar industry in Barbados.

I think it is iniquitous that the taxpayers of Barbados, for the third time, should be called upon to subsidise

an industry which is inefficient, which is obsolescent, which is dwindling in its capacity to gainfully and honourably employ people in this country at the level of dignified occupation, which is compatible to a decent standard of life, which has always been beset by strikes, beset by industrial warfare, which is being symptomatic of — my grandfather may turn in his grave — the degradation of the great masses of people in this island, so that hundreds of thousands of young people leaving school today refuse to join it.

We are being asked today that the taxpayers underwrite a further \$10 million, and we hear the Minister on the same occasion vindicating and justifying whom he describes as "the architects of the legislation" which says that a small farmer with more than two acres of land must pay a levy for not planting marginal land in St. Philip, Christ Church or St. Lucy if he does not make \$1 200 a year.

A plantation like Drax Hall, (St. George) with over 1,000 acres, would have to make \$1.2 million profit not to have to pay the levy — Drax Hall is the largest Plantation in Barbados, it is the oldest sugar plantation, too if you apply the same yard stick or criteria which is being extended to small farmers, people who have marginal land, maybe the widow of a former civil servant, maybe a retired civil servant who cannot get out there with a hoe and fork. 1.25 p.m.

There is a person whom I know very well — let us call the person a close friend — who has retired, has a couple of acres of land — I do not mean two; a little more than five; maybe seven or eight — and who has been confronted not only with his tax bill this year, but the last time that person planted his land he lost \$7 000 because he could not get his canes reaped. He tried potatoes and vegetables, and the inhabitants of the surrounding districts and the monkeys carried away all his vegetables. He is trying now to plant pangola grass, but due to the absence of rainfall could not make the \$1 200 criterion, and is confronted now with a levy of \$5 000 plus the taxes. And we hear these pious pronouncements.

I just want to cut a long story short and come straight to the point. The Democratic Labour Party is dedicated to the removal of this levy immediately and retroactively, and refunding to the people who have been mugged, deprived of their just earnings, all the money that the Government has wrongfully taken away from them. The sugar plantations will no more look forward to people who have to pay ordinary taxes being called upon to underwrite the sugar industry. They must farm themselves more effectively, or we must negotiate better prices with the European Economic Community, or find some other use for our agricultural lands other than the use of sugar.

We cannot go on finding \$10 million this year, \$25 million last year, \$40 million the year before. We are burying our heads in the sand, and we seem dedicated to the propping up of the wealthy people in this country at the expense of all the other taxpayers, when the poor people of Barbados, who have one or three acres of land, are being asked to pay a levy because they could not prove that they made \$1 200 on the land.

As you know, Sir — you come from the country like the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, the same parish, one which I formerly represented — the most that you can get now for renting agricultural land is \$100 an acre. If you cannot work the land yourself, you cannot pay the labourers to do it, because the cost of labour is so high that you will never be able to make the criterion that the Government has set if you are going to be exempt from the levy. The minimum you can pay people is \$25 to \$30 a day, the very minimum. If you have three acres of land and you have to pay people \$25 a day, I do not know what kind of crop you are going to grow in order to meet the criterion the Government has established before you are exempt from paying this levy.

The honourable Member, the Minister of Agriculture, knows that people who have cultivated their land are being asked to pay the levy, although the leader of the Government — I do not mean the Leader of Government Business, I mean the right honourable Member for St. Thomas — denied that on the Floor of this House, when the Attorney General himself had said that he had received a tax bill calling upon him to pay the levy when he had cultivated the land. On the floor of this House, in my presence, the Prime Minister said it was not true, that people who had cultivated the land were not being called upon. The Attorney General was a member of the Government and had received a bill himself. The Minister of Agriculture said, 'Oh yes, we did it, but the onus is on the land owner to prove that he had made \$1 200.' What is the logic of this?

Sugar cane is not making money, but if you are a large plantation owner we will ask the taxpayers to give you \$25 million. If you are a small man in St. Philip or Christ Church and you have three acres of land, you grow sugar cane, you lose money, you have to pay a levy for not making money. If you are growing vegetables and you cannot establish that you made \$1,200 an acre, you have to pay the levy. But if you have 150 acres at Harrow — I am not being personal, let me say Ruby or River Plantation, or Turner's Hall, or Lamberts, or Malvern, St. John, Trents in St. Lucy — the Government is going to make sure that the taxpayers give you some of this money out of the \$10 million. What kind of sense is that?

You will go up Christ Church as you drive on your way to the airport, particularly if you go on the seaward side and not on the left hand side, on the starboard side as we say, and between the road to the airport, Highway 7, on the right hand side, say Ealing Grove, Gibbons Boggs and so on, you will see fairly considerable tracts of land there in the constituency of the Member for Christ Church East. Some of them have been given planning permission a long time ago to build houses; no houses have been built. On other areas under the Physical Development Plan, areas which were earmarked for market gardening, you will find that some people have been doing market gardening very successfully, and there are other areas where just sheep are grazing on that land. Canes have not been very successful in that area, but people who own two or three acres in that area are being called upon to pay a levy.

I agree that if people get permission to develop land and it is agricultural land, they should still try to utilise the land. But if they are losing money is it reasonable to ask people to dig up land and plant it just to satisfy the Government that they are planting it?

This kind of legislation was designed for countries like Puerto Rico when the big companies, the large multi-nationals had large *latifundia*, as they call it, large numbers of acres, and there were peasants there who were hungry for land, people who would only have been too glad to be able to go on this land. And when Governor Munoz Marin became Governor of Puerto Rico, he introduced legislation making it possible for the Government to go in and take over, pay the land owners some kind of *nom nebis* and get the land cultivated.

If the Government's policy was that if you are not using the land and you cannot get the labour to do it, we will rent it from you, let us say, at the normal agricultural rent of \$100 an acre and find some young people and put them on the land to produce something for Barbados, that would make sense. But the levy makes no sense at all, and as the honourable Member just said — he did not use the word "whimsical" — but he said the architects of this legislation, an expression which did not subsume that he was one of the architects himself, were dealing with hunches, and it was not based on any scientific examination. That is a very strange admission to make on something which amounts to penal legislation on a day, as I said at the beginning of my remarks in my intervention this morning, when you are coming for \$10 million as a subsidy for the sugar industry.

I make no apologies when I criticise a lot of the planters that we have in Barbados, who are Johnnies-come-lately when compared with the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and me. We have been in this thing for

200 years, they only came in here since World War I, and all these people are putting on big airs and talking about being socialists. I am a socialist by conviction but a capitalist by birth, and I prefer it to be that way, like the honourable Member who is the Deputy Leader of the House. Everything that I do, I do by conviction, not because of who my grandfather was or because I was friendly with you and other capitalists — not being personal, Sir, being another planter. It does not work that way.

1.35 p.m.

Now we are very serious here. The Democratic Labour Party is dedicated to the repeal of this legislation. It does not make sense, as the honourable Member has admitted. The honourable Member for Christ Church East is in the constituency probably where they have more people suffering as a result of this legislation than almost any other constituency.

I just want to say something, which I am sure the Minister of Agriculture will agree with me on. We hear a lot of talk in Barbados that people should try to get back to the land and I want to say this. When I hear that talk I say, "Back to whose land?" I do not know of anybody who has land in Barbados and has left the land that I can go in there and plough it up and plant it up as I would like.

When they say "back to the land", they mean back to the plantation yard, and the young people in Barbados are not prepared to go back to the plantation yard. Back to whose land? There is nobody who has left their land. They may not be able to farm their land profitably, but they have not left it.

There is no unclaimed land in Barbados as such, but we have appointed a gentleman now, who once ran against me in St. John, and given him a fantastic salary, I understand over \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year, and designated him as Commissioner of Vacant Lands. He should be called "commissioner of vacant minds", not Commissioner of Vacant Lands because the only thing he can be a commissioner of is a commissioner of vacant minds, the person that I know. He has that kind of reputation in St. John, the Commissioner of Vacant Lands. He is also the receiver for about five or six sugar estates, the very sugar estates that we are subsidising, and getting about \$4 500 a month from each of them.

If the Minister delivers what we call a pre-emptive strike and repeals this legislation — I have said we are going to repeal it and if he repeals it before the election, I would be doubly glad. I would not criticise him for it. I have made a statement on behalf of my party. We are going to repeal it. I invite him to make a pre-emptive strike and deliver it before we get an opportunity to do it. He himself has said that it is based on hunches rather

than on scientific examination, and I hope that he gives it a little more scientific thought.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: I am not yet ready for winding up, Mr. Chairman, but I just wanted to expose a myth on which most of the speech made by the right honourable Member for St. John was based, and that is that this legislation affects large numbers of small farmers.

If you have under two acres of land, you are exempted, and 90 per cent of the small farmers in Barbados have under two acres. So the basic premise of his argument is invalid.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN (St. Philip North): Mr. Chairman, Head 25, Subhead 18, Item 10 — an amount of \$59,654 for improvement in the handling of fishing boats at Oistins Fishing Terminal.

This is one area, Mr. Chairman, where, for a long time, the poor people of Barbados have been able to exert some kind of independence, from the time of the row boats, which they built on their own, through the era of putting engines into the boats to the point where big boats are now being fitted out with ice packs for longer fishing trips.

The Ministry has on occasion indicated its willingness to see the development of the fishing industry in Barbados since it is (1) a large employer of people in Barbados; (2) it allows the small people in Barbados to develop a livelihood of their own; and (3) it provides high protein foods for Barbados.

It is passing strange that now the fishing industry has reached this stage where young people are prepared to borrow large sums of money, a lot of it from the Barbados Development Bank, and buy these bigger boats to stay out longer, we are discovering that there is a disincentive, in the form of a duty, being placed on boats brought into Barbados for fishing purposes.

This should be looked at, because if we are to encourage, and we should, the development of the fishing industry, there are so many problems in the fishing industry that have to be solved. It is such a tricky and a high-risk industry that we should not further discourage these young men by putting on the duty.

They have problems with insurance.

Asides.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: It is a duty put on on the boats that I am talking of. There is no subsidy on the levy. I am talking about the duty.

They have problems with insurance in that the only one of the companies that tend to give them insurance policies is the Insurance Corporation of Barbados, and at some very high premiums.

Secondly, there is the peril of the open sea, you cannot dictate the conditions under which you work under.

So I am saying that the Ministry should do whatever is possible and immediately remove any duties on the boats brought into Barbados by these young people. I would like to invite the Minister to give me his thinking and his Government's position on this, so that people going into the industry would be guided in the future about what to expect as far as the duty on the fishing boats.

As far as the \$10 million subsidy that had been granted to the large plantations is concerned, I would like to invite the Minister to examine something that is happening in the plantation system. Despite the fact that there is legislation that people who are registered agricultural workers should be given five days a week from a particular time, there are hundreds of plantations, and I know most of them in St. Philip, where they are only getting three days some weeks and four days some weeks. And despite the fact that they have been making representation against it, I am fairly certain that it has been brought to the attention of the Ministry of Labour, nothing is being done, and the plantations are persisting in giving these workers only three days a week and four days a week.

It is not only a breach of the law, but since, over the last three years, the Government has been subsidising the plantation system so heavily, I think it is only fair that they should insist that these registered plantation workers be given the five days the law dictates they should have. I would invite the appropriate Ministries to look at that particular matter in the interest of the people in the plantation industry. They are already working for wages that are below those in all other competing industries, construction and the rest, and it is creating a terrific burden on them if their wages are further reduced by being given three days a week.

There are very few of these families that could even exist with the basic amenities, food and paying their light bills, on three days a week, on the plantation wages that are less than \$25 a day. It is something like \$22.10 a day, which gives most of them something like \$66 a week, and, as we know, in this particular category there are usually large families to take care of. I invite the appropriate Ministry to make sure that as long as there is any subsidy at all given to the plantations, these people are given their five days a week, as stipulated by law.

1.45 p.m.

There is another problem as far as the fishermen are concerned, and it concerns the berthing of their boats in the Careenage.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Which subhead is the honourable Member addressing his remarks to?

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Head 25, subhead 18, Item 10.

On this particular subject, it is a fact that the fishermen, who for any reasons have to pull up their boats on the inner harbour, are given a certain amount of days to do their repairs; and if they do not get their boats completed within these certain amount of days, they have to pay a due for hauling up. This is not fair.

First of all, there is a shortage of artisans in this type of industry, and you have to wait until one is available. But when you compare this to the fact that there are hundreds of people with wayside garages, where people park their cars on sidewalks, blocking the sidewalks, making a living — you have the Old Car Museum where people are making a terrific living and blocking the sidewalks and nothing is done about that — it is unfair to ask these boat owners to pay a fee if they are going over the stipulated time that their boats are intended to be hauled up for.

I think we should look at all of these things, and we should encourage the fishing industry, which has always been one that has been owned and operated by the small people of Barbados. It is still an industry that has not been taken over by the big people, and that makes it more incumbent on any Government to protect that industry and give them all the encouragement that they need.

Thank you.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Mr. Chairman.....

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The honourable Member cannot be on a point of order. The honourable Member for St. Andrew.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE (St. Andrew): Mr. Chairman, it is certainly good that this debate has evoked quite a bit of discussion. What has been of great interest to me is the proclamation by the honourable Member for St. John, that if his Party is returned, he will remove the levy. (A VOICE: When?)

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: It is always if and when, when he can make his policies. As a matter of fact, when he was making his speech an honourable Member here said he was not sure the honourable Member for St. John was not still in the position to make instant

policy. He thought that the executive, if there is such a thing, of the party would come up with these policy statements and that the honourable member would pronounce after that is done, but we still see, Mr. Chairman that he is operating on the system.....

Asides.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: You are worried about over here, and I have to be worried about over there. There is no problem about that. I do not think we need to quarrel or get angry about that.

The point I want to make, however, is this: the country is not going to take anything you say about agriculture seriously. You have never had a policy on agriculture. When you left office it was virtually destroyed. During your time you did absolutely nothing for it. As a matter of fact, the honourable Member for St. John is on record as saying that he would like to see the day when he would stay from one point of the country and look towards the other and not see a cane blade.

I do not know if there is a change of heart. He has just admitted something to this Honourable House, that he and another honourable Member is from the plantocracy. He is from that area. I do not know what he is.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: On what is the honourable Member rising?

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: I am on a point of order. I am not making an admission. I have stated facts, and I said the honourable Deputy Leader of the House, too. I am not any bastard.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Why are you standing? On what do you rise? The honourable Member must take his seat.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I am not going to take the bait of the honourable Member, because I would tell him something he would not like to hear, but I will deal with the honourable Member in the fullness of time. He believes that his type of politics will work at every stage. I have had to apologise very recently to this House for the behaviour of an honourable Member. I would equally like to apologise to the young children there for the bad behaviour of the honourable Member for St. John who, because of his experience in this Parliament, should be a statesman in here.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order: the honourable Member cannot say that to the Chair. That is an affront to the Chair. If there had been bad behaviour, the Chair would have ruled. He cannot say that on his feet when the Chair is sitting there. That is an affront to the Chair.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: These interruptions must cease. Order on both sides of the House!

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, I am going to continue. I am accustomed to the behaviour of the honourable Member for St. John. I have had a lot to do with him, I know him well and I know what he is capable of. I do not think that the little children here know him, but I am glad they are hearing him, because they will have to deal with him in a few years' time. As a matter of fact, he would not be around. You will never have the chance to remove any levy, because the people know you well and they will not give you that opportunity.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Leave out the personalities and let us get on with the debate please.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, the honourable Member for St. John had promised many things. There were manifesto promises in 1961 to introduce houses for workers as resorts. He had planned to shoe the people in this country. People were not to pay rents. (This is just a reply, Mr. Chairman, if you do not mind granting me the indulgence. Somebody has to reply.) For fifteen years he did absolutely nothing in those directions, and therefore his promises would mean very little. You will never have that opportunity.

Mr. Chairman, it is very unfortunate that in this day and age when throughout the world agriculture is being promoted by all countries in the world, we can find in an enlightened Parliament, at least I hope it is, that an Opposition that claims to be loyal and ready — that is what they say, but I do not know ready to do what! Ready to scramble for the leadership among themselves and that is all — can be so critical of a Government that is offering support to one of our main industries in the land. I would expect that they would have come up with new ideas. I would expect that they would put forward alternative proposals to the proposals which we have put up.

When we came in with this proposal of a levy for the non-working of agricultural land, it was at a time when several thousands of acres of land were lying fallow throughout the length and breadth of this country, and a number of people were concerned as to what inducement could be given.

A number of inducements were at the time given. The Extension Officers within the Ministry of Agriculture were invited to go among the owners of the land and to encourage them to produce food. We felt then that even if you did not care to grow canes, you could grow vegetables, you could grow pangola grass or you could grow fruit trees, so long as you were growing and planting something.

But you had a situation where that Government had allowed several valuable and viable plantations to go out of use because of the indiscriminate cutting up of agricultural lands, which were sold as large house spots. Their friends were able to buy and cut up the very plantation lands. The honourable Member for St. John would know that.

1.55 p.m.

(Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: I do not know that.)

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: He will know his own position. You would know about your own involvement in Turner's Hall, Frere Pilgrim and other plantations throughout the country.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, order, please!

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Agricultural lands!)

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: You would know that when the owners of Frere Pilgrim wanted to sell, they were not allowed to sell. Eventually, somebody came in on the side and they were able to cut the lands up, although they were told that the lands would not have been allowed to be cut up.

Asides.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I know that. And you are a lawyer, so you must know, and you do know, how to get off people like Pilot, and how to protect them. You must know all of that.

Asides.

Laughter.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: The problems which we are now.....

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, order, please!

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: We are now, Mr. Chairman, inheriting the whirlwind of the wind which was sown by the honourable Members opposite, because of their lack of policy.

And whenever the right honourable Member for St. John gets up to criticize people who are involved in the sugar industry, I will want to tell him that he is doing the country no good at all. Absolutely no good!

It is good to criticize, if you are doing it constructively, but you have never sought to do it that way. Your style has always been to attack people, to bring

down the very institutions that you claim you want to uphold. You have never sought to be constructive in your criticisms.

The time has come.....

(Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: To bring you down.)

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE:.....when you should conduct yourself like a statesman in this country.

You would never be able to do that. I will bring you down first.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, please.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I am more powerful, in terms of my position.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: These interruptions must cease. Order, please!

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, the country today is very self-sufficient in terms of vegetables. As a matter of fact, last year we did better in terms of non-sugar agriculture by way of foreign exchange than sugar agriculture. We have virtually reached the point where we are importing little or no vegetables, and from the point of view of fruit production, we are reaching the point of self-sufficiency. So even though we might have gone into the reverse in terms of sugar, we have nonetheless been making up considerably in terms of other crops.

We must bear in mind that we need the foreign exchange which we earn from the sugar industry. It is vital to our existence. It is vital to the stabilization of our land mass, because sugar cane is a grass and it holds the soil well. It holds it better than the vegetables which we produce and make money out of. So it is vital and important that we continue to maintain sugar cane in this country.

Mr. Chairman, this Head under this Resolution is vital and important. Any support that is given to agriculture should be hailed and upheld by any enlightened person in the community.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture dwelt on the question of a study which was done on fires. He said that the Barbados Shipping and Trading Company came up with an idea on burning and that it was the only analysis which we have on the question of the burning of sugar cane.

I have not seen it and I do not know. But this is what I know, that, only a few short years ago, the Opposition was loud throughout the length and breadth of the country suggesting that the canes should not be reaped. I would like to know if that was analysed in the study which was done by the Barbados Shipping and Trading.

But when all of these things are said by influential people, things that affect vital industries within the community, we have to be very concerned, lest we find ourselves running into very serious problems. These are some of the vital issues which, in my view, need to be very seriously addressed.

Mr. Chairman, I commend this Head to this Committee.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN (Christ Church East Central): Mr. Chairman, I feel that the position in respect of the law should be accurately stated. It is very wrong to conduct a debate upon a premise of the existing law when, in truth and in fact, the law is not what is postulated.

It is very important that the Land Tax (Amendment) Act 1981-45 be drawn to the attention of the House. The levy only applies where the area of the land is three-quarters of a hectare or more, has a greater site value than two thousand dollars per hectare, was before January 1, 1968 used as agricultural, and is no longer being used. So land which is under three-quarters of a hectare is not eligible for the levy.

Secondly, Sir, the amount of value of agricultural crops which has to be produced is not one thousand dollars an acre. It is a thousand dollars a hectare, less than five hundred dollars an acre.

So it is quite clear that a minimal effort to produce some kind of crop of whatever diversity you have in Barbados would satisfy the law. Even in putting a few head of sheep on it per year, you will satisfy that.

Do not let us get in here, because we wish to criticize the programme of the Government, to attempt to mislead a whole country. That is recklessness, that is irresponsibility.

Sir, I also want to draw attention to the fact that there is provision for a refund of the levy.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Where?)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: By section 9 (c).

You see, this is the trouble: a lot of town men over there want to pontificate about these matters when they have not even looked up the law.

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: He does not have any sense.)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: That is the problem. They have not looked at the law.

What kind of people are we dealing with when an Opposition could get up in the House of Assembly and postulate an argument upon a false assumption of the law. I mean, that is reckless and irresponsible.

Aside.

(Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Three-quarters of a hectare would be two acres.)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: That deals with that effectively.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, please, on both sides of the House. Order, please!

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: The amount of people who are affected by this levy must be small.

I will also say this, that the machinery for the recapture of the levy could be improved. I would say that.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Could be improved?)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Yes, it could be improved....

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Could be set up!)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: because, in my opinion, when once you have demonstrated that you have the land in cultivation, for the subsequent years, the owners should shift back.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: That is what we are saying.)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: After you have demonstrated the land is actually in use! That could be approved.

(Mr. P. M. GREAVES: That is not what is happening.)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: That is a matter of the mechanics of the operation of the Act. It does not in any way detract from the principle of the Act.

(Mr. P. M. GREAVES: It is a bad principle.)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Well, that is a different matter. But the position is very clear, the law is on the Statute Book.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: And we are going to take it off.)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: In the unlikely event that the honourable Member has the opportunity before the year 2 000, he will be at liberty to take it off. That is his business. I cannot quarrel with him for pronouncing on his policy. I can disagree with him that he will have the opportunity to do it, but I cannot quarrel with him for pronouncing it.

There is another point that I would like to make very clear. The honourable Member for St. Philip North (Mr. W. O. Franklin) continues to make the point that that Government is not giving duty off in the area of fishing.

I wish, again, to correct the honourable Member. Seventy-five per cent of the duty on imported fishing boats are regularly remitted as a matter of policy. And the reason why 100 per cent is not remitted is because in the honourable Member's constituency, among others, there is a large boat building community which has to have some measure of protection. He cannot have his cake and eat it.
2.05 p.m.

If he does not want Fiberpol to build, if he does not want people by the Crane to produce boats, if he does not want Mr. Lucien Babb in St. Lucy to produce, if he does not want Mr. John Wiltshire in Oistins to produce, if he does not want the fishing boat builders in other parts of Barbados to continue to have a slight measure of protection, well, let him go forward and proclaim in the Market Square that the Democratic Labour Party's policy is that they will give unlimited importation rights for nearly finished fishing boats.

The honourable Member knows that the position very often in these matters is that all you have to do is write a simple letter to the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Finance will reduce the duty. Mr. Mason in St. Philip got a reduction. There is an application now from a man called Mr. Morgan which is being processed. We do not discriminate

Aside.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Not that Mason! There are more than one Mason in St. Philip, many more Masons in St. Philip. That is the gentleman that went to Florida and brought down the boat. He got off his 75 per cent. He sees me in Oistins all the time and begs me for the other 25 per cent. I tell him that I cannot help him because we have to protect Fiberpol.

One of the most interesting things about this development is that the Barbados traditional fishing boat

design, which was made out of wood, was adapted by the use of new materials, and we are now in a position where we have a design which is accepted throughout the Caribbean as being suitable for the seas. It is a local industry. You ought to be proud of that, and you ought to do everything in your power to ensure that they are not being built in London, Cornwall or Florida.

Aside.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: We cannot have this shouting.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: What we have to do is to decide in our mind that that element of duty which was in existence by virtue of a CARICOM Treaty to protect a domestic industry is not relieved by administrative discretion. Do you get that? That is the position. That is all. There is no big thing in that. I will argue that out with you any place at anytime.

I am not going to be shouted down by them. They will not distract me. You cannot stop me from making my points.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: The other heresy is that the only means of delivering agricultural credit is through a bank. That is wrong, Sir. The Government has devised other means of delivering agricultural credit. It is delivered to all the rural development schemes in relation to all of the new agricultural schemes, such as fruit farming.

There is one thing that we have to recognize, and I hope that when we are talking we acknowledge this. The question of cane growing in the tropics is in a very, very serious condition. We are competing now with agricultural practices in Europe where the land has been reformed. Mechanization has reached such a peak that, with a combination of micro-processors for the leveling of the land and lasers for the detection of plant growth at a particular period of time, they are able to re-plant under such conditions that the productivity per hectare of beet sugar is much greater than ours. In none of the ECP countries have we been able to date to have the plant breeding or cultivating success that has come along in Europe in the last five years. It is a fact. It is a challenge, if you see the evidence.

Secondly, all of us are competing where we have to import our inputs from the developed world, and, since the energy crisis, they are getting a higher price for their inputs than we have got for our increase in raw material. That is the problem, our costs are higher than theirs. And under the A.C.P. agreement, we are having to absorb the

cost of transportation whereas they get an ex-farm price. So we are operating in a very difficult environment.

It is easy for all of us to sit in here and say, grow a new crop. I ask the question — what is the new crop? So do not let us think that we can debate this area in an atmosphere which is charged with emotion and political overtones. It is a very, very serious matter we are dealing with, and all of us have got to agitate the minds of our technicians as to what we can do to restore the competitive position that we have, because time is running out.

I just thought that I should have brought these few matters to the attention of the House so that the debate can go back on an even keel. That is what I think is necessary, and when we come back, we will deal with the other Heads. I want to talk about fishing today.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sir, I beg that you do now report progress to your Honour, the Deputy Speaker.

While you report progress, I will welcome back the Leader of the Opposition. I must confess that I was a bit bothered today by his conduct condemning the mothers of children who were not married. It is a sad, sad day for a child who was not born in wedlock to be condemned by you. I will deal with you on the platform on that. You are nothing at all as a man! All the young mothers who were not married and who gave birth to children in this country, you have condemned today! You are a wicked old man! I am going to bathe you! It is a disgrace.

I beg to move, Sir, that you do report progress to your Honour, the Deputy Speaker, and ask for leave to sit again.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to second that.....

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order please, order.

Mr. CHAIRMAN left the Chair and reported progress to Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER and asked for leave to sit again and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

SUSPENSION

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this sitting be suspended until 3.00 p.m. today.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

2.15 p.m.

ON RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This sitting is now resumed.

When the suspension was taken, the House was in Committee of Supply. To that it now reverts.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair and the House resumed Committee of Supply, Mr. J. G. ODLE in the Chair.

The question that Head 25 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 28 — MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 28 stand part.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 39 — MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SOCIAL SECURITY AND SPORT

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 39 stand part.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1983-84, No. 13 — \$4 172 071

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 73 Ministry of Finance and Planning stand part.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 79 — MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LANDS

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 79 stand part.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 80 – MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 80 stand part.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE, Mr. Chairman reported the passing of two Resolutions in Committee of Supply, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On separate motions of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE, the Resolutions were read a first and second time and agreed to.

CABLE AND WIRELESS (WEST INDIES) LIMITED (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1983

Order No. 4 was called – To move the Second Reading of a Bill to amend the Cable and Wireless (West Indies) Limited Act.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a budgetary proposal out of this year's Budget, as indicated by the Prime Minister.

I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. J. G. ODLE in the Chair.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On separate motions of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1983

Order No. 5 was called – To move the Second Reading of a Bill to amend the Stamp Duty Act.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: This is another budgetary proposal. I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. J. G. ODLE in the Chair.

Clauses 1 to 4 inclusive were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. L. S. CRAIG seconded by Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

HOTEL AIDS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1983

Order No. 6 was called – To move the Second Reading of a Bill to amend the Hotel Aids Act, Cap. 72.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN (Christ Church East Central): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the object of this Bill is to provide additional machinery to ensure that hotel proprietors and those who are responsible for the operation and management of hotels fulfill their obligations in respect of handing over the hotel tax, which is charged pursuant to the Hotel and Restaurant Sales Tax Act. It will provide another bit of machinery to effectuate that objective.

I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to second that.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES (St. Michael North): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Act seems to me to tie in the payment of certain taxes to the question of obtaining certain benefits under the Hotel Aids Act. The mechanism that is proposed here for doing this in some respects differs from

the mechanism proposed for persons who apply for liquor licence tax. I have no quarrel with this, as indeed I had some kind of disagreement with the other one.

There is one thing with which I am concerned, relating to the taxes or payments required to be made with the National Insurance contributions. Again, Sir, I want to say I am in full agreement with that, but I am a little concerned about what happens at National Insurance, not that it is not properly run, but the fact is that we are not sufficiently made aware of all that is happening with the National Insurance Scheme, and we are not being made aware because. . .

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am not going to allow a debate on the National Insurance Office, or the method by which it is being run, on a matter which is supposed to deal with the Hotel Aids Act.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: It is a little wide, but the point is.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is why I am going to keep you directly within the straight roads.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: I do not want to go outside the straight roads. All I am saying is, if a person who is going to make an application for some kind of concession under the Hotel Aids Act has got to pay all the National Insurance contributions, with which I agree, at the same time we must all be concerned that the scheme is properly operated and that the reports that should be sent to Parliament should be sent, because I have not seen one here for quite some time.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: With all due respect to the honourable Member, if you refer to May's Parliamentary Procedure, page 421, the 19th Edition, you must recognise that while there may be ways and means of speaking on a topic, it does not allow debates of this nature to go outside the matter before the House. It deals precisely with relevancy of an argument. National Insurance does not now form part of the subject matter of the topic before the House.
3.15 p.m.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Which is the matter of insurance contributions. This is the aspect of the National Insurance contributions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this is the aspect of it that I want to deal with. If Your Honour wants to rule that I am out of order, I will take my seat but it is that aspect I want to deal with, because this deals with the payment of National Insurance contributions.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the honourable Member feels that he can bring it within the ambit of this Resolution, he may proceed, but I am warning him that if he goes outside this matter I will have to ask him to stop.

(Certain remarks made at this point by the Honourable Member for St. James North were ordered expunged from the Record by Mr. Deputy Speaker.)

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to move, Sir, that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. J. G. ODLE in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 - 5 inclusive were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On separate motions of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

PLANT, PEST AND DISEASE (ERADICATION) (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1983

Order No. 7 was called - To move the Second Reading of a Bill to amend the Plant, Pest and Disease (Eradication) Act, 1983-6.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM (Christ Church East Central): Mr. Deputy Speaker, several months ago now this House gave consideration to a Bill to consolidate and amend the Acts relating to sugar cane mosaic diseases and the eradication of love vine and wild cotton. The Bill also provided for the eradication of specified plant pests and diseases.

This measure was passed by this Honourable House in February of this year. When the matter went to the Other Place, the point was made that the definition of "premises" as used in the Act was particularly restricted in the sense that it applied only to farms and plantations and that, for example, it did not apply to a parasitic plant growing in the backyard of a private house. The point was taken by the Leader of the Senate, who undertook to have the matter studied by the Ministry, and to have, if necessary, an amendment brought to this Act. That is the background to the amendment which is before this Honourable House.

It is really an attempt to extend the scope and provisions of the Act in so far as it relates to premises, so as to ensure that wherever a parasitic plant is growing, the Chief Agricultural Officer, or anyone acting on his behalf, the Act refers to Inspectors, can call on the owner to destroy the plant. If the owner fails to comply, they can enter the premises and destroy the parasitic plants.

So it is really to ensure that all over the island will fall within the ambit of the Chief Agricultural Officer in so far as the carrying out of his powers under this Act are concerned.

With those remarks, I now beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to second that.

On the motion of Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. J. G. ODLE in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 – 3 inclusive were called and passed.

Clause 4 was called.

3.25 p.m.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN (St. Philip North): Just a clarification from the honourable Minister. Clause 4 reads that the Chief Agricultural Officer can enter at any time on a farm. Under the definition of farm, suppose there are living quarters attached to that farm, would that come under this? Later on you just qualify dwelling-house, but would a farm include living quarters for somebody on it? What would be the position with the entering of those living quarters on the farm?

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN (Christ Church East Central): Mr. Chairman, I have no doubt that the courts are going to be very restrictive in the interpretation of that. Unless there is some reason to believe that the parasitic plant is actually growing in the dwelling-house, the courts are going to say it is an abuse of power. The object of the thing is to get at where the parasitic plant is, so I would hardly think it would be in a dwelling-house.

The question that Clause 4 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Clauses 5 and 6 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, Mr. CHAIRMAN

reported the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On separate motions of Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sir, before I adjourn this House today, I would like to give notice of two money Resolutions.

I beg to give notice of the following:

Resolution to grant the sum of \$6,879,612 from the Consolidated Fund and to place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 1983–84, Part I – Current, as shown in the Supplementary Estimates 1983–84, No. 14 which form the Schedule to the Resolution.

Resolution to grant the sum of \$1,102,827 from the Consolidated Fund and to place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 1983–84, Part II – Capital, as shown in the Supplementary Estimates 1983–84, No. 15 which form the Schedule to the Resolution.

THE ADJOURNMENT

Hon. L. S. CRAIG (St. James North): Sir, there is no more Government Business for today.

In adjourning the House, I must make the comment again that we have handled some six items between 3 o'clock and 3.29 p.m., 26 minutes, and it took five members of the Opposition a quarter after twelve until ten minutes after two to speak on one Subhead.

This is a clear-cut demonstration of what I have said repeatedly in this House. If we had no visitors in the Gallery, you would have no debate from the Opposition. When you have visitors in the Gallery, especially young persons, there is grandstanding on that side of the House.

We had a full debate on agriculture in here during the Estimates, we had one during the Budgetary Proposals, and one Subhead took from 12.15 p.m. until a little after 2 o'clock, when I had to suspend the sitting! We heard from the honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt), the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central (Dr. R. C. Haynes), the honourable Member for St. Philip North (Mr. W. O. Franklin), I think the honourable Member for St. Philip South (Mr. H. A. Blackman) had a taste, too, and the Leader of the Opposition (Rt. Hon. E. W. Barrow), who surely did not

bring the freshness into Parliament, after being away for a while, that I had hoped he would have brought, fresh as he looked.

It has been a sad day for those women who gave birth to children out of wedlock to be condemned on the Floor of the House by the Leader of the Opposition, when he referred to people on this side as bastards. It was a sad day for young women in this country.

I must confess I had hoped it would have been a fresh day, fresh as he had looked, but I had to make these comments. It hurts me deep inside to see that my colleague, the honourable Member for St. Michael West, can sit there and hear such a statement made by the Leader of the Opposition, a man with so many years' experience and a man who has contributed so much to his country, in which he condemned the very women and children that voted for him, referring to them as bastards on the Floor of the House. It is a sad day. I feel hurt about it, and I am sorry he is not in his place.

I am going to remember December 6, 1983, and I am going to read on the platforms what he said about unmarried women in this country. It is ungracious and uncharitable to them.

I beg to move that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday, December 13, 1983, at 12 o'clock noon.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that.

Mr. B. M. TAITT (St. Michael West): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish on the adjournment to take note of the fact that the honourable Leader of the House is concerned that the Opposition spoke on the particular Head from a quarter past twelve until ten minutes past two.

I do not believe that the honourable Member is in any position to determine how many honourable Members on this side should speak on any issue in this Honourable Chamber, and for how long any honourable Member will speak, so long as that Honourable Member speaks within the Rules of this House. I think that it is a measure of arrogance for any honourable Member, whether he is on this side or that side, to attempt to castigate either one of those sides for the length of time which they take while a Presiding Officer is sitting to determine a particular issue.
3.35 p.m.

The honourable Member has stated something that is not a fact. He has every right to be as offended as he wishes to be on any issue. But he said that the right honourable Member for St. John (Rt. Hon. E. W. Barrow) called an honourable Member on that side a bastard. And he said further that I sat here and heard that.

The truth is, Sir, that I did not sit here and hear that. What the right honourable Member said was that he, the right honourable Member, was not a bastard.

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: By inference, you clown!)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Whatever a man wishes to say about himself, I believe that freedom of speech still allows a man to say it.

The honourable Member sits there now in all of his wrath, and he, in turn, is going to attack me because I sat here while an honourable Member was on his feet speaking. I do not know whether he wanted me to get up, what he wanted me to get up and do, get up and say. I do not understand.

The honourable Member is wrong if he is talking about the attitude of the Democratic Labour Party to illegitimate children. It was this party, this political party, that removed the stigma from illegitimate children in this country.

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: He is a joker.)

Aside.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have allowed the honourable Member to respond to statements made by the honourable Leader of the House. I am not going to allow any further debate unless it is to deal with the adjournment of the House.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I allowed it to be continued while I searched for the relevant precedent on this matter.

This debate on what happened during the sitting is now at an end. If Members want to debate why the House should not be adjourned until the date proposed by the Leader of the House, they may proceed.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I am saying, Sir, that it is perfectly in order for the business of this Honourable House for any honourable Member to speak for the allotted time which has been granted to that honourable Member, so that the business of the House may proceed.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have allowed you sufficient time to respond to the honourable Member.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I appreciate Your Honour's ruling.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House, in moving the adjournment, took issue with certain things that happened today. I have allowed you time to respond.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I appreciate Your Honour's ruling, and I bow to the Chair.

Thank you for your kindness.

The question that the House do now stand adjourned until Tuesday, December 13, 1983 at 12.00 o'clock noon was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

3.39 p.m.

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