

THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1981 – 86

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, December 13, 1983

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 12.15 p.m. o'clock on Tuesday, December 13, 1983.

PRESENT

His Honour C. L. Bolden, LL.B., (Deputy Speaker)
Hon. L. S. Craig, (Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House)
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)
Mr. B. M. Taitt, B.A. (Hons.), M. A., LL.B. (Hons.)
Hon. DeL. O. Bradshaw, (Minister of Labour, Social Security, Sport and Community Services)
Mr. L. L. Sisnett, (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Tourism)
Hon. Dr. R. L. Cheltenham, M.A., M.Sc., (Econ.), (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs)
Mr. R. E. Brathwaite
Mr. A. Truss

Prayers were read by Archdeacon F. A. Cayless.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN and Hon. H. deB. FORDE entered the Chamber and took their seats.

MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of the meeting of December 6, 1983.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of December 6, 1983 be taken as read.

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

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN entered the Chamber and took his seat.

PAPERS LAID

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance I am commanded to lay the following:

Statements showing Net Customs and Excise Receipts for 2 months ended 31st May, 1983.

Statements showing Net Customs and Excise Receipts for 3 months ended 30th June, 1983.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to lay the following:

The Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Board of Tourism for the year ended March, 1983.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: On behalf of the Minister of Legal Affairs I am commanded to lay the following:

The Law Revision (Rectification of Omissions) Order, 1983.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD entered the Chamber and took his seat.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

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

Resolution to approve the compulsory acquisition of land at Trents, St. James to provide a right of way to the Pumping Station.

Resolution to approve the compulsory acquisition of land at Retreat Road, St. Peter for the relocation of houses affected by the construction of the Speightstown By-Pass Road.

A Bill to amend the Companies Act.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

On motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, a Bill to amend the Companies Act was read a first time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GUARANTEE OF THE BOND ISSUE IN THE SUM OF \$10 000 000 UNDER THE SUGAR INDUSTRY (SUPPORT PRICE) ACT, 1982

Order No. 4 was called – To move the passing of the 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 Price) Act, 1982.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM (Christ Church East Central): Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will recall that last year, in response to conditions in the sugar industry, caused by low output and inadequate prices in 1981 and 1982, Government, for the first time, introduced a price support scheme for the sugar industry.

This year we are again introducing a price support scheme. I wish to say at the outset that this is an index of the Government's support for the sugar industry, Government's recognition of its importance in the Barbadian economy, and Government's determination to ensure that the industry is made modern and viable.

Before getting on to the details of the price support scheme, however, I think it necessary to put the initiatives being taken in the industry into perspective and disabuse the minds of the public and, more important I think in this regard, the minds of the Opposition in regard to a lot of the matters surrounding sugar.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES entered the Chamber and took his seat.

Sugar, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a matter in Barbados that is scarcely ever discussed objectionally. It has a long association with slavery and the plantation system and some politicians use the occasion whenever there is discussion on sugar for a lot of political posturing and empty rhetoric.

You will recall that last week, the right honourable Member for St. John (Rt. Hon. E. W. Barrow), in an attempt to anticipate this debate, said that we were doing no more than the sugar barons, in this country, and that the sugar industry is obsolete and obsolescent. We now know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the right honourable Member for St. John and the Leader of the Opposition was only demonstrating his pronouncedly moribund mentality, and indicating the extent to which he has learnt nothing over the years – and forgotten nothing, too.

He was doing no more than repeating the demagogic and devious lines which he used to utter in this country in the 1950s. He was doing no more than demonstrating, for all to see, once again, that the Democratic Labour Party has no interest in the sugar industry and, given the opportunity again, they would force its demise, while at the same time not knowing what to put in its place.

12.25 p.m.

I am not ashamed to say that we, the Barbados Labour Party, have always had a policy in relation to the government of sugar in this country. That policy has been consistent, it has been progressive, it has been humane.

Without going too far back in the past, I just wish to remind this House that it was only after 1976, when this Government came to office, that a study was commissioned, which has since come to be known as the McGregor Report, that looked into the problems of the sugar industry, problems that were largely caused by the former Government. Because you will recall that they literally dismembered the body of the sugar industry, by allowing a reckless policy of speculation in land in this country whereby dozens of estates were taken out of production and were allowed to lie idle until someone could come along and give the owners a good price for these lands. What that did was to cut into the critical mass of the industry, an industry that is characterised by a high fixed cost, and that pushed up the unit cost of production and presented the industry with a very unprofitable profile.

In addition, you plunged the industry into low morale and depression when in 1975, using the Sugar Export Levy, which you introduced, you extracted \$30 million from the sugar industry, put \$15 million in the

Treasury, and only ploughed back \$2 million in the industry by providing some mechanical scheme.

So in 1976, as indeed was the case, we found an industry characterised by low morale and acute depression. It was, to a large extent, the result of the fifteen years of no policy which the Democratic Labour Party had demonstrated in relation to the sugar industry of this country. But the first thing we did, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we set up the McGregor Commission that looked at the industry and recommended how best it might be placed on a modern and viable footing, and made to survive into the 21st century.

The view has always been expressed that the problems in the industry are somehow externally induced. That is only partially true. The only externally-induced problem that we have in relation to the sugar industry in Barbados today is the fact that we have no control over the movement of the currencies in which we are paid, particularly the European units of account, that basket of currency in which we are paid for some 50,000 tonnes to 55,000 tonnes of our sugar. The price on the World Market scarcely affected us, because in recent years we have not had enough output to serve on the World Market. We have had only enough output to meet our quota commitments.

The problems have largely been of our own creation: the lack of policy in the years preceding 1976 and the almost deliberate plunging of the industry into depression; the fact that we did not succeed in addressing, until recently, the burnt cane problem: the fact that we have in recent years been starting the crop far too late, which always has an adverse effect on the succeeding crop; the fact that too many canes are dropped along the wayside on the way to the factory, while too many stalks remain in the ground. All of these are problems of our own creation and that has got to be understood when we are talking about sugar.

A large number of the problems are within our competence, and we have to exert and exercise ourselves in dealing, successfully, with these problems.

But getting back, following the McGregor Report, we have been implementing in the last few years, on a steady basis, a series of reforms which reflect nothing but credit on this Government, and which are all designed to make the industry modern and viable.

The first major reform to which I wish to refer is the collapse of the old levy system and the fact that we have now put the levy funds to productive ends, while at the same time keeping a levy for provident funds. That is really to provide pensions and funeral benefits for those workers who are now retired, but formerly worked in the sugar industry; who retired so early that

they could not take advantage of the National Insurance provisions. We introduced, too, a new feature by way of a levy system, and that is the financing of the Research and Development Committee of the sugar industry.

When we took office in 1976, a large quantum of levy funds was on paying deposits at commercial banks, and not being used for productive purposes. We set up the Sugar Industry Capital Investment Fund, which is a revolving fund, a Small Holders Mechanisation Fund, which is another revolving fund; the Sugar Stock Financing Fund, another revolving fund; the Sugar Industry Scholarship Fund, which is being financed by a one time appropriation; the Sugar Policy Research Fund, which again has been financed by a one time appropriation.

You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we gave direct grants to the Agricultural Development Corporation so as to allow them to get on with the pilot scheme for small holder mechanisation. That was the first major step that we took in the sugar industry. We collapsed the out-of-date levy system and we used the money for productive ends.

The second thing that we did, Sir, which is of major importance, is the introduction of changes in the cane pricing formula, as a result of which we compensate growers not only for output but also for costs. We recognised here that an efficient producer, wherever located, ought to be properly rewarded. In this regard, we were doing no more than most modern agricultural communities have always done, such as Australia, Canada and the European Economic Community, and that is to compensate farmers for locational differences — compensate them for efficiency regardless of where they are located, whether in poor rainfall areas or good rainfall areas, whether in areas of good soil or poor soil. In so doing, we corrected a major inequity that had been in existence in the sugar industry for many, many years.

The extraneous matter price adjustment is also another major reform which ought to be noted. This cured a growing price distortion in the sugar industry resulting from technological changes.

There was a time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thirty years or so ago, when there was little or no extraneous matter going to the factories in the canes. The canes were all hand cut and all hand laden. But we now have different systems of cutting and loading, and more and more we have the canes being mechanically-loaded, even though we still have a large amount hand cut.

By having a unit price, it meant that the clean cane growers, if I may put it that way, hand-cutters, were virtually financing the dirty cane growers, and this extraneous matter price adjustment formula now makes

sure that that inequity is removed. The producers of clean cane, who were subsidising the growers of dirty cane, now find that they are being rewarded for producing clean cane.

12.35 p.m.

(Dr. R. C. HAYNES: They can wash the canes.)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Another major reform which we brought about was the introduction of a green cane incentive scheme. You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that for many years we in Barbados suffered from the problem of burnt canes. This reached a high point about two years ago when something like 27 per cent of the cane fields and of the canes that went to the factory were actually destroyed or affected by cane fires. This has been a problem that has been going on for many years in this country and has contributed, to a significant degree, to the decline in production over the years.

We decided that this matter of burnt canes had to be addressed at the level of the pockets of the personnel related to the industry — that an incentive had to be created for green canes and a disincentive for burnt canes. As a result of this, there was incentive, a pronounced gap between the green canes and the burnt canes — not a marginal gap, one that makes sense.

Last year we saw a reduction from 27 per cent burnt to four per cent. We believe that, with the fine-tuning which we are introducing as a linkage to this price support scheme this year, that figure could be further reduced.

In addition, we insisted on the restructuring of the insurance scheme, and so far as it affected burnt canes. We felt that 1981 was a bad year, a year of low prices, and there was virtually some incentive arising from the way the fire insurance policy is structured for owners to have their canes burnt. And we succeeded last year, as a result of pressing that linkage to the price support scheme, in having the fire insurance policies completely recast, to the extent that there is now no advantage to any owner in having his canes burnt.

All of these, Sir, are but few of the major changes which have taken place in the sugar industry in recent years. I just want to mention another of them, that is the fact that in the sugar industry today, we have the beginnings of a modern corporate structure, run on strong management principles.

You would recall that for many years we had the Barbados Sugar Producers' Association and we also had Barbados Sugar Factories Limited, two organizations, one dealing with production at the field level and the other one dealing with production at the factory level. The view of the industry as a co-ordinated whole, with a close

relationship between field and factory, was not appreciated. Now, today, we have one entity, a modern corporate structure, Barbados Sugar Industry Limited.

You will not believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that up to about two, three years ago, they did not even have a qualified accountant being responsible for the management of their financial affairs. We have insisted that the industry must be modernized, not only at the technical level but also at the management level. So today we have Barbados Sugar Industry Ltd., a modern, corporate structure being run on modern management principles.

So the role of the Government in the last few years, certainly since 1976 and since the McGregor Commission, has been a consistent one of guiding the industry towards new levels of innovation and change, all designed to make the industry viable, to make it modern, to increase output where possible, and to reduce inefficiency.

This record, as I said at the very outset, Mr. Deputy Speaker, stands in stark contrast to what the Democratic Labour Party did. We know of the famous cane blade speech, that they looked forward to the day when there would not be a single cane blade in this country.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: I expect Craig to say that)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: They said all of that to add to the decline of the morale in the industry, and by their reckless land policy, they seriously dismembered the body of the industry and cut directly into the notion of critical mass, causing inefficiencies and all sorts of distortions to grow up in the sugar industry of this country.

If, today, morale is high in the industry, if, today changes are being introduced and the industry is being modernized, it is all as a result of the guidance and the initiatives of the Barbados Labour Party. And I hope that the people of this country and the people in the sugar industry will appreciate who are their friends, and I hope they will also know where they can get support and guidance, positive and constructive.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: You can have the sugar producers.)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: And I hope that they will know, too, that the Democratic Labour Party is rigidly opposed to the continuation of a successful sugar industry in this country, whilst at the same time having no thoughts whatsoever about what to do with the land in place of sugar.

Aside.

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sandy is not in that.)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: They would like to see no doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, repeats of Sandford....

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Neil's)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Neil's

(Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Rowan's.)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: and Rowan's.

Asides.

(Hon. H. B. ST. JOHN: I am not going to tell them, Richie. I am not going to tell them.)

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Members will please remember Standing Order 33 (c).

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: We need, too, Sir, to set the Record straight in relation to another matter.

The sugar industry in this country is owned by all Barbadians, and they are not all white Barbadians either. The notion that the sugar industry is owned by sugar barons is a continuing myth being propagated by the Democratic Labour Party.

Laughter.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: The ownership profile in the sugar industry has changed dramatically in recent years, and there are a lot of blacks who own sugar estates today. In addition, large numbers of companies owning the sugar estates are public companies.

Laughter.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: It is wrong, therefore, to give the impression that when we deal with the sugar industry, we are dealing with a handful of white people, or that these sugar owners are living like barons. It is far from that. The notion of barons in the sugar industry is absolutely mistaken, and is no doubt intended to do nothing more than mislead the public of this country.

I turn now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the specifics of the price support scheme. The first thing that needs to be said is that it is done for the second time by way of off-budget financing. No one ought to leave here today with the impression that the Government is taking money from the Treasury of this country and giving the sugar farmers by way of price support. The price support is done by way of off-budget financing, through a Government guaranteed bonds issue floated by Barbados Sugar Factories Ltd. All that we are doing, in layman terms, is backing the loan for the sugar industry. The sugar industry has to pay back the money.

12.45 p.m.

Aside.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: By 1990 this particular bond issue must be fully redeemed. Thus far, they have met all the interest payments, and by March next year I think they would have paid back some \$5 million in principal on last year's bond support. The money is there in the Sinking Fund, and you ought to appreciate that.

The support scheme last year is very similar to the support scheme this year. Both schemes are being done through a Government bond issue floated by Barbados Sugar Factories Limited. Last year the support was at the level of 92.5 cents per kilogramme of sugar, or \$925 per tonne. This year it is at the level of 87.5 cents per kilogramme or \$875 per tonne of sugar. I need to spend just a minute explaining this difference which, in many respects, is more apparent than real, because, in net terms, the producer will get very little less by way of price support this year than what he got last year. But this year we have had an increased tonne scheme to a tonne of sugar, an improvement in the T.C.T.S. formula. That allows us to support at a lesser level.

In addition, the point has got to be made repeatedly that the resources in Barbados are not infinite. They are finite, and to that extent, we have got to set realistic levels. The industry has also got to appreciate that there is a limit to the amount of debt that it can absorb, even though we are anxious to help them by way of price support and the floating of a bond issue. The industry must recognise that if we help them by so much that we plunge them into too much debt, we are, in the end, doing no more than injuring them.

Last year all the support was in the form of a loan, which was in part convertible into an advance, depending on the output performance of the subsequent years. We found that last year many small farmers, the majority of them, were utterly adversely affected to taking up the price support. When we looked closer at these small farmers, many of whom produced less than 10 tonnes of canes per year, and many of whom who would have qualified for the conversion of the loan into a grant if they had taken up the loan, we recognised that it makes little sense to continue to offer them price support by way of a loan and that we should give them an outright grant. So on this occasion, small farmers, defined as producers who sent less than 400 tonnes of gross canes to the factory in the last reaping season, will have their price support by way of an outright grant.

We think that this is important, because in recent years we have been witnessing a significant decline in the contribution of the small farmer to the total sugar output. There was a time, not too long ago, when their contribution was something like 15 per cent. We believe

that has now dropped to something like nine per cent, and the trend continues downwards.

Government is very concerned about arresting this downward trend in the production and the dropping contribution of the small farmer in the sugar industry. This is just one of seven measures which we are putting together, and have already put into play, to help the small farmer and to ensure that the small farmer continues to play his part in the contribution of sugar to the Barbados economy.

The situation is particularly worrying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because, in most cases, when the small farmer goes out of cane, he does not grow other crops and, as a result, continue to enjoy an income from their lands. Many of them who went out of sugar in recent years left the land idle, and it was therefore a total loss, both at the personal level and at the national level. So Government has got to be understandably concerned about the plight of the small farmer.

To some extent, the low prices obtaining in sugar is one factor, but there have also been other factors affecting the small farmer, particularly the difficulty of getting the canes cut and reaped and the fact that they are charged particularly exorbitant rates for the hauling of the canes.

We are calling on the industry itself to regulate the tariff for reaping and hauling — hauling in particular — so as to make sure that a few of the lorry men do not really exploit and take advantage of these small farmers. I am very hopeful, as a result of recent information from the industry, that they will be moving to that position very soon to make sure that the small farmers can get their canes cut and also carted at reasonable prices.

You will find, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that one of the specific linkages in this year's price support is the insistence on the part of Government that the industry engage at least three Liaison Officers adequately furnished with transport and communication equipment. They are to work directly with the small farmers and I hope that one problem, which results in staleness and loss of yield, will be corrected.

It is commonplace, as you well know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a small farmer to have his canes cut on a Saturday and five days after quite often still have canes on the ground ready to go to the factory. We feel there is need for better co-ordination between field and factory, particularly in an attempt to reduce the problem of staleness. These three additional Liaison Officers, Grow Liaison Officers they are called, will be dealing particularly with these problems and working with the small farmers.

12.55 p.m.

To deal specifically with some of the other elements of the price support for 1983, the grown share of the support element will be distributed applying the cane price formula and extraneous matter adjustment in the following manner:

- Growers with outstandings bank debts will have the money due to them credited to their respective bank accounts.
- Self financing growers will be paid directly this year as happened last year.
- Growers who ceased to operate their holdings for the production of sugar after the 1983 crop are barred from receiving the support element which may, however, be made available to any successor operating such holdings to produce sugar in 1984 and subsequent years.
- The loan conversion will be treated as income such as the taxes and they will be levied in the year in which they take place.
- The factories division of the Barbados Sugar Industries Limited would be considered as one producer for the purpose of calculating the loan conversion of the process this year.

I have already indicated that the Government guarantee of the 1983 bond issue is conditioned on the implementation of certain linkages by the Barbados Sugar Industries Limited. I mentioned the engagement of at least three Grow Liaison officers, and I ought to mention some additional linkages, which I think are important for the improvement and efficiency at the level of the field in the factory.

First the Barbados Sugar Industries Limited will have, as one of their conditions for the next crop, to install in addition water metering devices and scales in at least four of the six factories in operation across the country. It is for the 1984 crop and in all six factories by the 1985 crop. These devices are necessary to improve the process control in the factories and to improve the efficiency at the factory level.

The Green Cane Incentive Scheme, which was introduced last year, will be further fine-tuned this year by the provision of grants, if I may put it that way; the advance of monies to the sugar workers in the week preceding Easter and generally around the Easter period.

We have found over the years that Easter is the big holiday in the sugar sector in this country. It is the time when the sugar workers, both at the level of the field and factory, have money, and, as a result, can spend

generously. But over the years that we have been experiencing burning, we have always had a bulge in the number of cane fires around Easter time, resulting from the fact that Easter week was a short week and income was depressed, particularly at the time when it was most needed.

Many workers have traditionally resorted to burning to make sure they could get some additional income during and around the Easter period. Knowing that this is the problem and knowing that this is the basis, we have decided that the industry should give the workers an advance on their wages around the Easter period, so as to make sure that in the Easter week, for example, they do not earn less than they normally earned. The industry will take back out the advance in the following week.

We regard this as an important bit of fine-tuning with the Green Cane Incentive Scheme which was introduced last year, and we are looking forward with great hope to future success.

We have also insisted that steps be taken by the industry leaders to assist the Small Holders Scheme generally, and to contribute to the transfer of the ownership of the plantation tenancies.

You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that about three years ago we passed a very revolutionary bit of social legislation, which in effect solved the long problem, a century and more long, with plantation tenancies — what to do with those persons who live on plantation tenancies and who did not, and seemingly could not, own the lands on which they were living, and on which their fathers and their forefathers lived. We introduced legislation whereby those lots have to be, they are bound to be, transferred to existing tenants at nominal or 'pepper corn' rates. But it is a fact that today large numbers of tenants on those tenancies have not got title deeds. We feel that the industry can make a contribution to speeding up this process of transfer of ownership.

Some sections of the industry have recruited their own lawyers and their own surveyors in an attempt to speed up the process. Certainly this has been done by the Barbados Shipping and Trading Company. Perhaps other sectors of the industry may wish to do likewise in circumstances where tenants have been lazy in coming forward. They perhaps ought to put pressure on them and encourage them to take whatever initiatives are necessary to speed up this process.

We are appealing to the industry leaders, the owners of the plantations to make sure that this important bit of social legislation is implemented, and that the workers working on plantation tenantry lands get the title deeds in their hands.

The final thing I wish to refer to is the job classification scheme in the sugar industry. You will recall that, about three years ago, it was one of the conditions of the wage negotiations agreement between the sugar industry and the Workers Union that the industry needed to get on with the job classification scheme. Thus far, very little has been done.

We feel that it would improve industrial relations in the industry, and would add to the efficiency of the industry if a modern and up-to-date job classification scheme is introduced and implemented. So Government's support of the price scheme this year is linked to a modernisation of the industry's job classification system.

There is not much more that I wish to say by way of my opening remarks in presenting this Resolution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, except to say that we are looking forward to increased production in the industry.
1.05 p.m.

These measures are not only linked to modernising the industry and trying to maintain its viability, but they are also designed to stimulate increased production. Increased production is particularly important to the industry, which has so high a fixed cost. It is very important when you have an industry with a high fixed cost to have your maximum output if you are to reduce your unit cost and make your industry more efficient. So as Government supports the industry for the second time in its period of difficulty by way of backing the bond issue, as it were, we are appealing to the industry to make sure that they need to increase their planting at the very first opportunity so as to increase the total tonnage of cane which we will have available in the future.

The price support is not being given by way of taking up taxpayers' money. Not a cent of the taxpayers' money is involved, and that point needs to be emphasised. I very much hope that the early indications that the Opposition will wish to divide this House on this matter will not take place. It is important when we are dealing with national industries of such vital significance, like the sugar industry, that we have a bi-partisan support policy in this country. We may disagree about details of policy from time to time, but let us be all agreed on the necessity for national initiatives, particularly at times of national difficulty.

I am confident that there will be no particular divide, because my understanding of the Opposition, which is really out of touch with public opinion, is that they fly a kite to see where the wind is blowing. The kite was flown last week when the honourable Member for St. John, the Leader of the Opposition, attempted to initiate a debate on the sugar industry. He was hoping that he would have got support by John Public, but there was no support for him or for his view point — and there is none

now. So I do not expect that the Opposition will divide this House on this particular issue.

Their policy is really to lead from behind, not from in front. They are not sufficiently in touch and in tune to lead from in front. They hold tentative positions to see how the public will respond or not respond. On this one they have got no response from the public, so I very much expect that they will support, however critically they may appear to do so, this important Resolution before this House today.

I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE, Hon. H. deB. FORDE and Dr. R. C. HAYNES rose.

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Are you going to second it? Get up and second it, then!)

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: There are three honourable Members on their feet. Will somebody second the motion?

Hon. H. deB. FORDE (Christ Church West): I will give way to the honourable Minister, but I hope that you will note my place of speaking.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE (St. Andrew): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to second the Resolution and to give it my endorsement. I regret very much that at this time the right honourable Member for St. John (Rt. Hon. E. W. Barrow) is not in his place. I certainly hope that he will be here, since I believe that, on that side, he stands out uniquely as the only person who would want to divide the House on an issue such as this. As a matter of fact, I believe that the strictures which he has levelled against the sugar industry over the years would very unlikely come from the Members present.

While I am not going overboard, like the honourable introducer, to appeal to the other side not to divide the House, I would very hopefully expect that they will not seek to do it. But the Government is never unwilling to face the question of a division in Parliament on an issue, no matter what that issue may be. Whenever we come here to address issues, we do that against the background of our conviction that we have a public duty to perform, and no matter what the climate out there might look like, as the honourable Leader of the House said just now, you have to sometimes seek to lead public opinion on matters and not to follow the views expressed.

This party has never been unwilling to set the pattern and to lead when it becomes necessary. Unfortunately, the sugar industry has been looked at over the years in terms of colour and who owns the industry. It is unfortunate that it is so. I cannot get off it because it is something which is still present today.

Whenever you get up to say something about the sugar industry, the right honourable Member for St. John and the honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt), who is now saying it is a fact, seem to be somewhat peeved over the fact that something is being done in the interest of sugar. But I would like the honourable Members opposite to realise that there was a time when the sugar industry in this country employed over 30 000 people. It is not so today, but nonetheless it employs a considerable amount of people.

There is something further which honourable Members opposite would not wish to be known, but which it is necessary to say. It was on the basis of sugar that you were able to go to London in 1966 and convince the British Government that you would be able to carry on the affairs of an independent sovereign state. That is the position. Outside of sugar, you would have had no hope. It was then when sugar was reigning king, when we have a lot of respect and admiration for it, when it was regarded as the lifeblood of this country, and therefore I continue to have that faith in the industry, an industry which is vital to the economic development and well-being of this country.

Sugar has its ups and its downs, its ebbs and its flows. But there is one thing which is clear, that we can always at some time or another in our national development, as cited by the honourable introducer here today, depend upon sugar to bail us out. It has done a wonderful job for us over the years, and I have no doubt it will do so for us again.

It was in 1637 that sugar was introduced into Barbados as an industry, and before that we had such crops as tobacco.....

Mr. B. M. TAITT (St. Michael West): On a point of order; the honourable Member is misleading the House. It is not true that the sugar cane was introduced here in 1637.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member must not accuse another honourable Member of misleading the House. If the honourable Member wants to correct this honourable Member on anything he said, he will have ample time so to do when he gets an opportunity to speak.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Not 1637.)

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please! The honourable Member can make the correction at the appropriate time. The honourable Member for St. Andrew will continue.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would stand corrected by the historians, but not by the honourable Member who has just intervened. Even then I

would not stand to be corrected on this matter, because I am very sure that my figures are correct. Before that there was tobacco, indigo and nuts. Those were the items that were grown before 1637, along with bananas and such foodstuffs, which were used for food to feed the people who were then on the land.

1.15 p.m.

In that early time the holdings in Barbados were not large holdings as they subsequently developed to be. They were owned by people who came out from London, England and who enjoyed the privileges of the settlers at the time. So there were small units of land until sugar was introduced in 1637, and when the sugar industry was introduced, then they moved towards the widespread cultivation of the sugar cane industry. I am sure that the Member will also want to correct me if I said that the first real bumper crop that this country had was somewhere in 1875 – I want to hear what he has to say about that – when a large amount of sugar was at that time reaped in Barbados, something like 63 800 tons.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sugar has always played a very significant role. It was during the time that the Democratic Labour Party was in office, a very long period, between 1961 to about 1966, when you had an average sugar yield of about 172 000, tonnes. That was a very good and reliable tonnage for any country that is very dependent upon sugar and the sugar industry to have. They were able to buttress their economy on the basis of production of that average tonnage of sugar over that period of time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the sugar industry fell into very serious problems as a result of the indiscriminate cutting up of land in this island.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: That is not true.)

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Over 5 000 hectares of land were cut up in this island during the regime of the Democratic Labour Party, ostensibly to sell to the present proprietors in this island. But that was not the purpose. The purpose was to give their friends, who were then the owners of the plantations in this country, the opportunity to make money. Places like Cane Garden, Frere Pilgrim, Neil's, Rowan's, Sandford, the Belle.....

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Sandy Lane.)

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Sandy Lane, if you want me to say that. I can say anything you want me to say. If you want me to say that, I say Sandy Lane. But Sandy Lane was not cut up in the way that these areas were cut up to sell to friends. Sandy Lane was cut up to make it a worthwhile unit of the tourist industry.

There were no developments at all in the areas you cut up because, except for the areas that were released

for housing in Cane Garden and places like Frere Pilgrim, where people have three and four acre lots of land on which they are doing absolutely nothing, which is a total disgrace to an agricultural society like ours. That is not marginal estate.

Sandy Lane can be regarded as a marginal estate, and, certainly, it was. You cannot say this of Neil's, you cannot say this of Rowans, you cannot say this of the Belle. Not only that, the Belle lies within the water zone, and although it lies within the water zone, and you were well advised that it lay within the water zone, you did absolutely nothing to protect that zone. But you hear, as soon as this Government brings a Bill or Resolution in here that you believe is within the slightest reach of the water zone, you get extremely critical of the Government.

We have the information and we are going to put it forward whenever the time comes. We are told constantly that the Government is only helping the sugar industry. Nonsense!

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been helping all industries in this country. The manufacturing industry that is now shouting and saying Government is not doing sufficient, we have been providing money to help them, through the Barbados Development Bank. They can borrow money.

The money which the sugar industry is getting at the moment is not money that the Government is giving them. The Government is guaranteeing the loan. The money which the tourist industry, the manufacturing sector and the small business people in Barbados are getting is money which the Government is disbursing itself. So I cannot understand the argument that the Government is only assisting the sugar industry.

Am I to understand that the other side is so totally unconcerned with development in the sugar industry that they do not want to see it live? Is your respect for the industry such that you want to see it destroyed overnight?

The honourable introducer of this Resolution adverted to the fact of the burning of sugar canes in this country and the measures taken to arrest such burning. I would truly like, when the Opposition rises to speak, to hear them address the issues and come up with solutions. Do not only be critical. We want to hear you coming in tango, if the sugar industry is in trouble. We want to know what you would do, as an alternative Government, to assist them in the troubles which they are in, bearing in mind that over the years, they have provided the funds which you have squandered.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: We did it in 1964.)

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: The funds which you have used to buy Bath. And tell me if Bath was a viable estate! I want you to tell me the purpose for which you involved yourself in Bath. They have also provided the money with which you were able to buy the North Point. That is what I want you to come and tell me! That is what I am dealing with!

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: We are dealing with sugar.)

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: The sugar industry gave support to this country all over the years, so that we were able to do a number of things that were done in this country: the roads that were built, the schools that were built over the years, the new hospital which you got, the assistance with the Deep Water Harbour. All of that.

(Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Housing.)

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Housing, your good network of roads – that is what the sugar industry has done!

There was a time when there was no tourism, there was a time when there was no manufacturing industry. The only thing you had was sugar. This Barbados Labour Party, as a result of steady progress towards the structuring of the economic position of the country in a manner which would provide for the needs of the people over the years, introduced not only a positive approach to the tourist industry, the manufacturing industry and all the modern-day industries in this country, but has continued to give its very positive support to the sugar industry.

There is no point saying that you are going to allow one sector of the economy to flourish and destroy another sector. It will not work. If we are to import our needs – and, of course, we must import; we have to import most of the things we have and use in Barbados – we must find money to import the items which we bring from outside. And sugar forms a very important component of the foreign exchange in this country, which pays for our imports.

1.25 p.m.

The time has come, in my view when the Opposition should stop playing games on the question of sugar and put forward a very positive approach with respect to what it will do, if ever at all it is to return to power in this country. No person is going to invest their money in an industry in which they feel unsafe and unhappy. When you tie up millions of dollars in any business, you expect that you are going to have a long period in which you will be able to salvage the amount of money which you put into the industry.

The sugar industry cannot feel that safe and secure when you can hear statements coming from the other side, particularly from the Leader of the Opposition, as

if you are just throwing money into the rich people's pockets: "There is no need to give the planter-class that money," and all types of nonsense.

He says that he came from the plantocracy, but he is a socialist by conviction. I do not know what socialist he is. I believe that there are many people in all walks of life, be they from the plantocracy, the merchant class, the professional class, or whatever, who might have socialist convictions. They are some people who are from the lower class who have capitalist ideas and capitalist convictions. But I do not believe that we should import all that into the debate on an industry such as sugar, or, for that matter, on any matter which is of vital concern to the overall development of this country.

Barbados is not what it is today because there is some person who has divined that it should be so, beyond God. Barbados is so because of the thrift and the hard work of our foreparents, who have not only worked in agriculture but in all facets of life. And there is something I want to make abundantly clear, which I believe that this is known by all Barbadians. No matter what your professional status is in this country, no matter who you are today, you only have to look as far back as a grandfather or a great grandfather to find an agricultural labourer or a fisherman. It is as simple as that.

So when we believe that we have gone far from the land and have gone far from the roots, we are certainly mistaken. I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that our roots are in the land. I would hope that in the fulness of time all Barbadians will go back to the land. I do not mean that, by going back to the land, they must go on the plantations and work land on the plantations. But, of course, wherever there is money, there is no disgrace. The money which goes into the doctors' pockets is no different than the money that goes into the agricultural labourers' pockets. Where there is money, people should work for it.

In my view, people should get themselves once again totally involved in agriculture, whether they work for somebody or work for yourself. I know for a fact that, constantly travelling over the length and breadth of this country, I can still see tracts of land lying idle. It is not idle because there is no incentive. The Government has given all the incentives possible. But I know what is wrong. It is that the people were so brainwashed in the past that they should not be involved in agriculture, that it is the devil's work, it is an area which the slaves were brought here to develop, and therefore when you do it, you only see the action of a slave – and there is nothing else.

If I am the product of slaves and want to be in agriculture, I see nothing wrong in that. Nothing whatsoever is wrong with that! I know that there is hardly a

person who would oppose the plantation system. There is hardly a person who would oppose agriculture, who does not want a piece of land to put a house on or to have their own kitchen garden or flower garden. They still want to get back there. They still want to be independent, to feel that they are part of the soil.

This holds true with Barbadians who live abroad, who wish to come back to Barbados in some point in time. They seek always to maintain a piece of land in this country. Sometimes when I see the plots of idle land and I feel unhappy, I take the view that it might be that the plot of land is owned by a Barbadian living abroad and is lying there until the person is able to come back.

I would like to see coming out of all these discussions a formula whereby we can take the positive decision — and, of course, Government has already taken a positive decision — that we cannot only have an agricultural industry, as of necessity we must do, but that we will be able to approach all industries in this country in a positive way, not only to help the people who are directly involved as owners, but in the interest of the workers who are employed in all of these industries because there is nothing better for a country than to have total employment.

I, myself, deplore the fact that at times you see large numbers of people not working in various communities. It is happening all over the world, but because it is happening all over the world, it does not mean that we should be happy it is happening here. We must feel sad. We must feel upset. We must feel sorry for those people who are laid off occasionally as a result of industries not operating to full capacity, or in the form in which they should operate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when these problems arise, the problems arise not because of Government's unwillingness to see things done, but because of circumstances over which we have no control. These are mostly external factors which caused the problems which the Government experience in terms of the unemployment within industries in this country. But we are working towards the resolution of these problems so that we will be able to have the factories in full operation once again.

I consider that this matter of supporting the sugar industry is a very important one, and it should be given the full support not only of this House, but of all people in this country.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES and Hon. H. deB. FORDE rose.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have two honourable Members on their feet. Will both Members please sit. The honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE (Christ Church West): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thought it right that I should intervene in this debate, particularly as I was not in here last week when some anticipation of this debate took place on another Resolution and I did not have the opportunity to deal with some of the misrepresentations put forward by the right honourable Member for St. John (Rt. Hon. E. W. Barrow) on his view of agriculture and the sugar industry as a whole.

Let me begin by saying that the Barbados Labour Party has been firmly committed to the consent of the people of Barbados on an enlightened policy towards the sugar industry. From its manifesto of 1981, a copy of which has been made a document of this House, I read from page 7:
1.35 p.m.

"The Barbados Labour Party recognises that agriculture in our island, limited as it is by the small land size and relative unavailability of a willing labour force, will inevitably occupy a smaller percentage of the Gross Domestic Product as the manufacturing and service sectors (including tourism) expand. The party does not however believe that agricultural output should fall in absolute terms as happened under the DLP. Our Party therefore reaffirms its commitment to a strong, vibrant and well diversified agriculture growing with the economy and continuing to contribute to the balance of payments."

Specifically on the issue of the sugar industry, the party enunciated a policy which was not only enlightening, but far sighted. It said this:

"The sugar industry has the greatest addition of local value of any economic activity carried on in Barbados and is therefore still potentially our most economically useful earner of foreign exchange. Its viability has diminished in recent years because production has been allowed to fall below levels at which the reaping and factory systems can operate satisfactorily. This has partly been due to the policy of the DLP in permitting the abandonment of good agricultural land and subdividing it for the purpose of land speculation so that over 12 000 acres of land have been taken out of agriculture. The Barbados Labour Party has already reversed this iniquitous policy of the Democratic Labour Party by bringing Government lands back into production; by prohibiting the further wanton sub-division of agricultural land; and by introducing tax incentives and penalties to encourage the bringing back of land into production. This policy will be continued, and the Party's further proposals are:

- To make ownership of the sugar industry more democratic by purchasing enough shares in the

factory-owning company, Barbados Sugar Factories Limited to make the Government the largest shareholder. These shares will be held by the Agricultural Development Corporation and by the Government on its own behalf and on behalf of the small farmers.

- To ensure that modern ploughing and other mechanical cultivating equipment is made fully available to all growers, large and small alike, by an investment programme to be managed through Government financial institutions and the Agricultural Development Corporation. (The implementation time for these proposals will be 1981-1982).
- To carry out a long term programme to increase sugar production to at least 150 000 tonnes annually by means of improving cultivation techniques; reshaping all sugar fields to make them more suitable for mechanical harvesting; and by expanding the scope of mechanical cane cutting and loading.

I believe that that is a policy which can be adopted by all Governments of this country for several years to come. There is no doubt that the sugar industry has in many respects been a cyclical industry. From its inception in 1641, it has gone through very many cycles. But despite the cyclical up-turns and downturns, this industry has largely contributed to the modern Barbados which we know.

Any objective analysis of the sugar industry will regret, of course, the serious disadvantages which accompanied the building up of the industry, particularly the introduction of slavery into this island, with the concomitant historical hang-ups which it has left among some of our people. But I think that we are very far removed, certainly in this Parliament and in this country, from the worse effects of the plantation mentality.

There is no doubt that the legacy of slavery will, to a large extent, still affect the attitudes of some people. But the ownership of the sugar industry has shifted considerably, as indeed the ownership patterns in Barbados have shifted over the past few years.

Very many of us fail to analyse, objectively, the shift in ownership patterns in our own country. The Government is the biggest owner of lands, both cane and other agricultural lands in Barbados, and it holds those lands on behalf of the people of Barbados, from the working class up to the retired class. So today it is a fact that the people of Barbados own the larger proportion of the agricultural lands in this country. They are no longer held by a few select people, whether expatriate or local.

The second significant shift in land ownership in Barbados has been that some of the agricultural lands are now held by companies, which are in themselves, by and large, owned by conglomerates belonging to the people.

It is a fact that the insurance companies own part of the industry. For instance, the Barbados Mutual Life Assurance Association, one of the most genuine co-operative efforts, owns a substantial proportion of shares in companies which in turn own the sugar industry. And thousands, including several persons in this Assembly today, not only the Members but others, are policy holders of the Barbados Mutual.

The honourable Member for St. Michael South Central (Dr. R. C. Haynes) points at me, and I certainly carry policies in the Barbados Mutual. But each and everyone of us in this capacity own part of the assets of the sugar industry, regardless of whether we like it or not. This covers several policy holders in this Assembly and among the public, small people and big people. In this respect, it is not only Mutual Life that is involved in the industry. If you look at other life insurance companies, local as well as non-national, they too are holding substantial proportions of the share ownership of companies which own the lands in Barbados.

Now the failure has been the failure of the academic people in our community, some of our own people, to recognise that the pattern of ownership has changed. And we have not followed up on the shift in ownership patterns by a shift of management control. That is where the problem is.

It is nonsense for people to go around saying, as the right honourable Member for St. John has said, that the sugar industry is owned by a few white select barons. I think he has failed to do his homework, or he is really only making a point for political purposes. Ownership patterns in Barbados has shifted tremendously in the last 20 to 30 years.

Asides.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: It has shifted under both parties. I am not as partisan as some of the other honourable Members may want me to be. When the Democratic Labour Party is wrong, I will say that. But it is significant that, with the revolution of 1937, not only has there been a shift in political control in Barbados, but, although not at as rapid a pace, the economic control of Barbados has been shifting, and we have been slow in recognising the shift in the way it has been going. Sugar has been one such area.

Aside.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: The honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt) says that he cannot see it with the naked eye. I know that the honourable Member has a reasonably good brain. All that is happening is that he is not using it at the moment, because he can use his analytical powers, of which he is capable – and I know he has the capacity of good research – to monitor these movements. Indeed, unless both political parties monitor the movement, we are in great danger of putting forward the wrong attitude, in our leadership capacity, to the people of Barbados on vital issues such as this.

When I saw the Government last year taking a decision to support the sugar industry by passing the Sugar Industry Support Price Act and guaranteeing the issue of bonds, I was well satisfied that it was giving support, in a broad way, to an industry which was democratising at a faster rate than has been recognised by the people of this country.
1.45 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I consider that the fact that that issue of Bds \$17 million of bonds was fully supported within one day of the issue being on the market is evidence of the strong commitment of Barbadians to the sugar industry, and it is evidence of the recognition by Barbadians of the vital importance of the industry to Barbados.

Now, Sir, I do not believe that any honourable Member of this House has done an analysis of the persons who took up these bonds, but they range from the institutional investors, such as the insurance companies and the banks, to a series of small persons, including retired persons, widows. Particularly women of this kind have a lot more foresight than the men in this regard, the small widows, the people who have got a few dollars by way of severance pay and savings, who recognise that they were lending not only to get a benefit and a return on their investment, but were lending towards an industry which would secure an improvement, which would secure an economic return on their savings for the future.

I have no doubt that this new bond issue of \$10 million will be equally fully subscribed soon after it is made available to the public. That we as political leaders cannot recognise that the people see through our words and are able to analyse these matters for themselves, then I think we are short-sighted. If anybody wants evidence of the commitment of the people to the sugar industry, it was in the manner in which they responded to the bond issue.

What has been the effect of that bond issue last year? In my view, it went a long way towards underpinning the industry, and I would like to say even preventing its virtual collapse. That was most important. It would have been an economic, if not a sociological,

tragedy to this island had the sugar industry of Barbados collapsed completely, or reached the stage that it has reached in some other countries, including the Caribbean country of Trinidad and Tobago.

The industry still remains an employer in direct terms of some 7,000 Barbadians, and several others in indirect terms; it is still the main earner of foreign exchange; and, as the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central will admit in his contribution, it is an earner in which there is more local content than there is foreign content, and to that extent it is valuable to retain it.

I recognise that there were certain things which had to be done in the industry if the industry is to be seen in a new light, and I believe that the people most connected with the management of the industry have gotten around and tended to these matters.

I was very pleased to hear the honourable Minister of Agriculture advert to the change in the management structure at Barbados Sugar Industries Limited. They have wound up the two other companies and formed one association, one limited liability company in which ownership of the shares is open to anyone who owns agricultural land, and who will be producing cane or indeed producing any form of agriculture. In the process, the management structure is being overhauled, so that there could be the best management techniques available in the industry.

I am pleased to say that the industry has been fortunate to have had the guidance of people like Sir Erskine Ward, Sir Neville Osbourne as he is now, whom I would take this opportunity to congratulate on his knighthood, as well as the other distinguished presidents in the industry, people long past like Julian Mahon, Sir Archibald Cuke, and a whole host of Barbadians who have retired at the management level.

Let me not forget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the contribution which, despite the occasional controversy that may have occurred, has been made by the Workers Union and the workers themselves in this exercise. One of the most fortunate aspects of the total life of Barbados, and I think that history will record this in due course, even if it is not fully recognised, is that at the economic transitional period of our affairs, from 1961, in particular, up to now, we have had a Barbados Workers Union that has shown tremendous foresight in many respects. And we have been fortunate to have a leader such as Frank Walcott, who, despite the fact that at times he may appear very tough in his negotiations, in the long run recognises the economic reality of Barbados and is prepared to come to a decision in the interest of the island as a whole. That is why I do not lose faith.

One must recognise here that although the negotiations have not started seriously, the workers recognise the need for a vital sugar industry to be maintained as well. And although, as a union leader, his reaction to the Minister's statement for the negotiations to be concluded early was characteristic of what one would expect from a trade union leader, I have no doubt that Mr. Walcott had analysed the situation carefully, that both the employers' and the employees' organisations will take the Minister's statement very seriously, and that the negotiations for the new sugar agreement with the union will be concluded well ahead of the crop, and remove any question of annoyance by a few people, or any trouble which might cause some disagreement. That is very important for the next crop.

I was very pleased to hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the incidence of cane fires has been reduced from 27 per cent to four per cent. We have been plagued by cane fires in this industry. At one stage, indeed, I think the then Government, the Democratic Labour Party, considered that what was called "controlled burning" was the answer to the problem. It may well could have been the answer in a big country like Australia, even maybe in Trinidad where you have more land mass, but I think that it has been proved that the burning of cane has in the long run done more damage to decreasing the cane yield than anything else that has happened.

So the Government has to be congratulated on having inspired the Green Cane Incentive Scheme, which worked successfully last year. It led to an improvement in the earnings of the workers themselves and an improvement in the percentage of cane which was reaped green, and therefore an increase in the yield of cane juice and sugar cane and sucrose itself. It was worthwhile that this should happen.

It has been indicated to me that the time of interruption has come, but I wish to reserve my right to complete my speech at the end of the period.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is now 2 o'clock and I beg to move that this sitting be now suspended until 3 o'clock today.

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

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would like to warn persons in the Gallery that they must respect the dignity of this House. They must not stroll about *ad lib* when questions are being put.

The question that the sitting be now suspended until 3 o'clock, was put and resolved in the affirmative without

division, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the sitting accordingly.
2.00 p.m.

ON RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This sitting is now resumed. When the suspension was taken, the honourable Member for Christ Church West was speaking. At that time he had used twenty minutes of the allotted thirty minutes due to him. If he so desires, he may now continue for ten minutes.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If I may summarize. Among the points I made before the suspension was that one had to see the sugar industry as a changing industry, both in terms of management and the pattern of ownership. The pattern of ownership has shifted considerably from a few people to a position where it is now owned largely by the people of Barbados, through the Government being the major shareholder, and institutional investors, which included pensioners and people who owned insurance companies. By and large, a large number of Barbadians are now owning their own property.

I made the point that the evidence had showed that the last support was welcomed by the public, investors had taken up the amount rather quickly, and I said that that succeeded in forestalling the collapse of the industry, which is still a major exchange earner, as well as the employer of a large number of people.

I also said that already one could see some of the good effects of the Government's programme for the sugar industry by the reduction of the incidence of cane fires, as well as the change in management techniques and management structure at the Barbados Sugar Industries Limited.

I should also like to refer to another significant change, which I think will have far-reaching effects in the long run. This is to the method of reaping the crop.

It is a fact today that perhaps one quarter of the crop is reaped mechanically and in excess of 80 per cent, I think closer to 85 per cent, is loaded mechanically. Mechanization and technological changes are making their impact felt on agricultural production in Barbados. Therefore, we must begin to look at training methods which would take into effect these significant changes.

We will, perhaps by the turn of the century, find that the sugar industry is not characterized as an industry in which you carry cane on your head or on your back.

The industry, agriculture on the whole, can perhaps look forward to the days when the people who are coming into agriculture will be people who have passed through our schools, both at the primary and secondary levels, who see agriculture as a livelihood, who are prepared to adopt the new technological methods, and who will be earning a respectable living from agriculture.

Already, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this can be seen in some of the new managerial talent that has come to the fore. There are some of the schoolboys who have gone through Harrison College, did brilliantly, obtaining eight and nine 'O' Levels, have left school, done degrees in agriculture, who have also specialized in the use of mechanical equipment, and are now back into agriculture itself. These are not only people of a Caucasian complexion, but people who are also of a black complexion. I think that it augurs well for the new thinking about sugar and about agriculture in Barbados.

I am happy to see that the Community College as well as the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic have recognized the vital need to give a new educational image to agriculture so that we can remove the last vestiges and the hang-ups which we have about the association of sugar with the plantocracy, and with slavery in particular.

It is obvious that the price of producing sugar last year per unit cost would have been much higher than some previous years. Not only with the increase in inflation which occurred during the years, but because of the decrease in the tonnes of sugar produced.

I listened to the Minister with some care and I am pleased to hear him forecast that he is expecting a crop that is going to be some 23 000 tonnes, if not more, than what we produced last year. I understand from some of my friends in the sugar industry that we can expect in the region of 115 000 tonnes, on the assumption that the crop is reaped promptly and that the incidence of cane fires happen to remain low, if not lower than what it was in the last year.

I have been watching the futures' price, what is called the sugar future, the forecast of forward buying and forward selling. It seems to me, from all market trends, that if we can reach a production target to supply our traditional importers, people who give us guaranteed markets, and yet have a surplus for the World Market we will do better, because indications are that the World Market price of sugar will continue to shift upwards for the foreseeable future, particularly having regard to what has happened in Cuba and one or two other places.

I would not miss this opportunity, however, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to express my total dissatisfaction with the policy of the European Economic Community towards the price support which they give to their beet sugar

producers while, at the same time, having the niggardly attitude which they have adopted towards cane producers in the Caribbean and elsewhere.

There is no doubt that some aspects of agriculture in the Community are artificially propped up by price support schemes, just as the production of sugar in the southern United States is artificially propped up by price support schemes, some of which are discriminatory against sugar from the Third World, from the Caribbean in particular. The sort of quota restrictions, followed by the levy system on the tonnes of sugar imported into the United States, can sometimes fall heavily on Third World countries. At least the method of price support in Barbados does not have this ugly feature.

I know the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central sees the problem particularly from one major perspective, from the method of financing. His contention has always been that off-budget financing adds to the contingent liabilities of the Government and, therefore, one must take into account, no matter how marginally, calculating the Government's liability for the public debt.

I would like to say that the only institution which has failed in repaying debt guaranteed by the Government has been the Government statutory corporations, and only one private investor that I can recall, International Seafoods Limited. The history of International Seafoods Limited is not a case that anyone likes to point to, since I think it is one of the things that led to the direct downfall of the Democratic Labour Party and a shift of Government in 1976.

I am sure the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, if the opportunity ever presented itself, would not make the same gross errors that were made at that time, by the then Minister of Finance, in giving a guarantee to the private institution in the way it was given, an institution over which there was not even any control, certainly from the Government's point of view. At least in the sugar industry, the Government has some major control over what happens, by virtue of its ownership of a significant part of the industry.

Secondly, I am pleased to hear, and I know, that the industry has begun to repay the interest payments falling due on the first set of bonds.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member has now used up the allotted time.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: Yes, Sir. I am going to finish.

Even with no significant increase in the price of sugar on the World Market, I believe that this guarantee

is well founded. We must recognize that sugar is important to us, has always been, and will continue to be, and give it our total support in this House.

Applause

Dr. R. C. HAYNES (St. Michael South Central): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on this matter now before Parliament.

Certain remarks made at this point by the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central were ordered expunged from the Record by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.
3.15 p.m.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: In the past, the honourable Minister of Finance has introduced measures of this kind in Parliament. On this occasion the honourable Minister of Agriculture had his first opportunity to demonstrate not only to this Parliament but to the public at large, a command of his portfolio in the area of what I refer to as "the cane industry" in this country. Unfortunately, he allowed himself to be drawn into the area of politics, which proved extremely disappointing to me.

I wish on behalf of the Democratic Labour Party to dissociate the party from any remarks which may have been made by the honourable Minister, or any subsequent speaker on that side, which has any element suggestive of racial determinations in the positions taken by either side of this House. I am absolutely sure that no Member of this House would allow his position in relation to the sugar industry, or any other sector of Barbados, to be informed by consideration of race.

The second major disappointment was the fact that in the few minutes which he devoted to the relevant part of the Bill, that is the incentive elements and the conditionalities of the price support, he was so vague that it clearly indicated to me that he, himself, did not understand what were the elements of the price support which he was putting before Parliament; nor, indeed, the basic thinking behind the conditionalities attached to the price support scheme which his Government has foisted on him.

Sir, I believe that it is essential for the Record of this Parliament and for the people of Barbados to be able to distinguish clearly between uninformed political propaganda and the truth in relation to the sugar industry.

The suggestion has been made that the sugar industry was run down by the Democratic Labour Party and that it has been resuscitated by the Barbados Labour Party. The facts are as follows, Sir. The sugar industry was never bankrupt under the Democratic Labour Party. It is bankrupt today. The second factor is that the sugar

industry is now, in fact, enjoying its third year of effective price support.

In 1981, when I thundered away in this Parliament over the disposition of the funds made available consequential on the collapse of the sugar levies, exclusive of the Provident Fund, the totality of which was some \$24 million out of a potential \$31 million, I said that the way in which those funds were allocated to the industry clearly indicated that they were intended to bridge a situation which was the result of the poor crop in 1981 and the heavy drawdown of funds from the Barbados National Bank in that year. So we had approximately \$24 million in 1981. We had \$32 million in 1982, which is \$56 million – and now it is another \$10 million. That makes a total of \$66 million.

Indeed, the honourable Minister of Agriculture has failed in his duty to inform this Honourable House that the increase in the price of domestically-produced sugar this year has put the price way above what should be the price of sugar to Barbadians if it were imported. I am not saying that sugar should be imported. I am saying that if you were to look at the comparative prices between what sugar could be bought at if imported, and what sugar is sold at today in Barbados, that that differential is also part and parcel of a price support policy for the industry.

It is a price support that is paid by each and every Barbadian, every school child who buys a sweet drink, everyone who buys a biscuit, and everyone who bakes a bread in Barbados. Let that be absolutely clear. The Minister has absolutely failed in bringing to this House a properly quantitative figure as to that component, within the context of the support system for the industry.

I am saying that it is \$66 million plus the differential between what it would be at the normal market price for sugar and what we are paying for sugar in Barbados. I do not have the exact figure here, I am working on it. These files in front of me represent a detailed documentation of the sugar industry since 1947. When I go through the various categories of sugar where they define now the increase in prices between now and the next Budget, I will be able to tell you exactly how much it is. But I am not going to ask anybody in the sugar industry. I will work it out for myself.

There is another major factor which must be dealt with, and it must be dealt with on the Floor of this House. It is totally and completely untrue to say that sugar production in Barbados was run down by the Democratic Labour Party and was resuscitated by the Barbados Labour Party. The fact is that the lowest acreage under sugar ever in this country was in 1982 under the Barbados Labour Party; 15 800 hectares. I am

referring to the Central Bank of Barbados Annual Statistical Digest 1982, page 153. The lowest level of acreage under sugar in Barbados was in 1982, the lowest ever! And these are the same people who said that they brought back idle lands into sugar production!

Now listen, Sir. In 1976 the number of acres reaped were 15 900 hectares. In 1982, it was 15 800— 100 hectares less than in 1976! They did not between 1976 and 1982 bring back one square inch of land under sugar in this country. In fact, there was a substantial reduction in the acres under sugar.

Now, how on earth can they come in this honourable House and seek to mislead an entire nation by talking this nonsense again and again about the amount of land they brought back under sugar production? These are the hard statistics here, Sir.

There are even worse things than that. If you were to look at the sugar produced per hectare in terms of tonnes, the lowest production that ever took place in Barbados per hectare took place in 1982 — 5.4 tonnes per hectare; the lowest ever in the history of Barbados since official records were kept, going straight back to 1951. Between 1951 and 1982 the lowest level of production took place under the Barbados Labour Party regime, and yet they are trying to tell the public of Barbados that they have done so much for sugar! When, in fact, they have been in charge of this country when the industry went into bankruptcy! When the number of hectares under sugar cultivation fell to its very lowest level, and when the yield per hectare fell to its lowest level!

3.25 p.m.

If you want to see exactly what I am talking about and you were to look at 1963, you will see that the sugar per hectare in 1963 was 10.4 tonnes per hectare. In 1982 it dropped to 5.4 tonnes. There is no question about it.

It is nothing but straightforward propaganda to be telling the public of Barbados that they brought idle lands back into production, that they have a higher acreage under sugar, and that they have improved the production capacity of the land. It is totally untrue, and these kinds of figures should be put into the newspaper side by side with the speech of the Minister. I am thoroughly disappointed!

I would expect this from the honourable Member for St. James North (Hon. L. S. Craig) or other Members, but I would not expect it from a Minister who is responsible for a portfolio and who is committed to asking this House to commit itself for a guarantee for \$10 million for the sugar industry. We just cannot have this kind of thing in this Parliament. It is not good enough. It is simply not good enough.

The figures are here, and the figures are absolutely straightforward, and there can be no denying these figures whatsoever. That is what has taken place over the years. It is as simple and straightforward as that.

Under the Democratic Labour Party, we certainly achieved — look at the various five year periods — levels of production never achieved under the previous Barbados Labour Party and never achieved under this Barbados Labour Party. And those Members who address themselves to the indigenous nature of the problems would recognise that in the 1970s' there were certain problems developing in the sugar industry. Out of those problems you got the net loss to the country in terms of sugar production and so on, so it is absolute and total foolishness to be saying that sugar did not thrive under the Democratic Labour Party and that it is striving better under the Barbados Labour Party.

The next point that I wish to challenge fundamentally is this ill-advised concept of critical mass. Critical mass is a scientific concept which should not be applied to areas such as sugar, where there are so many variables — not only the variable of production, which is a factor that is very relevant to critical mass, but there is the area of markets.

You can have a situation in the sugar industry where the critical mass concept, if applied to the sugar bill, could be very important; and if applied to a guaranteed market in the domestic market and the EEC, can be very relevant. But once you move into a level of production that goes outside of that, into the World Market, then you might find that if you apply willy-nilly the doctrine of critical mass, that is increasing your production in order to reduce your overhead, you might find that your returns outside of your guaranteed market might be such that it might deal a severe blow to the fundamental theoretical thesis that you are applying. I will deal with that in more detail.

I go further, Sir, and I refer to the sugar levy, which has been criticised. We have heard again and again on the Floor of this House references to the levy that was made on the surplus earnings from sugar in 1975.

I have produced documentation again and again — I am not going to go into it now — where if you were to look very carefully and take the balance sheets between 1947 and 1981, forget the price support loan of \$32 million in 1982, and you were to look at the amount of money extracted from the interest by way of levies, and at the amount of money put back into the industry by various other means, you would see that it completely balanced out by 1982.

I refer you to the work of Cleviston Haynes in the book put out on the 10th anniversary of the Central Bank of Barbados; there you will see the historical background to the levies. You will understand quite clearly why it was totally iniquitous to have taken out \$24 million or thereabouts on the collapse of the levy and without paying regard to the study done by the Barbados Workers Union, I think it was the Egan Report, where you would see that the recipients of that levy should have been all persons participating in the industry, the sugar factories, the plantations, the small holders and the workers.

What you did was to take part of the money to pay the workers. They worked in the 1982 crop for the money that they and their parents had historically saved, since their wages were compromised by the amount that had to go into the levy. That is what you did in 1982.

Asides.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: It is not a bogus argument. It is a very fundamental argument, that if you were to look at the structures of those levies, bearing in mind that there was a period of time when the British Government had put money into those levies along a certain system, and then after a certain point in time the levies were totally generated locally, you would see that that compromised the price offered to the primary cane growers at our level, it compromised the wages paid by the workers and it compromised the profits made by the factories during that period.

Therefore, there should be some kind of *pro rata* distribution. Because it was my contention that the worker, the small farmer, the plantation owner as well as the factories, were all capable of absorbing a proportionate part of that \$24 million and put it to capital investment purposes. It was a completely bogus argument to say that if it was distributed on a reasonable and rational basis, rather than handed as a non-refundable gift to one sector of the participants in the industry, that it would have been throwing the money down the drain.

All this business of money lying in low interest accounts, that is true. That comes out of the McGregor Report. As a matter of fact, it is not only the McGregor Report, but going back to the Farley Report you will find the same evidence there. And again it was thoroughly erroneous to say that the only Government that sought to get a proper analysis of the present status and the future status of the sugar industry was the Barbados Labour Party. It just shows that the honourable Member was totally ignorant of the report that guided the fortunes of the industry over a period of 15 to 16 years, the Farley Report.....

Asides.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: The report was there. It was commissioned and written. I have seen the report so do not tell me that the report was never written.

There is another very important point. The Minister has now come around to the view, and I think quite correctly, that the problems in the sugar industry have never been largely external. They have been largely internal, they have been largely indigenous, and indeed there are some serious issues involved in the run-down of the sugar industry which need to be addressed when we start putting money behind the sugar industry in this way.

Now the only reason why I would not vote against this Resolution, and it is my personal view, is because the industry is owned by the Barbados National Bank and by the people of Barbados. If the market conditions were such as to enable the bank to seek to recover the money owed to them through the usual process of bankruptcy and so on, you would see what would happen in terms of the various owners of the sugar industry in Barbados. 3.35 p.m.

They do not have to worry, because if you were to look at the escalation in credit to the sugar industry between 1979 and 1983, you will see the \$66 million that we have been putting back in over the past few years is about the same \$66 million that found its way out of the industry. You will find some in South Africa, you will find some in Swiss banks, you will find some in the Channel Islands, you will find some in Canadian banks, you will find some supporting various commercial organisations in Barbados and in other areas. You know that pretty well. Do not smile, you know what I am talking about.

If you have any difficulty in saying where you will find it, I know where the money can be found, and I know where that money has gone. If you take the normal cycle in the sugar industry, you would have expected that between 1975 and 1979 you would have got a cyclical pattern of increase in credit to the industry, because you got bumper earnings in 1975, and the normal three to four-year pattern is that that credit would rise. But at the same time, the twice yearly fluctuations in the level of crops, consequential on borrowings for reaping and borrowings for planting, would have been retained. And if you look very carefully and see what happened to credit to the sugar industry in Barbados, you will see that in 1980, when we produced 135 000 tonnes of sugar, when we got a very satisfactory price on the market, nevertheless the following year was the year in which it started building up massive credit in the sugar industry, challenging the integrity of the Barbados National Bank in this country.

I would like an explanation for that. I want to know where the money went. I want to know where the earnings from the 135 000 tonnes of sugar in 1980 went, that could result in the crisis that occurred in the industry in 1981. If you check your figures very carefully, you will see that you are filtering back, through a price support system, money that was filtered out of the sugar industry during that period. Just check it carefully.

I will tell you where to look for the figures. If you look very carefully at the credit to agriculture in the Central Bank statistics in the private sector, and you also look very carefully at the assets of the Central Bank, you will find on page 1 a column there that largely reflects sugar money and you will see how the quantum, the rhythm and how the pattern changed during that period.

So, Sir, what we are doing, let it be clearly understood, is that we are following certain instructions, and we are trying to resuscitate an industry whilst at the same time preserving a particular pattern of ownership, where, in my view, those people who were guilty of running down the sugar industry during that period had forfeited their right to the ownership of those estates, or to be propped up by any Government.

But we have a wider responsibility. We have a responsibility to the community as a whole, and, therefore, assuming that the Government policy is correct in relation to sugar one can indeed find it possible to look critically at what they are doing — not that I am in total agreement with this over-dependence on diverting the cane industry into a sugar industry.

I want to be very clear in what I am saying. I will get back to that later. I understand the importance of a cane industry in Barbados. A cane industry is not the same thing as a sugar industry along the lines being pursued by the present Administration, and I will develop that point. I will get to that later on.

The next area I would like to look at, Sir, is this area of burnt canes. Many Members may well recall that I was the first person that brought to the attention of this House a study done by a director of Shipping and Trading, in a speech delivered at the Hilton Hotel some two years ago, I think, where I was invited because at that time I was listed as a shareholder, I think, in Barbados Sugar Factories Limited.

Since I disclosed that information here, and was told I was not entitled to membership, I have had no more invitations since then. I do not know who took back the information. The fellows do not invite me anymore. But I got an invitation from the new Company this year, and unfortunately I could not attend the meeting, at which the new sugar price was disclosed.

Asides.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: As a small holder, don't get me wrong.

On the question of burnt canes, I am proud to say that no Member on this side, past or present, had ever been arrested on suspicion of having burnt any canes. I am proud to say that. I will say no more, and I will move on.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member should be rather careful in making that statement. I think the honourable Member should seek guidance when it comes to that statement from the honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt).

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Sir, I will move on now to the plight of the small farmer. I think, for the first time now, it is being recognised that the price support system as divided last year would not be of any interest to the small farmer. The small farmer has suffered enough losses in the previous years that the only way he could be attracted is by giving him a guaranteed price, which would cover the cost of production and reduce the cost of cartage and the cost of reaping to him. So that element of the price support system this year, that conditionality, places the onus on the factories.

I must say, Sir, that is a historic onus which the factories carried in the past. The honourable Minister of Agriculture would not understand what I am talking about, but you would understand, and when I hear names like Mr. Julian Mahon, from whom I have learnt a lot in the industry, and Mr. Herbert Dowding, let me tell you what these fellows used to do for the small farmers.

They used to give them credit in relation to agriculture without interest. They used to lend them money on matters not related to agriculture, for instance, to buy school clothes and to pay school fees. They used to guarantee them that they would take their canes; they used to help them cut their canes. If your half an acre or quarter of an acre was adjacent to the plantation, when they came to cut their canes they would cut your canes, and also haul them for you. They would do their best to get the best price for the small farmer, and at this time of the year you would be looking forward to your preference money that would come from the plantations, and I must say, Sir.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: While the honourable Member is on that point, I would like to remind him that his time has expired.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: No, Sir, I am the first speaker on this side.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sorry.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: I have four more hours to go, Sir.

The point I am trying to make is that there has been a clear change in the mentality of the management of the sugar industry and its attitude to small farmers. They have abandoned the custodial relationship in relation to the small farmer and in relation to the industry in general. That is a fact, Sir, and it is a fact that has to be borne out, and I would like to see as part of any price support policy a serious reinforcement of the concept that the large plantation units and the sugar factories have custodial responsibility to small farmers, who form part and parcel of the same total productive unit in this country.
3.45 p.m.

I say this, Sir, because I am talking about a cane industry. I am distinguishing in my mind very clearly between a cane industry and between a sugar industry.

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Not a distinction, a difference.)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: We will get on to that later on.

On this business of the liaison officers that they are talking about, let me tell you something. Do you know who used to be liaison officers? The managers on the plantations, who used to know the people who were producing canes for them, they would go and advise them on their land and would help them.

Indeed, Sir, to this day, you would know, Sir — of course you would know — that it was the small half acre or three quarters of an acre that was the most productive unit in Barbados. It not only produced canes, but the average return on those canes was higher than the plantations. You had a hedge row, you had pea trees, you had guinea corn and you had cash crops which you could sell or eat. Of course, you can no longer sell them, because the large farms have gone into the area of cash crops in a big way and are driving the small farmers out of business, and the Government has collapsed the BMC from under them. There are big problems for the small farmer!

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: That is right.)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: I am just showing you the kind of things that should be built into any price support, assuming the policy is right, because the historic conditions are there. There could only have been a change in attitude and a change of management, which can virtually be pinpointed to the days when Mr. Julian Mahon, Mr. Herbert Dowding and Mr. Bethel ceased to be important influences, for one reason or another, in the sugar

industry in Barbados. Their successors did not take the same kind of responsibility in relation to the industry, and allowed a lot of things to go wrong. And then the Government, intoxicated by its use of, or its capacity to use Central Bank money, allowed an overflow of credit, on an unsupervised basis, to flow to the industry.

Let me tell you something. Under the days of Mr. Mahon there was no way you could get \$50 000 from the Agricultural Credit Bank and not put it in the land, because he used to go there and see exactly how the money was spent. There was supervision at all levels. A lack of such supervision created the environment in which that \$66 million or so in losses could have taken place, the invisible money, which could be picked up by anyone who has a very basic understanding.....

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Speak to Horatio.)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES..... of financing.

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Speak to Horatio about the supervision.)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: I want to look at this whole question of ownership. We on this side have never questioned a price support in relation to ownership. That is completely wrong, because we recognize that the *de facto* and true ownership, as I have said, rests with a public institution, namely the Barbados National Bank. What we have questioned is a price support which is not based on ownership that is committed to agriculture and committed to the further development of the cane sector of the economy. That is what we have questioned.

We have always questioned certain fundamental elements of the financial management of the sugar industry. I have my reservations. I do not want to speak them in public.

Let me put it this way. We know the person who has been appointed as Financial Controller, but knowing the problems of a Financial Controller in the sugar industry, no one man can do it. It is going to take him years to develop his knowledge of the sugar industry on one hand.

Secondly, in the areas where a lot of the infelicities take place, you have to have some kind of on-site inspections of how those books are kept.

We also know that sugar has suffered because of expenses being piled up on plantations against sugar, whilst the cash crops are deprived of those expenses. The cash crops, interpreted literally — when you sell potatoes and yams, that is cash in the pocket — all the money from those would go against the expenses in sugar.

Now unless you can get that kind of financial control at unit level, then you could never really seriously monitor what is happening financially in the sugar industry. It is a combination of those multiple units, large, medium sized and small, that constitute the guts of the industry, and unless you can supervise or monitor what is happening there financially in relation to any credit you make available or any guarantee of any loan, then you do not have effective financial control of what is going on.

I feel that I have answered most of the distortions presented to this House by the honourable Minister.

There was one point raised by the Member for Christ Church West (Hon. H. deB. Forde). He said that those bonds were taken up by the public at large. I happen to know that is not correct. Of the \$32 million, \$7.5 million was a direct loan from an offshore bank guaranteed by Government.

(Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: That is a sugar factory thing.)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: The insurance companies took the remainder. The domestic component was subscribed by insurance companies, not by the public at large. So I believe that that should be corrected. Indeed, the terms offered to the insurance companies were so good.

(Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Generous.)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: If I remember correctly, it was something like 13 per cent or 13.5 per cent, somewhere in that region, before tax. The terms were so generous that they had no difficulty in investing, particularly as there was a Government guarantee around the corner.

So I do not think the fact that those bonds were readily taken up means much. In fact, I am in a position to say that not only were they subscribed, but they were pre-subscribed.

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: And over-subscribed.)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: A meeting took place in the Central Bank of Barbados where the insurance companies were all called together, and they were told that they would have to do it. All that was discussed at that time was the particular interest rate that they would like, whether they wanted it at 13.5 per cent pre-tax or tax free or what.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: The Minister.)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: The honourable Minister of Agriculture was not there. He does not know about it.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: He was not there?)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: All I am saying is that they were prescribed, not subscribed.

(Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: According to the capitalist, he is management.)

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: He is a surrogate.)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Now, Sir, I want to let it be clearly known that this party has a policy in relation to the cane industry.

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: What is the difference between that and the sugar industry?)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: We recognize that it is bankrupt at the moment. We have identified the domestic problems. We have debunked the theory that the decapitalization of the industry in the first seven years of the administration of the Barbados Labour Party was due to any transfer out by way of any extraction by a Government levy. We have provided, again and again, substantial data to substantiate that the net flow in and out from the sugar industry, via the levies, represented a net balance over the years; and if anything, if you go back to the years when money was put in by the British Government, it is probably a net in favour of the sugar industry and not a net against it.

We are satisfied that the problems that exist are not due to wages. We have provided abundant evidence to that effect that the wages in the sugar industry have lagged behind wages in every sector of the economy, even in relation to unskilled labour, over the years, whilst at the same time, the total work force has been reduced from 24 000 to around 5 000. So you have had a drastic reduction in the number of people employed in the industry, whilst at the same time the rate of increases of the wages of persons employed in the sugar industry have been less than even unskilled labour in this country.

We recognize, and have defined, that the problems have been due to chronic mismanagement, abuse of credit and the financial malpractices which I dealt with covertly this year, but in the past dealt with more specifically.

3.55 p.m.

The basic question that we have to ask is really a fundamental question: Are we going to continue with a cane industry or not? That is the sort of level of thinking which the leader of this party, the right honourable Member for St. John (Rt. Hon. E. W. Barrow), will try to bring to bear on the Government.

We are satisfied that a cane industry is justifiable on the following programme — the ecological argument —

that is the preservation of the soil. It is a fundamental scientific argument which relates to a cane industry, not necessarily a sugar industry. In other words, it is the growing of canes that constitutes the core of the scientific argument in relation to the ecological situation.

The second question we are talking about is the whole question of foreign exchange earnings. We are satisfied that the cane industry, properly organized, has the capacity to be an earner of foreign exchange and, very important, a saver of foreign exchange; either an earner or a saver. This is where, later on, I am going to go into the whole question of the cane industry.

What is concerning me is that, with mechanization, two things are beginning to happen.

The foreign exchange cost of earning such foreign exchange as we earn has increased significantly on the one hand, and on the other hand, when we had to get into a foreign currency loan as part of your price support policy last year, that also reduces the net foreign exchange capacity of the industry. So the industry has undergone a change in terms of its net foreign exchange earnings over that period.

The third point on which we are satisfied that we can continue a cane industry is as an employment generator, and the fourth basis is that we suspect that it might make the best use of the available lands, given the circumstances of Barbados.

Those are the four prongs on which, in the light of the prevailing economic conditions and in the light of the need to maintain continuity in the industrial development of this country, we support such an industry.

But it is important to understand that the cane industry can be a totally indigenous industry; that, in fact, the origin of manufacturing in this country started from the sugar industry. And if you had used your minds more intelligently and had been more flexible in your approach, you would have been able to recognize how important it is to be able to make a clear distinction between a cane industry and a sugar industry.

When you start thinking of a cane industry, you are probably thinking of the only totally indigenous manufacturing industry that can take place in Barbados.....

Asides.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: They say that we do not have any ideas. Do you know why they say we do not have any ideas? They say so because they do not understand what you are trying to say.

Aside.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: If you go back to the Barbados Foundry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here again, obviously, this is a matter you would know about only too well, for a variety of reasons. You would know the contribution which the sugar industry has made to the development of manufacturing skills in Barbados prior to the formal introduction of a manufacturing sector in Barbados. You yourself, I believe, Sir, have worked in this area. You have been very close to the people in this area and you know and would be able to support what I am saying.

The other good reason for a continuation is that we already have a massive investment in hardware terms, in terms of skills and in terms of general orientation of the society. These are capital assets which must be put to productive use.

Finally, the technological skills related to the sugar industry over the years are something that we cannot easily replace, as one would have found out, or will find out, as you move into the area of information in industry in this country.

We have set out the reasons why we think we should continue with a cane industry. I do not propose to go into all the various factors which have militated against the success of that industry. But there are some very pertinent questions that I want to put to the Minister. The first one is: What accounting measures are in place apart from the appointment of a Financial Controller? What subsidiary accounting supervision have you got at union level?

Secondly: Have you done a proper survey of the efficient use of your transport system for canes? That is vitally important, critically important in these days of high energy costs. That is also fundamental in determining the viability of the industry and the capacity of this industry to repay, so that the taxpayers will not have to eventually fork up the money — although I have a deep suspicion that they are going to have to do so.

Have any traffic studies been done? This is the question I want answered. Because, speaking now on behalf of the people of St. John and St. Joseph, I know that at the beginning of the crop last year, despite one of the conditionalities of the price support system, the canes of people from St. John and St. Joseph had to be transported to Portvale and elsewhere.

The Minister is going to have to come and tell us whether or not all the conditions attached to the price support of last year were met by the sugar producers. I am going to repeat the question. Will the Minister tell this Honourable House, since he came to this House last year and asked for a guarantee of \$32 million and attached certain conditions to it, whether all the conditions for last year's price support were met, in particular, whether or not all the factories were ready to start at the appointed time? And if not, why not?

Aside

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Why not? Just tell me why not.

Aside

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: You have to tell this Honourable House. We are guaranteeing the money. A condition of that guarantee was that you would see to it that these things are put in place. If they do not come into place, now that you have come to this Honourable House again, you have to explain to us why you cannot start on time.

I referred to the Financial Controller at union level. These are specific questions that I want answered:

1. Is the Minister aware of the distribution of those cost?
2. Is he aware of the percentage under canes or alternative crops on the various units?
3. Is he aware of the extent of tax avoidance related to that particular dual type of exercise?
4. Has he set in place a system of basic parameters or measurements of what is going on?

These are vital questions.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: On a point of order. Would it not be better for the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central to table the questions, Sir? I am only making a suggestion, because he is talking so fast that the Minister himself cannot write down the questions. As usual, just filibustering! That is the problem!
4.05 p.m.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. If the honourable Member chooses to ask a question on the Floor of the House, obviously he is prepared to accept the answers he gets.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Now, Sir, my perception of the cane industry in this area, given the factors which we have outlined before — the ecological factors, the capital already deployed in the industry, the skills available, the potential of developing a totally indigenous industry — given the facts — is that once we get above about 88 000 tonnes, we are going to be at the mercies of World Market prices. I believe that we need to look at the production of cane as one phase in the industry, and when you have reached the point of cane, it is important to look and see what you can do from there on.

Firstly, Sir, there is the question of sugar production. That has been the traditional area in which we

have moved from cane. We have moved to certain types of sugar. We have had our molasses and we have had our rum industry. I am saying that we should be looking not only at sugar in the way we export it at the moment, but we should be looking at the area of refined sugars as well, for which there is a fantastic market.

We should be looking into the area of alcohol production with various water content. From your methylated spirits you can get your anhydrous alcohol, a surgical alcohol, for which there is a tremendous potential throughout the world. There are many areas in which you can use that particular part of the sugar industry that goes through the line of sugar.

Asides.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: I do not wish to get into the argument on gasohol again this year. I am not going to get into that. I will deal with that as a budgetary matter. I will deal with that when I have a national audience.

The point is that we have a basis here for your cane industry to be intimately linked to your energy policy. Your alternatives are gasohol, feeding excess energy into the national grid, on a much greater scale than has been done, the use of the bagasse itself in various areas of energy production, and so on. You have got to understand that when you have got to cane, there are several areas in which you can go.

Indeed, anyone reading that paper by Mr. Douglas Lynch very carefully would see that he also made a very specific point, that his principle of critical mass applied to those areas that could produce sugar at a cost that is less than what you would fetch for it; in other words, the areas that can produce sugar economically. And the question arises whether or not you should not look at those sections, that part of your cane production that you cannot sell at a profit, that you cannot sell over production cost, largely in terms of foreign exchange savers. You have many alternatives in the energy sector and you also have, of course, the possibility of the animal feed sector.

Energy is a very interesting thing. It is not only energy for electricity or energy for a motor car, but it is also energy for the growth and development of animals. The sucrose content, the fibre content of the sugar cane, probably with an added protein and vitamin content, can form an important base for it.

I am not saying that these are things that you can start and do tomorrow. What I am saying is that, faced with the situation of a virtual collapse of the industry in 1981, due to mismanagement, which both sides are agreed on, you had all these options available to you where you should be moving into a more flexible situation.

A gasohol factory, for example, meeting 20 per cent of the gasolene needs of Barbados, which would be the right combination for the production of gasohol, could actually guarantee \$90 a tonne at today's prices, particularly to the small farmer and the farmer on marginal lands, consequential on your energy policies. And by concentrating the doctrine of critical mass in those areas that can really produce sugar in bulk, and produce sugar well below the cost which it would fetch, either within the EEC or, in good days, on the World Market, or certainly locally, then you might well have a very broad base for your sugar industry.

The point I am trying to get across is that these things are not mutually exclusive. You do not go into gasohol, or go into sugar, or go into cane feeding, or go into energy and so on. They all form part of a complex of activity which can be varied from year to year.

There may be a year when, if you put up a plant in Barbados for \$6 million, or had put up a plant instead of wasting \$30 million on Portvale, that it might not suit you to produce gasohol at all, it might be better to sell the sugar and buy the gasolene in that year. But there may be years when the sugar price might be so bad that it might suit you to produce gasohol during this particular period. In other words, the diversification of the primary product into further industrial development is of critical importance to the long term survival of the sugar industry. I hope that I have gotten across the point I am trying to make.

Satisfied as we are on the basic elements of a cane industry, we believe that the subsequent industrialization from that base of your cane industry can go along different streams. And it is my humble submission that if this \$66 million that went towards the sugar industry over the past three years, had gone into secondary industrialization, if I may put it that way, consequential on the production of cane in Barbados, we would have a more stable industry here in Barbados.

We would be less dependent on international prices. We would be less dependent on World Market prices. We would be employing people all year round, because you would be dealing with different facets of the industry — the facet that deals with sugar, the facet that deals with energy, the facet that deals with cane feeding, the facet that deals with gasohol and so on. You might even reach the stage where you get all year-round reaping of certain sectors of the crop to feed the various secondary industrial activities that would flow from that conceptual analysis of a sugar industry.

4.15 p.m.

You would also overcome one of your basic problems. Whenever you talk about slavery in the sugar industry, about a slave mentality and the avoidance of

the stigma attached to slavery, what you do not understand is that the way to change that is by the use of technological advances to demonstrate that you have a basic industry where with the application of modern technology, you have the capacity to project that into areas of secondary industrial development that can enhance the employment capacities, can enhance the foreign exchange earning or savings in the sugar industry, and at the same time can introduce wider concepts of development in relation to sugar in Barbados. In other words, Sir, I am saying that we have missed a golden opportunity to look very carefully at the ownership and management of the sugar industry and get people inside there who are capable of not only conceptualising but getting down into the laboratory and then putting into practicality the various aspects of a cane industry in Barbados with several prongs — sugar, energy, feed — with the flexibility of plant to be able to divert in any given year, or succession of years, to what is in the best interest of the people of Barbados. That is a very fundamental concept.

What has been happening in Barbados is that a lot of you have been talking about these things, but no one is sitting down and looking very carefully at the implications of putting this money into the sugar industry. What is going to happen tomorrow?

Do you realise what is the problem? You can only charge people in Barbados so much for sugar. What happens if the EEC countries decide that they are not going to buy your sugar at more than a given price and that price is below production level? Do you know the kind of problems you would have? What happens if the World Market price remains depressed for a long time? In other words, you are pumping money into an area, whilst at the same time leaving too much to chance, and that is what you have to face.

There is no point getting up here and accusing us of being anti-white and all kinds of foolishness like that. Who can accuse anybody in this House of being anti-white? There are no racists in this House. That is foolishness. We have allowed ourselves to be trapped by this business.

Whereas tourism has been torn to bits left, right and centre on the Floor of this House, and whereas the manufacturing industry has been attacked right, left and centre, you all have been afraid to get up and speak about the sugar industry. You have allowed the Coziers of this world and those people to scare you from talking about it.

Talk about the issues involved. I can do that; I am not scared. I would not be scared if tomorrow I saw a headline in the *Advocate* or in the *Nation* accusing me of being anti-white or anything like that. What do I care? I know how I feel inside here, and no one can

inject accusations of prejudice and so on, so we must put a stop to it on the Floor of this House.

When we criticise elements of the sugar industry and address ourselves to policies, we must not allow ourselves to fall into any trap laid by certain people who do not wish the industry to be examined, and who, therefore, would cow and put politicians in a position where they would not want to get up and speak out and address themselves to the issues involved.

I have never been afraid. Two years ago I got up here and said what I had to say, racehorse or whatever you like, and I am very pleased to see that the Government has shifted its ground gradually and gradually and now has come up with the firm statement saying that there has been gross mismanagement. I am quite sure that in due course they will also be talking about misappropriation of funds in terms of re-directing it away from the sugar industry and so on, because the facts are there for all to see.

The honourable Minister of Trade, the Deputy Prime Minister, (Hon. H. B. St. John) read a statement last week in this House relating to the Barbados National Bank. It is a serious statement, because he knows perfectly that the only reason they could have recorded a meagre profit is because of the price support money. He knows that perfectly well, and he knows that this price support money is not only dealing with the sugar industry. It has gone to salvage a major financial institution and provide a bridging financing and saving to stop that bank from collapse. In fact, I am only quoting the right honourable Prime Minister.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member is now trespassing outside the bounds of this Resolution.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: I accept your judgment and ruling, but the point is that there is one good reason for the price support, and the one good reason is to prevent the catastrophic failure of a major financial institution in Barbados.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: And in that way you are going outside the Resolution. That matter was dealt with last week and you are well aware that an honourable Member cannot raise a matter which has already passed this House in the current session. If you were going to deal with the National Bank, last week was the time for you to raise that. You are dealing with the price support money now, and that is what I expect to hear.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now there are several areas of concern which I would like you to answer. We have been told that there

will be no further support price after 1983, that is, after this year. If we assume that there is going to be an increased production of sugar this year, we would like to know how the Minister can give an assurance that he will find markets for the marketing of 135 000 tonnes of sugar. I want to know how he is going to give people that assurance, because it is a serious assurance he is giving. Are you going to tell people that if they produce 135 000 tonnes you are going to guarantee them that without a price support they will be able to make a profit at all levels in that industry? That is a question I would like you to answer, because, Sir, from my knowledge of sugar cane, I know what I am talking about. When you move from 86,000 tonnes or 88,000 tonnes, to, let us say, 110,000 tonnes this year, that increase is not a consequence of existing ratoons. It has got to be a consequence of additional acreage which were not planted or had gone out of production in 1981 and 1982 being brought back into production.

If anyone knows the cost of first-crop canes and second-crop canes, you would know that the production cost for the extra 12 000 or 15 000 tonnes is going to be higher than the cost for the 88 000 tonnes of sugar, whilst at the same time it is that component that you have to sell outside your protective markets. So you are going to have a higher production cost and the potential of a lower price for the increases there.

I would warn the Minister that he should examine very carefully the various elements involved, because the only way, looking at the amount of hectares under production in 1981 and 1982, that you can reach 135 000 tonnes is if you bring additional acreage under production. That is going to involve first and second-crop canes, it is going to mean increased cost of production, and then you move from the area where you have greater variation and greater fluctuation in prices for the excess that you produce.

The honourable Member for St. James North (Hon. L. S. Craig) would not understand this, but it is fundamental. It is a very critical point. Here it is you are asking people who have lost a lot of money in canes, particularly small farmers — people who have lost real money; it is not money for tax purposes or anything like that — by giving them a good price this year under the price support system, to commit themselves to further production, and you are telling them now that you cannot give them any price support beyond this year. You are guaranteeing a market. I do not know how you are going to do that.

The other problem that has cropped up is that you hear all of this corporate amalgamation, the appointment of a Financial Controller and all these elements. I wonder if anyone has told the Minister that something is beginning to happen in the sugar industry, that whereas the

26th parts — and those who know about sugar would know what I am talking about — was sufficient to deal with the manufacturing sector, it would not surprise me if, in a year's time, they want more than that.

4.25 p.m.

What is happening is that a lot of costs are being amalgamated at management level, and this was not so before. You are going to probably find that the manufacturers are going to be demanding a larger slice of the cake, which again is going to reflect on the amount that you can pay the primary producer. And in that way, once you depress the price to the primary producer, you have no industry.

That is one reason again why you should emphasize and plant in people's minds the importance of thinking in terms of a cane industry. Unless people can grow cane profitably, you cannot have any sugar industry, you cannot have any subsequent industry that is based on cane production.

My own estimate is that the deficit this year will not be \$10 million. As far as I can see, it is more like \$11 million. I have done my own calculation, and it tells me that if you were to look at another 22 000 tonnes, thinking of 110 000 tonnes at present World Market prices and projected World Market prices, you are looking at a deficit of \$11 million. Indeed, at present World Market prices that additional 22 000 tonnes would be sold at a loss, whilst the cost of production would be higher.

I would like to wind up. There are many more things that I have to say about this, but I do not want to reveal the finer details of my research at this stage. I will leave that for an occasion when what I say cannot be distorted in any way by direct access.

I would suggest, Sir, that the Government takes stock. Stop this politics. I was very disappointed, I must say, because it was the first time that I was hearing the honourable Minister deal with a substantive matter, apart from one of the sugar Bills last year, to have heard him launch into this area of political foolishness. I do not like that kind of thing. This is too important. Address yourself, please, to the issue that I have raised. Address yourself to these problems and you would find that a consensus would emerge on the issues.

You do not have to buy gasohol. That is an idea that can be very important in one year, less important in the next year, depending on the price of oil, depending on how much you plough into Barbados Oil Company. There are a lot of variable factors inside there, as there are variables in everything. But I prefer to deal with an industry where the final output is based on controllable variables. That is the point.

Therefore, a multi-facetted industrial sector, cane related, geared for sugar, geared for gasohol, if you like, geared to feed lots for cattle, geared for alcohol, geared for the refined sugars, geared for energy — the totality of that package — is, in my judgement, the direction in which the cane industry should be developing. That is the sort of development which I could support putting money behind, and which, I am sure, the present dominant thinking in the sugar industry at ownership level is not geared for. Whether it is geared for it at management level I am in no position to say, but it is my considered judgement that the Government is not taking as balanced a position on these matters as they should and they might find themselves up a dumb tree.

There is no point getting up and attacking me on gasohol. There is no point.

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Who is attacking him on gasohol?)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: If there is a war tomorrow in the Persian Gulf then gasohol becomes immediately relevant. If there is a tremendous drop in prices, even our oil company, Barbados National, would be irrelevant. So all these things are subject to international variables.

All I am pleading for is a fundamental restructuring of your thinking in relation to the industry. And I think that, consequential on that restructuring of your thinking, you would get a different kind of response from the people of Barbados in relation to the sugar industry.

Then, you would be looking into the future. You would not be listening to sugar futures as we hear now in relation to prices. You would be thinking in terms of an industry that can cater to the wide range of people who we are sending out of schools, because you would be using the technological tools for which they are educationally geared and you would find that the absorptive capacity of the sugar industry for persons, at all educational levels, would be considerably enhanced, if basic steps are taken.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have set out, I think, a constructive policy, which any rational Government can look at. It is a policy in which I think the future of the cane industry in Barbados lies. It is an area which, in my view, is more at one with the general thrust of the emotional and psychological development of the Barbadian worker. I believe that if we harness our basic resources in this way, we can substantially enhance the yields from our soil to the betterment of the total community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to make these brief recommendations, in summary at the moment, to the present Administration,

and for the opportunity to return this debate to the issue level which I have been looking forward to.

Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. B. M. TAITT and Hon. H. B. St. JOHN rose.

(Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I am before him.)

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member for St. Michael West catches the eye.

Mr. B. M. TAITT (St. Michael West): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

First of all, I want to congratulate my colleague who just sat down on an exposition which, I believe, ought to bring to the Minister of Agriculture a sense of regret that he has taken this debate into areas which were totally unnecessary, and which may, in the end, deprive him of the consensus which, as he came towards the end of his speech, he sought to get from this side.

I think that it is wrong for any honourable Member, either inside of this Chamber or outside, to seek to suggest that mere criticism of the sugar industry, from any point of view, is an attack on the individuals who make up the ownership of the sugar industry at this point. I think it is wrong to suggest that we could somehow discuss the sugar industry in Barbados and pay no attention, at all, to the configuration of the personalities who have been involved in the development of this industry from time immemorial.

I wish, at the outset, to correct an error which was made by the honourable Member for St. Andrew (Hon. L. B. Brathwaite), who, as a former Minister of Agriculture, ought to know better. To suggest that sugar cane was introduced into Barbados in 1637 is to fly in the face of the facts as outlined by many historians. It is generally accepted that sugar was introduced from Brazil to Barbados in the 1640s; and when a date has been pinpointed, 1645 is the year that is usually quoted. I think, therefore, it is wrong to suggest that 1637 was the year.

But that notwithstanding, I find it unacceptable from any honourable Member, and least of all the honourable Minister of Agriculture, to suggest that there was no policy before 1976. The suggestion that in the first 300 years, from 1645 to 1976, there was no sugar policy, and more particularly that during the regime of the Democratic Labour Party there was no policy on sugar, is to make a mockery of the history of this country, because the history of this country is bound up in the history of sugar.

4.35 p.m.

The honourable Member, in the course of his presentation, alluded to a number of improvements that

have been made in the sugar industry. I think that if the honourable Member in his sober moments would reflect, he would recognize that the vast majority of technological improvements which occurred in the sugar industry, occurred in the period between 1960 and 1975.

But what I wish to allude to more particularly is the concept of marketing. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to refer primarily to the so-called McGregor Report, and I am going to start with page 37. At page 37 of this report the lie is given to something which the honourable Member sought to make the gravamen of his input. If you look at page 77, the final sentence on that page says: "The Commonwealth Sugar Agreement provided a guaranteed market for some 80 per cent of this production at a price well in excess of production costs."

Now they are speaking about the days of high production, in the 1950's and early sixties, and the honourable Member sought to suggest that there was no policy in the Democratic Labour Party. I wish to remind him and this Honourable House that up until 1975, perhaps 1974, what used to happen every year in Barbados is that the sugar producers used to go to London and hold discussions with people in Britain, notably the Tate and Lyle people and the British Government, and the price of sugar used to be set in London; in such a way that the people who owned the means of production, and the people who owned the vast sugar production in this country, who also owned the processes of sugar beyond the primary process, were the ones who benefitted substantially from many prices which were set under the old C.S.A. system.

I want to ask the honourable Member for Christ Church East (Hon. Dr. R. L. Cheltenham): Who is it that negotiated the Lome Convention? Who is it that took the marketing of sugar out of the hands of the producers and made the marketing of sugar a policy of the Government, that allowed him in his speech last week to say to farmers, "You give me the sugar and let us worry about the marketing?"

It is on the basis of a decision made by the Democratic Labour Party to remove the marketing of sugar from the vagaries of discussions in London and put them on an entirely different plane, which allowed the people of Barbados to finally start to reap the benefits of the production of sugar in this country, and at the level commensurate with an independent country.

I do not understand how the Minister would dare come here today, after making that speech last week, and talk about there was no policy! There has never been a more fundamental change in the policies regarding sugar than the decision made by the Democratic Labour Party that the marketing of sugar would reside henceforth in

the breast of the Government of the day. It was that that permitted you to be in a position to say that you will find the markets.

It was the Democratic Labour Party's Administration that determined how much sugar would be sold to the European Economic Community. It was the Democratic Labour Party's Administration, and I personally went to Brussels and worked seventeen hours a day so that we could come to a conclusion that has been hailed throughout the world as the best of its kind ever, in the history of the world, between developing countries and developed countries.

The fifty thousand tons which we determined back in 1974 have operated as the bulwark from which you can proceed with any policy, including policies of reform, as outlined in this document. It is recorded here, and if the honourable Member has read this, he should not have been in the position where he came today and sought to suggest that the Democratic Labour Party had no policy.

I want to go further, Sir. My colleague has outlined the position in regard to acreage under cultivation and production from that acreage. But there is another point that has to be taken. The honourable Member suggested blatantly that the sugar industry today is owned by the majority of black Barbadians. I do not think that is fair. I do not think it is fair to try to suggest that in a debate in this House that black Barbadians are now in command of the sugar industry. That is not true. It is simply not true.

And his colleague from Christ Church West (Hon. H. deB. Forde), by trying to inveigle the insurance companies — and therefore, by some indirect means, since the insurance companies get their policies from mostly Barbadians of a certain hue — that therefore the Barbadians own the sugar industry, is intellectually dishonest. Because a corporation, which the insurance companies would have to be classified as part of, in which you are a shareholder by virtue of the owning of a policy does not put you in a position of a decision-maker in that corporation. Furthermore, it is only the Manufacturers Life Insurance Company that can really be described in insurance terms as being a mutual company, where the policy owners are the policy directors — and there are no policy directors in Barbados.

When the honourable Member comes and suggests that because the insurance companies have been directed to invest in the industry, the people collectively now own the sugar industry and, therefore, the vast majority of the ownership in the country is in the hands of black people — I cannot say what I would like to say — that is wrong, and it is misleading. The fact is, we still have a cabal of people who makes the decisions concerning the sugar industry. That is a fact. No one is questioning that. But

you cannot say to intelligent people that they do not have the right to criticise the structure of that particular decision-making force.

The right honourable gentleman from St. Thomas, himself (Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. Adams), came to this Honourable House and was the one who put the issue beyond doubt. He is the one who spoke of the mismanagement and the ineptitude in the manufacturing sector of the sugar industry, and indeed in the sugar industry as a whole. It was the right honourable Member of St. Thomas, the Prime Minister, in his capacity as Minister of Finance, who told this Honourable House that the sugar industry was inept.

If, therefore, the right honourable gentleman of St. John (Rt. Hon. E. W. Barrow), who has to take the responsibility for managing the affairs of this country in its first 15 years; if that right honourable Member, who knows more about the financial shenanigans that have been going on in this country with regards to sugar than anybody else in Barbados, by virtue of his having held the portfolio of the Minister of Finance for the number of years that he did, says in relation to a debate concerning the iniquitous levy which has been placed on a number of small farmers in this country by a Government that does not seem to understand its priorities — that is the context in which the statement was made, and he was juxtaposing the decision by that Government, three years in a row, to offer price supports of a lucrative kind to a small group as compared with the levies — if he says that it favours some and hurts the small people mostly, he cannot be seen as a racist.

The honourable Member agreed that the levies were iniquitous during that debate, that the levies on the small farmers with two acres or thereabouts were not placed on them on any scientific basis. He agreed — and then he seeks in a subsequent debate to suggest that the honourable Member was importing some kind of racial overtones into the discussion which took place!

That, Sir, smacks of intellectual dishonesty. It reminds me of the kind of attitude which is consistently taken in this country, that if ever you have to get up in this country and open your mouth and you have to say something about a small group of people in this country, you are deemed a racist. If you talk about the plantations in this country, you are a racist. If you talk about the merchants in this country, you are a racist.

4.45 p.m.

I say that it is hypocritical and dishonest for anyone, anywhere, to take a look at the history of this country and not recognize that when we talk about merchants, and when we talk about planters and when we talk about plantocracy, there has been a particular pattern in this country. If by criticising the lack of

capability of ordinary intelligent right-minded Barbadians to reach the commanding heights of the decision-making in those areas of our economy, it makes one a racist, then I join the group that has been described as racist.

I need not even make the epithet that some of my best friends are white. I just find it unacceptable when we, carrying on from the heritage that has been vouchsafed to us in this Honourable place, find ourselves in a position where we cannot discuss issues of the day, which are the burning issues concerning the people of this country, without being deemed racist.

The honourable Member knows that there are no racists on this side, or, for that matter, on that side. But it suits his purpose, from a political point of view, to say, "he hopes that the sugar producers and the people know who their friends are." Why do you not address those remarks to the manufacturers and the people who work in industry. They should know who their friends are as well. But we are saying that we must not allow the people of this country to feel, on a given day, in a given debate, that friendship is shifted on a weekly basis.

When we talk in terms of the \$10 million or, in the lucid words of my colleague, the \$66 million which has accrued to the sugar industry

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: *Are you relying on those figures?*)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Our figures are much more reliable than your figures. You put out official figures, and, in high places, your official figures are questioned fundamentally. Please ask the honourable Member, Sir, not to ask me to discuss their figures at all! Because one of the areas in which the Government of Barbados has had absolutely no credibility whatsoever is in the area of statistics, and the honourable Member knows that. In fact, all the honourable Members over there know that.

Statistics! We can afford to put out figures, because we work on them ourselves and we have no axes to grind. We do not have to go and tell anybody that these figures are our figures, because these figures, when we work on them, can stand the test of time. I challenge any honourable Member over there to get up and say that the figures trotted out by the honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance can stand the test of time, or critical analysis. But that day will come for the debate on statistics.

I am dealing with this agricultural fallacy which suggests, somehow, that the Democratic Labour Party took plantations out of production. That is a fact. But so has every Government in this country from the time we

had a Government. Because if you did not do that, and if you do not do that at some time, it would mean that we would have a static situation in this country. It would mean that the ownership pattern in this country would remain static — and that those who have would have, and those who never had would never get.

I subscribe to the view that every person in this country has a right to aspire towards ownership of land. I subscribe further to the view, and that subscription is joined by the people who wrote the McGregor Report, which says that in the areas where the production is marginal, it is more economical to a country of this size to put that land to more effective use. And when we made decisions concerning the cutting up of lands into four acre lots, those decisions were informed by the Chief Agricultural Officer and his technicians who at the time were the highest qualified persons in this country — I would not call his name, but it is well-known — and who recognises, as a matter of policy, in the light of certain necessities, that we would have more effective farming in some areas if we would cut the land up into four acre lots.

I am not going to run and hide from that. If you wish to say, in the light of experience, that some of the cutting up was mishandled, if you wish to say in the light of experience that there were shenanigans connected with some of it, say so. That would be no different from the shenanigans and the infelicities which have been associated with the cutting up of the Sandy Lane Estate, when large sums of money passed hands among the people involved, where expatriates, who came from various parts of the world, were able to buy their way into this country by virtue of what they knew and who they knew.

I do not flinch from the fact that I was part of a policy which sought to give Barbadians in this community a stake in their own country. I will not resign from the position, because I was there. I lay no claim to its perfection as you should lay no claim to your perfection, for you have recaptured the famous Bath which you lied about throughout this country. You told the people that the right honourable Member for St. John was benefitting personally from the acquisition of Bath — and from the acquisition of the North Point, and from the acquisition of a number of things.

Sir Herbert Duffus, whom you paid U.S. \$174 000, tax free, came to this country and said that was not so.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Tax free! U.S.!

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thought we were dealing with \$10 million support. I do not know if you have gone back to the Duffus Report.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: No, Sir. I am just mentioning him to demonstrate that he had said that none of what they said about Bath was true.

But they have taken over Bath — and they have grown 57 varieties of grass at Bath!

The honourable Members on that side seek from time to time, week after week, to give the impression that they have rescued this country agriculturally. It is not true.

These documents from the Central Bank speak volumes. Anyone who wishes to pursue them can read about the quantity of production in this country under the Barbados Labour Party. Non-sugar agriculture in this country declined from 1977, and it started its first upward movement in 1982. Even so, that only occurred because in 1982 certain decisions were made which show up the quantities in a certain way.

My time does not permit me to go through them, but I invite every single person in this country to read these documents, so that when the honourable Members come here and try to give the impression that they created some rescue operation, the facts will be known.

Let them tell you about Bath Plantation, which the honourable Members over there are constantly talking about. You have taken it back over. Get up and tell the people what you have done about it. Get up and tell the people what the McGregor Report had to say about you and Lower Estate. Get up and tell the people how you took the best possible sugar land in Barbados, Lower Estate, and, for reasons which defy ordinary persons as well as experts, you sought to let Lower Estate pass on to creating some BMC project.
4.55 p.m.

The honourable Member might not be aware of it, but the McGregor Report has spoken on it, and the reason why you took Lower Estate has to do not with the land, not with the function — it had to do with the principals who were involved in the transaction. That is the reason why.

Do you believe that you can come to me with a debate and I am going to run from you on land speculation in Barbados? You are in no position to talk about that. We are not going to call names on the Floor of this House unless you insist, but I assure you honourable gentlemen that if you insist, I will call the names for you. Do not come and talk to me about agriculture, debating cutting up of land.

You have said that you have made improvements. Your improvements can be seen in a new factory which you created in St. James, a factory whose productive

capacity continues to be 80 per cent in excess of the production, two and a half to three years after you have commissioned it! You closed two sugar factories at the time when small holders used those particular factories effectively, before you had commissioned the new sugar factory!

You spent large sums of the taxpayers' money on that particular new factory. And if you were working in private industry and you had made as colossal errors as you have made on that particular factory, each single one of you would not only have been fired, you might have found yourselves in worse situations, because you guaranteed the loan without knowing what you were doing. You allowed yourself to be caught in the rhetoric put forward by one among you to you, and you agreed. But the truth about that factory will be made known in due course of time.

I am not going to be afraid to talk because there are nice people in the sugar industry, and let you come in here giving people the impression that the Democratic Labour Party has some skeleton in the closet. You, in your capacity as Ministers, allowed yourselves to fall prey to a policy which saw you paying people from the BMC to work for private enterprise under the guise of some new approach to marketing, and in the end what you have done is precisely

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member...

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I withdraw that, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: seems to have lost track. You have left St. James and the guarantee of the loan, you have got down to St. Michael to the BMC and marketing and somebody else.....

Mr. B. M. TAITT: No, Sir. I was in Christ Church actually.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You went up to Christ Church! I see. You then crossed Bridgetown and went up there?

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Yes, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, please come back to St. Michael with the Resolution. Let us deal with the Resolution.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: You see, the Resolution seeks to give \$10 million in assistance to the sugar barons.....Not the Resolution! The honourable Members who introduced the Resolution, and who defend it, seek to give the impression that this \$10 million which they are giving is some far-reaching and high level policy decision. It is inevitable; they have no choice.

Let me tell you why they have no choice. Long before them, the United States Government, back in the 1930s, started the principle of price supports. You have no choice because you are now on a treadmill from which you cannot get down.

The honourable Member is coming to this House and telling this House and telling the population that this is the last year. Nowhere in the history of mankind where the Government started price supports has the Government been able to stop the price supports. So what you should do is tell the people of Barbados that they have a contingency liability of \$10 million to \$15 million per annum forever hereafter so long as sugar forms part of the economy. That is what you must do. Do not mislead the people, giving them the impression that you are doing it for the last time, because you and I know, as the Europeans have found out with their mounds of butter and their common agricultural policy, that once you start price supports you have no choice forever hereafter.

The reason is simple, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the farmers were given \$10 million last year and they have not made enough to pay it back this year, and you have to give them \$10 million more this year, next year, even if we are able to negotiate a decent price with the EEC — and the honourable Deputy Prime Minister would be able to tell you how difficult that is proving — they would only make enough partly to pay what they owed last year, so what you give this year will still be owing. Do not mind that you have got people to buy the actual bonds. We the people of Barbados guaranteed those bonds, so they will have to be paid, but the sugar industry has never been able to pay back its capital debt.

What used to happen, and what continues to happen, is that every year there is a roll over till the seven year benefit comes. The industry runs on a cycle of seven years, and every seven years there is a bonanza, and what the banks used to do was move in and take off from the top. But the Government is so inept that it has taken over all the burdens without any of the benefits. The commercial banks used to be able to draw off the top, but the financial institution which you have directed to lend the money, and which you seek to prop up and give the impression that that particular institution is doing well — and God knows we wish it to do well — that institution is in great difficulty, because you took the entire Agricultural Division and you put it inside the guts of that institution — a fundamental error from which the country will never be able to recover.

The Barbados National Bank will never be able to make sufficient profit to account for the drag down which must occur as a result of your carrying the agricultural sector into the bank. And you can give price support three times the size of this one, the situation will still be the same!

But you see, Sir, we are different from you. We understand the principles of subsidisation. We understand that principle, and that is why we can afford to say to you that while we cannot vote against the price support, because we know that to do so would be to signal the wrong signals, nonetheless we must be able, and are in a position, to point out to you the error of your ways, and that you cannot go on to mislead the population with information that is inaccurate concerning this whole question of price supports.

I will end, Sir, by suggesting that you are going to have during the course of economic problems to give some price support to non-sugar agriculture, you are going to have to give some support to the manufacturing sector, so that your subsidisation policy would be balanced in all of the sectors of the economy and not skewered as it is under the present Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN (Christ Church East Central): Mr. Deputy Speaker, obviously the Opposition, having last year in this House and outside the House found themselves in the position in which they made their gravest error, in trying to give the impression to the public that they were totally opposed to the policies of the Government in relation to the support of the sugar industry, have now decided that they must recoil from that unpopular position and have given this Resolution what they would call critical support.

That is a technique that all of us are well aware of, one that Oppositions periodically have to indulge in. There is no tactic the Opposition can produce that we, with our fifteen years of experience over there, have not had to indulge in at one time or another. I knew from the very beginning that the Opposition was going to be forced into the position of giving support to this Resolution.

5.05 p.m.

They were only two tactics available to them. The principal spokesman on this subject, the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central (Dr. R. C. Haynes), adopted one tactic, and the honourable Member who just spoke adopted the other tactic.

The honourable Member talked as though the Government owned the industry. In other words, he tried very skilfully to give the public the impression that they had a policy which would lend itself to agreeing to the support, while he talked about a cane industry; that he is all in favour of a cane industry on a number of grounds — but he has nothing to do with the sugar industry.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Sir, I did point out that the cane industry is a base, and the sugar industry is one product that stems from it, whilst other things stem from it.

Hon. H. B. ST. JOHN: Sir, the honourable Member was careful on numerous occasions during the course of his speech to say, "cane industry, cane industry". Sometimes the truth came out about the sugar industry and then he said, "I mean cane", "I mean cane". He kept saying that all the time.

But, Sir, I looked at the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party. There is nothing in the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto to suggest that it is the policy of the Democratic Labour Party that their concept of the industry is one of being a cane industry and they have nothing to do with the sugar industry.

(Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Look at 1976).

Hon. H. B. ST. JOHN: I am dealing with 1981, because the honourable Member was not a Member of this House in 1976.

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: All that is a non-sense policy. Nothing to do with the industry.)

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Look at 1976, fifteen lines.)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: That is right, Sir. And two paragraphs in 1981! In paragraph 15, page 11, it says they will:

"give continued support and encouragement to the sugar industry as a principal agricultural crop. Steps will be taken to further rationalize the industry."

I know a lot about drawing manifestoes, you know, Sir. That statement is pregnant with meaning, but it conceals a lot, because it does not say what policy he is going to put and what steps he was going to rationalize. It does not say any of those things.

(Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Rational sense.)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: So all of this is only a play by the Democratic Labour Party.....

Aside.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN:.....to try once again to bring their political party in some kind of harmony with people who have a right to vote in Barbados, and who, in the exercise of their vote, will take into account that they want to elect a Government which has a policy which is relevant to the people who are involved in the sugar industry in Barbados.

Nobody in here on the other side, so far, has averted the public's mind to the fundamental problems that we have in relation to sugar, and I have repeatedly been trying to bring it to the attention of members. It is that the principal source of sale for your sugar is the

European Economic Community, and the value of your sales has gone down since 1979 at a faster rate than your cost of production; part of which cost, you have control of; part of which cost, you have no control of.

It is very important for us to remember that it is an almost impossible situation in which you are putting the producers, unless it is possible for them to take advantage of a technological revolution whereby they are able to absorb the increase in the cost of production and as well a reduction in the cost of the receipts. That is the fundamental problem.

We are getting less today in money terms for our sugar than we got in 1975, 1976, 1977. It is a fact. That is the problem that you have. So, therefore, what we have to do, if it is to continue, is to push and push and push for a fundamental change in the structure of the industry to take it towards viability.

Secondly, we have to try to look for more remunerative markets than the one that we have for that element of production which is not destined for the European Economic Community. In those cases, we are talking about the difference between the 50 000 tonnes per year sold to Europe and the amount we sell to the United States, where you benefit from the minimum price regime, and our efforts in getting an international sugar agreement, which will have a reasonable price as a floor price, based upon the true and realistic cost of production worldwide.

Sugar is one of those commodities that has only about 12 per cent to 15 per cent of the total production in the world sold on the World Market. So the World Market price is not a true and representative price of the cost of production. Most of the rest of production is sold within an artificial market. I think that those are important facts that we must bear in mind.

Now what steps have been taken to bring this industry into viability, to bring it into reconstruction? The mechanization of the industry is, obviously, one of the steps that have been taken. Tremendous progress has been made in reforming and the reshaping of the land in order for canes to be cultivated, reaped and transported mechanically. We are now in that position as a result of our own indigenous research efforts.

These are important points because as I said in an earlier debate, we in the cane growing land are competing with beet sugar in which all of this revolution in production has already taken place. Today, beet growers in Europe are bragging that so perfect are they, in relation to their mechanization, that they now have micro processors hitched on to their tractors where not only can they plough in their line that they wish to have, dead accurate, but also, when they are doing their fertilization, they have sensors on the tractors that they can pick up

particular plants which have not reached the growth rate which should have been achieved; they can pull them out and replant them so that they get the optimal yield per hectare. All of this is documented. This is what is happening now in agriculture in other parts of the world.
5.15 p.m.

So we cannot afford in this industry as in any other industry in the Caribbean, to indulge in any wishy-washy talk. When we come to this important matter, we have to remember that it is the duty of the Government to help stimulate and create conditions in the industry where, if we are to continue to have the industry, we are as reasonably competitive as possible.

I am very glad to see that there has been so remarkable a transformation in some sections of the Democratic Labour Party. The Leader of the Opposition is still not in this, but I think what the others there are trying to convey to us is that he is on his way out. They are trying to tell us not to bother with his views. The views that are current are the views of the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central and the honourable Member for St. Michael West. I do not know which is the predominant view at the present moment, but I noticed that today both Members had to take the opportunity to promote their views.

The position is that a Government in any part of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries now have to make up its mind whether it is going to say the industry cannot compete with beet sugar at the present moment because of a variety of factors. Are we going to say cut it and leave it? Or do we believe that it still has a future, but that for it to have that future, we have to give it some support? The Government in Barbados has taken the decision, because, up to now, there is no alternative that any scientist, or non-scientist, has been able to put to any government in Barbados as a viable crop to grow on as large a scale as we grow sugar cane.

I am one of those who believe that the conditions of the grant could even be tighter. I still believe that there is scope within the industry for further re-organization, and I know that the Government and the Minister of Agriculture will continue to press for further reorganisation within the industry.

For instance, gone are the days, in my opinion, when some of the inputs in the industry still have to be imported through commercial houses. I think the industry is a fully capitalized and efficient cooperative, in which case they should be able to take charge of that aspect of it. I am still getting some feedback from my constituents and others about what they cannot understand in relation to the cost of fertilizers and herbicides this year. There is

one product called "Round-Up" that seems to have gone up high in price.

I know that investigations into each and every item are being undertaken. I think last year the Government made it clear that it would be insisting on special help from the industry to the small grower, in the form of tractor cultivation, in the form of advisory work and in the form of reaping and transportation, as conditions of the price support.

The honourable Member for St. Michael South Central talked about the services that used to be given in the past. I rode in the trucks in Christ Church for many years. In those days it used to be so much competition among the factories for cane that they had to do that to get canes. They all used to have their agents in the area. The honourable Member for Christ Church West Central (Mr. M. A. King), his father used to be an agent — my father, too — in Oistins. That is the position.

But the thing is that we still have to get across to an element in the industry that the people expect these services to be provided. Also, we have to get across that you cannot expect small lorry owners to provide the transport services at prices that the small holders can bear, and I will tell you why.

Throughout this country there is a fundamental problem with many people in understanding cost accountancy. Ninety-nine percent of the big or small lorry owners believe that they should amortise the cost of a lorry in one crop season. So they will pitch their charges at such a level as to be able to pay back the cost of a lorry in a crop season.

We also have the same problem in relation to tractors. We have the same problem arising again in relation to the mechanical harvesters. You have the problem in other areas too. So that if the industry is to be competitive with other countries we must have, at the central level, sufficient equipment to deliver these services to the people who need the services. That is the point that I still feel has not been fully addressed.

I still do not understand how is it that all the sugar is transported from the factories to the harbour in one fleet of trucks, but there are a multiplicity of trucks carrying canes from the fields to the factory for small units. It was all right previously, when those same trucks that provided this service in the crop time were automatically hired by the Vestries to move stones out of the crop; but today the whole transport sector has changed. So that is an area of service which must be addressed, and addressed immediately. I would hope that there is no fear about crushing the corns of any so-called small men in relation to that service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 99 percent of the holdings growing canes in Barbados are small in relation to Europe. With the exception of Drax Hall and maybe one other estate here, there are not many holdings in Barbados which are over 500 acres. With the exception of Germany and some parts of France, and a certain region in Italy, in the European Common Market they have large holdings, and that is what we have to be dealing with. If we are to be competitive internationally, we have to understand the structure of the industry we are competing against. That is an important point. Do not let us be confused in our minds that we have any big land owners in Barbados. What big land owners?

5.25 p.m.

Once upon a time land was the foundation of wealth in Barbados, and growing sugar; but today there are not half per cent of the total holders that can make any money out of it. The houses are worth more than the land. There are some estates, which, if you put them up, for instance in Guyana, you have to pay people to go there — and sometimes you cannot even pay people enough to go there. So this is a fact of life that we have got to take into account.

The question of the accounting is one that the Government is fully aware of and apprised of. If you have to market internationally, you have to have your facts and figures, so you are not scoring any big points when you attempt to say that proper accounting and proper charges in relation to the real cost of sugar should constantly be kept. That is something that anybody who has any idea of how international negotiations are conducted will appreciate and understand is of vital importance.

The Government recognises this, and has taken steps to ensure that there are proper internal accounts because you have to have efficient internal accounting in order to gather the information quickly so that it can be independently audited.

In these days, though, of computerisation, the time has come when, with the micro main frame computer in the Sugar Producers' office and a telephone hook-up, every member, through a little simple telephone call every day, and at the end of the month or at the end of the week, should be able to get a print-out of the — I doubt there are 1,000 — producers of sugar. Even if there are 1,000, it is not too difficult to get these things done today.

What is difficult is to get across to the decision-makers in the industry that these things are possible, that they are necessary for the economic survival. This is the point that I would like to reinforce.

The Government has to persuade the decision-makers in respect of this. The Government, by virtue of being

one of the largest land owners, has a strong voice in the industry. By its ability to withhold finance or to give finance, or to help marketing internationally, the Government can exercise influence. But let there be no doubt about it that there are other agencies in the industry, both land owners and employers, and workers and their organisations, that are equally as influential as to what happens in the industry. So this has to be a tripartite approach.

When the honourable Members over there seek to criticise the Government as though they are the sole determinants as to what happens in the sugar industry, I would ask them to remember that this is an inaccurate assumption. It is a very inaccurate assumption that the Government is in a position to dictate the full pace of the industry. We are in a position to influence it.

It is therefore quite wrong for the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, in particular, to get in here and trot out \$66 million and say that that, in his estimate is the totality of the money that flowed from 1981–83 to the industry, and that the owners received that money. That could never be more inaccurate.

The honourable Member knows that the cross-structure in the industry is such that at least 50 to 55 per cent of the money goes towards labour costs. At least 55 per cent of that money went to the 6 000 or 7 000 people who are employed in the industry. Is the Democratic Labour Party saying that the Government should not help those people to be able to earn their living?

When we come to sugar, let us be frank. There is no alternative to us here in Barbados. That is why we support this Resolution as we do. Whenever a dollar goes in, we know that at least 50 cents or 55 cents of that dollar is going to go to the people who work in the industry.

There is one other point, Sir, before I conclude. The honourable Member made the point about centralisation. I have done a study of the salaries in the supervisory, management and technical levels in the industry. I am amazed that they are able to get people of the calibre that they get for the salaries that they receive. It is really a labour of love.

I would hope, Sir, that the European currencies would strengthen and that the World Market will rise. Our experience of sugar has always been that it has its ups and it has its downs, and I wish to say that just as the Government supported it in its hour of need, in its hour of prosperity the Government will be in a position to recoup that which it paid out.

I beg to support this Resolution.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to suspend the sitting for 15 minutes for a break, so that you and other Members may have an opportunity to go to the dining hall.

I beg to move that the sitting be suspended for 15 minutes.

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

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the sitting accordingly.
5.35 p.m.

ON RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This sitting is now resumed.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN (St. Philip South): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be very brief in this debate on this Resolution. I believe, from the speeches I have heard from the other side, that they have not really addressed themselves to the Resolution and to all that the Democratic Labour Party feels should be addressed. I recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that last year the Government came for \$10 million support for the sugar industry. At that time the honourable Prime Minister in his address admitted that there were, in his words, obsolete persons in management of the sugar industry. I am in total agreement with what the honourable Prime Minister said at that time, and I will say that the basic problem in the sugar industry is that the accounting policy of the management over the years has been bad.

I believe that the reason why they have gone along with that accounting policy is that there was easy availability of credit. Since about 1980, 1981 and 1982, with the economic situation as it is and the availability of credit becoming tighter, those persons who managed the sugar industry suddenly realised that the traditional accounting policies would not work any more, because the banks would not be coming up with money that easily. And since the honourable Prime Minister admitted in the last debate when he came for support for the industry that there were obsolete faces in management in the sugar industry, I would like to enquire what was the criteria used for the Government to guarantee this loan. I would like to know if those obsolete faces or any of those obsolete faces, have been removed from the management of the sugar industry, or if those persons with these anachronistic accounting policies are still running the sugar industry.

Last year when we debated the support for the sugar industry, we over on this side warned the Government that

we would have to come back to the country for another support for the sugar industry, and we have been proven right in that statement.

We have heard in here how management in the sugar industry has been changing over the years, and in fact one honourable Member said that we have not been looking at the thing carefully, otherwise we would see how the ownership has been changing.

What I can see is no basic change in the ownership of the industry. What I have seen in the sugar industry is that the same ownership is there, but what is happening is that they are employing a few people or some people in lower positions. They used to call them drivers in years gone by, now they have glorified titles like 'over-seer' and that sort of thing, but I do not see any change in ownership. I would like any honourable Member to tell me of any ownership of the sugar factories in Barbados which have changed hands, say, within the last three or four years, and have gone to a local person and is still not governed by the plantocracy as has been the case over the years; by somebody's son or somebody's grandson over the years.

I am not preaching black and white. Every person in the sugar industry was not white, so I am not preaching black and white.

Speaking now specifically on the \$10 million support, this \$10 million is going to be raised by the issue of bonds. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you issue bonds, it means that you are taking money out of the economic system. I believe that, in economic times like these, to take money out of the economic system is detrimental to the whole economics of the country. When you take money out of the economic system, you have to divert money from some other area, which means there has to be a cut down in consumption or there has to be cut down in investment.

I believe that this \$10 million, for the most part, will be subscribed by wealthy people, who can contribute to investment in this country. If these people support this issue of bonds, it means that they either have to cut down on their consumption or they have to use their savings which means they have less money for investment, and I believe that in times like these; in a recession, you need as much investment as possible. Not only that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe that \$10 million out of the economy at this time will influence the price of credit, because it makes money less available to the ordinary man, and it will make the price of credit go up.

There is one other thing I would like to say about this issue. I have seen here that the bonds will be issued

in tax free and taxable tranches. The tax free situation is what I am getting at. As I have said before, the majority of persons who I believe will be purchasing these bonds will be the wealthy. If you are saying that you are making this issue tax free, what you are telling the wealthy people is that they can afford to go ahead and buy the bonds, thereby escaping taxes; and at the same time, the ordinary carpenter or mason has to pay taxes on the \$200 or \$300 that he is getting.

In the Addendum here it says that the bonds will be issued in tax free and taxable tranches, and I would like that explained to me, and I want to know what yardstick they would use to decide which set of bonds will be tax free and which will be taxable and that kind of thing.

With those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I end what I have to say hoping that I will get the required answers from the Minister on the other side.

Mr. R. E. BRATHWAITE (St. Lucy): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to support this Resolution.

In supporting it I have to say that I was thinking of that old Bible story with Isaac, Jacob and Esau when it sounded like the voice of Jacob but they were the hands of Esau. As I sat here this afternoon and listened to the honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt) and the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central (Dr. R. C. Haynes), I was shocked, and I would say that, except for a few distortions, I am quite satisfied that there were two tactful speeches.

I am wondering after all that has been said and done how these honourable members would face the Leader of the Opposition in this country, because it seems to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition of this country is saying one thing and these two honourable Members are trying to say something else. I thank God that it took these two honourable Members two and a half years to see the light.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am hoping that the people of this country will continue to learn, understand and remember. You could not believe that these two honourable Members had anything to do with the Democratic Labour Party from the year 1961 to 1976. I believe that every blind man, every deaf man knows the stand of the Democratic Labour Party as far as agriculture, and especially the sugar industry, is concerned. Mr. Deputy Speaker, look at the contrast; see how this country looks now as compared to what it was under that regime! There is no comparison whatsoever.

The honourable Member spoke about 1982 and the smaller acreage of cane. We have a reason for that.
6.05 p.m.

The honourable Member would know about the time when they said that they would not like to see a cane blade from St. Philip to St. Lucy. We are all quite aware of that. The honourable Member would also know that there was a certain time in this country when any farmer would go and light his canes in front of a policeman. So you would understand that when you continue to burn canes from year to year, it would affect the soil, and we paid for that in 1982.

But it was as a result of what took place in 1974 and so on, when it was law in Barbados that you could light and burn canes, burn up the soil.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it took our foreparents approximately 336 years to build up the sugar industry in this country. And I would say that from the reckless handling by the Democratic Labour Party of the sugar industry, we would be nearly without a sugar industry.

I would not have liked us to find ourselves like St. Vincent, St. Kitts, Antigua and those countries which are now trying to get back into the sugar industry. In this country, we are paying less for a pound of sugar than any other country in the West Indies. That is something that we could really be proud of.

They talked about the support price. Trinidad, the United States of America, almost all countries in the world, use the support price to substantiate and help business. And I believe that our price support is one of the things that brought back in the sugar industry to the stage it is.

I would like to send a warning to the honourable Member for St. Michael West. I am sure that in 1984, if God spares our lives, the industry would not be as it was in 1982. We will have a bountiful crop, because we planned for it. We have encouraged those people who ran from the sugar industry to come back through what we did in 1982 with that price support. I am sure the incentives that we offer have encouraged those people to come back into the industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was really shocked as I listened to the honourable Member for St. Michael West when he spoke about the lower acreage. I would commend the Democratic Labour Party for buying a few fairly good plantations, but I could not commend them for the way they handled those plantations. We all know that in 1974, when the best sugar price ever came to this country, the Democratic Labour Party, with the ADC plantations, reaped 14 236 tonnes of cane. In 1980, the same ADC reaped 57 200 tonnes of cane. If you divide 57 200 by four that will still give you 14 300. We improved production by four times as much as it was under the Democratic Labour Party. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can see the contrast, the improvement in the sugar industry under this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think you were the first member of this side to hold the Ministry of Agriculture. You found the price of potatoes in this country at 75¢ a pound, and through your Ministry, you cut it from 75¢. Now, ten years after, next year will be ten years, up to this time potatoes have not yet reached 67¢, because this morning, the last price I got was 66¢. Ten years after, when the price of labour has tripled, the price of potatoes have not yet reached that level.

There is nothing that we can have in this country that can contribute more than the sugar industry. We all realize that you can have sugar cane planted in good soil for as long as ten years, and it would perform well. You cannot do that with certain other crops.

Our forbearers tried tobacco, they tried cotton, they tried nuts, they tried all sorts of things. And there were not any doctors among those people; there were only people that were led by God, and the Lord gave them the understanding and the sense to which crop would be able to succeed in this country. But now, some of us, because we do not know of the hard work of those folks, find it easy to scrap, cut down and destroy.

We all talk about the hotel industry in comparison to the sugar industry. Tourism brings in a few dollars, we agree. But when you look at tourism, you have to start to build a hotel, you have to put in furniture, you have to produce brochures, which are very expensive; you have to do a lot of things before you can get one cent. Now in the sugar industry, all you have to do is plant those canes, weed them, buy a little fertilizer, depend on the blessing of the Lord, of course, for the rains, and you have foreign reserves.

(Mr. P. M. GREAVES: You get losses too.)

Mr. R. E. BRATHWAITE: And you will agree that since 1974, we never reached that standard again. But I am hoping, by God's help, that we will again find ourselves with that sugar price that came down in 1974.

If the Democratic Labour Party was a party that used to plan for agriculture, I am sure that we would have a little New York in this country. But in that year when that sugar price came, the Democratic Labour Party had all the ADC plantations planted in cotton. When they picked the cotton and started to plant sugar cane from 1975, the pig was already out of the bag — the sugar price was already gone.

I remember last week the honourable Member for St. Philip North (Mr. W. O. Franklin) spoke about the five day week. That is a very good point to make. But there was no time in this island that we ever had five days a week. That was only to fool the poor people in this country. We never had it. We talked about it, but we never gave them.

There are certain times in this country that a farmer would like the workers to work seven days per week. When the time comes and they want to plant cane plants, or when the rain comes and you want to plant food crops, they would want people to work seven days per week. But a time comes when you cannot afford to have more than three days a week. There are no books in this country, on Government estates or any private estates, unless a man is inside the yard attending to his stocks, that there is any record that you give five days a week through a year. Nowhere!

But I would like the honourable Member for St. Philip North to know this now, that this price support will go a long way in helping to alleviate this situation, whereby those people will be able to get more days a week. And when you think about those 6 700 workers that we have in this country and that there were people that were going all out to destroy the sugar industry what about those 6 700 workers? What would we do with those people? There are a lot of people that would have to look for jobs in a time like this.

6.15 p.m.

Last Sunday I was some place in a certain district, not necessarily St. Lucy, and a lady, with about ten people in the house, told me that some member of the Democratic Labour Party came out and told them about the Tenancies Act and tried to mislead and give them the impression that they would have to pay taxes. I cannot believe that an Opposition like that, in a bright day and age like this, would walk about and try to fool the poor people of this country. I do not think that there is any member of the Opposition who is renting a spot or house today; all of them feel big and proud to be owners. But on everything this Government tries to do to improve the working class of this country, you see the members of the Opposition get up and try to mislead the poor people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people see the results from these cane fires that we were having years ago under the Democratic Labour Party regime. When you think about the destruction; when you think about the water, in the first place, that we used when it was law to burn canes; when you think about our health; when you think about the things that we had to do to try and combat to fight fires — sometimes you would light a cane fire and it would burn down some poor person's house; they destroyed all the ratoon canes, the trees which helped to trap rain and the grasses that hold the soil — all those things are the result of the cane fires in this country which they use to encourage.

I am very happy to belong to a party such as the Barbados Labour Party, a party which plans before, which does not wait until things are out of hand to plan. I hope that they will continue in the way that they are going right now.

One of the things which shocked me, was when he spoke about Bath Plantation. We brought back Bath Plantation, St. John, Kirton's in St. Philip, River Plantation, St. Philip and I can call about 14 or 15 more plantations that we brought back and cultivated them. These plantations never used to produce anything in the Democratic Labour Party's time. And I am surprised to hear the honourable Member telling me that we had less acreage this time than he had ten years ago when they were in power.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in closing I would like to commend the nice people of this country — the Police, the Defence Force, Fire Service, and all the concerned Barbadians and visitors alike — for their good sense in helping to reduce the cane fires in the year 1983, moving them from 27 percent to 4 percent. I am hoping that all of us will join hands in 1984 to make the crop a fire-free one.

I thank you.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN (St. Philip North): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the total importance of the sugar industry to the economy of Barbados has been examined very carefully, and we on this side have taken the decision that this Resolution will be supported for the reasons given. It is only, therefore, for me to have a look and see what good it will bring for the workers in the industry.

As I have said before, I am very concerned about the conditions still existing in the agricultural industry vis-a-vis the worker. They have the longest working hours in Barbados. They start at 7 a.m. in the morning, they break at 11 a.m., come back at 12, and they work until 4.30 in the evening. If you compare those working hours with those of any other workers in Barbados, you will realize that they have the longest working hours. The women in the industry, I know, are presently getting \$28.48 per day, giving them a weekly pay of \$107.40.

Last week I drew the five days to the House's attention, and it must be examined very seriously. The honourable Member for St. Lucy (Mr. R. E. Brathwaite) made a statement that at no time in the industry were workers ever given five days. I would say this is not true. I monitored the situation in the plantations of St. Philip very closely, and it was only within the last three years, and I will tell the honourable Member how it came about, at Three Houses, that they are not getting five days in the stipulated period.

The plantations started a policy of sending home all of the old people over 65 years, and those old people were finding it very difficult to make a living and exist on the small pension that they were getting from the National Insurance. Some of the younger people approached the

plantation owners and asked that those who were still physically fit to work be allowed to stay on. At that time an agreement was drawn up that in exchange to keeping on some of the older people, the younger ones would lose one of their working days; so they went from five to four days.

Reluctantly, some of them agreed to this, because they realized that it would be a very serious problem for those people over 65 years — most of them had no income at all — not to be getting any work. I am talking about what I know for a fact. It started that way, and then sometime last year it grew worse, until it reached the point that some weeks they only got two days work. They drew it to my attention. I, in turn, drew it to the Ministry of Labour's attention, and to the attention of their representative at the Barbados Workers' Union, that it was against the law and it was wrong.

I am saying now, particularly since over the last couple of years the industry has benefitted so substantially from taxpayers money, that some of this money must filter down to the workers in the industry. And unless the workers in the industry are going to benefit in a tangible way, by the planters making sure that they get the five working days in the stipulated period, it is incumbent on the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Labour to examine this matter very, very carefully. Ten million dollars this year alone is a lot of money to be passing into an industry that is blatantly disregarding its social concern in providing work for these people.

I have been unfortunate to have met four old people who collectively have given about 160 years of their lives to the sugar industry. They were laid off at a plantation in St. Philip on the flimsy excuse that they did not turn up for work, when the day before they were refused work due to the fact that they would not work in water. It was not fit for these old people between the ages of 58 and 60 to work in those conditions. They came back the next day to work and they were sent back into the same water. They refused to work. They came the third day and they refused to work under those conditions, and they were dismissed on the ground that they refused to accept a lawful instruction.

On that occasion, I can say that I instructed a legal friend of mine to proceed with that matter in the Lower Court. I am now very happy to report that at the end of the hearing they have been found to be wrongfully dismissed and it is just a matter of quantum to work out for these people.

That is what you are getting in the industry, and I am saying that it is very incumbent on the Ministry administering this price support to make sure that some of the money in the industry go towards the people who have developed the industry over the past 300 years.

I thank you.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have had a full debate on this Resolution and I am indeed grateful to all the honourable Members who have spoken. I think that we have had an exhaustive debate, and I am glad that, at the end of the day, we are on a happy note of bi-partisan support for price support to the sugar industry.
6.25 p.m.

Part of the strength of this country rests on the fact that in all the major areas of public policy, both major parties tend to see eye-to-eye. I think it is very important that there should be unanimity with respect to the principle of price support for the sugar industry. There is always room for differences of opinion with respect to details, with respect to methodologies, with respect to approaches, but I think it is very important that we should have had bi-partisan support on the principle of price support.

In the course of the debate there have been a few mis-statements of the facts and a few distortions, and I think it is important that we should put the Record straight in relation to them. For example we have the honourable Member for St. Philip South (Mr. H. A. Blackman) stating quite emphatically that the price support last year was for \$10 million, when indeed it was for \$17 million. We have the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central (Dr. R. C. Haynes) saying that the price support last year was for some \$32 million, when indeed it was \$17 million. Those are just a few of the many inaccuracies of fact which we would like to put right.

The honourable Member for St. Michael West seems keen to have us remember that he played an important role in the negotiations of Lomé I and, particularly, the establishment of the sugar protocol under which we now operate. Indeed, from all reports, his contribution was not without distinction.

I would just like to remind him that at the end of the day he does not have too much to be proud of, because Barbados settled then for a quota under the sugar protocol which was less than we enjoyed under the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement. So I do not think that he has too much to be proud of in relation to his role in the fashioning of the sugar protocol.

The honourable Member for St. Michael South Central repeatedly called on us to ensure that the accounting procedures in the industry are strict. I think that he is on good ground in that regard, and he expressed sentiments which are very much shared by us on this side.

The accounting procedures in the sugar industry were adequate 30 years ago, but the industry and those procedures have been overtaken by structural and technological changes. Thirty years ago, for example, no vegetables were planted on a large commercial scale such as we have today, and there was little mechanization.

Today, accounting procedures are needed which reflected these important changes, and I am happy to be able to tell the House that, effective as from this reaping season, we are going to have these strict accounting procedures which have been called for put into place.

This is not the occasion to have a discussion on the relevance of the notion of the critical mass in relation to the sugar industry. I just would like to say that we on this side believe very strongly that you cannot continue to dismember, as was done in the years prior to our returning to power in 1976, the body of the sugar industry without affecting its whole efficiency profile. As you cut more and more into the critical mass, you increase the unit cost and you increase the inefficiency of the industry.

I think that all that has been said about the need to ensure that the small farmer gets some additional help in the area of carting of the canes, in the area of the reaping of the canes and in particular in setting of a reasonable tariff for the cost of transportation, are points which have been well taken on this side. Already we are in discussion with the sugar industry leaders in respect of the introduction of many of these measures that have been called for.

However, much of the debate did proceed on the premise that we control the industry. Indeed, Government does not control the industry. Government is in a position to influence the industry and to some extent regulate the pace of changes.

We have important levers arising from the fact that we are responsible for marketing, from the fact that much of the financing of the industry is done through the Barbados National Bank and from the fact that Government owns by way of shares some proportion of the industry on behalf of the small producers. Through such control we can to some extent influence what happens in the industry, but we are not in a position to control outright what takes place in the industry.

I was particularly attracted to the contribution made by the honourable Member for Christ Church East Central (Hon. H. B. St. John), particularly his point that now that we have the sugar industry on a viable basis as a modern co-operative, it should really get into the area of importing direct, while leaving out the middle man, the important inputs which are needed in the industry, so as to reduce the cost to consumers in the industry.

I bear in mind that the industry has had a long connection with the mercantile community in Bridgetown, and I wonder now how viable this hope is that that will come to pass. But I think that Government has got to insist that they move in that direction or, alternatively, that the particular items be rigidly price controlled. I think that that is a challenge both for the Government and the industry itself. It is an area in which we in the Ministry will concentrate in the immediate future.

With those remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish once again to thank all those honourable Members who participated in the debate, and I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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.

On motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Mr. J. G. ODLE, 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. 6.35 p.m.

Head 31 – Prisons – was called.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 31 stand part.

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

Mr. M. A. KING (Christ Church West Central): Mr. Chairman, under this Head I will take the opportunity to raise the question of the problem of the administration of the prison. It seems to me as if, despite all that is being said and done about the prison, about the reports and investigations which have been going on in relation to the prisons, all is still not well at the prison as far as general administration of that institution is concerned.

In recent times we have even heard of a situation where a death, a murder, has been reported in the prison. I wonder if the Government would take this opportunity to shed some light on what steps have been taken so far as bringing the perpetrators of any wrongful and criminal acts in the prison to justice.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN (Christ Church East Central): Mr. Chairman, I am sure that the honourable Member, above all, is well aware that under the Constitution of Bar-

bados the investigation, the laying of charges and the conclusion of charges are all in the hands of agencies over which politicians have no control – and quite rightly they should have no control. I therefore share with him his concern that these agencies should get on with their job, and in view of the public interest in matters of this kind, periodic reports of the progress or the lack of progress should be made available.

I can only on behalf of the Government tell the honourable Member that we too look forward to a solution of the causes of what occurred at the prisons, because even if a man is a prisoner, he is still entitled to his right to life, unless he loses it in circumstances under which the law provides.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD (St. Michael South): Mr. Chairman, I would like to seek some information on Sub-head 1, Prison – Prison Department, Item 7, Supplies and Materials. The supplementary provision required for this item is \$100,000 and that is in relation to the amount that was approved in the Current Estimates, \$460,000. The note to that particular item states that as a result of the increase in the prison population it has become necessary to supplement this item. The supplement which is being requested is, I believe, about 21 per cent, and I am asking what really is the increase in the size of the prison population which has taken place to merit this demand for the supplement.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Chairman, I would not be able to give the honourable Member a specific reason for the increase at this stage, because the particularity with which the honourable Member has framed his question would seem to indicate that he needs an answer of equal particularity. If that is so, the honourable Member, as an experienced parliamentarian, would know that the proper way to elicit such particularity is to ask a question. I think that everybody knows, because it is a matter of public knowledge, that there has been an increase in the number of sentences which have been dispensed by magistrates, in particular in relation to the rise in drug traffic in Barbados.

I live in a parish in which the only airport is situated, and I am astounded at the number of people who are held over the weekend for trafficking in drugs. Certain flights come from other parts of the Caribbean only on weekend, and the specialists in this area of trade believe that the weekend is the proper time to deal with offenders. One understands their reasons for it, because there is no way that you can give such a person bail if they are not resident in the country, and they come in on a weekend and it is known that if the object of the crime is to dispose of the drug during the course of the period of time that they are here. So the judiciary has come to the conclusion that the proper way of dealing with this matter is to have a weekend holiday in Barbados

for all connected, and that has been responsible for some of these problems.

The other thing is that we have also been having a number of other areas of the law where a tougher attitude on sentencing has been exhibited lately, because there has been a repetition of certain offences, and in their wisdom, those responsible for sentencing decided in their minds that that is one way to prevent it.

Barbados is not unique in this respect. I saw in the *Times* only recently a discussion on a common policy of sentencing in relation to drugs and certain other offences, like breaking and entering on a lower scale and offences of snatching, not robbery really, offences from the person. I think it is almost unanimous now that in these cases, because of their prevalence at this particular time in the history of mankind, judges all over the world are dealing with them. As a matter of fact, the Chief Justice in England in his address to a Magistrates' Association stated that where there was strong evidence that the person had more than one conviction for the possession of large quantities — I only hear of this thing in kilograms, but they obviously were dealing with it in pounds — of drugs of any kind and they had a previous conviction of such a nature as to indicate that they were dealers, then the magistrates and other law enforcement authorities should consider a prison term — once there was evidence that they had sufficiently large quantities.

Obviously that is being reflected here too. It is felt that if offenders have sufficiently large quantities other than for their personal consumption, after the first conviction, they should be considered for a prison term, a short one in the first case and then larger if they have succeeding offences.

Again with the question of the offences that you have in relation to jostling people and taking things from them in the streets of cities, apparently that is a very current crime in some countries where people would mill around in a crowd and they push; usually a little gang; one person pushes the victim and the other person attracts his attention, then the other person pulls something off him. Apparently it is now fairly clear that after a second conviction, they are also regarded as being fit for a three months or six months sentence. So we are getting a different concept now.

6.45 p.m.

There is another area that is very interesting, and it is a crime in relation to trespass and the breaking up of sports. Apparently, that is now such a common thing in many countries of the world that if you now break up a sporting game, or even if after the game is over and there are fights, prison terms are being recommended. All of this is going on in the world.

I have absolutely no doubt that if an investigation was done in relation to the increase in the amount of sentencing, one would find that Barbados in one or two instances is only following suit. Regrettably, I may say, the younger people seem to be the ones who are involved. It runs counter to the theory that I learnt when I was doing criminal law that is that you used to do your best to prevent young people from going to prison. It was always felt that it was worse to send them to prison where they would mix with the other people than the feeling today. Apparently they feel that a weekend or three months is no big thing today.

Mr. B. M. TAITT (St. Michael West): Mr. Chairman, I just want for the Record to make a few points arising out of what the honourable Member for Christ Church East Central (Hon. H. B. St. John) said.

I find it a little unacceptable, in fact I find it difficult to understand how he could make the point that an honourable Member with the experience of my colleague ought to know that the way to elicit information of a certain kind is via the Parliamentary Question. He is saying *sotto voce* he did not say that, but that is what I understood him to be saying.

In Head 31, the Note says:—

"As a result of the increase in the prison population it has become necessary to supplement this item."

I would think that if ever there was a question that followed naturally and flowed logically out of that statement, it is the question, "By how much has the population increased?"

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: He said he would be able to give an answer then.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Could you let me speak in peace?

The point I am making, Sir, is not that he ought to have the information, although that is a point that can be made. If you are coming to this House, you should come with the information. That is the information that you ought to have. But he said he does not have it, and we accept that.

What we do not accept is the admonition that we ought to ask Parliamentary Questions about matters which come before this Committee. This Committee is the principal place where questions of that kind should be asked. And the honourable Member knows that. I think it was a lapse on the part of the honourable Member. I would not flog that point.

But my colleague is a parliamentarian of very high standing and wide experience and would not get caught, and he is not in the habit of trying to slip things past

anybody. He knows that the Committee is the place where these questions should be asked.

The honourable Member raised the question of sentencing. I know that we are not into a debate about sentencing, but since the honourable member raised the question of sentencing, there is something which occurs in Barbados which has been of some concern to a number of practitioners at the Bar, and certainly to a number of persons who are concerned with human rights in Barbados.

We have a situation where persons who seek to get bail in this country have to do two things. First of all, a person with a previous conviction has to go before a magistrate and that magistrate, by necessity, becomes aware of the previous conviction; and then, very often, the same magistrate has to deal with the offender in the substantive matter. It seems to me that that is a very serious lapse in our system of administration of justice and one which needs to be corrected as a matter of course, because it is humanly impossible for an individual not to take cognizance of the fact, such as that an individual has had previous conviction, when that individual has to take a judicial position, as a magistrate.

I am not here impugning any of the magistrates in Barbados integrity. I am saying that it is not a desirable system where a magistrate who is going to pronounce on bail, who gets to see the record of the individual, should be the same magistrate who is dealing with the individual in a substantive matter when that individual comes before him. It stands to reason that that individual is going to be the beneficiary of some kind of bias, however small.

I do not accept the fixed concepts of sentencing either. I believe that our system of justice requires that each individual who comes up to be sentenced ought to be treated on his merit. And whilst it is a recognized principle of sentencing in law that prohibition — I use that term — is one of the principles that may be used in sentencing — and we know of instances where the Court of Appeal in England, for example, has used a particular sample as a signal to others in the community where a particular crime is becoming prevalent — I think that in a society of this size, we have to be extremely careful not to have fixed ideas or fixed concepts as to whether people will be sent to prison in certain circumstances.

I necessarily must talk around this, because I do not want to be invidious. But I do not believe that any magistrate in Barbados, or any judge for that matter, ought to have any fixed idea as to what kind of sentence would be meted out for what kind of offence under certain circumstances. It is a fact that notwithstanding the appearance that the particular offence is the same as another offence that occurred, for example, the breaking up of parties or the breaking up of football games, or rowdyism at the end

of a game, different people are engaged most of the time. And it seems to me that each one of them, especially when they are young people, should be given the benefit of the doubt.

We need to look at the cause of the problem rather than the result of the problem. Where we have that kind of behaviour, it is invariably the signal that something else is wrong in the society. Where we have had rowdyism and bad behaviour in Barbados, it has invariably been traceable to something beyond the actual incident that occurred.

I know that there are a number of people who feel that you must not be "mandy-panky" about young people in the society and that you must set example for them, but sending a person to prison is a very serious step. And to the extent that you can avoid sending young persons to prison, I think it is in our interest, as a community, to avoid sending those young persons to prison.

I do not wish to import any politics into this particular debate. But I do not, on the basis of what I observe in Barbados, see that there is any great need for a large increase in the prison facilities in this country.

I know that there was a time when the Labour Party passed a law that would have made every house in Barbados a prison, as necessary. But that notwithstanding, it seems to me that I heard the honourable Attorney-General in this Honourable House indicating that they were having a new enlightened approach to the whole question of penal arrangements in Barbados.

I recall that he asked this House to give him some time and that he would come back to this House and let us know what the new arrangements were, after he had studied the report, I think it was the Jones Report and some other report. We have heard nothing from the Attorney-General, and some considerable time has elapsed since then. I hope that the Acting Prime Minister would not expect us to wait forever to hear of these new arrangements for the prison.

I notice now that we are exporting prison officers to Grenada. I think it is very good that if we have an excess prison officers of good quality, we share them with the people in the Caribbean, to the extent that they need them. But I hope that the Government is paying attention to the new technique which is being used in some of the more advanced prisons in the world. Not in the United States. They do not have any advanced prisons in the United States, except for political prisoners of the Administration. They get to go to a farm that has been euphemistically described as a prison.

6.55 p.m.

But in Europe, a number of innovations in penal policy are available to Governments like Barbados, and I

hope that the Government will take the opportunity to send some of its prison officers to some of these places to observe and pay attention to the new techniques especially avoiding the mix between the first offenders and the hardened criminals.

Mr. Chairman, this is not the time for a full-fledged debate on the prison, and at a later time, hopefully not long from now, we will have a few more things to say.

Mr. N. K. SIMMONS (St. James South): Mr. Chairman, I guess that I might be in a better position than most people in here to make a comment on bail and sentencing.

I think that you must understand, first of all, that Barbados is a very small place and it is not really possible, in many instances, that the person can go before two separate magistrates, one for bail and one for the hearing of the case. In any event, let me say that when a fellow has gone before the court two or three times, he is known — throughout the island. So whether he goes on the fourth occasion before Magistrate A or Magistrate B, it makes no difference. That is a fact. Whether we like it or not, this is so.

I think that, nevertheless, we can say in Barbados that persons do get a fair trial. That can be seen from the number of appeals which go before the Divisional Court.

As far as sentencing is concerned, I would like to say that a common policy of sentencing might be applicable to a large country where people are, generally speaking, numbers. But in a small community where by and large you know nearly every individual, you can treat people on an individual basis, and the circumstances of the case, the circumstances of the man's background and so on can really come into play.

I believe that in our situation a man gets a better chance of a good sentence that in a bigger country, because you tend to know, especially if you are operating in the district from which you come, generally speaking, what is best suited for him; you know his upbringing, his attitude, his behaviour, and you know his character. This is very important as far as sentencing is concerned.

I do not think that we should go towards a common sentence or a policy of sentencing. It would not work. Every case is an individual case. You have the special circumstances, even if it is the manner in which the crime was committed, if it is the antecedents of the accused person, his age or his background — something is different in every case.

I think that is why the legislators in passing the law might give you the maximum rather than to say you can give a man a specific sentence. That is why they give you

the maximum. You have a wide range, say, from \$50 to \$500 and from a year to three years. They realize, in their wisdom, that people who come before the court are individuals and must be treated as individuals, and so you should look at the special circumstances.

Of course, you can talk of a common policy of sentencing as it applies to a crime; let us say, murder is hanging, rape is life, larceny from the person is five years maximum. But that deals with specific crime. When you are sentencing the individual, you must look at the individual specifically, and deal with him. Because what you are trying to do in sentencing is to make an accused person understand that what he has done is wrong; and the sentence which is imposed on him is the sentence which should best make him understand that he has done wrong and that where it applies, he is being given a chance to reform.

But if you have a common policy of sentencing, you might find that very often it has the reverse effect. For example, let us say three men come before you and you give each 18 months. For one that might be a good thing, but for two it might have the reverse effect; they become anti-social and create more crime.

I do not agree with this common policy of sentencing, especially if it applies to a small country like Barbados.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, just a few brief remarks in answer to a point made by the honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt). The Jones Report was presented during the time that I had responsibility for the subject of Prisons and arising out of that report we set up a special committee under Professor Delroy Chuck, and the Chuck Report was presented to me just a little ahead of the last elections — it might have been in 1980.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: If the honourable Member will give way for just a moment: I am not dealing within his time. In fact, it was the present Attorney General who had come to this House. I just want to make that point.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: I am aware of that.

What has happened is that there were also a series of draft bills which would comprehensively reform the whole of the criminal law. Those bills have been submitted to a committee under Justice Denys Williams, and my latest information, from talking to the Attorney General, was that several of them are now at a stage where they should shortly be able to come to the House. There are actually a few members of the Bar sitting on that committee and the consultations have gone on on them.

I think one of the areas that will cause us concern will be the question of the death penalty. Let me confess that when I was Attorney General, I found it difficult to make a decision on behalf of the country as a whole on the complete abolition of the death penalty. It did seem to me an area in which there ought to be perhaps a free vote in this House, and the bill which has been drafted. The Offences Against the Persons Act, did not address itself to that particular problem.

The increase in the prison numbers has been significant for some years now. I know that in the last election it became a question of great contention. I even heard my friend, the honourable Member for St. Michael South (Mr. L. E. Sandiford), who is normally very restrained, speaking on the figures and actually at times pulling out certain figures to show that there was an increase in crime, but not looking at the others — using only those obviously which would prove the case.

The truth of the matter is that a large percentage of that increase in the prison population is due to the fact that we still maintain an archaic system of sending people to prison for a debt. We recognize this, and I understand that the Ministry of the Attorney General, as part of the reforming measures, was working on a bill to abolish imprisonment for a debt *per se* and to institute other measures to deal with persons who may not be able to pay a debt on time.

I had, a couple of weeks ago, the experience of being called up at my home by a constituent to say that a young lady in the constituency of the honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, the Deputy Prime Minister, had been arrested and taken to Glendairy Prison. She is a relative of persons in my own constituency. When I investigated the matter, it was for a simple debt. She had defaulted on one instalment that was due and she was taken up and sent to prison for this, leaving a baby a couple of months old and children who were all under the age of eight years old. It was only the intervention of neighbours that brought the situation to the attention of her family.
7.05 p.m.

Obviously I intervened immediately, and the Welfare Officer dealt with the problem. But it brought home to me the harsh reality that sending people to prison for debt seems to be a very archaic method of dealing with the problems of debt.

The Probation Department along with the courts have instituted a community-ordered project which was working very successfully, although it has not been implemented by way of legislation, but by way of Court sentencing. I think that the judiciary, both the magisterial branch of the judiciary and High Court branch of the judiciary have now obtained enough experience in that

field that it would be good for us to probably bring a measure before Parliament dealing with the reform and sentencing provisions and regulations.

There has been some increase in people going to prison for drugs. It has not been as catastrophic as the initial figures have shown that it would have been, although of course there has been a drug problem world-wide.

I think that one of the significant things about our prison population is that the number of women in the prison has kept consistently low. I think they have almost decreased, and there are probably less than 11 women in prison at any one time.

I believe that this needs an in-depth study by people at the University of the West Indies and sociologists and others in our community, to find out how it is that the women in the community, although outnumbering the men in terms of percentages, because there are more women in Barbados than men, yet do not go to prison as often as the men in the community do go to prison.

Asides.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: The honourable Member says "equal rights." It only shows that the women understand and respect law and order in a much better way than the men in the community do. It may well be that there are some lessons there for us in the way that we teach our men, in our households or somewhere else, to respect the laws of the land and not to breach them as often as possible.

The honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt) is quite right, that there is really not a case for building any new prison. What I understand we have been doing is refurbishing the prison, making the prison self-sufficient in many areas, encouraging training and education within the prison — certainly we have had people graduating with certificates from Pitmans and from the O'level examinations whilst in prison — we have introduced Art classes in the prison, and I think that by and large an attempt has been made to show the prisoner a better way of life and to reintegrate the prisoner into the society after the prisoner has suffered the particular problem that he has had. So there have been various examinations and studies for them.

I would especially like to mention the volunteers who devote a lot of time to helping prisoners rehabilitate and improve themselves. There are several people who do this, and they are not always recognised. The honourable Member for St. James South (Mr. N. K. Simmons), who has spoken, when he was visiting Magistrate of the Prison would have had an opportunity on many occasions to come into contact with these people

who are really taking steps to see the prisoners as human beings.

The last bit of legislation that I hope would come in the package which I know the Attorney-General's Office is working on, is the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. I think it is a hard thing that when a man has served the prison term and has got several years on, sometimes 5, 10, or 20 years, to find that he still has a record being brought up against him in the court when he is on a minor traffic offence. The magistrate probably says, "Is there anything known about him?", and you find that when he was a little boy, 20 years ago, he threw some stone and knocked down somebody's mangoes and he was charged.

I think we should get rid of records after about five to seven years, except for certain serious offences, homicide or treason. But other than that those offences should be written off, and particularly where you get countries such as the United States asking you for these records and using them sometimes as an excuse for denying people immigration rights into their country.

On motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. H. deB. FORDE, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported progress and asked for leave to sit again, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until 8 p.m. tonight.

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

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the sitting accordingly.
7.15 p.m.

ON RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This sitting is now resumed.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: 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 31 – Prisons, stand part, was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Head 34 – Ministry of Education – was called.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 34 – Ministry of Education, stand part.

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

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN (St. Philip North): Mr. Chairman, under Head 34, Subhead 5, Item 9, there is a vote for \$188 878, of which \$87 000 is owed to Central Purchasing and the remaining \$100 000 is needed for urgent repairs to buildings at 30 primary schools. This shows something like only \$3 000 per primary school. I wonder if this is really accurate. The reason why I ask this is that if the repairs are so urgent, for them only to be worth \$3 000 seems a little bit unusual to me.

I would like to signal the Ministry that they have to be more careful in their maintenance programme at the schools. What comes to mind forcibly is that they are presently repairing St. Philip Boys' School. They are replacing the entire roof and they are using, quite rightly, greenheart from Guyana for the trusses. But to my surprise, they took off the Big Six sheeting and are replacing these by galvanise sheets.

Now the saving between the Big Six and the galvanise could be very nominal, but if you consider that the life of those galvanise sheets could hardly be more than five or six years in that part of St. Philip, it makes nonsense of the situation to go to the expense of using greenheart trusses, covering them with galvanise sheets where in another six years' time you will have to incur the cost of repairs again to remove those galvanise sheets, setting up a crew and going back in there to put on some other sheets. I think that it is a very short-sighted policy by the Ministry to go into an initial expense like that to save a couple of dollars, to use galvanise sheets in preference to a longer life sheet.

This brings me to the query about \$3 000 per school for repairs. They have just done some repairs at Baileys. I am surprised that after the repairs at Baileys, you still have to pull in the main door and secure it with a piece of wire.

(Asides.)

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: I had my meeting there last week and they had just finished repairs there. I find it remarkably short-sighted that you can just finish repairs to a school, and you still have to wrap a piece of wire around a nail to secure the main door.

I realise that it is a very tedious programme, and I realise that you have a lot of schools, but it is better for

your maintenance department, when they are doing maintenance at a school, to effectuate the repairs properly, with proper material, because in the long run it will be cheaper to the Ministry than to go in and do this slipshod work just for the sake of saying you have done repairs at the school.

I would like to invite the Minister's comment on that, since it looks to me as if this vote is not really appropriate, having \$100 000 for urgent repairs to some thirty schools.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES (St. Michael North): Mr. Chairman, I, too, share the concern of the honourable Member for St. Philip North (Mr. W. O. Franklin) about the state of repairs in the primary schools. In the St. Michael North area, there are three primary schools, all of which are relatively new. One has been operating for more than twelve years now and quite frankly there is not very much wrong with it, except that it needs a little paint here and there.

But there is a school on Green Hill, and I am wondering if, in fact, the Ministry of Education is aware of such a school. It is the Buxton Primary School. The school is in a very bad state. The entrance to the school is very sub-standard and it is a very short entrance. The yard to the school is in equally bad shape, the school is very grubby, it needs painting and there is not even a sign on the building to indicate that it belongs to the Ministry, or to identify the school itself.

The Minister indicates that she is aware of what I am speaking about. Well I am glad that she is, and now I know she is, I hope that something will be done about it.

Before the Eden Lodge Primary School opened in 1981, there was a school called Montgomery School. The building is the property of the Moravian Church. It has not yet been handed over to the Moravian Church. There are about three structures there that comprise that Montgomery School; one is a stone building and there are two timber buildings that were placed there from time to time as the population of the school increased. All of these buildings, Mr. Chairman, are in very bad shape.

I believe that the timber buildings are still the property of the Ministry of Education and they can be moved and put some other place that would need them, but they have been vandalised, the windows have been broken.

As regards the stone structure, it is the property of the Moravian Church and has not been handed over since it has no longer been in use by the Ministry. It needs a considerable amount of repair, and I am afraid that if it is left much longer, the Ministry might find itself saddled with the responsibility of having to put up a completely new building for the Moravian Church.

I am again drawing this to the attention of the Minister and I hope that something will be done about that as well as about Buxton School and the entrance to it, which also serves as an entrance to a very sensible community called Johnson Land.

Mr. B. M. TAITT (St. Michael West): Mr. Chairman, I have quite a few things that I wish to raise under this Head, and I am going to take them *seriatim*.

I, on a previous occasion, have spoken through you, Sir, and through the Deputy Speaker, to the Minister of Education, and I have tried to suggest to her that there are a number of things which have happened out of the Ministry of Education which have tended to reflect on her as a Minister. They tend to suggest that, in the tradition of the ladies who now run Government in other places, she is a hard-hearted person without any sensitivity to the feelings of people in the community. I spoke of those things because I do not believe that she is necessarily that kind of person, but the policies continue to come which continue to show her in that light.

The first thing I want to talk about is a matter which I think all of us are aware of. For very many years in Barbados, students have been transferred from one secondary school to another. They have been transferred at the behest of parents in consultation with headteachers. Let me say at the outset that I hold no brief for persons who try to get around the regulations or try to stand on line, in queue and that sort of thing. Nonetheless, it is a fact that, traditionally in Barbados, students who have gained entrance to one school subsequently in their school career have been able to transfer to other schools.

As you know, Sir, we brought into this Parliament and passed legislation which now puts the power of decision making more firmly in the Ministry of Education, and in recent times it is my understanding that since the new Education Act came in in September — it became effective in April — there have been some parents, and necessarily some children, who have been caught in an unfortunate situation, which I believe cries out for a solution. These children have been transferred from various secondary schools to other secondary schools, and the Ministry ordered, in the middle of the school year, or in the middle of the school term, after these children had effected the transfer which was carried out in the way it had been done before — the headteachers had agreed — that these children go back to the original schools.

8.15 p.m.

Now let us take that first part. In the case of one child that went back to a particular school, my information is that that child was ridiculed and made to feel less than human. One can only speculate as to the

psychological effect which would accrue to that child, for the rest of its life, because it had been ridiculed now. You may say that that is not the Ministry's fault, that that is the function of the particular headteacher who caused that child to be singled out at an assembly.

Then there are a number of other children who, having transferred legitimately as far as their parents were concerned, and having sought legal advice, have been told not to move from the schools where they have been transferred to, while this matter goes through legal discussion or goes through the courts or whatever.

In the meantime, the Ministry of Education, it is my information, has instructed those schools where those children are not to extend any services to those children whatever. So those children are in classrooms and, according to the Ministry, they are to receive no instruction. I understand that some of the teachers at some of the schools have been ignoring that part of the instruction from the Ministry, but those children have been given no reports. And a whole series of things, which I do not think I have to enumerate to indicate what is the dilemma in which those children found themselves, have befallen them.

Mr. Chairman, I submit that for a child of twelve, or thirteen as the case may be, these kinds of indignities which are being visited on the children, whether it is the fault of the parents taking legal advice, or whether it is because the parents are pigheaded, or whether it is the Ministry that is being pigheaded is not right. I am submitting that the Ministry could have handled this in a much more humane way. The Ministry could have given a firm instruction to the headteachers that this is the final time that they will allow any such transfers. But they ought not to have used those children, caught in the midst of that particular transaction, in the way those children are being used.

I think that the Ministry's responsibility is a sensitivity to the children of this country. Those children that represent the generations that would look after this country in the years to come. And to any extent that the Ministry visits psychological hardship on those children, that is wrong.

I do not understand how, if the Minister is aware of this, the Minister could allow such a hard-hearted policy to prevail. I would prefer to believe that she is not aware of it, but if I am aware of it, she has to be aware of it.

I look forward to hearing the Minister's views on this and I would frankly hope that the Minister would direct that until this matter has been settled in the courts, these children be treated normally in the schools where they now go to school, or where they now believe they

have a right to go to school. Because if a headteacher agreed and allowed a transfer, the children engaged in that transfer ought not to be the recipients of the Ministry's policy invective.

The second thing I want to speak about under this Head is of equal indication of a lack of sensitivity. There are some teachers in this community who have been teaching at certain schools for twelve, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen years. Apparently they were given direction or instruction that they should acquire certain certification, and for a number of reasons they have not been able to get that certification by a certain time. At least three of those teachers have spoken to me, so I speak of this with a certain amount of knowledge. Those teachers have been systematically laid off, suddenly, and have not had any employment this year at all.

Now these are persons who served this community well, for ten, twelve, thirteen years. If that is so, again the Ministry ought to exhibit the kind of sensitivity which would allow it to recognize the service which these persons have given to the community. To say, *ex post facto* that a person who was hired with a certain expectation is now required to reach a certain qualification, and not to recognize the enhanced difficulty for some people to reach that qualification, is to display a lack of sensitivity which is not in keeping with what one expects or anticipates from a Ministry of Education.

Maybe from a Ministry of Transport and Works, that is the sort of thing you would expect. One does not expect it from a Ministry of Transport and Works, but if it happened, one would say that in the Ministry of Transport and Works, traditionally has had to deal with some hard cases. So if they behave in a hard way and lock off some heads here and change around some people there, you might even understand that. But in a Ministry of Education, dealing with children and teachers, people who we expect to have a nexus between them, and cutting off teachers suddenly in the midst of a school year, or teachers who had every expectation when they went home last year that they would be rehired, to have to wait at home for the call that never came, that is not good enough. It is not the sort of humane Government which people in Barbados have a right to expect.

The third point relates to the same laying off, except that this time we are dealing with a number of teachers, mostly in secondary schools, who, having retired, had been brought to these schools because of their special capabilities, their special abilities and their special skills. A large number of them at Combermere, that is the school of which I know, have suddenly been given their walking papers.

With the coming of this new Board of Management system, where the Ministry of Education is making

the decisions from a central position, apparently, you have people like Broodhagen who have been sent home. Now, Mr. Chairman, pray tell me which person in Barbados can duplicate the skills of a Karl Broodhagen? People like Harry Sealy, whose expertise in the area of junior school management and dealing with the children extends way back to when persons like you, Sir, were little boys at Combermere, he too, has been given walking papers – suddenly.

I am suggesting that you cannot replace that kind of person. But what is more important is that where those persons collectively form part of the core that will help to engender a sense of tradition in that particular school, both for the young teachers and the young students coming in, to remove all of them suddenly, and, in addition, to transfer a number of the other older heads from that particular school, opens you to the charge of victimization. I am not saying that it is victimization, but I am saying that when someone who perceives that kind of action accuses the Ministry of victimization, the Ministry is hard pressed to defend itself effectively.

I do not understand why you would have to focus on a particular school to remove six or seven or eight of the core people at the same time. It does not make sense to me. I would welcome an explanation from the Minister. I would be happy to hear an explanation which would put the lie to what I am saying, because if what I am saying is true, it is a sad moment.
8.25 p.m.

Finally, Sir, we have been hearing about a new Social Science Paper.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order: I think that I really have to appeal to the honourable Member to try to get something right. He has heard about the introduction of a General Paper, the re-introduction of a General Paper. That is what he has heard about. This is not the place to be inventive.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I bow to the superior wisdom of the Minister of Education on these matters. If I call it a Social Science Paper and she calls it a General Paper, I withdraw Social Science. I say a General Paper.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Precisely, that is why I am trying my best.

Sir, the General Paper examination. Through the usual channels that we use, we have been fortunate to get a copy of this specimen paper. I do not believe that this is a specimen paper. I believe that this is a paper that somebody has put together to defame the Ministry. I put it to you, Sir, that anyone who goes through these 50 questions,

which is intended as a guide for the new General Paper that is going to come out, cannot believe that it is intended that these questions would be for 11-year-old children.

I recall that the honourable Member who just uttered words had a look at this and indicated quite freely that even at this age he could not pass this. He indicated quite freely after he saw this that he could not pass this 11-Plus Examination. Mr. Chairman, let me just give you some sample questions.

"For how long has Barbados been a sugar producing island?

- (a) 50 years.
- (b) 150 years.
- (c) 300 years.
- (d) 450 years.

We saw in this honourable Chamber today that an honourable Member, who has held the portfolio of the Ministry of Agriculture, was not sure about this particular answer, and yet this is a specimen for 11-years-old.

Another one, Sir:

The growing period before canes are ready to be harvested is between:

- (a) 8 and 10 months.
- (b) 12 and 14 months.
- (c) 15 to 17 months.
- (d) 20 to 22 months.

I cannot read the whole paper. I will make it available to you.....

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The section on Tourism? Yes, the section on Tourism looks interesting. Let me see if I can find it. The Minister responsible for Tourism is called.... That is a fairly easy one.....

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Do not get too upset.

Listen to this one, Sir.

In 1970 each tourist spent an average of \$150 and in 1980 an average of \$415. The 1980 average compared with that of 1970 was about:

- (a) 3 times as much.
- (b) 4 times as much.
- (c) 6 times as much.
- (d) 10 times as much.

No problem, Sir, if you know that it is \$150 and \$415. But they are coming at you now!

"Which one of the following may not attract more tourists to Barbados:

- (a) Advertisements
- (b) Positive comments about the island
- (c) Negative comments about the island
- (d) A clean environment

"In 1981 tourists to Barbados were pleased with their trip as shown:

Air transport 51%.

Accommodation, 40%.

Beaches, 57%.

Hospitality, 42%.

Using the information above, show which service most tourists were satisfied with:

- (a) Accommodation
- (b) Air Transport
- (c) Hospitality
- (d) Beaches

Which of the following is not a CARICOM country, and they list them. Then they have a diagram, Sir. It has Heads of Government Conference, Common Market Council, Caribbean Community Secretariat, Associate Institutions. Here is the question.

The diagram above shows the:

- (a) West Indian Confederation
- (b) Structure of CARICOM
- (c) Barbados Government
- (d) Ministry of Education

Sir, for us in here those questions appear to be easy — for some of us — not all of us. But, Sir, there are fifty of them, and you would have to see the ones on Science. They are wonderful! These are some of the diagrams. The honourable Member has seen them and I think he will agree that they are a little tough.

Time is running out, and I do not have to remake the point. All I am saying is that if these questions are truly the sample questions that they intend to ask in the General Paper, the teachers in those schools will have to spend all of their time teaching these subjects, they will have to spend all of their time preparing the children for this paper, they will have no time to prepare them for the other two. You are going to have a whole new approach.

And I put it to you that if this is a sample — God help us! It means that more particularly only those children that grew up in an environment where these kinds of things are spoken and discussed comfortably and regularly will have a reasonable chance at this examination. But I will let the honourable Member answer those questions before I go any further.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE (Christ Church West): Mr. Chairman, I have heard nothing but critical remarks of the honourable Minister. I wish, however, to praise her. I had the privilege only recently of attending the opening of the Luther St. Alban Thorne Memorial School on the Clapham Road. That school is a model school. In fact, Barbadians could be proud of what has been achieved in the rebuilding of the primary schools of this island, in such a short space of time, under this Government. I believe some seven of the ten primary schools have been completed, and I have had the privilege of seeing the most recent one.

The honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt) may be surprised that if he went to the Luther St. Alban Thorne School and went back into the reception class, he may be able to answer a few of those questions on the Common Entrance that he has just read out. I saw a chart done by children who were just gaining entrance to the school, and it was done by drawings and as well as cutting out bits of paper — I believe they are called collages — on the Grenada Revolution and the events that occurred subsequent to 1979.

The concept of teaching has changed considerably at the primary school level in the last few years. A lot of us are not keeping abreast with the fact that, with so many trained teachers available, children will surprise us by the amount of general knowledge which they have acquired on current events when we least think that they are absorbing this knowledge.

Some of the achievements of the five-year olds, and on through the school — I think we have only got them up to eight years, because the school has just started — were surprising to me. Certainly in my day at primary school I concentrated on the three Rs and I was taught in an almost formalistic way rather than in the new methods of teaching and with the aids to teaching that are being introduced to schools.

I do not know how many of us take the opportunity to visit these areas. But if I can compare that school with the St. Matthias School, I would like to see the St. Matthias School reach the same level in terms of the teaching aids, the methods of teaching, the approach of the teachers and the approach of the pupils themselves. I believe that we ought not transfer some of our fears to the children, since it seems to me that the Ministry as a consistent policy — I am not only saying only under our Government — has been working towards achieving this goal, and certainly all of the institutions have been geared to it. The honourable Member for St. Michael North (Mr. P. M. Greaves) has had the benefit of new schools in his area and he has probably seen this.

8.35 p.m.

I want to thank the Minister, although the school is not in my constituency. It is in the constituency of the honourable Member for St. Michael South East (Hon. DeL. O. Bradshaw), Minister of Labour — it is on the border of my constituency — but a lot of the people in my constituency have children attending that school. I believe that over \$1 million has been well spent on the 600 odd children who will be going to school there, and I have no doubt that those who will be sitting the Common Entrance Examination when their time comes will master those 50 questions without any problems whatsoever.

I am the father of two children, one of whom is not blessed the normal capacity of children, he is handicapped. But it is always surprising to me that if you start talking to children, they will answer a lot of these questions. He certainly would have some difficulty with some of them, given his limited capacity. But talking about events, because of the impact of radio, because of the impact of television, because of the impact of the new modern approach in schools, most of these children, even the handicapped children, are being taught seeing, hearing and general knowledge everyday.

I think it is wrong for people, because we are introducing something new, to condemn it out of hand. I believe that current affairs, particularly current affairs as it relates to your own environment, is extremely vital to the proper education of a citizen. I believe that in this regard the honourable Member for St. Michael South would support me.

There was a time when we knew everything about the United Kingdom. We knew all of the battles, all about the Battle of Hastings in 1066. We were taught this from school days. None of us would know when the Brazilians came here and started the sugar industry. The honourable Member knows that now, but very few of the people of my age group were taught that. I believe that if you were to ask them to name five leading cricketers in the Caribbean, they would not know, but they may be able to tell you the names of ten leading generals in the United Kingdom, and I think that it is necessary for us to concentrate the young people from early on their history, their sociology, their politics and on the Caribbean region — not that we are going to be so introspective as to recognise that we are not citizens of the world.

I was not expecting the Minister to be criticised for what I think is a proper step that should be taken. The timing of it may be a matter of which we would have some differences of opinion — how long it would take to get it into the school system — but I believe that the necessity for that type of paper should not be contested.

The Government has achieved a lot in the primary field. I recognise that under the last Government, when

I shadowed my friend, the honourable Member for St. Michael South (Mr. L. E. Sandiford), a lot of the concentration was on building in the secondary field — at the time the World Bank programme was not on stream. I think I am on record in those days as saying that we had to shift our building programme and our concentration on upgrading the standard of primary education. The reason is that the large proportion of children in this island still only go to only primary education level, and it is important that we continue to spend more on them. I do not know what would be in the next five year programme, but I am sure that the Minister, in her projection, for the future, would be looking at upgrading other schools.

I want before I sit down, since in this House there are at least three of us who are products of an outstanding school, Christ Church Boys' School, the honourable Member for Christ Church West Central (Mr. M. A. King), the honourable Member for Christ Church East Central (Hon. H. B. St. John) and myself — do not mind the honourable Member for St. John (Rt. Hon. E. W. Barrow) — I want to again thank the Government and the Minister for having rebuilt that school. It has produced a lot of outstanding scholars, and I think it was in need of repairs for a long time. But now we have a modern school there.

I do not know if I will be fortunate enough to get the St. Matthias schools into the next five year development plan, but in the long term those schools ought to be amalgamated. The problem we are going to have in the area is a lack of available land space — I think the honourable Member for St. Michael South will agree with me, some of his constituents also go there — and even although we may not be in a position to start the physical building of the new plant with a plan period, I believe the Ministry should give urgent consideration to acquiring any available open land that is suitable, which is still in the area, and earmark it for the future development of a school plant.

I think that the Minister, in the short time in which she has been in the Ministry, has brought her usual penchant for forthrightness. Sometimes it is difficult to be tough in politics. There are not many people who can be tough in politics, and when they are right stick by it. We tend to look and see how the votes we have are going to fall.

But the Minister obviously knows her portfolio. She manages it well. I would not say she lacks the sensitivity of which the honourable has accused her. I think she is a very forthright person. She speaks her mind frankly, but she is never adverse to listening. Indeed, I am aware of the fact that whenever representations are to be made in her Ministry, whether it be from the telephone operator right up to the Chief Education Officer or the Permanent Secretary, you always get a very reasonable hearing.

I have been phoning the Permanent Secretary sometimes at half past eleven to find that he is still in his office. I have phoned the Chief Education Officer at late hours to find that he, too, is in his office, and I have got always good reception. Not that they can solve all the problems, but I think there is one thing you cannot say about the Ministry of Education, including the Minister of Education, that they are lacking in sensitivity.

They may have to enforce rules which may not be popular, but they do find the time, from the Chief to his deputies, to the inspectors, to the supporting staff, to listen to people's complaints and to try to redress them. In this regard, I believe that they take the leadership from the Minister, whom I know devotes at least one full day to listen to the public complaints on matters such as this.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I am not speaking. I just want to correct the honourable Member. He said that I was accusing the Minister of insensitivity. That is not quite correct. I said that she allows herself or has allowed herself to be in the position where she can be accused of lacking sensitivity. There is a slight difference.

Mr. N. K. SIMMONS (St. James South): I would like to make reference to one or two things made by the last speaker. Although I am appreciative of the number of new primary schools which are being built, I think that something seems to be lacking as far as the maintenance of the older primary schools are concerned. I cannot remember really passing any one older primary school and seeing it in the condition in which I would like to see it.

From time to time, I make it a point of duty to stop by some of these schools to see what the condition is like. I do so because I think that once you are building newer schools, then it is a necessity to upgrade the older schools, and I think that this is something which should be on a continual basis.

As a matter of fact, I believe that the best way of doing this is by a system of preventative maintenance. I know that there are a number of schools in my area, St. John the Baptist Mixed and St. John the Baptist Infants, which, I believe, have not been even painted for the last eight years.

8.45 p.m.

This is not good enough. To my mind, they are no better than when I went to them myself. The paint is off the walls and they are not really conducive to learning. I believe that when a youngster first goes to school or goes near to a school, he should want to go into the building, but if the building is somewhat foreboding, the first impression is a bad one, and it unfortunately might have an effect on him for the balance of his school life.

Coming back to the question of new schools, I would ask the Minister to consider erecting a primary school in the Oxnards/Wanstead/Husbands/West Terrace areas. Since the new development in Haynesville and that area generally, I do not think that even the schools have been extended to cope with the numbers. Last Sunday I attended a fair at St. John the Baptist Infants School and the people were complaining bitterly. They cannot take one single child far less all the others that are to come, so there is a dire need for a new school in that area.

I believe that the last speaker, in speaking of the youngster who was doing the collages, was probably speaking of an exceptional child, because here again I make it a point of business to speak to the teachers and the children, and they are all complaining about the children who seem to have learning problems. There is a vast number of children going to school who have learning problems, and this brings me on to the next point.

I believe there was a place in these schools for those teachers who were laid off. In the nursing profession you call them nursing aides and in the teaching profession you could call them teaching aides, but if a child has learning problems, then it seems to me that the lower the ratio of pupil to teacher, the better for the children. As a matter of fact, they need more individual tuition than the average child, and I believe some consideration should be given to the question of having these people in that particular area. They could be collecting the fees in the schools for examinations, but after sixteen years or twelve years it is difficult to ask somebody to be retrained to go on to a new area, especially when they are so settled and they feel somewhat doomed.

Now something strange happened at the St. James Mixed School a couple of weeks ago, and I would like to bring this to the attention of the Minister, because I think the policy in the Ministry could be more flexible. The PTA at this school saw the need for the school to be repainted and decided to have a fair and dance to raise the funds inside the school term. I know it is not the normal policy of the Ministry of Education to allow people to have dances in schools during the term, but here was a PTA, realising the economic situation with which they are faced in this country, deciding that they would raise money to paint the school and were told "No way, can you hold the dance at this particular time," although it might have been a good time for them.

This kills the spirit in which the PTA wants to operate, and other PTAs, because obviously the news went abroad. I believe the Ministry could have been a bit more flexible and say you are the PTA, you want it for school purposes, to paint the school or to buy books, go ahead and use it. But, unfortunately, they were told they could not do it. So rather than making possibly \$3 000,

they made \$1 000, and the school now has to wait until the Ministry can afford to have it painted. This is not good enough by any stretch of the imagination.

There is another area of concern as far as all the schools are concerned. It seems to me that little attention is being paid to playing areas. I have visited a number of these schools and although the school buildings are beautiful, the playing areas never seem to be completed. I do not want to go to the primary school area to make the point, but I would draw to your attention the St. James Secondary School where the building has been erected over six or seven years, and up to now the playing field is still not ready.

When a school is in this situation, then the building itself is destroyed, because if the children cannot play on a playing field, they have to play in the school building, and then there is vandalism, or what we tend to term vandalism, because there is no deliberate act on the part of the children to destroy the school. The fact of the matter is that children must play; and if they cannot play outside, then they will play in the school.

On the issue of the General Paper, there is a need for such an examination. But it seems to me that the standard at which the General Paper is being set at the moment makes it very difficult for the vast majority of children to succeed, especially when, if my recollection serves me correctly, the English Paper has been reduced by a total of 40 marks. This means that the child who might be very good at English and Mathematics because of his background, not being able to cope with all that is included in a General Paper, has not as good a chance to succeed as he would normally.

I believe that in this area some reconsideration should be given. Leave the marks as they were so that the child who is naturally bright and who does not come from the environment, as the last speaker said, where he would hear about tourism and the sugar cane industry, who might not even have the benefit of radio and television, could still make it. If he is not from that environment where the parent is constantly asking him to read or trying to bring to his attention what is happening in current affairs, then he is at a terrible disadvantage, and therefore something has to be done about that.

In connection with the transfers, I think that we have reached the stage where the situation for use of a better word, has become scandalous, and something must be done urgently to rectify the situation. I am quite sure there can be an amicable settlement to the whole situation. Most of the children are undergoing pain and anger. I believe that they are looking at adults now as cruel and vicious, because they are in the midst of something over which they have no control whatsoever.

As I understand it, the first knowledge they had of not being "accepted" was six weeks after they were placed in the schools, when they were on the register and their names were being marked. What made it even worse, as I understand it, is that the porter, a man on the last rung of the ladder in the school, came around to the forms to inform the children that they had no place in the form rooms — not even the form masters, but the porter.

Now they have reached the stage where the children are told that their exercises will not be marked, that they will not even be given reports to take home to show how well they have done. Can you expect that after one year in a particular school they can go back to another school, where the curriculum might be slightly different and in which they might not be able to do French and Spanish together, or History and Geography?

As I understand it, these children are filling vacancies which existed, not that they are taking places from other children. In many cases children went in from the second form and up, and there were vacancies in these forms. Another thing, as I understand it, is that the children, from their reports from their previous schools, were accepted because they could cope with the level of the children in the classes to which they were going, and therefore it seems to me that the children are being punished as a result of the situation.

As far as transfers again are concerned, I think this should bear out the point; transfers to the Sixth Forms from schools without Sixth Forms have taken as much as six weeks to be effective. In other words, under the old system, when the headmaster had most of the say in the transfer of children from non-Sixth Form schools to Sixth Form schools, it was a matter of children presenting their results to the headmaster and, if the vacancies were there, they would put them in the schools. Now having to go through the Ministry of Education, I understand it has taken a matter of six weeks for some children to get into the schools with Sixth Forms.

You can appreciate that, if this is so, a child starts way behind the others; and in a Sixth Form course, this means a lot. As a matter of fact, one or two set books could have been covered in that six week period. So this is something to which I have had to ask the Minister to pay special attention.

8.55 p.m.

One of the problems facing the primary schools is the question of overcrowding, or teacher pupil ratio. There are some schools, most primary schools, in which teachers have to teach more than forty children per class. If a teacher is to give of his or her best, considering that the children are not handpicked for a class, which means

that their abilities vary from the exceptionally good to severe learning problems, then to expect any one teacher to cope with forty or fifty children is asking too much. It is like asking to do little or nothing. Even to cope with thirty children with normal ability is to ask a lot, especially if they are four or five years of age.

I believe that the cry must again go out for an increase in staff at the schools if we are to expect a better standard or a better level of achievement from children when they reach Eleven-Plus, because these days the Eleven-Plus seems to be a large stepping stone in the history of school children.

I have said already that in this area, teaching aids mean not aids to help them, but actually people to be called teaching aids to assist in this area, especially if they are not trained or have not reached the qualifications which are necessary, and especially in the area of remedial teaching. This is one area which teachers would complain about.

Something which disturbs me is that we seem to be so interested in giving children a secondary education that children who are going to secondary schools cannot cope with a secondary education. I believe that it would be better if a child is allowed to stay down, where he can achieve something meaningful, rather than achieving nothing at all.

If you were to have a chat with most of the teachers in nearly all the schools in Barbados, especially the newer secondary schools, they are more than frustrated with the system which we are developing. I do not believe that any one Government is to blame. But I think that the whole system has to be reviewed so that we can see that what we are trying to achieve is to make sure that when a child leaves school, he is able to cope at his level, rather than push a level on him with which he is not able to cope.

I do not believe that there is any formula to say that, because a child is fourteen-years old, that child must cope with work that an average fourteen-year old is expected to cope with. If he has not got the ability to cope with it, then he should be allowed to cope with a standard that suits him. I believe that is better. But to push him from form to form, then I believe that we are not achieving anything.

Mr. Chairman, I believe I will get back to education at a later stage. That is my contribution at this time.

Mr. L. A. WEEKES (St. Michael North West): Mr. Chairman, out of sheer experience, I think I would want to make a few comments in respect of the Common Entrance Examination General Paper, as it is called.

I believe there is a genuine fear and dissatisfaction which has arisen among the parents. I do not know how you teach General Knowledge. You cannot really teach General Knowledge. In my view, General Knowledge is something that you develop through a series of avenues over a period of time.

This is not the first time that we have heard about a General Paper. I believe in the late 1940s or thereabout, when we used to have the Second Grade Exams, there was a paper which they called a General Knowledge Paper; and there were many students, because there was a marking system, not because they were not capable of entering the secondary schools, who gained very good marks in some papers, but by virtue of their own position, they were not able to score heavily in the General Paper.

A General Paper would require a lot of things. In those days, some people could not buy a newspaper. There was no radio or television or anything like that, and most of the information you would get was by newspapers. Those parents who were capable or were interested enough to see that their children got a broad view of things would probably buy a newspaper and make it available in their homes.

There were also educational toys. Many of us learned a lot of things through toys, and the cost of toys today, Sir, is very expensive. I do not believe in this electronic age that many of the children's parents may be able to afford them the kind of toys that would keep them abreast of that.

Personally, I could remember in one of the examinations that I took then, this was a general knowledge question: "What is a gimlet?"

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: What is a gimlet?)

Mr. L. A. WEEKES: A gimlet was something I knew. Some children who might be around a carpenter, or who might have been exposed to a lot of reading and so on had the advantage of that. But this is the sort of fears that most parents are expressing right now.

The cost of education is very expensive, so they are not able to give the children the kind of books that are required, neither are they able to provide TV. Some homes do not even have in a radio, some of them that I have visited. Far from having in a radio, they do not even have electricity, and batteries are very expensive, even if you have a pocket radio or something like that.

Mr. Chairman, what I am trying to get over here is that against that background, most of the parents who would not be able to compete with the better-off homes where some parents provide libraries for their children

and so on believe that their bright children may miss the opportunity of going to the school of their choice when the marks are added. I think it is a genuine fear, and one would like to see that equal opportunity, in every respect, would be given.

A General Paper could take a lot of forms. It is not like learning your tables and the tables must come up all the time; the questions will vary. And if the children are not in a position to cope with that expanse of knowledge that probably would be necessary, then, naturally, the parents feel that the child would have lost a valuable chance in life.

I think the Minister need not get high on this. I would like to ask the Minister if she has ever researched the reason why they dropped the General Knowledge paper years ago. And we have not produced worst scholars anyhow, Sir. I am not too sure that the General Paper would make us more brilliant or produce better scholars. I do not think so.

I think a broad education in your primary schools is necessary. In my time, we used to do about three or four or six subjects, including Nature Study — but we never did them for examination purposes. It only encourages a child at that point to develop in the areas that he probably would have liked to know a little bit more about.

So I think the Minister ought to listen a little bit more to what is being said, and not take it that one feels that she is trying to — at least I do not feel so — put a barrier in a way of those unfortunate children who may not be able to have the opportunity, or access to those areas or those education tools that would develop a skill for the General Paper. I think she should take it as a genuine concern and at least try to assure those parents that everything will be done to ensure that the paper would not, in any way, deprive their children of any future possible success.

Those are the few remarks I want to make.
9.05 p.m.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Mr. Chairman, something slipped me when I first spoke, but it is very important.

An area that is causing considerable concern to parents in primary schools now is the cost of text books. It has been drawn to my attention that text books in these primary schools can well run into \$120 to \$140, and I am sure that with the introduction of the new paper, that that will increase.

I am sure that the Minister is aware that this is going to be a very serious problem in the primary schools, where you have some parents with four or five children. If they are to benefit from the education and the improvement of the physical structures, the Minister must consider this very seriously.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN (Christ Church East Central):
Mr. Chairman, I am going to be very short on this.

I think that one of the characteristics of this community is that 99 per cent of Barbadians do not like change, and any attempt at introducing change creates fear. When I heard the discussions on the General Paper, at first I, too, was afraid, but I tried to find out about some of the specimen papers.

I would say that there are a number of publications that I can put my hand on, which I have seen, and if they are in circulation to the degree that they ought to be, I would say that answers can be found to some 50 per cent of what is in those papers.

I understand also, and I understand this from primary school teachers in the area that I represent, that there are specific programmes which are being carried out now, on a group basis, in the schools, and which have been going on for the last two years, so that children will be familiar with the type of questions they will be asked. I certainly have seen on the Tourist Section the work that has been done in the last four years by the CTRC and the educational group that they have in trying to bring to school teachers a method of presenting facts in relation to tourism. As a matter of fact, there was a special programme that was going on here for some considerable period of time with the Ministry of Education and Caribbean Tourism Research Centre and, I am not too sure whether it was Ryerson, or whether it was another Canadian college, because Ryerson is also Canadian.....

The question of introducing a child to an important facet of the economy of the country at an early age was brought out. Apparently, this is something that is now being regarded in many countries in the world as expressly necessary, for young children to be orientated in this area.

I am not suggesting — I do not know, and I would like to know — whether your total marking system will reflect this or not. I am not clear on that part in my mind whether the General Paper will be looked at in relation to the other papers that you have, or whether or not it is going to be used to decide border line cases. I am not sure as to how it is to be done. But I really do not think that we should magnify this area and suggest that only children from a certain environment will be able to be exposed to this. It is not quite factual in relation to what has been going on in Barbados.

I believe it is true to say that of the 70 000 to 75 000 households in Barbados, some 50 to 60 per cent or more have radios. If you listen to what VOB and the others, they tell you, every household in Barbados has access to it. If CBC tells you, that 95 per cent of the

Barbadian households will have. So that there is not that difference in Barbados today as there was in the past. This is not a deprived community. This is not a community in which the disparity in living standards is that pronounced. If it was so, how would we have 40 000 vehicles in the country? How would we have so many television sets in the country? I think that we are underestimating. How would we have so many newspapers being sold in this country?

What I would like to see as a public service, and I am sure it is being done, because I do not read it myself, but I understand that there is a newspaper called the *Junior Nation*, which is published for the schools. That has a tremendous amount of information which sharpens young children, and most of the schools must have subscription to that.

If there is this kind of information available to the children, surely this paper will not present the difficulty that is envisaged. So if one looks at it in that light, there is no reason to fear.

Now on the question of books. I want to bring one thing to the attention of honourable Members. All of us have to recognise that there is no country in the world that I know of now which is able to provide the freenesses on the scale that they were able to provide in the past. The two energy crises that we had in the world has had a tremendously harmful effect on the ability of Governments to deliver freenesses, whether it be health, education, or any other area of social services in relation to what they were able to do before.

We must get across the concept that however willing the Government is, there has got to be some economic costs of raising a child. It is a fact of life. We have to get across that concept that just as paying rent is more important than buying a video, so too is buying school books more important than smoking cigarettes. The economic crisis has hit me so hard that I have had to give up smoking.

Asides.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: It is a year now.

So the question of the school books is something that however willing the Government is, and, how much it would like to do, if we have to pay for the university, the Community College, the primary schools, all the secondary schools, it is just an impossibility. Some cutting has to take place. This is the reality of the situation.

Whether we live in Russia, the United States of America, whether the complexion of the Government is socialist or capitalist, the reality of the situation today is that we cannot do what we were able to do before.

I am willing to go through all the countries in the world, all of the political systems, to demonstrate that since 1975 there has been a reduction in the proportion of their Gross National Products that they have spent on Education.

9.15 p.m.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, I am very glad that honourable Members have left me some time to reply. I think I have to begin at the very beginning. It seems very clear to me that there is a lot of widespread ignorance today among adults about what is going on in the educational system in Barbados.

Education still enjoys the largest individual budget in this country. In this current financial year, our budget is \$109 million. I think honourable Members must be made to understand that 80 per cent of the education budget goes to salaries, other personal emoluments, travel and fixed costs, like utilities. We cannot escape from those costs. Eighty per cent of my budget goes to salaries. By the time we have spent \$15 million of what is left on the university, \$10 million on the School Meals Programme and \$1 million on the Text Book Rental Scheme, there is very little left.

We have at the moment, because there is an on-going programme of amalgamation in the primary school, 109 primary and 21 secondary schools. In this year's budget, what I have left to buy what is known as Supplies and Materials, things like toilet paper, chalk and teaching aids, for 109 primary schools is \$60 000. That is the background that I want to paint in for honourable Members before we move on.

Now the supplementary is before us. We had, as you know, the World Bank Project going. A lot of the primary schools in this country are not in good shape. Do not let us forget that in the 15 years of the Democratic Labour Party they did mostly nothing in the school building programme in this country. You have had the primary schools and the secondary schools over 200 years now deteriorating, and many are church buildings.

We began the World Bank's school building programme. We have built seven of ten primary schools. We are preparing to move in to St. Saviour's in St. Andrew for the beginning of next term, St. Patrick's in Christ Church has got its roof on and should be finished during the middle of next year, we have just rebuilt a block at the Christ Church Boys School, I have just opened the Luther Thorne School, the Lawrence T. Gay School has been opened, we are going to be building Sharon next year — and I could go on and on. The point is that we have this school building programme going on.

In the meanwhile, we are doing preventative maintenance as best we can on a very limited budget. The

position is that I have to operate this maintenance budget on a crisis intervention basis. That is the position. In other words, a roof has to begin to fall in, a floor has to begin to fall in, Queens College has had to begin to fall down, before we can give it the kind of priority it needs. It goes on and on.

Vandalism in the schools is unbelievable. I am doing draft estimates now. Yesterday the headmaster for the Garrison Secondary School came to me for 340 chairs. That is one school.

Asides.

Hon Miss. B. A. MILLER: I can give the headmaster of the Garrison School 340 chairs, but it might mean that I have to close a primary school, and that is not easily done. And the honourable Member who is hiding behind the Speaker's Chair, and who was a former Minister of Education, well knows that that cannot be done. He did not do it in his time, so it is very easy for him to hide behind the Chair now and shout to me to give them. It is not easy, but we try our best.

I visit, particularly the primary schools, on a regular basis. I do not advise them that I am coming any more. Everybody gets very jittery — all the teachers have on their best clothes, the children are all nervous and everything is changed around. So I go now without telling them, because I want to see them as they really are, and it is a tremendous experience.

Last week I went to six in St. James one day, then three in St. Andrew and three in St. Thomas on another day. When I got to Sharon, a policeman was there giving a lecture to the entire school. When I got to Holy Innocents, CBC was there and they were doing a programme; I suppose a Christmas programme for television.

Sometimes I get to them at School Meals time. The first thing I do, of course, is to look into the slop bucket to see what they are rejecting. And every school I go to, I always look into the toilets to see what the condition is, and it is not always nice.

School boys can be difficult, and I am sure all honourable Members can appreciate that. I have now had to give instructions that in the boys toilet they are to tile right up to the ceiling. I suppose all honourable Members in here know there is a competition among boys to see who can "pee" the highest. All of that we have to put up with. I look at everything there is to see, and we try our best in these very difficult circumstances.

Buxton was drawn to our attention. I know that Buxton is not in good condition. It has broken windows, it is right on the road, it has very little playing area, it

gets all the noise on that highway. But I take great pride that notwithstanding all of that, in this year's Common Entrance Examination Buxton has produced excellent results.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: It is not a miracle, but we have got to stop under estimating our children. We have got to stop mollicoddling our children and encourage them to pursue excellence in the way that we were encouraged to do it. In your time, and in my time, it was a pride to our parents that we knew at age 12 more than they knew at age 12. Today parents are terrified because they children know more at 12 than they did. That is a reflection on this generation.

But I want to put all honourable Member's minds at rest in respect to Buxton. We are building a new school at Sharon next year under the World Bank Project, and when that school is completed, Buxton will be phased out.

When we completed the Lawrence T. Gay Memorial School, some of the children who lived in that catchment area and who were going to Buxton were transferred. But a lot of the children who go to Buxton live, properly speaking, in the catchment area of Sharon; so when Sharon is built, Buxton will no longer be entertained as a school and those children will be farmed out, principally, to Sharon, and to other surrounding schools.

The honourable Member also made mention of Montgomery. Montgomery is one of those schools which the Moravian Church over many many years has made available to successive Governments in this country. 9.25 p.m.

The policy of successive Governments, the agreement with all of the churches, not only the Moravian, but the Methodists and the Anglicans as well, is that once we have come to the end of our use for a school, we should put the building into a reasonable state of repair and hand it back over to the Church. We have done that with Grace Hill and we are doing it with Montgomery in this financial year. Montgomery is going to be handed back, after repairs have been done, to the Moravian Church. This financial year ends at the end of March.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I know it needs substantial repairs, but you must not underestimate what the Ministry of Education can do.

Mr. Chairman, we have heard all about transfers and about the re-introduction of a General Paper. I will deal first with the re-introduction of the General Paper, and I

deliberately say "re-introduction", because many of us who are grown-ups today went to school in a system where we sat exams. We used to go to Combermere to sit an entrance exam and then another day we went to Harrison College and sat an entrance exam. You were tested in English and Arithmetic and there was a General Paper. Do you remember those days? They are not so far gone, but people's memories are short.

I think it was one of those moves into mediocrity when we abandoned the General Paper. Everyday children in the primary schools are taught those subjects which are covered in the General Paper. We have discovered over many years that teachers do not concentrate on those subjects, simply because the children are not going to be examined in them. We have discovered too, that testing the children in English and Mathematics alone does not give us a fair balance of the child's true capabilities.

The General Paper we are proposing for this year, the first year of re-introduction – and the schools know this – is going to be on only half of the syllabus. In other words, they are going to be tested on only a term and a half's work. The rating of the General Paper in this first year is going to be reflected. You have a 50–50 rating between English and Mathematics now. The essay is not given a mark and that is where the marginals are selected. The essays are marked "A", "B", "C" and "D", and the essay is to help with marginal cases, where a chap or a girl with an "A" will take preference over somebody with a "C" or "D".

What we are proposing is that the 140 items which we used to have on the English and the Mathematics paper will be reduced to 100. The hour given will remain. In other words, the children will have more time to deal with the English Paper and the Mathematics Paper, both of which will be reduced. Then, they will have a third paper, also lasting an hour, which will be the General Paper, and the rating will be more like 40–40–20 for the General Paper.

We are hoping very early in the new year, Mr. Chairman, to invite teachers to what I believe in business is known as an item-writing seminar, so that some of the questions which will appear on the General Paper will be items written by the teachers themselves.

Members and parents really absolutely must not fear for what children know or what they do not know. I am amazed myself when I go into the primary schools. I see that they are doing Geometry and Algebra. These were subjects that I never did until I went into secondary school. But the fact is, Mr. Chairman, that our children have to compete with the world out there, and I do not think there is anything to be gained by our molycoddling our children, or hiding them from the competition that lies out there. Children are not stupid. Even at five years old in the schools, they know it.

The honourable Member for Christ Church West (Hon. H. deB. Forde) talked about a collage depicting the Grenada crisis. This was done by all of the children in the class; not any specially bright children were picked up. We know that there are slow learners, and that is why our teachers are specialising in courses, provided at Erdiston, in remedial teaching and the teaching of what we call special education – to teach children who are handicapped in one way or another.

We are trying to cope with all of that so that we may enter the 21st century on a competitive basis. But our children can perform, and we must stop telling them that they cannot.

When we upgraded the qualifications for the Barbados Scholarship in June this year, I heard the same story about not this year in June. Just a few weeks before they wrote the exam, I was told you are not going to get any scholarships, you are making it too hard, and I begged the people to stop telling the children that; that they have capabilities and they can do it, and I appealed to the children. And what happened this year? We got more Barbados Scholarships and more Exhibitions than we ever did, four people ending up with three "A" grades, something that was unheard of before!

The point I am trying to make, Mr. Chairman, is that our children can rise to our expectations. Parents terrorise their children about the Common Entrance every year. It is the parents; we see them. Mothers come into the Ministry yard when the results come out and weep bitterly because their children did not get into Harrison College or Queens College. It is the parents' values that are being forced upon children.

I have no doubt in my mind, Mr. Chairman, from what I see myself in the primary schools, they can do it. They are doing their programmes and I see the wonderful work that they do. They know a far deal more than what honourable Members are calling general knowledge and we give them credit for. We must stop underestimating these children. A lot of them are bright; and those who are not so bright are getting special help where we can afford it.

This brings me to the next business of teacher training, and that is why I am going to publish an analysis of the result so that everybody can see. We all know that there are certain schools which do very well in the Common Entrance: Erdiston, St. Pauls and Wesley Hall. But this year, when the results are published, you will see that a far greater spread of Government primary schools have done better, like Buxton and Boscobelle Schools, that people do not know about, and I think that has a direct correlation with the fact that more Erdiston-trained teachers are being drafted into the primary schools every year.

The substitute teachers were always substitute teachers. I agree that there were many years when we needed them and the record is there to show how we have struggled with those substitute teachers. The ones who are being told now that we can no longer use their services are people who have not even bothered to try to pass an Erdiston exam since 1971 — more than ten years ago. You are dealing with people who are given the opportunity by us; you are dealing with teachers who said there is no way they are going to stop drinking Mount Gay Rum to go to Erdiston. I know what I am dealing with in the teaching service, and talking about being insensitive and hard-hearted.....

Mr. B. M. TAITT: If the honourable Member would give way

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I am not giving way. I am either going to reply or I am not going to reply. You have a dirty habit of interrupting people.

What I am saying, Mr. Chairman, is this:

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

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: A lot of those teachers

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman: I do not wish to interrupt the honourable Member, but I specifically said there were three persons who called me. None of those persons drink Mount Gay or any rum, and she must not give the impression that people who have been laid off are all drunkards.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, what I am saying is that these are some of the problems I have to deal with. Everybody knows a person or two persons or three persons, and everybody can make special pleadings, but the point is that we give these teachers every chance to upgrade themselves. You cannot expect children to be learning New Maths, you cannot expect children now to be able to learn to cope with computers if the teachers who teach them cannot pass the elementary maths.

We have even said to some of those substitute teachers, "If you cannot manage in the academic areas and you can manage in some of the special areas like Music or Agricultural Science, we will do everything to accommodate you." But sometimes you are dealing with people who have absolutely no skills to recommend them, and the fact is that I have to place the people who are coming out of Erdiston, and the people who are coming out of Erdiston are showing us results.
9.35 p.m.

It is also a fact that the substitute teachers whose services are not any longer required this year is nothing new. We have been doing this over a period of years. It started in the time of the Democratic Labour Party, and we have been doing it. Those teachers who know that they are coming to the end of their time know that a long year in advance. And this year, certainly, we are negotiating even now with the union on the matter of monetary compensation for those people.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Broodhagen and those.)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, I also have to get on to the matter of the transfers. We have a system in this country where children sit the Common Entrance Examination, children from all schools, private schools and public schools; and on the basis of the results and the marks they get in the Common Entrance Examination, they are placed in the secondary schools. That has been a fact for many years.

There was a time, a long time ago, and I sincerely hope that I am not being advised to go back to that time, where special arrangements could be made for special people who did not pass the exam. I sincerely hope that it is not being recommended that we go back to that, because Mr. Chairman, I could not preside over a Ministry of Education where that was the policy.

The policy is that every child must sit the Common Entrance Examination, and, based on the marks, be allocated to a school. The Allocation Committee comprises all of the heads of the twenty-one secondary schools and an independent chairman.

What we have had over many years, and it is many years, because a circular was issued in the year 1970, is people trying to persuade heads that they were not to go behind the back of the Ministry of Education and make transfers on their own account.

Let me tell you what has grown up over the years in this country. Children would sit the Common Entrance and some children would not do as well as their parents wanted — it is always the parents — and there are even some teachers today who will boast that if they do not get in at the Common Entrance, they will get them in. What they do is take the place given and then quietly make a private arrangement with a headmaster or headmistress at one of what we would call the more prestigious schools.

So for many, many years now, we have been trying to tell the heads, "This is not fair." Ultimatums have been issued to heads. The fact is that most heads come through the Ministry now.

It is not that we do not allow transfers. We do. But the transfers must be processed through the Ministry. There is a procedure. We look at the mark the child got in the Common Entrance, then we look at the three reports that the child got during that school year, and we then try to see where that child is best suited to go, if there is a place. And we offer a short list — never one. I always say, "Give parents at least three choices."

The cases which are being talked about today are cases involving two schools, which after fourteen years of the Ministry saying, "this will be the last year, it must stop", you have one school where twenty-two people are taken in, through the back door, and another school where maybe fourteen or fifteen children are taken in.

As soon as this was discovered, and this was well before six weeks — in fact, it was the second week of this term that has just ended, in the middle of September — the two heads were called and they were told and asked to provide us with lists of the children. They were instructed then, to make it quite clear that, notwithstanding whatever permissions they gave, it was really quite improper and the children should be returned to the schools where they were enrolled.

Some parents took the Ministry's advice and did exactly what they were instructed, other parents continued to send their children to the school — I have no doubt, aided and abetted by the headmasters, who, to this day, pretend that they cannot get the children to stop coming.

The children are not on the roll. What the honourable Member for St. Michael West said is absolutely not true, that we have given instructions that the children should be denied any education.

I have made it clear that once they are in school, the children must be taught. I am not having children sit down home. But the fact is that the children are not on the rolls of these schools, therefore they cannot get reports at the end of the term, and at the end of the school year will not be eligible for promotion.

Added to this is that the headteachers of the schools at which they are on the rolls have now reported to us, as they must do under the Act, that these children are absent from school. So the School Attendant Officers want to know why these children have not turned up at the schools.

All sorts of cases, special pleadings, were made to me. And let me say, Mr. Chairman, in some of these cases, the parents had first come to the Ministry and had been told, "Your child is not eligible for transfer". In some cases the heads were written letters with this information, and still went behind that and made private arrangements. And there are Members on both sides of

this House whose children are going to schools which are not Queen's College and which are not Harrison College. I saw a photograph of the St. Michael Speech Day a few days ago and I saw two honourable Members from this side sitting there watching their children; very proud.

But what I said was: "What we will do is to start afresh. Let them come to the Ministry, we will look at the reports, we will look at the marks and we will try to accommodate your child, if you really want a transfer." But you have to have a good reason for a transfer. You cannot, like one parent, stamp the floor and say, "I want my child to go to Combermere." No other parent in this country has that right. Every other parent has to have his child subjected to the system.

We cannot have such a situation. I certainly am not going to preside over a situation where a few middle-class parents are going to be able to say, "My child must go where I designate." It was not even ever so in my time, and there is no way, as I said, that I am going to preside over that or encourage it in any fashion. And so, with the remaining children, we did this. Some parents took up the offers and took up the options that were given.

But there were one or two parents who decided that they were not taking our advice, and they sent me what I consider to be quite rude letters from their lawyers saying that if I attempted to remove their children, they would go to the court for injunctions. So the children remain in the schools and the situation gets worse.

Now let me tell you something about some of these transfers. I am hearing a lot of talk about who is hard-hearted and who is not, and who is insensitive. People are putting it to me that the welfare of the children must be put above everything else. In the Ministry of Education, that is what we do. Remember that, in the first instance, it is the parents who are picking these children up and trying to transfer them to another school. The first move is being made by parents.

Let me quote a case in point, of a child who got a mark of 201, and a "D" in the essay of his Common Entrance Examination. His report at a certain school over the year was mostly "Poor" "Must improve", "Must try to do better". The parent is trying to transfer him to a school where the cut-off mark is 234 and a "B" in the essay.

There is nobody who could persuade me, Mr. Chairman, that that is in the interest of that child. All that would happen is that the child is going to lag at the end of that class in the second, possibly in the third and the fourth form, and may indeed never even get to sit 'O' Levels.

Let me quote another case. Everyone knows that in the Common Entrance Exam, there is a cut-off point. There is a point beyond which you have to say, "This child is not ready for secondary school." Last year that cut-off point was 171. There was a child who got 156, and this is a child who is now being transferred from a private school straight into a Government secondary school.

Mr. Chairman, what do we tell all of the parents who applied to the Ministry and were told, "No" and respected the Ministry's decision. What do we tell those parents who came to the Ministry's yard and cried and said, "My boy only got into X school, I am so sorry he did not get into Harrison College; instead of trying to encourage the child? I mean, young people are winning scholarships from Foundation and Coleridge and Parry and the Lodge School.

9.45 p.m.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Yes, you want to go home now. Everybody had their say and I am going to have mine.

So in a nutshell, Mr. Chairman, that is the situation. With all these letters from a few parents telling me now how they will take me to court to get an injunction and so on, I have said that I will settle the matter quietly. The Ministry will go to court and ask the court for a declaration as to what the position is. If parents then want to defy that, I do not think that you can have any doubt about the calibre of the quality of the parent we are dealing with.

We are not dealing with parents who want the best for their children. We are dealing with the kind of parent who stands up at the door before the Common Entrance Examination and shouts at the child before it goes into the room, "If you do not pass, I am going to do....." and they carry on. You see children who are trembling not because they are afraid of the examination, they are afraid of the parent. We are dealing with parents who are going to harry these children right through the school system. We see them everyday in the Ministry.

We now have a fulltime child psychologist in the Ministry of Education. Do you know what the psychologist is dealing with most of the time? Not so much the ills of the children, it is the ills of parents visited on children. I always say in the Ministry of Education that the parents are my worst enemies. I can cope with the teachers — we do not always agree — I can cope with the children, although we do not always agree, but parents make life difficult for school children in this country. They give the children too much money and when they buy drugs, they want to curse the whole

world. They give them jewelry, and when it is stolen, the school and the Ministry of Education are to take the blame for it. It goes on and on. But a halt has got to be put to this.

On this matter of illegal transfers, it will never stop. Do not tell me to tell the heads that it must stop here. We have done that for 14 years, and you will always have some heads who want to cheat the system. We are going to settle it now. We are not going to fire the heads or anybody. We are going to settle it now and let it be clear that we are not living in a country where if you have a godfather or a certain friend, you can cheat the school system. The integrity of the Barbados school system is in my care while I am the Minister of Education.

Mr. Chairman, there were one or two other matters raised which I think I must touch on, and one has to do with teachers being transferred from a certain school. All I can say is that I know nothing about that. That is a matter for the Public Service Commission, and perhaps a parliamentary question should be directed to the Minister in charge of the Public Service Commission. That does not fall under me at all — mercifully.

I think also, Mr. Chairman, that I would take this opportunity to announce to honourable Members, and this goes back partly to the General Paper, that generally speaking, we have recognized the need for more text books in the primary schools and I have managed to secure \$200 000 towards text books. The text books are on order, and I hope that next term the distribution of these additional text books for the primary schools will start.

A question was also asked about the newer schools not having sufficient playing areas. We only talk about one particular school, the St. James Secondary School. That school is being very difficult. A tent was placed there for CARIFESTA, and there are several acres to the east of the school which have been acquired by the Government, but the schools must get up and help themselves. In time of financial restraint like this, I cannot give playing fields and fencing any priority. That is for PTAs and old scholars to help with.....

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I live with the cow-itch as well. There is nothing we can do about that but cut it every year.

I think that I need to point out that the National Advisory Commission on Education is reviewing the entire education system. So it is nothing dramatic or original for honourable Members to get up and tell me that the whole system needs reviewing. I well know that. I am

the one who inaugurated the NACE, and I hope that from time to time they will give me interim reports. In fact, I am expecting the first interim report possibly before the end of this year.

Other matters have been raised. I cannot canvass all of them now. Sometimes I think that Members are only raising matters for the sake of raising them. Because what is the point of raising matters and leave me with insufficient time to reply to them? At this point, I think that all I can do is to ask that Head 34 stand part.

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

Item 1(b) was called – To move the passing of a 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.

Head 76 – Ministry of Education was called.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sir, I beg to move that Head 76 stand part.

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

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. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of two money Resolutions 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 two Resolutions were read a first and second time and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this concludes Government Business. I beg to move that this House stands adjourned until December 20, 1983 at 12 o'clock noon.

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

The question that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, December 20, 1983 at 12 o'clock noon was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly. 9.55 p.m.

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