THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1991 - 96

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, March 30, 1993

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 12:15 p.m. o'clock.

PRESENT

His Honour L. A. WEEKES, G.C.M., J.P., (Speaker)
His Honour T. C. ESTWICK, B.Sc., LL.B., (Deputy Speaker)
Mr. H. deB. FORDE, Q.C., M.A., LL.B., (Leader of the Opposition)
Hon. B. M. TAITT, B.A.(Hons.), M.P.A., LL.B.(Hons.), (Minister of Health)
Hon. P. M. GREAVES, Q.C., B.A., (Deputy Prime .Minister, Minister of Public Works, Communications and Transportation and Leader of the House)
Hon. M. A. KING, Q.C., LL.B., (Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs)
Hon. W. O. FRANKLIN, A.I.C., M.I.A.S., J.P., (Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce)
Hon. N. K. SIMMONS, (Minister of Justice and Public Safety)
Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN, B.Sc.(Econ.)
Mr. O:S. ARTHUR, M.Sc.(Econ.)
Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS, Q.C., LL.M.
Hon. C. V. WALKER, (Minister of Education)
Mr. L. L. BRATHWAITE, J.P., (Chairman of Committees)
Hon. E. E. GREAVES, G.C.M., B.A., Ed.M., (Minister of Housing, Lands, Community Development and Culture)
Hon. W. W. HALL, G.C.M., H.B. M., (Minister of Tourism and Sports)
Mr. C. LeR. TROTMAN, M.A.
Mr. R. L. MORRIS, B.A., Cert. Ed.
Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B.(Hons.), (Minister of State, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs)
Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, Q.C., LL.B.
Mr. L. R. TOLL, Q.C., M.A.
Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW
Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, Q.C., M.A., M.Sc. (Econ.)
Mr. J. O. TUDOR
Hon. D. W. BOWEN, (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries)
Mr. R. C. EASTMOND, B.A., LL.B.

Prayers were led by Rev. Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is in session.

MINUTES Mr. SPEAKER:

Minutes of March 15, 1993.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: The Minutes of the meeting of March 15, 1993,1 am informed, have been circulated. I move that they be taken as read and confirmed.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

Mr. SPEAKER: I am to announce that I am in receipt of:

The Report of the Ombudsman for 1992 and Accounts and Statements for the month of February, 1993 as prepared by the Accountant General.

MESSAGES FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Mr. SPEAKER:

"Dear Sir,

I shall be away from the Island from March 24-29, 1993 on a visit to St. Croix.

In accordance with the provisions of section 21(b) of the Constitution, the Honourable Sir^Denys Williams, G.CM. will perform the functions of the office of Governor-General during the period of my absence.

As the Honourable House of Assembly will not be meeting prior to my departure, it will not be possible for the usual formal message to be sent down to your Chamber. I am asking you therefore to please bring my absence formally to the attention of the House of Assembly when it next meets.

I have the honour to be,

Yours faithfully,

Dame Nita Barrow
Governor-General."

PAPERS

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Training Report for the year April 1, 1991 to March 31, 1992.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay:

The Land Valuation (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations, 1993;

The Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) Order, 1993;

The Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (No. 2) Order, 1993;

The Exchange Control (Authorised Dealers and Depositaries) (Amendment) Order, 1993;

The Business Transfer (Bank of Credit and Commerce International (Overseas) Limited) (In Liquidation) Vesting Order, 1993; and

The Customs Tariff (Amendment) Order, 1993.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael Central has delivered to me the text of a letter which I will read for members of the House. It reads as follows:

"March 22, 1993

His Honour the Speaker
House of Assembly Public
Buildings Bridgetown.

Your Honour,

I should like, with your permission and with the leave of the House, during the sitting of Tuesday, 30th March, on the call of the item Personal Explanations under Standing Order No. 10: Order of Business, to address the House.

My Personal Explanation will be that, as I have already communicated to the Right Honourable Prime Minister, I am no longer one of the majority of the Members of the House of Assembly referred to in section 65(1) of the Constitution.

I no longer support nor am I a member of the governing party which constitutes the majority of the Members of this Honourable House under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

I am also to state that I am not, under Section 74(2) of the Constitution, a supporter of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in this House.

Yours faithfully,

Leroy Trotman
Member for St. Michael Central."

The Honourable Member has also indicated under this item he wants to make a few comments. I have personally seenjthe comments that he wants to make and to my mind it may not be a strict interpretation of the matter of Personal Explanations, but if he craves my indulgence, I will allow him to condense that explanation to make it more suitable.

I think the Honourable Member is free under this item to make that explanation.

Mr. C. LeR. TROTMAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would wish formally to crave your indulgence to place that letter of March 22, 1993 within its proper context, particularly as I consider it important to set the record straight on a

number of issues that have significance for trade union members and for the working class of Barbados generally.

I maintain that trade unionists, after church leaders, are better placed ideologically than any other sort of persons to represent the political constituents in a predominantly wage earning community. The Caribbean is replete with examples of those persons and here in Barbados we have had several examples of that level of representation including Sir Grantley Adams, Sir Hugh Springer and Sir Frank Walcott.

I submit, Sir, that even though the issues have changed today from what they used to be when we demanded things like holidays with pay and workmen's compensation and'a reduction to the 40-hour week, the quality of the contribution of trade union leaders in Parliament today is no less vital or significant, particularly when we do not have a developed system of lobbying.

There are those, Mr. Speaker, who would reject this submission and who would denigrate the current trade union personnel and I would want to have them recognise 2 things. One is that the employers as a class have generally not sought to exercise influence by being political representatives because they exercise power and influence through the economic strength they have. 12.30 p.m.

In his fight against that economic strength of the employers, at the same time as he tried to represent the workers in the trade union movement, and at the same time as he tried to maintain a successful law practice, Sir Grantley Adams earned for himself the dubious title of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The dates and times have changed. The effort to deny the workers a workers' representative has not changed.

The position I hold regarding trade unionists is held by most people in Barbados, including Honourable Members on both sides. They go further to recognise that our political system requires that we need representation while functioning within the framework of a political party structure. When, therefore, a trade unionist joins a political party and he is doing so against the understanding that no one political party can satisfy everything that a particular member might wish to have it fulfil, he does so trying to find a party that is most closely associated with his ideological perspective.

I still hold firm to that position, Sir, but events over the last 2 years have brought me today to where, although I am aware that I may have sacrificed my political future, I am acting not from that narrow concern of my political wellbeing, but from the position of trust and responsibility placed on my shoulders by a constituency, including St. Michael Central, but spreading further afield to include the rest of Barbados, the Caribbean under the influence of the Caribbean Congress of Labour, and indeed the wider workers' movements. Quite naturally, Sir, you would expect me to make known my concerns with the character of governance and I have done so from time to time so that there can be no misunderstanding in that matter. But in a statement of this sort I will not dwell on that subject. I will remind you only that a number of responsibilities were placed on my shoulders within that 2-year period that I have spoken about.

In the first place, the Caribbean Congress of Labour changed its constitution last November specifically to get me to remain as President of the Regional Labour Movement and to press labour's case to the region's political leaders as well as before international agencies like the IMF, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, which is a young non-governmental organisation seeking to influence the conscience of the Commonwealth Heads of Governments, has heard of our efforts here in the Caribbean and in particular in Barbados, particularly in our crisis, and as a result, that organisation has asked me to serve as the equivalent of one of the members of their Board of Directors. The only other Caribbean person who has served on that Initiative is the Honourable Member for the City.

The ICFTU at its Congress in Venezuela in March 1992 accepted my credentials and eliminated my competition to the presidency of that world body of over 110 million members thereby thrusting on me the responsibility to meet with world leaders to put labour's case. While here in Barbados, I have also been asked to give leadership to the fledgling Coalition. Persons are now soul-searching into the importance and relevance of such a body. They should not believe they have a monopoly on misgivings, especially since many of those misgivings are planted by persons who are aware of the successful efforts to date and of the potential of such a movement.

My own organisation, the Barbados Workers' Union, has asked me to be responsible for policy formulation and administration as General Secretary and has given me the platform which made me gain election as a governor of the International Labour Organisation in June last year. So my action results today from careful thought over a period of time. It related to my overall office and not to my position purely as a back-bencher.

I wish in that context, Mr. Speaker, to thank my constituents of St. Michael Central who have been very kind and understanding and have instructed me to remain within this Honourable Chamber as an independent Member championing their cause with the same fervour that I have given in the past. My thanks as well to other well wishers from throughout this island, Barbados, and

across the Caribbean who have called to express solidarity with me at this time, to my family, friends and loved ones for being there and respecting my decision, and to you, Sir, Mr. Speaker and Members on both sides of this Chamber for your assistance and kindness during this very difficult period.

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In closing, Mr. Speaker, I wish to indicate that I shall physically separate myself from my erstwhile colleagues as soon as certain logistical changes have been made, especially the microphone on the other side.

I thank you. SUSPENSION OF STANDING

ORDERS

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, as we are about consideration of Government's Business, I am going to move that Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of today's sitting.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 9 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE BORROWING OF 10 MILLION ECUs FROM THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK TO FINANCE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SEWERAGE SYSTEM ON THE SOUTH COAST

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, in other presentations before this Honourable House we have made reference to the need to construct a sewerage system on the south coast of Barbados and we have indicated that funding for the construction of that Sewerage System would be sought from the international donors. After negotiations with the Inter-American Development Bank it was concluded that one portion of the cost of construction of the total works should be sought from the European Investment Bank which is part of the arrangements of the Economic Community. Arrangements have been concluded for the financing of one aspect of this total South Coast Project.

I believe that although reference has been made to the Project that Honourable Members are entitled to have some detail about the Project itself. It is called the South Coast Sewerage Project. 12.40 p.m.

The project works for the South Coast system consists of

(1) a collection system of approximately 40 kilometres of gravity in the corresponding service connections,

(2) five lift stations,

(3) a transmission line of approximately 4 kilometres,

(4) a waste water treatment plant and main pumping station,

(5) a marine out-fall line to about 1 kilometre seaward from Needhams Point, that is just off the Hilton Hotel, and

(6) approximately 3 300 connections to private residences, hotels, commercial establishments, schools and other public buildings, industrial facilities and recreational areas.

The area covers 1 250 acres represented by 12 kilometres along the coastal strip from Oistins to the edge of Bridgetown and .5 kilometres inland from the coastline covering the most densely populated region of Barbados. It would embrace the area just south of this point along the Garrison, that very densely populated part of St. Michael and the Bay. It will meet up with the Bridgetown Sewerage system at the point near the Aquatic Gap. About ^ kilometre inwards, stretching along the area embracing the Bay, the entire area of the Bayland, and going south about *2 kilometre to Chelsea Road.

Complimentary components include in-house connections of the Central Bridgetown Sewerage system which will be retroactive financing, the installation of 40 000 water metres and 20 macro metres which is designed to improve revenues of the Barbados Water Authority while at the same time ensuring the preservation and conservation of our water resources. It also includes the provision of operation maintenance equipment. The project which has an execution time of over 4 years is estimated to cost Bds. $146.2 million. The Inter-American Development Bank will provide $102.4 million, the' European Investment Bank ECU 10 million or US$12 million and the Government of Barbados through the Barbados Water Authority, the remaining Bds.$20 million.

Mr. Speaker, the primary objective of the Sewerage Project is to reduce environmental hazards on the South Coast, particularly the contamination of the ground water reserves and the near-shore sea water, and also to arrest the deterioration of coral reefs and other marine life as well as to prevent future erosion of the beaches in the area and to prevent declines in property value.

Mr. Speaker, by preserving the aesthetic and sanitary conditions of the South Coast, the project will also have an important effect on tourism and will eliminate the serious problem of the disposal of considerable amounts of

septage originating from the highly populated area. Its benefits would be felt not only by the population and businesses on the South Coast but by the Barbados population at large through the indirect effects of the investments in sustaining tourism income.

Mr. Speaker, in order to ensure satisfactory operation and maintenance of the facilities which we hope would be constructed in the time frame, institutional strengthening of the Barbados Water Authority will be undertaken by the provision of consulting services to assist in upgrading that organisation, its financial administration system and its commercial operations. Consulting services of which I believe you may have seen tenders advertised in the local newspapers will also be hired to provide support in the operation of the system for the initial two years and to provide on-the-job training for the Barbados Water Authority personnel as well as to monitor the quality of the ground water and the sea water.

Mr. Speaker, the financing from the Inter-American Development Bank will be provided by 2 loans and it will be amortised over a period of 25 years including a grace period of 4 years, with a subsidized interest rate of slightly less than 3% on 55% of the loan amount and a variable interest rate of 7.9% on the remaining 45% of the loan. The loan contracts between the Government of Barbados and the IDB were signed as you will recall, Mr. Speaker, on March 8,1993 between the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the President of the Inter-American Development Bank in a ceremony at the Central Bank of Barbados. The loan from the IDB for which this Resolution is seeking to have the endorsement of the House will be amortised over 20 years including a grace period of 5 years with an interest rate subsidy of 4 per centage points. The interest rate will be determined on the date of signature of the contract. The interest rate at March 16, 1993, when the loan was negotiated was 7.75%, therefore with the interest rate subsidy of 4% the interest rate at that time was 3.75%.

In addition and in keeping with the development strategy for Barbados in the area of environmental protection, Sir, the IDB is also financing a coastal conservation management programme for the South and West Coasts, the development of a comprehensive solid waste disposal programme and the final engineering for the sewerage disposal system for the West Coast.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said on a previous occasion, instead of awaiting the completion of the South Coast project to start the West Coast project we are in fact beginning the feasibility studies of the West Coast Project while the South Coast Project is going on; so that we will be able to mobilise the West Coast Project without any great'hiatus of operations.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is a matter that does not have any controversial aspects to it but in the event there is an Honourable Member or Members who wish to have any specific questions answered I should be most happy to oblige such Honourable Members. I know that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East is seized of these matters in the most intimate detail and would not wish normally to detain the House but just in case there is a small aspect that would escape his rather eagle eye, Sir, I would be most happy to accommodate the Honourable Member and all other Honourable Members.

Mr. Speaker, apart from the fact that it is right that Honourable. Members should have details about these matters, this matter comes here as well because under the Special Loans Act it is necessary to provide the IDB with evidence that we have not exceeded our capacity to pay under the Special Loans Act. 12.50 p.m.

The Resolution, therefore, reads: "Whereas Section 2 of the Special Loans Act, Chapter 105, the Government is authorized from time to time to borrow from another Government, any bank, corporation, company or other institution sums of money not exceeding in the aggregate of $500 million on such terms as may be agreed upon the Government and the lender of any such sum of money."

It goes on, Sir, to ask that this Parliament approve the borrowing of the said sums of 10 million European Currency Units from the European Investment Bank for the purpose which I specified in my presentation.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second that and reserve my right to speak.

Mr. H. deB. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I am intervening to say that the South Coast Project has been quite long on the drawing board and it looks as though it is at last coming to some fruition. It was a project that we recognise on this side was very necessary to preserve the ecological balance in our island and also to improve the sanitation conditions. The Minister, however, has given us some information that there will be 45,000 water metres as part of the project. Perhaps he can spell out for us whether it is now intended to metre all households in Barbados and whether we can anticipate an increase in water rates resulting from this project.

If so, can Government tell what will be the likely cost of water at the completion of the project in 4 years time. Since this affects both the business community and individual households on the South Coast area and, particularly in my constituency, I am for the figures used by Government in planning this project.

The Minister states that it is intended to connect up 3,300 businesses and individual households to this project. I wish to know what provision is going to be made to assist those householders who are affected by the project, particularly the people in the area of Pleasant Hall, Worthing View, Rockley Golf Club Road, Dayrells Road, Old Navy Road and the intervening roads. I want to know what arrangements are going to be made to assist them with the cost of connecting up to the scheme and whether they can anticipate additional cost. In the case of those persons, particularly senior citizens and also those who are below the poverty line in areas like Old Navy Road,^I want to know whether or not there is built into this project the facilities to waive any costs to them of the connections which have to be made.

The Minister will recall that the problems resulting from the first sewerage scheme was the cost of connections and as a result people were hesitant to connect up. The Minister should also be aware that there are several small business persons in that area who likewise will find the additional costs both of connection and of servicing to tye quite heavy. I would wish to know what arrangements, if anything, will be made to lighten their burden.

Finally, the Minister talked about an area of .5 metres in from the coast. I cannot translate that myself into an actual area. But I assume that the area will go as far as Dayrells Road. If it comes through Chelsea Road, it will either take in the Paddock Gap and come down Deighton Road and then go up Dayrells Road and maybe through the Golf Club Road linking back up with the Worthing Road in the Saint Lawrence area and going right up I expect to Oistins.

Could the Government state what plans, if any, it has for the equally densely populated areas in Deighton Road and Dalkeith and Brittons Hill in particular? What provisions will there be for water overflows that we get in that area? I did not hear the Minister clearly on the provision being made for the outfall. I think he said that there would be a main outfall to Needhams Point of one kilometre; but I want to know the point from which it will come.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: If the Honourable Member will give way on a point of elucidation...commencing at the point just off the Hilton and going 3 miles out to sea.

Mr. H. deB. FORDE: I hope the Minister has had all the assurances from the consultants that that will cause no further damage to the reef barrier along that point and the South Coast. I have not had the benefit of the studies which have been done on this. We would want some assurance about this matter. If it is still intended to build the main sewage plant, is there an open system being used as was envisaged in the St. Lawrence area? That is the constituency of the Honourable Member for Christ Church South. But I would also need assurances that there will be no pollution by scent or otherwise which will blow down the wind to inconvenience the environment for those persons who live particularly to the West and Southwest of the main sewerage plant. I must also express my concern about the likely effect of the project on the other ecological factors in that area. Remember that Graeme Hall is an area where we have unusual plants, preserving the environment and we also have an abundance of fish and birds. I'would hope, Sir, that these fears that have been raised from time to time have been satisfactorily dealt with.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: There is just one point, Sir. On the last occasion when we had the opportunity to debate this matter, Sir, I asked for the purpose of public information that a rather detail plan should be published so that all of the residents who come within the area as well as the public and other interested bodies would be in a position to know precisely the areas that the sewerage scheme will affect, Sir. 1.00p.m.

Today we have not had a copy of such a plan, we have had a verbal description and I am still unclear as to where this scheme will commence, in the Enterprise/Keizer Hill area, or as to how far from Oistin's Bay inland this scheme would go. I know myself, from the topography of the area, that there is a level at Oistin Hill, Maxwell Hill, Top Rock going right around Oistin, Maxwell and Welches, and I presume that that is the outer boundary. • There is a rather large concentration of chattel houses in Ashby Land and in Pegwell, which I hope will be covered, because I know as a fact that the water table there is so high that even existing septic tanks do overflow when the tide is up and there is rainfall. One only has to pass the area below the existing Esso station in Oistin and observe that parcel of land which is now the property of the Government, where the Rates and Taxes Office is situated, to witness the problems that we have.

Obviously we welcome the start of the sewerage scheme. It has been long in coming, but these things have long gestation periods, but we want to know where it is and what it is.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I, like the other Members on this side, lend my support to the end of the gestation period for the sewerage scheme, but there are one or two concerns I would like to raise.

It is clear from all the studies that the establishment of the sewerage scheme on the south coast does not only affect the south coast, it affects a considerable part of Barbados, because I understand that there is a link between the availability and quality of water for households in Barbados and the operation of the sewerage scheme.

I have read the original study and I am wondering whether in recent times because of a growing awareness of the need for environmental impact assessment study to be done for any major development of this sort, whether new changes have been visualised to ensure that the availability and quality of water for Barbadians are not substantially affected.

I also want to raise the question of the developments in other parts in Barbados. We have a big project coming up at Kingsland, for instance, and many questions have been raised as to the source of the water for the Kingsland project. We who live in the rural parishes have been in the past few months experiencing severe shortages of water. Those who live in the central and eastern part of Barbados will attest to the fact that for many days we do not have water. I do not mean many days on end, but days every week where there is no water. We understand also, Sir, that there has been a problem of finding additional sources for water in Barbados. We tend to take these things for granted. We have come along and we believe that you only turn on a tap and there is water, and that there is an endless amount of water lying below the coral and you just turn the tap and you will for ever get it. But the word is that the Barbados Water Authority is experiencing some difficulty in maintaining the levels of availability of water to households and is indeed at the moment exploring for new sources of water in this country.

Now, I tie all these things together, Sir, because if it is true that the development of the south coast sewerage project is going to impact on the availability of water to the rest of the country, it would be useful if the Minister, if he has the information available, would give those of us who represent rural constituencies and who are affected in the way that we have been affected in recent months, some assurance that our situation will not be significantly different, after the project is started and completed, than it is today.

I want to mention one other thing, Sir, and that relates to the whole, question of what is happening now in the south coast and what is likely to happen after. It is common knowledge again that the effluent that goes into the south coast, like all the coastal waters of Barbados, is not only causing problems in terms of the comfort of the people who live in those areas and those who enjoy the beaches, but that there has been significant damage done to the marine ecosystem. The reefs have been damaged, as the Minister has said, there is beach erosion and so on, but what I have not found in reading the study is what effect the marine outfall will have on the ecosystem, the species of fish that live in the coral system around the island. I ask this because there are studies done in other parts of the Caribbean - Puerto Rico, for one, and Cuba - where that problem has not been corrected in the way in which it was anticipated when the project was undertaken.

I say again, Mr. Speaker, we have no quarrel with the project. I think it is extremely timely. Our only concern is that it has been so long in coming, but it is also incumbent on the Government to look into all these areas and do the kind of environmental impact study that is necessary to ensure that we do not have problems down the line that we did not anticipate.

I want to add, finally, that I am particularly happy to support this, not only because I speak for this side on environmental matters, but because I am also a strong advocate of the view that there must be development in this country, not only economic development, but alongside economic development must be development of the general quality of life for Barbadians. I have said that often enough, Sir, that I could almost have it attached to my name, and I mean it, that we must have operating in tandem economic development and human social development. Nobody questions - if you are going to have a project, the building of a highway or a harbour or whatever - the fact that there is need for economic analysis of the project before it is approved, and if the economic analysis suggests that a project of an economic nature is not likely to be useful in the end, for whatever reason, the cost may be too high, the utility of it would be not as great as one would have anticipated, then decisions are taken on it.

I am merely submitting, Mr. Speaker, for now and the future that the community of Barbados must pay greater attention to these environmental impact studies on all of the projects in this country of whatever nature that are going to affect the environment in this country. 1.10p.m.

I know that the international lending institutions have made it a precondition for these environmental studies to be done and I do not want to be seen as echoing their position. One becomes a little bit more aware of the deadly nature of a number of developments to the environment as one reads more and looks at particular studies. Therefore, one gleans wisdom from the amount of published material in this area.

Finally, I do say that we lend our support but we do urge Government to continue to look at the full impact of all of its projects, not only this one, but of a similar nature, to see to what extent it may affect the environment of Barbados. Thank you.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am very grateful to the 3 Honourable Members who have participated in the debate. One of the advantages of the system we have is that very often after a while those who are in Opposition have in fact been in the Government and so become aware of a number of the details of what is going on with certain projects.

I will attempt to answer the questions and I will start with the Honourable Member for St. George South. I think a most important issue was raised *by* him and I can assure him that the environmental impact studies were done and redone.

The question raised by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West has in fact been answered in some part by the Honourable Member because one of the reasons for the delay in the starting of the project had to do with this Minister's insistence that we would not have the project until we were satisfied that the environmental protection was in place. Now there was an expert in the Inter-American Development Bank who was satisfied that this project should proceed with what I choose to call the open sewers. I think this is the question which the Honourable Member asked about. We had a stand-off between the Inter-American Development Bank and the Barbados Government where they said that to spend the $3 million necessary to put the odour control factor into our plan would be wasteful. We spent about 2 years with their saying they would not lend us the money and our saying that we do not want the money unless we were having that particular protection. In fact, we are going to have a plant that is controlled by computer and will have as part of its works the protection of odour.

Our experience with the Bridgetown Sewerage Project makes us wise after the fact. You will recall that when the Bridgetown Sewerage Project was coming on stream the experts had given us a lot of fancy pictures of how fish would be streaming in the effluent as it emerged from the plant, etc. and that there would be no odour. We know from those persons who have had to contend with the Bridgetown Sewerage Plant that that is not how it turned out. The fish are not swimming in the effluent which comes out of the Bridgetown Sewerage Plant. The smell certainly fumigated the whole of Lower Cheapside and the surrounding areas in a way that was not pleasant. It has taken a substantial amount of effort to cure those problems.

So when one went to discuss this, one wanted to be absolutely certain that within the realm of possibility that steps would be taken. I visited about 3 or 4 plants and in particular I was very impressed with a plant at Bridleton in the United Kingdom in York where they had used a similar plant to the ones we will have and I recall being inside the plant and one could still smell the perfume of the Chief Medical Officer. I believe that Barbados is owed no less a quality.

So far as the outfall is concerned I wish to assure the Honourable Member that the feasibility study was done by Reid Crowther. The location of the plant was determined by a study which was funded by the Inter-American Development Bank - a $3 million study by Reid Crowther of Canada. By the time the outfall occurs they will in fact be in the deep ocean channel heading farther north. So it is not likely that there will be any effluent flow back. The studies demonstrated - they were in place studies - that this path for the outfall is in that channel which I am told lies to the north west of Needham's Point which is a deep channel and goes farther out to sea.

The Honourable Member raised the question on the link between the establishment of the Sewerage Plant and the quality of water. I have seen nothing and I know of nothing which suggests that such a link occurs but, in any event, we have been assured that the establishment of the sewerage project will not in any way affect the quality of water even in the area where the sewerage system is being established.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church South raised some questions about the location and I have to say to him I am not myself able to identify the neighbourhood which he described in the way he did. If the plant were a little farther south I would have been able to tell him with some intimacy the names of the places but he did ask for the plan and I assure him that it is going to be published. There is a model of the plan at the Sewerage Project Office at the Garrison.

There is a plan for massive publicity and if I may take this opportunity to answer one of the questions raised by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, it is proposed that the connections will be done as the sewerage system gets to the particular area. Provision has been made • in the project itself for assistance of those persons who cannot assist themselves and for other persons. Hence we have had this pre-publicity where we are asking those people who will be connecting up to allow the engineers and the various people to come into their homes now so that the plans for connecting are being drawn even now and will continue to be drawn as the project is being put together.

There is an assurance that there will be total public involvement in this particular sewerage project. We have every reason to hope that it will be successful. In the actual construction we are going to use for a part of it something called the "no-dig" concept; they are going to be using a technique that will not require the road along Highway 7 to be disturbed. Rather, they will use a kind of suction to get the debris from the requisite levels.

The Honourable Member asked whether it is intended to metre all the households in Barbados and the answer is yes. The Honourable Member asked whether the rates are likely to go up and the answer is yes. It is unlikely that we could have a project that costs $146 million that is not expected to be paid for by some rise in the level of sewerage and water rates. I cannot give the Honourable Member any indication as to what they will be 4 years from now but I can give him the assurance that if all the

connections are made and all the properties are sewered the cost increase is likely to be relatively low.

For what it is worth, however, I feel it would be entirely wrong not to put up front, into the market place, the fact that we are discussing the preservation of our environment and that the cost of that preservation is likely to increase. The Honourable Member for St. George South raised the question of the quality of life. The price which we will pay for that quality of life is an increase in the cost of water and sewerage. The Inter-American Development Bank has a position that if you borrow money from them that the Barbados Water Authority will have to be in a position where it is solvent and that is one of the reasons why part of the Project will include consulting services for the upgrading of the management capacity and capability of the Barbados Water Authority. 1.20p.m.

As I have said, the provision to assist the small householders and small business people has been placed in the Project itself. Those persons who are indigent and unable to connect up to the Sewerage System will find assistance in the Project but, obviously, this will be very carefully and meticulously worked out.

I have already responded to the question of the open system. I am able to state categorically that we will not be using the open sewer system. We will, in fact, be building a sewerage plant. It will not be built at St. Lawrence. It will be built in the area of Graeme Hall. It will be located to the south of Graeme Hall, just under the first cliff. It is not going to be in the Swamp itself. It is going to be east-south-east of the Swamp. It will form a natural part of the gradient. That is what the Honourable Member who knows better calls it, the first cliff. There are some casuarinas in that area. There is housing to the south by the Pepperpot. Therefore we do not anticipate there will be any difficulty.

The Honourable Member asked to give him the assurance that there will be no pollution by scent. To the best of my knowledge, and as a result, even if I have to say so, it is one of the things which I am proudest of in this Project in that in negotiating it we went to enormous lengths to ensure that there will be no pollution by scent. Again we had difficulty with the Inter-American Development Bank because at first they did not accept that this was a serious consideration in a matter like this. Eventually they relented.

The Honourable Member for St. George South also asked about the actual south coast - to confirm what is actually happening now with what is likely. There has been some destruction but, believe it or not, we had to have a second study done to convince the Inter-American Development Bank that there was sufficient pollution along the South Coast. IADB experts argued that the Sewerage Project was not necessary, and even if it was necessary, that it was not necessary to take it all the way up to St. Lawrence, even if it was necessary, because they were not satisfied that there was sufficient pollution on the South Coast of Barbados.

We subsequently did another study *which the Inter-American Development Bank paid for and which was done by the Bellairs Research Institute which proved, apparently successfully, that there was, in fact, sufficient pollution on the South Coast to warrant this Project. We had a lot of resistance from a number of people working in the Inter-American Development Bank. Not the Directors or the people at the top but some of the technical people, some of whom felt that this Project was too good for Barbados.

In one - I now call it historic - meeting with one of the senior people at the Inter-American Development Bank, I had to make some very caustic remarks about the difference between the quality of life in Barbados and that in Latin America from where one or two of the experts had come. I made the point, and I feel strongly about it, that the quality of life for Barbadians warrants any expenditure which any Government of Barbados should make in pursuit of maintaining that quality of life. I give the Honourable Member, especially for St. George South, the assurance that for the last 25 years this has been my position and I cannot think of any reason why I should change.

I remember the very first time I sat down with the Inter-American Development Bank back in 1972 when I indicated that the way in which a country should be judged should not be by its Gross Domestic Product, or its Gross National Product so much as it should be judged by its quality of life index. That was before, in fact, quality of life had been accepted as an index for measurement in the development of countries. I am very pleased to see that by now, today, the quality of life is an index that is freely being used within the United Nations system. I might add that Barbados rates very highly and certainly first among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the quality of life index, *vis-a-vis* the rest of the world.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to Honourable Members that this Sewerage Project has found acceptance on both sides. I also wish to point out to the citizens of the country through you, Sir, that (here will be, during the next 4 years, some little disruption from time to time. Such disruption is much like how in order to get steel you have to pass some ingredients through the fire and water. When it emerges, it usually is pure, strong, hard and good. So it will be with the Sewerage Project. There will be some disruption, some dislocation but at the end of the day we will have guaranteed to our immediate Barbadians and our children and children's children that we have executed their

responsibility properly; that we have left a legacy in our environment of which they, and as a result we, can be proud.

I am grateful to Honourable Members, Mr. Speaker.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Order No. 11 was called - To move that the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the grant of a sum of money for the service of this Island.

On the motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES, seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT, Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. L. L. . BRATHWAITE in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee of Supply. 1.30p.m.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, this Resolution relates to supplementaries in respect of various Heads. In respect of Head 13, the Prime Minister's Office, and in particular additional expenditure arising out of contributions for the National Insurance Department amounting to various sums, $8 644, $3 231 and $9 148 and in respect of maintenance of property the sum of $11 829. This is a pretty straightforward matter aimed at the expenditure incurred by some Ministries and in particular by the Prime Minister's Office have been higher than anticipated under the various items.

In order therefore not to exceed the amounts approved under these items, it is necessary to seek supplementary to accommodate the increased expenditure and the amounts needed are set out under the particular Head. With those few words, Mr. Chairman, I move that Head 13 stand part.

Hon. W. O. FRANKLIN: I beg to second that and reserve my right to speak.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, at the very outset I just want to enquire whether you are in fact only dealing with Head 13 or if we are dealing with the entire

Mr. CHAIRMAN: No, we are dealing with Head 13.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this Resolution in my humble assessment represents a corruption of the system of financial management in this country that the House simply cannot give its approval to, begin to look at substantial aspects of the expenditure that the House is being called up to approve. It immediately becomes clear that the system of budgeting that we really want for this country, has totally broken down.

Now, I am going to speak only on Head 13 since we are dealing with it Head by Head. But one of the very important mistakes that is being made in relation to Head 13 is simply this; the amount being sought for National Insurance in the year ending 1992/93 is to be more when you add the supplementary and the initial vote together, than the amount that the House has just recently approved for 1993/94 although the wage bill in 1993/94 is greater.

And now, the wage bill is greater in 1993/94 but the national insurance contributions voted for 1993/94 are less than the amount for 1992/93 when you add the supplementary and the original vote together. So on a larger wage bill for 1993/94, Sir, the House has already voted a smaller national insurance. I make that point to say this; if we agree with these supplementaries and if we believe that these make sense then the exercise that we have just gone through, the approval of the Estimates for 1993/94 has been a bogus exercise.

Let me illustrate, Sir. The total provision including supplementaries for National Insurance for 1992/93 would be $82 453 but for 1993/94 the House has just recently voted $81 288 for the year, and that is in the context of an increased wage bill. What that means is that even now. we know that we are going to have to come back some time during the course of the next financial year and supplement each and every one of these items of National Insurance contribution that is contained in this omnibus resolution that is before the House.

It suggests to me, Mr. Chairman, that when the Government went about the business of preparing the Estimates which recently came to this House for approval, it obviously did not take into account all of the information that was at its disposal or if it took it into its account it sought to ignore it. I am sorry that I cannot at this stage, speak beyond Head 13 but I will come to other matters in due course. For this point just let me say, Sir, to the extent that Head 13 concerns our having to supplement the National Insurance Board, that clearly something has gone fundamentally wrong with budgeting - the simple act of budgeting. The simple act of bringing to this House, provisions that relate to Government's anticipated financial requirements.

Sir. The timing of it first of all, Sir, is wrong. Let me

That whole system has broken down and I want to say, Sir, that it is part of a general syndrome that we have .seen that in very fundamental areas, the system of public finances has become corrupted. I am not speaking in a moral sense, but corrupted. We have situations where the amount Government can get by way of overdraft from a

Bank or the Central Bank, is set by law but that amount, Sir, is honoured more in the breach that in the observance.

We have situations, Mr. Chairman, where too many Government Departments are spending in advance of Parliamentary approval. We have situations, Mr. Chairman, where Government departments are carrying arrears from year to year without accounting for these things properly or bringing them properly to book. We have situations where, Mr. Chairman, there is no compliance with the rules for tendering or the award for contracts as required by the Financial Administration and Audit Act. It really has to stop, Sir.

In relation to this, Sir, we need to hear the Minister explain carefully in relation to Head 13, how can it be that the National Insurance Contributions for the year just about to end, that is included in the supplementary, is going to be greater than the national insurance contribution for the year to come, in the context of a situation where the wage bill for the year to come is going to be greater than the wage bill for the year just ended.

The wage bill has increased by reason principally of the restoration of the 8% wage cut but in almost every instance, Sir, the wage bill in every Government Department has increased. This is nonsensical, Sir.

While I am on it, Mr. Chairman, this Head deals with the Government Information Service and I am really reaching the stage where I have a difficulty agreeing that the operations of certain sections of the Government Information Service should be met from public funds, Sir. I am reaching that personal position where I have difficulty agreeing that certain aspects of the Government Information Service should be met from public funds. There are certain senior officers in particular who do not...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Now, just before the Honourable Member goes down that road. Let us recognise what we are dealing with.

Mr. "O. S. ARTHUR: Government Information Service, Head 13.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Yes, National Insurance. The amount of money we are seeking in this Resolution for that particular item does not allow you to go that broadly.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I cannot discuss money without discussing functions.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: And the purposes for which the money is voted.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I cannot discuss the moneys unless I discuss the uses to which the money is put.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I am afraid that you will have to discuss it within the terms of the Standing Orders of this Chamber.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: But I am discussing it within the context of the Standing Orders. I am saying, Sir, that in my judgment, Sir, any moneys being used now to support the Government Information Service is being*badly utilised and that this supplementary being sought, Mr. Chairman, Sir, is a waste of public funds and I am saying that my argument is based upon the way in which people in the Government Information Service are construing their role and performing that role. The time is coming when we might have to ask the Prime Minister of the country to meet the expenditure of the Government Information Service from his personal pocket if the Government Information service is going to behave in the way in which it is behaving. 1.40p.m.

There are some people who do not know when the line of propriety has to be drawn.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I would wish to inform the Honourable Member that he has gone far enough and possibly too far and that he must now come back to the item under discussion.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: As far as I am concerned, Mr. Chairman, this whole matter of the operation of the Government Information Service needs carefully to be rationalised in the light of the fact that the Government Information Service has been going on with the business of providing its service that can enlighten the public in relation to sensitive and important matters of public importance rather than concentrate itself as an appendage to the Prime Minister's personnel staff. To that extent, Mr. Chairman, I have great difficulty in supporting any increase in expenditure for the Government Information Service. But in relation to Head 13 in particular, Mr. Chairman, my intervention is to ask the Government to explain the budgeting that is implied with our having a greater National Insurance contributions for the financial year to end than the one to come in circumstances where the wage bill is going to be greater than the year which is just about to end.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I assume since nobody else is contributing on this, I can probably get this information and I will try to seek it. It is not a question that I would have anticipated would have been asked in this particular debate, because the wage bill in the year 1993-94 has increased, one assumes that the National Insurance contributions are calculated in accordance with that. This is the assumption that I make. Now you cannot relate the projected increase to the wage bill in 1993-94 to the excess in National Insurance contributions in 1992-93. I do not know if the two of them correlate because you are dealing with specific Ministries which over that 2-year period

may have changed their make-up and the wage cost may have been adjusted in that time.

Sir, it is also possible that some of these are arrears of National Insurance contributions which are being cleared, but it is a small sum of money. I cannot imagine that a small sum of money like this to supplement a vote could generate as much heat as the Honourable Member for St. Peter is seeking to generate. If the calculation of National Insurance contributions is wrong, I do not believe that that can be ascribed to a total breakdown in the system of budgeting in Barbados. If somebody makes that kind of statement, Mr. Chairman, it is not something that I can answer because it does not make sense to me. There are so many other factors which go into the issue of budgeting. I am certain that the Honourable Member of St. Peter should be aware.

The point is that the amounts need to be supplemented and that they relate to either arrears or expenditures that are anticipated to be incurred in the 1992-93 fiscal year and essentially in respect to most pf these it is supplementing the National Insurance contributions. What I will say since the point has been raised and I do not wish to belittle it that I will seek to find out whether there can be any explanation between the Estimates for 1992-93 and 1993-94. I will undertake to provide that information to the Honourable Member, even if not in this debate, in the course of the day or when next we meet because it might be explainable.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am really sorry that we are not dealing with this as an omnibus Resolution. But the National Insurance point runs through all of the Heads. That is why I am raising it. Anyhow, in previous Resolutions of this kind that involve the Government having to supplement a Head, the Government had said that any increased supplementary was to be financed by way of savings without leading to an increase in Government's expenditure for the year.

Sir, I have to ask the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance specifically whether Head 13 and again in all of the others which are being sort now are to be financed by way of savings within the same Ministry or whether in point of fact there is increased expenditure over and above the amount that the Government has told us as recently as the Estimates debate and the Budget debate that Government intends to spend for the entire year. We are caught in a very curious position because in many instances we have just gone through a system where an estimate for revised expenditure for 1992-93 is set out. Those Estimates on revised expenditure for 1992-93 in most instances do not make provision for these supplementaries. One is drawn to the conclusion, Mr. Chairman, that these supplementaries would seem to have been concocted or devised sometime after the Estimates and the Budget itself were prepared and brought to the House. We have to ask ourselves a question because there is a column called Revised Estimates of 1992-93. So that the Revised Estimates for 1992-93 is Government's way of showing any adjustments in expenditure on a Head.

Aside.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Let the Honourable Member proceed.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, it is a very serious point. The Prime Minister came during the course of the Estimates and the Budget debates and said that this is Government's Statement of its expenditure for the year just concluded. In every instance where there has been a supplementary, any supplementary is to be met from savings within that same Ministry. He stated that as clearly as crystal, Sir. I am seeking to get the Minister of State to answer the question: Are all of these supplementaries beginning with Head 13, Sir, to conform to that particular principle as stated by the Minister of Finance or indeed, Sir, are these additions to total expenditure? I ask the question, Sir, because in many instances the notation called "Revised Expenditure" as set out in the Estimates which are supposed to reflect supplementaries is different from what was approved in the Estimates for 1992-93. For example, Sir, last year the Ministry of Finance had a contingency vote of $1 million. The revised estimate for the contingency vote in these Estimates is $7 million. When these Estimates were brought to the House at that • point, the Ministry of Finance was.saying that we will have to spend on contingencies $6 million more than what we budgeted for. 1.50p.m.

That is the point I am trying to get at. What is all this about? When were these numbers put down on paper? Were all these supplementaries concocted after the Estimates debate? After the Budget debate? What is the motive behind them? Is the motive behind these things the x Government reacting to the pressure of the International Monetary Fund to bring to book all of its arrears before the end of the financial year, rather than to allow those arrears to run into a different financial year, as has been the practice in the past? That is the issue, Sir, and that is why I started by saying they seem to me to have a collapse and a corruption in the management of public finances in this country. I would like to hear the Minister respond to this question. Are we keeping within the limit of expenditure as stated in the Estimates and in the Budget debate, or are all of these new subventions and these new appropriations additional to the amount the Minister of Finance told us was going to be the extent of Government expenditure for the year?

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, this is not a difficult issue at all. I am dealing with Head 13, but

the Honourable Member has asked me questions that relate to some of the items that appear under the other Heads.

I think the Honourable Member for St. Peter is aware of the Fund basis for accounting as distinct from the Accountant General basis. He may also know that the clearance of intra-public sector arrears is treated by the Fund like amortisation. Therefore it is not treated as additional expenditure in terms like the Accountant General.

In relation to the issue of intra-public sector arrears, some of these have been identified for clearance under specific Heads and the decision was taken, Mr. Chairman, to clear all the intra-public sector arrears under the Contingencies vote as a composite amount. So that it is possible that some of the intra-public sector arrears were provided for in the Estimates under different Heads. However, they are all now coming under the Contingencies vote in the Ministry of Finance, so we took the composite number and the financing was prepared for this.

In respect of the additional expenditure by way of National Insurance Contributions, there are some cases in which the savings have been effected under these Heads, not all of them, so that in relation to the overall position there will be a slight increase in expenditure, but it would not be the full amount of the National Insurance contributions. Some savings have been realised in some Ministries and I am sorry that the Addendum does not reflect this.

As I said already, Mr. Chairman, I do not know that there is anything else one can say to appease the kind of commentary the Honourable Member for St. Peter has raised. If additional expenditure in National Insurance contributions constitutes a breakdown in the budgetary system in Barbados, it means that the breakdown occurred not yesterday, but it has been endemic throughout the history of Barbados, because I have approved in respect of nearly every Ministry in here - sitting on that back bench and on this front bench - additional expenditure on National Insurance contributions. It is a common thing. If you are asking whether that additional expenditure had to be set off against realised saving, that is a valid question, and as I have indicated, there are some cases in which that additional expenditure can be set off against savings.

Supplementaries for National Insurance contributions are not an.unusual feature in our financial system, and therefore any suggestion that the budgetary system has broken down is foolishness. That is all I am saying, Mr. Chairman. You can take any amount of information and twist it around to suggest the budgetary system has broken down, but that is not going to obviate the need for supplementaries, and the Honourable Member for St. Peter knows that. This is National Insurance contributions. If he were keeping noise where operating expenses had increased, which is a matter over which the Ministry itself has some control, I would say he is being fair, but you cannot complain about National Insurance contributions, in my view, Mr. Chairman. If the operating expenditure went over, you could say the Permanent Secretaries have not been careful, that the Ministers have approved expenditure they should not have approved, but not National Insurance contributions, so I honestly do not think that the kind of commentary which is issued from the Honourable Member for St. Peter is relevant.

When we get to the other Heads I can explain in more detail how the clearance of the intra-public sector arrears was affected, unless you give me the latitude to do that now, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Actually, we are dealing with Head 13.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Since we are dealing with Head 13,1 think I have explained it because this deals exclusively with National Insurance contributions and I will elucidate on the clearance of the intra-public sector arrears when we get to the Contingencies vote.

The question that Head 13 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES, seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported progress and asked for leave to sit again, and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I move that this sitting be now suspended until 3.00 p.m. today.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that, Sir.

***The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the sitting accordingly.* 2.00 p.m.**

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken the House was in Committee of Supply. To that, it should revert.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Committee of Supply is resumed.

HEAD 15 - CABINET OFFICE

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, the same remarks that I made in introducing Head 13 apply here except that I would like to add that in respect of these additional sums savings have been realised commensurate with the amounts which have been supplemented.

I beg to move that Head 15 stand part.

Hon. W. O. FRANKLIN: I beg to second that.

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

HEAD 16 - MINISTRY OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to move that Head 16 stand part.

Hon. W. O. FRANKLIN: I beg to second that.

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

HEAD 17 - OMBUDSMAN

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to move that Head 17 stand part.

Hon. W. O. FRANKLIN: I beg to second that.

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

HEAD 18-AUDIT

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to move that Head 18 stand part.

Hon. W. O. FRANKLIN: I beg to second that.

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

HEAD 19 - MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, in respect of Head 19, the Addendum is a bit deficient and I think the House deserves a clear explanation of this although I sought to do so a bit earlier.

The amount for which the contingency vote is being supplemented is $54 597 000. Clearance of intra-public sector arrears accounts for $54.3 million and the privatisation programme accounts for $0.3 million.

Under the stabilisation programme with the International Monetary Fund, the Government had agreed to effect the elimination of inter-public sector arrears in the financial year 1992-93 and the liability which had been cleared and one other which is now being dealt with in this Resolution under review. They are as follows:

Essential Government arrears to the Barbados Water X' Authority - $8.7 million,

Central Government arrears to the Transport Board - $4.4 million,

Transport Board arrears to the National Insurance Fund - $19.1 million,

The Barbados Agricultural Development Corporation arrears to the Barbados National Bank - $22.1 million,

Central Government arrears to the University of the West Indies - $2.7 million, making a total of $57 million.

What I have done is to include a matter which comes a little later on in relation to the University. I am really only doing that to give a global picture, but we are only dealing with $54.6 million under this Head.

It was agreed that the supplementary of $54.3 million would be to the contingency vote of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and $2.7 million to the tertiary vote of the Ministry of Education which would bring it to the full $57 million.

Now as a matter of information, not because the accounting system of Government has changed, but as a matter of information to the House lest people feel that I am suggesting that the Fund's basis for calculation of public expenditure is what the Government is following for the purposes of its own estimates, I am not doing that. I am merely suggesting to the House for its own edification that clearance of the inter-public sector arrears is treated the same way as amortisation which means a netting out of expenditure and would not show on a fund basis as an increase in current expenditure.

However, the interest costs of those arrears will appear as interest expenditure because some of the debts were retired by way of Treasury Bills, Treasury Notes, debentures and other cash payments. On an Accountant General basis both the amortisation and the interest are current expenditure and basically, the Honourable Member for St. Peter in doing his calculations can subtract $8.7 milMon and $4.4 million as items which were under other heads but which are now being pulled together under the contingency vote under the Heading Inter-Public Sector arrears. The full $57 million less that amount would be

the figure for which the public expenditure in the fiscal year 1992 - 93 has been increased. You deduct $13.1 million from the $57 million, as I understand it.

Mr. Chairman, in respect of the Office of Privatisation I think this is also under this Head 19. The Government had contracted the firms of Ernst and Young and Peat Marwick Associates Ltd. under 2 separate contracts to provide consultancy services in respect to the privatisation of Heywoods Hotel, the National Petroleum Corporation and the Barbados National Oil Company Ltd. The supplementary of $0.3 million is required for the Office of Privatisation to satisfy contractual obligations under the consultancy agreement to the end of financial year 1993.

This would have been obviated had we been able to establish the Public Investment Fund into which the proceeds of privatisation would go and out of which expenditure relating to the privatisation would come. However, that has not been completed and therefore the contingency vote has to be supplemented to take account of this expenditure. I should point out that the Government has realised some inflows from the sale of shares in the Pine Hill Dairy and one could effectively set off what has been made from the sale of the Pine Hill Dairy shares against the amounts for which the contingency vote is being used to pay for the consultancy services contracted by the privatisation unit.

The central Government arrears to the Transport Board were cleared on June 30, 1992 and July 17, 1992 in the following sums - $2.9 million and $1.5 million. The Central Government arrears to the Barbados Water Authority were cleared on July 10,1992 and September 13, 1992 in the sums of $3 million and $5.7 million respectively. The Transport Board arrears to the National Insurance Fund totalling $19.1 million were cleared on September 30, 1992 in the sum of $19.1 million. The Barbados Agricultural Development Corporation arrears to the Barbados National Bank were cleared on September 30, 1992 in the sum of $22.1 million and the Central Government arrears for the University of the West Indies would be cleared on March 21, 1993 in the sum of $2.7 million.

That is the breakdown of how these inter-public arrears have been cleared during this financial year. The arrears have been cleared by issue of Treasury Bills, Treasury Notes and also debentures and cash transfers.
3.10 p.m.

If Honourable Members wish a break-down of how that has been done, that information can be provided.

With those few words, Sir, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. C. V. WALKER: I beg to second that.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Minister who introduced this debate said that he would use few words in introducing this Resolution but I want to make it clear that this Resolution has a profound impact, in our opinion, upon the way how Government is administered by this present administration. I also heard the Honourable Minister say that some of these arrears were cleared by transfers of cash. Now, as I understand it, that money came out of the Treasury of Barbados, was paid out and this Honourable House did not give its approval. This is the height of lawlessness.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I specifically made reference to cash transfers but I also said there were 2 elements of it for which provision had been made in the Estimates. They were paid therefore on that basis but we are bringing the full intra-public sector arrears under the heading of the Contingency Vote. When they were paid, they were paid on the basis of provision that had been made in the Estimates, for example, in respect of central Government arrears to the Transport Board, and that is the only cash transaction which has been paid so far. One point five million dollars was paid on July 17, 1992 and provision had been made for $4.4 million. The balance was cleared by way of Treasury Bills so there has been no cash payment for which provision was not made in the Estimates in fiscal year 1992-93.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Sir, we are engaging in double voting now. If you have already used an item of expenditure which has been approved by Parliament and you have charged that item with the expenditure and now you are voting the same amount of money under a different Head then you are opening the way for some smart Alec in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs to expend this money twice. Now what foolishness are you telling me? One of the men who is in charge of finance in Barbados is saying that part of this is a repetition of money that has already been voted by this House. We have double voting to the extent of that. That, again, is the height of lawlessness.

I want to make it abundantly clear, Sir. This House has always been the guardian of public finance and we must forever continue to be watchful. I was at the Constitutional Conference when the provisions of this law was embodied in the constitution of Barbados. I well remember the boast of the then leader of the governing party at that same Conference in which he said that one of the most distinguishing features of Barbados Constitution from the rest of the Commonwealth was that we never permitted any special warrant, that we always insisted, as a matter of ancient rights and privileges, that no expenditure out of the Consolidated Fund in Barbados could take place without authorisation of Parliament. Now we are going to have a Minister in the Ministry of Finance come in here and say that some of these arrears have

already been cleared with parliamentary approval. This is a very serious thing, an exceedingly serious matter.

Secondly, Sir, I do not care whether the Fund treats it in one way or not. The Fund does not run or make laws in Barbados. They may make laws for this administration but they do not make the law of Barbados. This money will be shown in the Accountant General's Report as an expenditure for this financial year.

Aside.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I have not seen any source of funds in this yet. He has not shown us any source of funds. The point is that all of these items are items of expenditure which, in the past, under successive administrations have been shown under specific Heads of expenditure with respect to the Ministries. Only recently, in the Honourable House, by way of Supplementary Resolution, No. 7, the Honourable Minister responsible for Transport came here for the sum of $2 700 000. It was shown as Head 42, Ministry of Public Works, Communications and Transportation, Programme 09 - Transport Board, Subprogramme - Transport Board Subsidy - $2 700 000. Any commentator of public affairs in Barbados will know that the Transport Board operations were run in such a manner that it caused a subsidy to be paid to it out of the central Government fund. When we look at the Addendum to that Resolution it says this:

> "The Government has embarked on a plan for reorganisation of the public transportation services. It was agreed as part of this plan that the Government would be responsible for meeting the payments of sundry creditors to whom the Transport Board were indebted as at March 31, 1992.
>
> The majority of the debts have been settled but debts due to a number of trade creditors are still outstanding. A supplement of $2 700 000 is required...[11]

Therefore, here it is, on the one hand not so long ago the Minister of Public Works, Communications and Transportation came in here and gave this House the impression that if we voted $2.7 million the arrears would be clear. Now, we have in here $19.1 million more on the ground that it is one intra-public sector debt. It is a debt.

Sir, I am going to use words I believe are necessary if we are to uphold the integrity ....

Aside.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: No. There are certain circumstances in every community when there is such deterioration in the body politic that it is necessary even for revolutions to take place. Get that in your pipe and smoke it. This is a massive act of deception upon this House. It is a rape of the Financial Administration and Audit Act. This House must put its foot down. This House has been deceived by being told quite recently in Supplementary Estimate No. 7 that $2.7 million would clear the arrears and now we come for $19.1 million. This can never be right.

We have reached the stage now where the* truth is irrelevant to anything. Lies have been elevated to the altar. It is a terrible thing we are in. I want the International Monetary Fund or whoever it is to understand that they had better go and check corruption in some of the developed countries in the world. Let them go and tell the Italians how to run their books. Let them go and tell a number of the other countries how to run their books but this country has an honourable tradition of parliamentary democracy of understanding truth and honesty and this House will not tolerate this because it is deception of the highest order. 3.20 p.m.

They will not tolerate this because it is deception of the highest order and I hope that the officials whp are in charge of the expenditure of Government money and accounting for Government money will put their foot down and let the public of Barbados know that this exercise has taken place contrary to the laws of Barbados.

I also want to say this, Sir, a very dangerous precedent has been set by bringing a contingency vote of this magnitude. Nobody with any responsible sense of budgeting would allow this particular vote to be used because you are laying open the door for all kinds of irresponsible acts in the future and then you are going to say, contingencies vote will cover it.

We cannot agree to this. You cannot agree with that, Sir. $58 million as asked for, when in truth and in fact $22 million for BADC. That should be dealt with by way of a subvention through the Ministry of Agriculture to BADC. You cannot bring that as a contingency vote. How can we deal with that? What kind of message are we sending? We have warned, on this side, repeatedly, that if in a society you allow lawlessness to be elevated into a position of great importance that you will encourage lawlessness. The lawlessness that the Central Bank of Barbados persistently permitted the Government and the Ministry of Finance to indulge in over the last 3 or 4 years by breaking the laws of Barbados, is now taking place. The Ministry of Finance now believes that it is above the law. Well it may be above the law over there, but it will not be above the law over here. We will make our voice heard. And I will tell you this, this voice is becoming more and more effective. One gone, two gone, tomorrow there may be 3 or 4. Wait.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member. I have been thinking of an aspect of your presentation that I need to see in its right perspective. You drew attention to a

Resolution that was passed not very long ago and you referred to the presentation of that particular document and the information that was led by the Minister. Subsequently, you used such words as, deception, and I would only ask the Honourable Member to clarify whether in his statement he is inferring that the Minister deceived the House.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Sir, I read the words that were used in the addendum and I will repeat them, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I heard all of that, but subsequently you said it was an act of deception and I just want to have ...

Could I have order please?

I just wanted clarification from the Honourable Member whether he is accusing the Honourable Minister of deceiving the House and if he is so doing he knows what the Standing Orders are in relation to that.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I am accusing the Honourable Minister of nothing. I am stating the facts and I am drawing the conclusion that as an Honourable Member of this House, when a Resolution is brought to this House and the addendum states that the majority of the debts have been settled but debts due to the number of trade ... are still outstanding, a supplement of $2.7 million is required to meet outstanding claims, when you have that statement and you come in here today and you have another Minister saying that transport $19.1 million is needed for the purpose of clearing off a trade creditor I say, Sir, that the two of them cannot be. And I say that is lies and deception.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I am only asking you to determine whether you are accusing the Minister of telling lies and deceiving this House, because if you are doing that, then I should have to ...

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I have never heard of a Chairman asking an Honourable Member a question yet.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Well you have heard it now.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Well, Sir, I say that I have said what I had to say and I will not be saying any more on that. I am not saying any more on that because the facts are that one Minister said one thing, this House was told by the Resolution that $2.7 million was necessary ...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member does not have to shout.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I am not having to shout, I am only emphasising.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I just want to make it abundantly clear that if in my view anything that is said in the course of a contribution to the debate, contravenes the rules of this House I shall take the necessary action.

Certain remarks made by the Member for Christ Church South and the Member for St. John were ordered to be expunged from the record by the Chairfkan.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I maintain that $19.1 million which the Honourable Minister in introducing the Resolution said was for the purpose of paying arrears of the Transport Board I maintain that that statement and a previous Resolution No. 7 of 1992 Supplementary Estimates is completely inconsistent.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: That is getting very close to repetition.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: To what, Sir?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I heard it already.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Wait a minute, Sir, the Honourable Member got up and accused me of misleading this House. I say, Sir, it is deception on the part of the Minister of Finance and on the part of this administration to come to this House on the one hand for $2.7 million and say to us that that will clear the arrears and now come and say that they are now in truth and in fact $19.1 million. This is the House of Assembly and the Opposition is in here for the purpose of being the guardians of the public purse. 3.30 p.m.

I do not care who gets offended. If the facts fit the accusation, I shall state the facts. According to this vote, $19.1 million will be paid out of the Treasury of Barbados for the purpose of paying debts of the Transport Board. Whether those debts are to Bridgetown, Barbados National Bank or to Timbucktu, it is still a debt. Therefore, we must draw to the attention of this House that this money, in truth and in fact, is additional to the previous sums. Why is it that the Ministry of Finance was hiding this? They were hiding it and we are not going to allow them to get away with it.

Sir, we come to the BADC. I was at the point where I was pointing out that every year we have to vote money for the BADC. This is not unusual to have to vote money for a statutory corporation. That is quite usual. Why is it that on this occasion the Government is now going to surreptitiously bring this under a contingency vote?

Hon. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir. I object to the word surreptitiously. The Honourable Member cannot say in the face of a Resolution that the

Government is bringing anything surreptitiously. It is a Resolution before the House and there is nothing surreptitious about that, Sir.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I have not heard a ruling on that, Sir. I am going ahead. That is a point of nonsense not order.

Sir, everybody brings this money under the appropriate Head of the Ministry of Agriculture. Why are we doing it in this way? Why is it that we have to bring it in this way? We are bringing it in this way because with the Honourable Ministers of Finance who are in charge of this have to obey the orders of their masters.

Aside.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I am dealing with you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to ignore that, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Can we have some order?

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: They have substance in them though. When you come to supplement the $26 million spent on the St. Joseph Hospital, we are going to deal with that.

Sir, I want to make it very clear that this House must regard its function as the guardian of the public purse very seriously. No attempt by anyone can stop this Opposition from bringing to the attention of the public the illegal and irresponsible conduct of the Ministry of Finance. I repeat. It is irresponsible, it is illegal and it suggests to me, Mr. Chairman, that this House has a supreme duty to ensure that these funds have not been voted doubly and, in truth and in fact, we are not opening the door for irresponsible conduct in financial matters to become the norm. This country has not got the reputation of Antigua or other countries. We must put our foot down now and do not allow this country to degenerate to that extent.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I would want also to indicate that I will not be supporting this financial debauchery. Having said that, I wish to state that we must not also take lightly the fact that the Government of Barbados has run up over $50 million in intra-public sector arrears.

Mr. Chairman, this Resolution is dealing with the settlement of intra-public sector arrears. The Government is being forced by the International Monetary Fund to settle intra-public sector arrears. However, the Minister was not good enough to speak to any arrears that the Government may have with bodies other than statutory institutions and what is going to be Government's position on that particular matter. I know for example, Mr. Chairman, that the Child Care Board and other Government institutions have a large amount of arrears outstanding not to other statutory institutions, but to entities in the private sector of Barbados.

I am suggesting to the Government that, in the same way that if has yielded to the pressure from the International Monetary Fund and settled their arrears on an intra-Governmental basis, it also behoves the Government of Barbados to bring to book as well all of the arrears that it has with private sector bodies in this country. The refusal of the Government to settle the arrears of the private sector entities of this country, Sir, is putting tremendous pressure on those persons who have in good faith provided services to the Government and cannot get their payment for those services.

Therefore, I must ask the Minister to the extent that intra-public sector arrears amounted to $54 million and you are settling those, what are the outstanding arrears not being brought to book by the Government of Barbados with private sector entities in this country, Sir?

As I understand the Minister's presentation, he said that this $54 million was financed by way of treasury bills, treasury notes and debentures. Sir, on page 2 of the Barbados Estimates 1993-94, there is a Table called "Source of Financing 1992-93". It says in this Table, Sir, domestic financing, treasury bills - zero, debentures --zero, and treasury notes $65 million. I have to ask the Minister of State for Finance, Sir, this. Can the Minister explain how it is that these $54 million in intra-public sector arrears were settled by the issue of treasury notes, treasury bills and debentures and in Government's statement of "Source of Financing ending March 31, 1993" it states domestic financing through treasury bills - zero and debentures - zero? Somebody again is fooling somebody. If in point of fact the Government had access to these instruments for the purpose of servicing these arrears, Sir, they are not being reflected in the Statements that this House has been asked to examine and agree to as recently as in the Estimates debate. So that the deception of which the Member for Christ Church South speaks continues.

Sir, the fundamental point that the Member for Christ Church South addressed that we have to agree on is that there is simply no circumstance under which we should sit in a House of Parliament and allow Government to give subventions to individual statutory boards and calls those subventions contingency votes. The contingency vote of the Ministry of Finance is a small vote that enables the Ministry of Finance to react to an unforeseen development. That has been its purpose from the time that there - has been votes approved by this House and that is how it must be so long as this House retains control of its financial affairs. A contingency vote cannot and must not be used for the purposes of hiding subventions to

statutory boards. When we say therefore, Mr. Chairman, that there is a breakdown in the Public Financial Administration it arises precisely from the fact that the Government now is embarrassed by the extent of its intra-Governmental arrears and want to hide those arrears under something called contingency. 3.40 p.m.

There is nothing contingent about the fact that these arrears have arisen. Government has been aware of these arrears for a long time. The BADC did not accumulate $22 million of arrears just overnight. This is not a contingency, this is a long standing default. And we are saying on this side that this House has a responsibility to insist on the Ministry of Finance that to the extent that there is an ADC vote in the Estimates, they should show the subvention to ADC not as a contingency but as a subvention to ADC.

There is a vote in these Estimates for the Transport Board and any money which should go to the Transport Board cannot be hidden under something called contingency or any foolishness like that. It has to be by way of a direct subvention to that Board, and this House must be asked to approve that specific Head. A similar situation obtains in relation to the University of the West Indies. We find it strange that the Government can come and take the University vote out of the contingency and show it separately, but wants to lump up all the other subventions to the respective institutions.

I will not be party to a system of financial decision making in this House where Government grants subventions to institutions and show them as a contingency. They must be separately shown. The Financial Administration and Audit Act allows that all items of expenditure should be separately shown and voted upon and Government is asking us in this particular instance, Sir, to depart from that particular precept. I am saying that we would be creating a monstrous precedent if we allow any Government of Barbados to come and lump up grants and subsidies and allocations to Ministries under one vote which bears no relationship to the purpose that Government i& seeking to portray.

The departure from good financial precept and practice in this instance is too considerable for the House to ignore. That is the argument we are putting. The Government has to show these things separately. A future Government can come thereafter and show any kind of thing.under Contingencies and we have to safeguard this House from that kind of cowboy accounting. That is the gravamen of the point that was made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South and it is a point on which we must stand. This House is in no position to vote in support of large conventions to statutory institutions, particularly of the order of magnitude here presented on the basis that we are indulging in a contingency exercise. This is not a contingency exercise at all and it is abusing the notion of a contingency vote. My major opposition to it is that it is creating too monstrous a precedent that future people could abuse.

Mr. Chairman, the notion as well that it is not to be treated as expenditure is utter financial madness. All that is happening here is that the Government \vjould have bought services from the Barbados Water Authority some time in the past, for which it refused to pay in the past, and is being asked to pay for those services now. Now that the Government is paying today for services it utilised in the past, we are in this House asked to agree that Government's payment for water service is not an expenditure. If we were to agree with that in this House, all precepts and practices of public financing as has been understood in every civilised society could be thrown out of the window. Government's payment for a water service is an act of expenditure and there is nothing that the IMF says, Sir, nor the Minister of State for Finance says that can alter the fact that when you buy water and you pay for it that that is an act of expenditure.

I therefore cannot be part and parcel of any arrangement where the payment to the Water Authority is not to be treated as expenditure, where Government's payment to the National Insurance Board is not an act of expenditure. I am therefore calling upon the Minister of State for Finance to tell us by how much Government's expenditure for the year that ended 31st March is to be increased by the bringing to book of these deferred payments. All that is happening is not that these payments were made in 1991, they are being made in 1992. We cannot as a House, therefore, Sir, agree that this cannot be treated as expenditure.

Those are the critical points, Sir, that will cause us on this side to vote against this Resolution. There is simply no way that clear grants and subventions to institutions can be treated as contingencies. That is foolishness and it cannot be allowed. Also, Sir, there is simply no way that Government's payment for services, such as water and National Insurance, should be regarded as anything other than what it is, an act of expenditure in much the same way as if Government was purchasing stationery from a company in town.

The bases upon which the Minister of State has called upon this House to support this Resolution cannot stand scrutiny. This House is in no position to subscribe to what I call the financial debauchery...

Aside.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: . . . financial debauchery, a departure from virtue, that is intended to be perpetrated upon this House. Let the Government do what in its heart it knows has to be done. This House has from time immemorial given grants to the ADC to pay bills, to

meet subventions, to clear lockups at the BNB, and in every instance that this House has in the past given subventions to the ADC to clear debts with the BNB, it has come by way of a vote to the ADC. No IMF can come to Barbados now and tell us that we must depart from what we know is right, and therefore I am not going to vote for this on those clear grounds. '

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, if I were in the Opposition today in the circumstances I believe I probably would make some of the noise being made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South especially, because I understand the politics of this. Here it is the Government, one day before the end of the financial year, comes to Parliament to ask for whole $54 million, Sir. I can imagine that. To the average person this concept is wild, and the Honourable Member being as astute as he is, and having observed this in the past - because he was a Prime Minister and he presided over a Government and he knows these matters - he knows that the average citizen out there on hearing that the Government is seeking $54 million, and considering that the political party which he represents had prepared a previous information piece, which prepared the people for this massive onslaught on the Treasury...

Aside.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: The Honourable Members on the other side are members of a political party that understands that when in Opposition there are certain techniques which have to be used to the hilt. 3.50 p.m.

Although I must say, Mr. Chairman, that I was a little surprised that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South was able to reach such levels of vigour on this occasion. I have not seen him like this in a long time. He was able to rise to a level that to the uninitiated seeing the Honourable Member at the height of his remonstration on this issue would have run straight to the bulwarks saying that this is a very serious matter that has been wrought by the House.

Let me be the first to admit that in the context of "contingency" the Honourable Members cannot be said to be on bad grounds. What contingent has meant in the past has been what the Government of the day has meant it to mean in terms of the vote. It would be instructive if the Honourable Members could look at some of the times when they have come down and in particular - I am sorry he is not in his seat - but the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Thomas, as he then was, used to bring down some very interesting contingency votes. The fact is that in the context of the programme which we have been in in the last 18 months...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member mentioned the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Thomas?

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Yes. The former. I said as he then was. The then Prime Minister. I mean Tom Adams, Sir. He used to bring some interesting contingencies. Do you remember a $4 million? He came down here and we were in Opposition then and in a strange kind of way we behaved honestly, exactly and in the identical way because we could not conceive of a $4 million contingency at that time. In fact it was the same in the words of the late Prime Minister of Trinidad & Tobago, "it was the same khaki pants" that we were discussing the use of the term contingency.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Let's not have any cross talk, please.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: The fact is that it has been in Governmental accounting for some considerable time, including t and especially during the time of the Administration of the Barbados Labour Party. There have been a number of accounts which have simply been rolled over year after year. The most outstanding and perhaps the best example is the Barbados Water Authority.

The Barbados Water Authority as a statutory board has had a number of accounts for the entire governmental structure which have not been paid which continue to be rolled over and added to over a long period of time long beyond the life of some Honourable Members' tenure in this House of Assembly.

The Honourable Members are pretending as if tomorrow the Government is going to have to look for $54 million in a barrel somewhere and bring it out in a wheel barrow and carry it to pay to somebody. The fact is that they are trying to make the books look reasonable. They are bringing it to book at last. Arrears to the Water Authority of $8.7 million. Do you know how much water that is? Do you have any idea how much $8.7 million in water is, Sir? Water that could wash away the whole of Barbados and the Honourable Members are behaving as if this Government from 1986 incurred $8.7 million in water.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I have allowed each Honourable Member to speak uninterrupted and I would like Honourable Members to recognise that they must not be speaking across the Chamber.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Pure politics! The Honourable Members expect to get up and use words like "deceptions" and "massive this and massive that" and are now telling me that I have to be clinical. We are discussing the politics. This is politics, Sir. It has to do with the real deception where you have $8.7 million owed to the Water

Authority. Do you know how long it takes to run up a debt of $8.7 million? The Government could have done this year what governments have done for years and leave it to roll over. What this Government is saying is that if you are going to have structural adjustment you must have clean, clear and clinical structural adjustment and stop the rolling over.

Arrears to the Transport Board, Sir. The Honourable Members talk about the $19.1 million. The fact is that when the Honourable Minister responsible for Transport spoke in here about the supplementary he brought he was accurate in the context of what he was saying. I think it is unfair to give any impression that there has been some corruption or misrepresentation. Mr. Chairman, we are talking here about $19 million owed to the National Insurance. Honourable Members have been among the first to say that the National Insurance outstanding, going back to the last 20 years, should be paid.

I remember the Honourable Member for Christ Church South himself saying that national insurance is a statutory requirement which should have been paid. The Honourable Member for St. Peter has a short memory. Honourable Members know that the Transport Board is being brought into a - let me call it - a cleansing. Catharsis - I am grateful to the Honourable Member. We cannot pretend and go on rolling over the debt. We have to pay.

Asides.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: It is being paid in paper. If we were in the private sector... Let me tell you, Sir, when I became a Minister in this country in 19711 discovered that there were some businesses in Bridgetown which had a way of passing some benefits to some of their employees. This is how they used to do it, Mr. Chairman. They used to lend some of the young senior people money to buy a house and then the young senior people would not pay back for the house for 3 or 4 years. Then the Board of Directors would meet and write off the amount as a bad debt. I had just come from America so I was a little fresh.

I told the then Minister of Finance, the late Errol Barrow, "You are going to have to put a plug on that." If you go back and look at the details you will see that he did. It started a different programme in Barbados. In the private sector it is called writing off and the Government has the capacity to make the book clean once and for all.

If the Honourable Members are saying that the methodological approach is not acceptable to them I have no quarrel with them. I am just saying that we must not let the public believe that this is some form of corruption. That is the only complaint I have. If the Honourable Members are saying that they do not like contingency as i vote they can say that it ought to have come as part of a vote of the respective agencies. That is a valid criticism. But it does not have to be coupled with concepts of corruption. There is no corruption. There is no deception and I do not understand why it is that politicians must constantly take up their bats and throw them at each other in the context of corruption and deception.

What we are doing here is what we agreed to do in the Letter of Intent. In essence we said that there would be structural adjustment. The same Honourable Member for St. Peter and his colleagues agreed that we should clean up. the sugar estates and we should make the sugar industry clean, crystal pure and we have decided in this House and the Honourable Member and I were not exactly happy about it, to make the sugar accounts pure. Do you mean it is all right to make the sugar accounts pure, but it is not all right to make the water accounts pure? Do you mean it is all right to make the sugar accounts pure, but not the Transport Board? It is all right to make the sugar accounts pure, but not the ADC?

Mr. Chairman, it cannot be right for the Honourable Members to jump up and down and look at the Central Government's arrears to the University of the West Indies. The arrears to the University of the West Indies have created confusion for the University of the West Indies. We have to straighten it out so they can get their books in order and the only way we can put the books in order is by coming to the House.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has 2 minutes.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I crave Your Honour's indulgence. Far from being dishonourable and disrespectful to the House by taking this issue and biting the bullet and bringing it to this Honourable House, this side is saying once and for all up front, we are going to take the opprobrium but we are going to do the right thing so that from hereon in and forever thereafter there will be no more of the obfuscation, the confusion and the deliberate deception across the board. 4.00 p.m.

If the Honourable Members feel it has come under the wrong Head we accept that criticism. The Honourable Members must not suggest to the public that we are doing something wrong and corrupt because they know - and if the last 2 Honourable Members on that row had said this, I would accept it. But each Honourable Member over there knows that all we are doing is making book entries to make clear and, yes, writing off some debts. The Honourable Members are concerned about the fact that we have not brought it under the right Head in the Estimates. The Honourable Members are free to make that criticism but they must not let the public feel that somehow we are corrupt. This is what they have done consistently and that is what I object to, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Chairman, I wish the Honourable Member who just sat down did not get up and make any contribution at all. I think he would have done the Government the world of good. This Opposition has made a point and I want to restate the point. This Resolution and everything that goes with it is misleading. I would go as far as to say that a lot of things are not true. I am not going to use the word "deception". I am going to say that a lot of things that have been told to this Chamber are not true.

First of all, the subsidy as it relates to the Transport Board - I am going to take my time on this because I remember some weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition made a statement on the floor of this House. He stated that the Transport Board owed some $50 million to the NIS. The Minister went on record and the Chairman of the Board delivered a long statement to the newspaper rebutting those charges and saying that all the Transport Board owed was $1.7 million. Let me tell you why I find difficulty in believing anything as far as it relates to tfoe Transport Board.

The Government has been bragging that over the years it has been reducing the subsidy to the Transport Board in 1991-92 to $10 million and 1992-93 to $4 million. Do you know that is not really the case? You know what the Government has subsidised the Transport Board in this financial year 1992-93 to the tune of? Let me give you the figure - $32.5 million. Let me give you a breakdown - the $4 million that was in the Estimates for the Transport Board, then the $19.2 million that was paid by the Government by way of treasury bills to write off some of the debts, then a further $2.7 million that was obtained by way of a supplementary, and let me add some other figures now. The money that is due to the severed workers is a debt by the Transport Board. That is $5.6 million, not $6.5 million as was told by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs. That figure of $5.6 million is accurate. Total those and that is the total indebtedness of the Transport Board. It totals $32.5 million.

When the Honourable Member for St. Michael West gets up and talks and charges this Opposition of being irresponsible and using words of deception, I say the figures trotted out are not true. I remember I sat down with the Minister of Public Works, Telecommunications and Transportation to discuss the supplementary for the Transport Board and I agreed on condition that the $2.7 million was all the indebtedness of the Transport Board. If I as shadow Minister representing her Majesty's Loyal Opposition was told that, and misled, what words am I going to use? Are you tricking me then? You are not deceiving me. You are lying to me. That is all I can say. Why am I taken into confidence and lied to? Now I am seeing that the figure was not $2.7 million.

I am going to say this now and I want especially the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs to understand. Some of the money was paid to the Transport Board severed workers. You have some additional money. By right, with proper accounting, that money should have gone into this financial year as a debt due to this financial year, never mind it is carried on. You are going to find that next year the same problem will reappear because you have to deal with it. You are carrying forward

I want the Honourable Member for St. Michael West to understand that it is not a fault that you are cleaning up this way. It is wrong. You have misled this Honourable Chamber once again. That is why I said you have done your Government a disservice by speaking. You have arrears and your Government has declared that it will pay the second instalment of money due. That is a debt by the Transport Board so you should not say in any contribution that you are writing off the slate. I have you on quote.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member does not normally misunderstand. He has the words I said accurately. He has the context wrong. I was not discussing any arrears for the outstanding payments to individuals. I was discussing the totality of the Contingency Vote as presented to the Committee. The Honourable Member cannot tie- the 2 things together and then bring me into that.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: The Honourable Member- must understand that when he talks about politics I am a professional at that. I want to remind you before you sit down because I am not going to take this intervention lightly. You said that the Transport Board has been made pure. Those are your remarks. How else can I interpret that? You do not take a statement like that out of context? It is clear. By saying that you are making it abundantly clear that there is a complete write-off and then the Honourable Member referred to the Opposition calling on the Government to pay its debts including the National Insurance, I listened carefully for the case he was making out. That is when I said leave him to me because I cannot understand how he can get up and make such a case. Let me tell you. You have made a very weak case. If you were defending someone for the hangman's noose he would have gone.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Now, the Honourable Member must address the chair.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Sorry, the Honourable Member for St. Michael West.

Mr. Chairman, it is very serious. That is why I have called on the Government repeatedly to set out clearly what is its policy and purpose for doing a number of things. The Leader of the Opposition was abused and ridiculed for making a statement. I am going to say this to this

Honourable Chamber. I have listened to the Honourable Member for St. John. But here again, he did state that the money was paid some time in September last year. I want to go on record again as saying that the statement that was put out, a report by the SEO, in the National Insurance Department states that at the end of October the Transport Board owed that sum of money. I want to know if you are telling me now it was paid in September but the National Insurance Board when it sends up the Report to the officer that there was something else outstanding at October 31. There is something wrong. They do not square. Bills were issued. I have repeatedly asked the Minister of Public Works, Communications and Transportation to tell me whether all the debts have been paid. 4.10 p.m.

And questions are tabled in here and no answers whatsoever. Now this Opposition must therefore, Mr. Chairman, conclude that there is some information that is being withheld which is extremely vital.

I am not going to accuse the Government of hiding information but I am saying something is wrong when the Government cannot get that information and produce it here. I feel that officers are not doing the Government jusdce and we demand it as a responsible Parliament. This cannot go on. You know what worries me about this? When people out there say they lose faith in politicians, they do not say the Government alone they are saying the Opposition is part and parcel of it. And I say when we get up in here and draw something to the attention of the Government for the better management of Government, when we think we are justified in making those criticisms , and I will not stand here or anywhere to hear any counter criticisms of this Opposition when it has to make suggestions and recommendations in the interest of proper management. So I want the Government to understand that.

I just want the Minister to understand that I can understand he is trying to tidy up the act but if there is a procedure to be followed, follow the procedure because there are opening the flood gates for dishonesty and corruption and thieving and embezzlement because you have departed from the financial rules. That is what I am saying and that is all this Opposition is asking Government to do. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South ...

Hon. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir, the Honourable Member said it would be opening the flood .gates for dishonesty, corruption and thieving among other things and embezzlement. I just wish to know who would be doing the thieving and the embezzlement.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Let me make this quite clear. I am on record. Listen I can stand up and say it. Don't think you can appeal to the public and say you caught me saying something. I am saying when you have figures that are overlapping anybody would steal - Ministers - any body who sees money would steal it, would misuse funds, misappropriate funds, so don't tell me. Anybody at all that double the figures.

I am hoping that the Minister responsible for Finance would take a cue and make sure that these loop holes and these things are tidied up so that we would,not have the questions that are being posed in this sort of debate today.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Mr. H. deB. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Financial year of this Parliament expires in 24 hours. The Government is asking us today to vote $62 million out of which some $55 million is being voted under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, $54.5 million of which is by way of contingency. I am going to make a simple statement. It is a basic tenet, a basic requirement of the laws of Barbados that money should not be expended on Government's affairs before it has been voted on and approved by this House. It is a basic rule that you cannot expend money before you have voted it through this House. This is the rule. That is what is required under the Financial and Audit Rules. That is what the Constitution of Barbados requires.

Now the Government cannot have it both ways. If the Government is going to contend that this money has been expended previously then the Government has breached the laws of Barbados. And this is the second time that one has to point out to the Government that the Government is biggest law breaker you have in this country and it is setting no standards for the public of Barbados to follow, if it continues to breach the laws of the country and hide behind a spectacle of collective responsibility.

Now, this is the Ministry of the Prime Minister. He is not here today to defend another breach of the Laws of Barbados. Anybody who understands constitutional niceties and conventions will resign over an issue such as this. In any other Parliament, in any part of the Commonwealth where Ministerial responsibility is accepted and people follow constitutional decency and niceties, the Minister of Finance would have resigned on a matter of this nature.

I said it last week and I am going to repeat it. He has breached, as is shown by the Auditor General's Report, and caused the Central Bank to breach the Financial and Audit Rules clearly in relation to the overdraft. Now that the Minister comes to ask the House to vote money that the Government has already spent.

Aside.

Mr. H. deB. FORDE: The Government. It will be the Go ernment. But where does responsibility lie? Now if it has not been already spent I say that the Government

cannot, between today and tomorrow, spend $62 million. So they can't have it both ways. And you know, Sir, why I am angry about this matter and why the Opposition is understandably angry. The Opposition was given this paper only yesterday. That is the first thing. The Government is treating the people's business with such scant respect that they will make this available to us less than 24 hours before we come in the House to debate the matter.

But worst than this, why I am angry about it, is because when I said some weeks ago that the Government had, through the Transport Board, a liability to the National Insurance Fund for $19 million, $16 million of which was owed by way of principal and the balance as interest I was contradicted on the matter by the Chairman. Now I am being asked to say "aye" and vote $19.1 million of this $54 million to satisfy a Transport Board liability to the National Insurance Scheme.

Now I ask who is the liar. It is this double dealing that we are getting in public life that is so detrimental to public morality in Barbados and is undermining the respect of the young for Parliament and Parliamentarians.

Now, Sir, the Honourable Members cannot tell me they are merely meeting a liability. Some time some body has to turn that paper into cash so that if the Central Government is accepting a debt it is replacing one debt with another debt. So I am asking them, Sir, what sort of fancy accounting is this? Let me ask whether the Government has dispensed this money in cash? The answer is no. 4.20 p.m.

If it has not disbeused it in cash, how has it disbeused it? It has disbeused it by saying that it owes the same amount by way of treasury bills. To whom does it owe the money, Sir? It has given the National Insurance a bond or treasury bill to hold in its hand. That is what it is saying, Sir. I am going further in saying that the Government is undermining people's credibility in Government's notes and paper in the way that it is acting. Now I want to analyze the debt to the Water Authority, Sir. That is usually current expenditure, not capital.

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

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member is on a point of order.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I do not know but when they were in, Sir, there were District Hospitals that owed the Barbados Water Authority for 17 years.

Mr. H. deB. FORDE: When we left, Errol Barrow went and took up $30 million that he said the Water Authority had in a fund. Do you remember, Sir, how they got up and told the people at the time that they will finance the deficit which would arise from their electoral proposals.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Not relevant though.

Mr. H. deB. FORDE: Sir, that has to be relevant because they had $30 million which they said we were keeping in a slush fund in the Barbados Water Authority. That money was to finance capital expenditure of the Water Authority.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. What Errol Barrow said was that they had the money all over the place. He said that there was no control.

Mr. H. deB. FORDE: Sir, the position is this. The Honourable Member cannot bluff his way out of this. These debts have been accumulated in the last few years. What has been happening is that they have been bringing down to tijis House rolled over debts and showing false accounting in order to make the figures look good. That is one of the things that we have to quarrel about.

Sir, I say that no respectable House will vote in favour of this type of measure. We cannot continually breach the Financial and Audit Rules. We cannot continually encourage the Minister of Finance to breach laws that should be governing how he should run the Ministry of Finance. And this is being done by a Minister of Finance who is the leader of the Government. I am not going to the Junior Minister, Sir. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South has dealt with him. He has to carry the responsibility since he holds the papers for his Leader. He is like a junior, Sir, holding papers for a leading Queen's Counsel in this matter.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member cannot do that, Sir. The Honourable Member cannot get up and say that an active Minister of .Finance and Economic Affairs is like some snub-nose junior somewhere. He cannot say that, Sir. It is an insult to an Honourable Member to cast him in anything but equality and the Honourable Member knows that, Sir.

Mr. H. deB. FORDE: If the Honourable Member for St. Michael West was junioring for me, I would never compare the Honourable Member for St. John to him because I am sure that he would have lost the brief, not only lost the case.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should conclude in two minutes.

•Mr. H. deB. FORDE: The point is, Sir, that I am putting the blame not at the feet of the Minister who introduced it. But I am putting the blame squarely on the Prime Minister who has primary responsibility in here, Sir.

I am not blaming the Minister by saying that he is like a junior in this case. I am not going at him in that way, Sir. The Honourable Member is mistaken. I am saying the blame is squarely on the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South in whom the country should have no confidence, as he undermines the country's laws and institutions in the way that he does.

I am not surprised, therefore, that our finances continue to be in a mess, that we are suffering in the way we are, that unemployment is rising in the way it is, and that the country's finances have reached a critical low. It is slap-dash management of the people's affairs. The Minister is managing the country and running the Ministry of Finance as though it is some little back-water place off the face of the earth.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Time has expired. The Honourable Member for St. John.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Members of the Opposition have their job to do and, therefore, one would expect that they will make the kinds of criticisms that they have made. I do not think that people should get too agitated. I hope that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West in the future when he delivers of himself a very poor presentation in Court as leading counsel that his client at the end of the day will always blame him and not the juniors that he takes into Court with him. Regrettably, sometimes the seniors like to shift the blame onto the juniors and he is one of those seniors who I know is not averse to that from time to time. But I will tell his clients in the future that anytime he has difficulties that the blame should rest squarely at his feet and not the poor juniors who he chooses to assist him.

Sir, let me make this point that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, in his usual style, has said that this is the kind of matter on which the Minister should resign. He pointed out some constitutional niceties which he throws out generally before this House without any reference to any particular law. He said that no expenditure sliould occur before approval. Now I am a pretty straightforward person. I am saying that the Honourable Member for St. Peter would never be foolish enough to get up in this House and say that supplementaries always relate to prospective expenditure. He knows that sometimes the expenditure has already been incurred in 90 per cent of the cases when the supplementary is brought. Therefore, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, when he was a Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance...

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by seeking to associate myself with foolishness.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: What?

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: He is misleading the House to say that in 90 per cent of the cases in which supplementaries are brought the expenditure has already been incurred. It is a gross misrepresentation, Sir. I will not at all be associated with that misrepresentation.

Hon. D. J, H. THOMPSON: Well, he said^that he will not be associated with it. But I am saying that he would never get up in here and deny that in every case in which a supplementary comes here that the expenditure has not occurred already. That is the kind of foolishness. It would mean that any Minister of Finance in this country would be guilty of breaching the Constitution and should resign.

Sir, I am saying that in the majority of cases that I have seen that come before me the expenditure has already been incurred. I said that off the cuff in respect of any Minister of Finance including the Honourable Member for Christ Church South who made a big set of hullabaloo about an expenditure being incurred before it was brought to Parliament. I am saying that I consider it disgraceful that any attempt is made in this Chamber to give the impression that this is the departure from some financial norm. This is the height of ignorance, Mr. Chairman. I have 10 from the Ministry of Housing that I can show the expenditure was approved beforehand too. I have to research very carefully these things and I know that on several occasions, Mr. Chairman, that the expenditure had already been incurred before the supplementary was brought. Imagine people getting up in this Chamber, Mr. Chairman, to give the impression that they are coming from some high ground of principle and that they are holier than thou and sanctimonious in suggesting to this Chamber that we have departed from some norm in financial management in this country.

Aside.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Just a minute. I am hearing very loud asides which is interrupting the debate and it cannot continue. Let the Honourable Member proceed. .

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am just making that point very clearly, Mr. Chairman. If I am challenged on it, the relevant information can be given. 4.30 p.m.

I want to speak about the nature of the Contingencies vote as well, because I have also done research on that, and I am saying that contrary to the impression given by the Honourable Member for St. Peter that there is some kind of rule of thumb which applies to the way in which the Contingencies vote is used, that I could come up with several examples in the past when the Contingencies vote has been used for a wide range of expenditure, including clearing arrears in public institutions and statutory corporations.

Aside.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am saying that the Contingencies vote is a vote that is used for a wide range of expenditure. Legal settlements. We brought one here recently for a MacAlpine settlement. We have used the Contingencies vote to settle several legal awards by Government. The Contingencies vote has sometimes been used in exceptional circumstances to assist in operational expenses in Ministries. This is well known, and the Honourable Members are trying to give the impression, to whom I do not know, that there are some kind of "rules that are given to a Minister of Finance upon which the Contingencies vote...

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I do not want to intervene, but certainly I cannot tolerate this kind of behaviour.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Government has opted to treat this as intra-public sector arrears. It is .true that it could be treated as a subvention to the entity. Yes, it could, but the Government has the right in its financial management to determine how it is going to treat expenditure, to classify that expenditure and come to this House for approval. If you do not like that approach, you are entitled to warn the public, you are entitled to proselytise against the Government and you are entitled to vote against it. That is your responsibility, but you cannot tell me how expenditure must be classified in relation to Government.

What the Honourable Members are saying is that you should disaggregate the $52 million and apply the amount separately to the institutions for which the arrears are being cleared, instead of having it under intra-public sector arrears.

Aside.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: But I have just indicated to the House how it is being cleared, what the institutions are, so what kind of nicety would solve this constitutional dilemma which they are presenting to the country? Just a nicety. Instead of bringing it one way, bring it another. It still has to get parliamentary approval. And the Honourable Member for St. Peter uses that as some kind of example of poor financial management, collapse of the financial system in Barbados and so on. The point is the Government has agreed to clear the intra public sector arrears, and this is the method which is being used. Not one of them has said that it is a bad thing to clear the arrears. Do you know why, Mr. Chairman? Because what the Honourable Member for St. Michael West said is true, that some of these arrears relate to debts that have been rolled over in financial institutions, particularly the ADC, of which the Honourable Member for St. Peter was once Chairman, debts that have been rolled over from time immemorial and which this Government as a means of cleaning up the financial system, as a means of protecting the Barbados National Bank and making its portfolio more credible, has decided to extract from the BNB portfolio by clearing off the arrears by this means. This is the kind of thing, Mr. Chairman, for which they are keeping noise, a simple transaction which, as far as I am concerned, should not attract all of this commentary.

I am saying there is no breach of the Financial Rules, that the Government can opt to bring it under separate Heads or bring it under the Contingencies vote on the understanding that it is intra public sector arrears. I am saying the magnitude of the settlement is not material. The point is that it has never been hidden that these institutions owed these arrears. It is known by the public. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East said that he knew that the Transport Board owed this money. The Honourable Members have said that they know the ADC owed this money and therefore it is not any new debt that has accumulated which should excite their attention and for which they are even able to say that the Government is fully responsible.

I want to deal with that Transport Board issue, because I keep making the point that the instruments which were used to clear the $19.1 million owed by the Transport Board to the National Insurance Fund were amounts which were cleared at 30th September, 1992. Therefore, when the Honourable Member for St. Michael North indicated to this House a few weeks or months ago that all that the Transport Board owed at that date in arrears was the sum which was in that Resolution that, except for the severance payment that was due, he was absolutely correct. That was all that was necessary to supplement what at that time the Transport Board owed, because the instruments which we used to clear those arrears had already been issued on September 30, 1992...

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Can I have some order, please?

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON:... and those arrears were cleared. The Honourable Member for St. Peter also knows how these financing arrangements are done, he knows who issues Treasury Bills, he knows who issues Debentures and he should try to explain to some of his own Members so that they would understand. He knows how these matters are brought to book, so all the grand-standing and questions about his looking into the Estimates for something and so on, Mr. Chairman, that is an attempt to draw a red herring across the trail. I am saying that the Honourable Member for St. Peter knows much better and does not have to make it appear in any debate that he does not understand how Government financing is achieved.

I go on to make the point that I have never said in this debate or at any time that Government has changed its system of public accounting. However, for the purpose of the record I indicated that the Fund programme, which is critical - because the Honourable Member for St. Peter said he wants to know whether we are meeting the targets and I am certain he would want to know if this affects the targets - and for the benefit of the House, not for the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, because no matter how you explain to him the relationship with the institutions, he still seems to think, for what reason I do not know, I do not know if it is some kind'of political complex, that somebody is standing around behind us with some stick beating us. Well, I do not need to be beaten into action, Mr. Chairman, on anything. I have my own brain and I am able to defend what I think is reasonable and to proceed on a basis that is sensible.

The International Monetary Fund basis nets out this clearance of intra public sector arrears. They treat it as they would amortisation, so that for their accounting it does not affect the deficit. But it is correct that it affects expenditure in relation to the Accountant General basis of public accounting. That is all I am saying. I am not suggesting that the basis on which we do our public accounting has changed in this country, it is the same. I am saying to you, and this is the third time I have said it, whether an idea comes from Washington or comes from my backyard or from this Chamber or anywhere else, if it is a sensible idea and if the clearance of the intra public sector arrears is desirable, it is something that the Government should pursue. I am saying that nobody over there has yet said in the course of this entire debate that the clearance of the arrears is a bad thing. Yet they make all kinds of hullabaloo about who said what before and try to vindicate their own inflated egos, which I will add, Sir, is nothing I can complain about.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should conclude in two minutes.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Thank you. We are not hiding under the Contingencies vote. From the time I got up and spoke the first time, Mr. Chairman, I indicated how this matter was being done. I did not hide anything, so any accusation - and that accusation comes from the Honourable Member for St. Peter and it upsets me - to this House that I hid information in relation to the Contingencies vote and its use is an unreasonable one.

Aside.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: "Hiding under the Contingencies vote". Those were the exact words he used. 4.40 p.m.

I am saying I made it clear how the contingency vote was being applied, the debts that were being cleared and I made the situation absolutely clear. This is no departure from precepts and practice which is not a departure from the concept of settling arrears. It is being settled by the Government and if Government assumes a debt it is entitled to settle that debt in the way that financing permits it to settle it. Treasury bills and debentures. These are the methods that have been used on this occasion.

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Mr. Chairman, I say that there is absolutely no basis for the kinds of criticism and the kinds of comments about deception and corruption which have issued from Honourable Members on that side. It is most unreasonable and unfair and I will not stand for anybody on that side trying to implicate me or any other Member to the best of my knowledge in incidence of corruption or any other kind of deception. This is something we have to be careful about because they may wish to sully other people's reputation by these kinds of imputations but they won't be sullying mine. I am not going to permit anybody to bully me into accepting any commentary which in any way seeks to align me to any corrupt or deceptive practices when an attempt has been made by the Government as a whole to put this matter in true perspective before the House. That is the unreasonable part of this debate which I deprecate.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, we just heard a presentation from the Member for St. John which was an exercise in bluffing.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member knows (hat phrase is unparliamentary. He has been in here long enough. I think it should be withdrawn.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, this technique of threatening to disclose information and holding the threat of possible disclosure of information over people's heads as a way of trying to cripple debate cannot work. I raise the point precisely because he referred to the whole question of the ADC debt. Under the Barbados Labour Party there was a very clear policy that the ADC lock-up at the Barbados National Bank were to be provided for in each financial year by this House being asked to vote a subvention for the purpose. It is now almost 8 years since this Government has had a subvention...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member. I am sorry.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: I am in the middle of a sentence, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Pardon me. I am making an intervention now.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, you always give c'her Members a chance to finish their sentences when they are in the middle of them.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I do not need any speech from the Honourable Member while I am speaking. The point I am making is that the Honourable Member for St. Peter made a comment which was objected to by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West which I did not hear myself but had clarification on it. Having that clarification I would ask the Honourable Member to withdraw.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I would ask the Honourable Member to withdraw the remark or to rephrase it. [N]

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, Sir...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Part of my problem is when 2 Members are speaking. One Member is on his feet and other Members are talking across the Floor.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I am not going to withdraw the word "bluff.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: If you are not going to withdraw it...

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: It is an ordinary common word that carries no implication of immorality. Foolishness!

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I am saying that...

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: I am not withdrawing it.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Will the Honourable Member for St. Peter take his seat?

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: It seems to me that I will have to do something that I do not want to do because Honourable Members seem not to want to respect the Chair. I am saying that if what has been referred to me is what is an act of bluffing, I am submitting that it has to do with what the Honourable Member said and in fact it means that he is not honest in saying what he said. If that is so, I am asking the Honourable Member to withdraw the remark.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I used the concept of bluff in a very precise sense that the Member was trying to cause people not to debate a matter by issuing a threat of disclosure. It has a very precise sense and if I cannot say that a man is bluffing in that sense and I have to be put out of the House I will have to be put out of the House but I shall not withdraw the word bluff when used in that context.

Hon. B. M. TAUT: Sir, I object to the use of the word *"bluff"*. The Honourable Member said that all the Honourable Member has said was a bluff.

Asides.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: "Bluff says, Sir, to blindfold or hoodwink. Now, Sir, you cannot say that the Acting Minister of Finance was hoodwinking the House. The Honourable Member should withdraw the word.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I will have to be guided. Will the Honourable Member take his seat? I will have to be guided by the explanation given by the Honourable Member and if that explanation is what he means then I cannot fault it. The point I am making is that from the explanation given by the Honourable Member I understand him to say he was not imputing any dishonesty. If that is so then I shall have to allow it.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: I am obliged to you, Sir.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: The Honourable Member4n the face of a ruling by Your Honour which may have been capable of retraction by Your Honour, but nonetheless was a ruling by Your Honour, stated categorically, "I am not withdrawing". I feel, Sir, that that is an affront to the Chair and I think the Honourable Member should apologise to the Chair.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: There is some validity in that because the Honourable Member should have made the same explanation that he made before. However, let the Honourable Member proceed.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I will speak very strongly. The Member for St. John who threatened that he is in possession of the facts must present the facts, particularly in relation to the ADC. I want to know how much of this $22 million of arrears that is now to be cleared occurred between 1986 and now as compared in a period when ADC has been incurring debts of more than $3 million a year. Multiply $3 million by 7, Sir. There was a policy under this Barbados Labour Party when I was Chairman of ADC...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: If the Honourable Member is addressing the Chair...

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I was the Chairman of ADC in 1983 and I have been accused by the Member for St. John of contributing to it, Sir.

• Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I only said the ADC of which he was Chairman incurred the debt. I never said it was when he was Chairman. I wouldn't be surprised if he did, but I did not say so.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, you just saw the bluff of which I was speaking.

In relation to the Transport Board, a supplementary was brought to this House to clear the accumulated debt to National Insurance incurred prior to 1986. I want it to be made very clear. Any arrears accumulated by the Transport Board to the National Insurance that the House is being called upon to vote funds for is post-1986. In relation to the contingency vote, Mr. Chairman, the contingency vote before 1986...

Asides.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: So he cannot threaten to disclose any information in relation to the contingency vote. 4.50 p.m.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Can we have some order.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, the House has to understand the principle we are trying to address in relation to the Contingency Vote. Prior to 1986 each Ministry had its own Contingency Vote and it was a small vote that was intended to allow each individual Ministry to deal with unforeseen circumstances to a very small extent. There was no question of misuse of Contingency Votes prior to 1986 because prior to 1986 there was not one omnibus Contingency Vote. This business about having one Contingency Vote was something introduced by the Democratic Labour Party.

The point we are making on this side is that a contingency vote must not be used as a place by which a Government concentrates a large amount of public expenditure because the whole point about a contingency vote in the past is that we do not have to explain in the Estimates the purposes for a contingency vote in the same way you have to explain how and why you are voting money for Supplies. If the Minister of State was serious about his responsibility, he would note that in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, every other Head of expenditure has explanatory notes setting out how the Government of the country intends to allocate the funds it is asking Parliament to vote. There is no explanation in relation to a contingency vote. Therefore, we are saying that if we now come to use a contingency vote in this kind of extraordinary way, given the fact that there is no need for an explanation for a contingency vote, that you are creating a precedent...

Asides.

Mr.' O. S. ARTHUR: We are saying that you are going to create a precedent. You may not abuse it. We may not abuse it, but why create a bad precedent in the use of a vote like a contingency vote which people do not have to explain? Therefore, on those grounds, Sir, the explanations given by the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs is totally confusing.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Let us have some order. The Honourable Member has 2 minutes to concludS.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, the notion of a contingency vote in our view is a very bad place for Government to try to handle a large expenditure and we are not going to be agreeing with that no matter what the Minister of State says. I am also telling the Minister of State that to the extent the Government of Barbados is bringing to books an expenditure item, it also has to bring to book the financing item that supports that expenditure. He has not, in this debate, indicated how the Government intends to bring to book the financing of the expenditure he is talking about.

The substantive Minister of Finance has had the opportunity in 2 debates previously to tell us the extent of Government's financing and his source of financing for the expenditure. This is additional financing. I am telling the Minister of State that if he wants to get up in this House and grandstand to the extent that there are 2 sides to every transaction, there is the expenditure side and the financing side. If you are telling us that you are bringing about expenditure you also have to tell us about the financing of it. This House has not been given a satisfactory explanation how $54 million in contingency financing that is to take place after Estimates for one year, a Budget for the year to come, is to be financed. That would be a totally unsatisfactory basis upon which this House should take a decision on this order of magnitude of expenditure. We cannot at all agree with it from all those various viewpoints.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Yes, Sir. That is the very point that needs to be underscored, because the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, stood up right at that seat there and told this House in his Budget speech that the Appropriation Account was as follows. This House in the Approved Estimates voted X. This House approved in the Supplementary Estimates additional sums of money. The total expenditure for the financial year was therefore known and none of this transaction was disclosed, although according to the statement of the Honourable Member for St. John, and this is what I call wickedness, the Government already knew that it had, in fact, used this special creating financing mechanism at its disposal to incur this expenditure and that expenditure was not disclosed. Now, with the best will in the world, even if you are in the most charitable mood, we cannot tolerate that kind of what I would call...

Aside.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I will leave the word, Sir, because I am sure that you, Mr. Chairman, know very well that in any kind of common knowledge what that would be described as. Everybody would know. I am not going to describe it. I leave it to the House. That is why this transaction must have a profound effect upon the financial out-turn of the last fiscal year. We in this House are entitled to free and full disclosure where this money to 'finance this is going to come from. Is it going to be an increase in the national debt? That is what I want to know.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Sir. At the beginning of this debate I indicated to this House the source of the funds, treasury notes, treasury bills and debentures. You are looking into that. I was not quoting from that. I was telling you how the Government is proposing to finance it. I am saying therefore that it is not reasonable or true to accuse anybody of wickedness because this chamber was told the source of the financing. If the Honourable Member does not understand Government finance that is his affair. But he is not going to accuse me of wickedness when I gave the Chamber the benefit of all the information on this matter.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Sir, I am still sticking to my point that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, although it might be speaking with 2 mouths, the substantive Minister of Finance told this House in his Financial Statement and Budgetary Presentation, as well as at the time of the Appropriation Bill, what the proposed expenditure was. At that time they well knew that they had incurred additional debt in the form of the issuance of treasury notes to settle these bills which they had committed themselves to the International Monetary Fund to settle and they did not come here and disclose it to this House at that time. What do you call that? They wait until the day before the end of the financial year to come and make this massive disclosure. Those are the bald facts not given by me but given by the Honourable Minister.

Aside.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: You call it creative accounting. Well, call it that. Other people would call it intellectual fraud. Not in the sense that you put your hand in the pocket but you call it intellectual fraud. That is the position. We now know they are treasury bills. 5.00 p.m.

We now know that this House has not been treated with frankness and the public will be able to see whether that is an administration that they have confidence in. We have extracted, like a dentist pulling out a tooth. We had to go through all of this exercise to extract ....

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Let us have some order.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: The Honourable Member says he said from the beginning what the position was. I heard the Honourable Minister of Finance and Prime Minister of this country in his Budget speech say what the outturn of the figures were. If you want to call him a liar why don't you wait until he comes back and call him a liar. Because I also heard the Honourable Member for St. John ...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Will the Honourable Member hold a minute. You are responding supposedly to an aside and putting something into the debate that has not actually transpired. I have warned against that time and time again. I have no intention of calling anybody a liar.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: That is right, Sir. My position is very clear. My position is extremely clear and anybody with any iota of honesty would know that if you are presenting a position today which is radically different from the presentation before, something is wrong. You have suppressed information which is vital and that is the position. ,

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister may wish to wind up or I will put the question.

The question that Head 19 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative the House dividing as follows:-

Ayes: Hon. P. M. Greaves, Hon. B. M. Taitt, Hon. M. A. King, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, Hon. W. O. Franklin,' Hon. E. E. Greaves, Hon. N. K. Simmons, Hon. C. V. Walker, Hon. D. W. Bowen, Hon. W. W. Hall, His Hon. T. C. Estwick -11.

Noes: Mr. H. deB. Forde, Mr. D. A. C. Simmons, Mr. O. S. Arthur, Mr. L. R. Tull, Hon. H. B. St. John, Dr. R. L. Cheltenham, Mr. Del. O. Bradshaw - 7.

Head 25 - Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fishers
k *was called and passed.*

Head 28 - Ministry of Justice and Public Safety was called and passed.

Head 29 - Ministry of the Attorney General was called and passed.

Head 34 - Ministry of Education was called and passed.

Head 36 - Ministry of Health was called and passed.

Head 37 - Ministry of Housing and Lands was called and passed.

Head 38 - Ministry of Community Development and Culture was called and passed.

Head 40 - Ministry of Trade, Industry and Commerce was called and passed.

Head 42 - Ministry of Public Works, Communications and Transportation was called and passed.

Head 50 - Post Office was called and passed.

On the Motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES seconded by Hon. B. M. *TAITT, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to Mr. SPEAKER, the passing of one Resolution in Committee of Supply and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair. '*

On the separate motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES, seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT the Resolution was read a first and second time and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 8 - RESOLUTION TO ABANDON THE ACQUISITION FROM THE ESTATE OF C. A. DOWDING, DECEASED, OF 5 PARCELS OF LAND AT HAGGATT HALL, ST. MICHAEL

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: This is a matter which dates back to 1981. Indeed, Sir, between June 1981 and September 1982 several parcels of land at Haggatt Hall, St. Michael, from the estate of C. A. Dowding, were compulsorily acquired under the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act, Cap. 228, for road improvement, housing development and the provision of headquarters for the Transport Board.

There were a number of surveying errors which showed up, subsequent to the acquisitions and it was discovered that 5 of the parcels acquired for the project had in fact not been utilised and the Government therefore took a decision to abandon the acquisition of these 5 areas of land, The parcels involved measure 1,772.7 square metres, 4,751.8 square metres, 288.5 square metres, 1 039.3 square metres and 889 square metres. 5.10 p.m.

What we are seeking to do this afternoon is to ensure that we go the route of seeking parliamentary approval to abandon the acquisition of these 5 parcels of land totalling 11 741.3 square metres.

Therefore, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that, Sir, and reserve my right to speak.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I am not in possessiori of a copy of the plan. I think that it is only fair that I seek some information because the lands that this Resolution seeks to revert back to the owners lie in my constituency. Now I want to be quite clear. Sometime ago we came to this Chamber and sought a change of use of the abandonment of lands that were acquired for the Transport Board Headquarters. The change of use meant that it would resort to housing. This is why it is so important to have a plan. I am at a loss and I think that this Chamber is at a loss to relate the area of land to the Transport Board. The area of land is significant which comprises 11,000 square feet. This can produce at least 3 house spots. If this area of land is adjacent to the already land that was transferred, then I would make a recommendation that instead of abandoning the land that you keep the land and have it vested in the National Housing Corporation which would provide at least 3 house spots.

As I have said, I am not in possession of the plan. I think that it is very important that, if we are going to make any meaningful input into these matters, it is absolutely necessary to have this. I would hate to know that as the parliamentary representative that I came here and agreed to the abandonment of this land and to discover at a later stage that the land could be utilized, let us say, for housing when I know that there are people who are in search of house spots.

On the other hand too, I would want to know the exact location because I am not so sure whether it is west or east of the ABC Highway or if it is anywhere near Cutting Road. I am aware that all of that land belongs to Dowding. I hope that the Government understands my position. I think that it is very important that we get to know exactly what we are doing because it has significance. If it is for widening road and we abandon it, I would want also to suggest that we review that because the people in that area have been asking to have the land. I am at a loss. I do not know if it is going up Mapp Hill or right across by Wonder Bakery.

I know that the NCC along that road has already landscaped the area. I want the Minister to listen carefully. I want to know if the land is southeast or south of the Haggatt Hall House. I must know this because Government has already embarked on using it. Are you abandoning land that is already being used by Government? If it is going up Cutting Road which is the other area, that land was acquired for housing purposes. It could be north of the existing housing area. If it is west of the existing area, it would be east of the Haggatt Hall House. Since Government has started to put in roads, I want to be quite clear in my mind where this land is located so that I could make a recommendation to the Minister. I think that it is only fair that in a matter such as this that I be given this sort of information to make the necessary input into it.

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the intervention of the Honourable Member. I think that the Addendum to the Resolution and certainly the information which I gave at the outset indicated very clearly that

these 5 parcels of land were never utilized. As I understand it, it is not contiguous to the area of land. You see there were a number of parcels of land which were acquired for road improvement for the Transport Board Headquarters and for other developmental purposes. The area of land which was specifically identified for the Transport Board Headquarters and since the Board was not being put there, then we came to Parliament and got parliamentary approval to transfer that area of land to the National Housing Corporation for the purpose of a housing development. These 5 parcels of land were left over when the road improvement had been done and all of the other things for which the Government needed the land. As a result, since they could not be of any particular use and they were not contiguous to what would be used for developmental purposes, it was decided in the usual tradition of acquisition that these would revert to the original owner. Unfortunately, Sir, I do not see a plan on the file and that is why I am unable to produce a plan for that purpose.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House do now'adjourn until April 27, 1993 at 12 o'clock noon.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that this sitting be now adjourned until Tuesday, April 27, 7993 *at 12:00 noon was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the Sitting accordingly.* 5.20 p.m.

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