
THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1994 – 99

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, November 5, 1996

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.20 a.m. o'clock on Tuesday, November 5, 1996.

PRESENT

His Honour I. A. ROE'IT, B.A., Dip. Ed. (Speaker)
His Honour R. D. MARSHALL, (Deputy Speaker)
Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD, B.A., M.A., (Econ.),

J.P.

Mr. H. deB. FORDE, Q.C., M.A., LL.B.

Mr. B. M. TAITT, B.A. (Hons.), M.P.A., LL.B.
(Hons.)

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.) (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, and Minister for the Civil Service)

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, Q.C., LL.M. (Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs)

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.) (Leader of the Opposition)

Hon. Sir Harold St. JOHN, Q.C., LL.B.

Mr. L. R. TULL, Q.C., M.A.

Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, Q.C., M.A., M.Sc. (Econ.)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tourism and International Transport) (Leader of the House)

Mr. J. O. TUDOR, J.P.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE (Minister of Public Works, Transport and Housing)

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C. (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES, M.B., Ch.B., F.R.C.P. (Edin.)

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of Labour, Community Development and Sports)

Mr. G. A. CLARKE (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Housing)

Mr. J. M. EDGHILL

Mr. F. J. STUART, B.A., LL.M.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER, J.P., B.A., Dip. Ed., B.Sc. (Chairman of Committees)

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tourism and International Transport)

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Minister of Health and the Environment)

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, LL.B. (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture).

Prayers were led by Rev. Canon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, October 29, 1996 which have been circulated be taken as read.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. SPEAKER: I am in receipt of the Accounts and Statements for the month of March prepared by the Accountant General.

PAPERS

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I am commanded to lay the Report of the Public Enterprise Investment Fund for the quarters ending March 31 and June 30, 1996.

ORAL REPLIES TO QUESTIONS

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice that Reply to Parliamentary Question No. 34, asked by the Honourable Member for St. John, is ready.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43, 44 be suspended for this day's Sitting.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business is the order of the day.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 3 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE GUARANTEE FOR REDEMPTION OF A BOND ISSUE BY THE BARBADOS AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT COMPANY LTD.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek the House's support to guarantee another bond issue in favour of the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Ltd. to finance future operations associated with the continued rehabilitation of the Barbados Sugar Industry.

I would like to set this matter in the context of the changing plans for the sugar industry and the changing method of financing the industry over the course of the last 5 years. The House will recall that in 1992 a company, Booker Tate Ltd., was engaged to devise a plan of rehabilitation of the sugar industry which was then confronted with a number of major problems, not the least being the unprofitability of sugar production in the country in general, the fact of a very large debt held on behalf of the industry by the Barbados National Bank and the widespread prevalence of what was then regarded, and properly so, as an archaic and arcane system for management of the industry.

That exercise Sir, led to the development by 1994 of a position that the Barbados Sugar Industry should be rehabilitated under the management of Booker Tate Limited to be eventually a 65 000 tonnes a year industry by the

year 1998 and also a two-factory industry. In furtherance of this, Sir, in June of 1994 the then Cabinet agreed to a financing plan for the rehabilitation of the industry. As I said, Sir, an industry that was intended to be 65 000 tonnes and involving two factories. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that the financing arrangement that was then conceived of was a \$60 million financing plan for the industry of which part was secured by way of a loan from the CDB to meet some of the capital investment requirements of the rehabilitation and the rest was by way of a bond issue raised by City Bank of Trinidad largely on the local market in favour of the industry and to meet its working capital arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the House, therefore, last saw this matter when the legislation to provide for the BAMC's bond issues to be guaranteed by Government was brought to the House. The House last saw this matter in 1995 when we were invited as a Parliament to agree to the guarantee of the repayment of the bond issue itself.

I would want, Sir, in order to put the House in the fullest possession of the facts that explain what we are doing today to say that the 1994 plan for the reconstruction of the industry presumed that the industry's rehabilitation would have led to the industry becoming profitable. Obviously, the House will need an update as to where we are with that. It was also predicated on the assumption that between 1996 and 1998 when the bonds raised by the industry with City Bank fall due for redemption that the Government would have to provide on-budget support to service the interest as well as to amortise the bonds when they fell due.

The programme was also predicated on the assumption that Government transfers would be kept only to amounts required to meet debt service and that the full extent of the on-budget financing required of Government would be limited to that particular provision.
11.30 a.m.

I want to stress therefore, Sir, that we have to understand that there was a plan for the industry intended to bring it back from where it was to 65 000 tonnes, as it had fallen to 50 000 tonnes, in the late 1980's.

The plan was based on a 65 000 tonne industry with 2 factories. Financing for capital was raised for the CDB. Working capital requirements and pre-shipment financing was raised through the facility of a Bond Issue with Citibank, on the understanding that the rehabilitation programme would restore the industry to profitability and until profitability could be realised. It would fall to the responsibility of the State to meet the debt service requirements of the industry, but the State's only transfer to the industry would have been limited to debt service and debt service only.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are here today discussing the need for a further guarantee because between 1994 and now, the plans for the industry have changed, as well as some of the responsibilities falling to Government have also changed. The previous \$60 million plan for the industry, Sir, was one intended to support production of up to 65 000 tonnes.

As you might be aware, Sir, we have made a decision as Government to raise the sugar target from 65 000 tonnes to 75 000 tonnes. That obviously will involve some expenditures having to be incurred on the part of the BAMC to bring lands that would not have been part of the production, if we were speaking about 65 000 tonnes, back into production. That is the first point, Sir.

You will also, Mr. Speaker, recall that one of the far reaching decisions that was reached by this Administration, was the decision not to have a 2-factory industry but a 3-factory industry. As an Administration, we reversed the decision that Bulkeley should have been closed at the end of the 1995 sugar crop. Therefore, there are certain financial implications also ensuing from that.

I should also make the point, Mr. Speaker, that the 1992 to 1994 plan for the industry also conceived that the only transfers required of the industry from the Government would be transfers to meet debt service on the Bonds raised in 1994.

The House would be aware, Sir, that subsequent to 1994, a number of additional subventions have been required by the industry from Government, in part to meet in the first instance the cost to help the independent farmers cover the losses ensuing from the disastrous 1994 drought. We also undertook to bring the sugar production from 65 000 tonnes to 75 000 tonnes to assist the independent growers with subsidies and subventions in the replanting exercise.

It is also a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, that, I think in 1995, the Government faced the additional financial responsibility of having to assist in redeeming the sugar bonds from the 1980s held by the Barbados Sugar Industry Limited that fell due for redemption.

I am saying all of that to say, Sir, that the obligations of the State in relation to the financing of the sugar industry has now gone beyond that of guaranteeing the Bonds Issue on behalf of the industry, has gone beyond that of servicing these Bonds as they fall due, and it has also extended meeting the redemption of Bonds issued in the 1980s for which no appropriate sinking fund provisions were made, and also to assist the independent growers to reach viability. Now, Sir, that provides the context within which this matter before the House should be contemplated.

What is envisaged here, Mr. Speaker, is a financial programme by which the Barbados Agricultural Management Company will raise an amount of \$41.3 million by way of Bond Issues raised in its favour by Citibank of Trinidad to meet its financing needs for the years 1996-1997, 1997-1998 and 1998-1999.

Mr. Speaker, it is intended that this amount of \$41 million will be drawn down in three tranches. The first of \$11.3 million will be drawn on December 1, 1996, \$15 million will be drawn down in June 1997, and an additional \$15 million will be drawn down in June of 1998.

What we are in essence here today providing for, Mr. Speaker, is a financial mechanism by which the needs of the industry over the next 3 years can be met by way of bond financing. I should also, say, Sir, that the option that faces us is, that we either meet the needs of the industry by way of bond financing, as was done initially, or we meet them by way of capital injection by the Government which is the sole shareholder of the BAMC.

The loan financing to meet working capital of an industry is a normal business practice. There was nothing wrong when it was done in the first instance as part of the effort to reactivate the sugar industry, Sir, and there is nothing wrong with it now.

This \$41 million that the Government, therefore, is intending to guarantee is to meet the financial requirement of the BAMC for the next 3 years, and it has to be set in the context of the fact, Sir, that the requirements imposed on the BAMC to raise sugar production from 65 000 tonnes to 75 000 tonnes, in many respects, Sir, has occasioned a part of the financing being requested.

I should also speak more to the point, Sir, that it was intended that the Government should not only meet the interest on the Bonds issued in 1994, but that the Government should meet the repayment of the principal when the bonds fell to be redeemed.

The first issue of bonds fell to be redeemed in June this year, BAMC met them from their own resources by way of bridging finance. What we are doing now is allowing a Bond Issue to replenish the cash resources of the BAMC, and to allow it to meet some urgent requirements arising from the fact of an expanded sugar production.

The House would want, therefore, Sir, to be fully seized of what the monies should be used for. As I said, of the \$41.3 million being raised by bond issue, \$11.3 million is really to finance the activity of 1996-1997, \$11.3 million is to be used in this fashion, Sir. \$1.8 million dollars is to help BAMC to bring back abandoned lands into

production, and private lands into production for the purposes of raising the sugar production level in Barbados. \$2 million will be used for cultivation on ex BADMC lands, \$5.6 million will go directly towards the capital of the company to assist it with its general operations. \$150 000, Sir, will go to independent producers as land cultivation rebates. \$490 000 is also going to be provided, for suck-well cleaning on independent farms, and \$1.1 million to go towards paying a productivity bonus to workers employed as independent farmers on BAMC estates.

Let me repeat that, Sir, that of the \$11.3 million of financing which is due by the industry through this bond issue for this year, \$1.8 million is to go to help to put abandoned lands into the sugar production, \$2 million is to allow for proper cultivation of the ex BADMC lands, \$5.6 million goes to the working capital of the BADMC itself, \$150 000 is for land cultivation of independent estates, \$490 000 is for suck-well cleaning, Sir, and \$1.1 million is for productivity bonuses.

We envision that the financial requirements of the company for the next two financial years, beyond 1996/97, will amount to \$15 million each. The opportunity is now being taken, Mr. Speaker, to raise sufficient fund by the bond issues with a view of making sure that the production programme of the BAMC for the next 2 years can proceed without any great alarm.

Sir, whenever the question of the financing of the sugar industry arises, necessarily, the question is asked, "Is it worth it?"

11.40 a.m.

This House has a responsibility as it seeks to decide on whether to give approval to the request for further guarantees for the sugar industry to take stock as to whether the rehabilitation exercise that is being supported by the raising of these substantial funds, whether that rehabilitation exercise is beginning to show evidence of success.

I remember, Sir, the rehabilitation exercise undertaken under the management of **Booker** Tate was intended to bring back sugar production in Barbados from 50 000 tonnes where it was initially to 65 000 where it was set and now to 75 000 tonnes; so it was intended to expand sugar production. But it was also intended to establish, Sir, that sugar can be grown profitably in this country by a change in the management system and the consolidation of management and by the institution of a number of measures designed to so induce cost savings on estates as to bring the cost of production in Barbados within some reach of the level of the revenue realised from the sale of sugar.

We must always keep that before us, Sir, that we are not necessarily doing this because we want to support the sugar industry but we are doing it because we are of the view that a restructured sugar industry can increase its production and it can also become an industry that is profitable or at least breaks even.

The records now, Sir, are coming in. The record is that last year the Barbados Agricultural Management Company which is, as you know, the company that is managing about 40% of the industry and managing estates that were heavily indebted and which have historically made massive losses... but the Barbados Agricultural Management Company last year virtually broke even and we entered the year with a small loss of \$453 000, but it is important for the House to understand, Sir, that of the loss incurred by the Barbados Agricultural Management Company, over \$400 000 of the \$453 000 was not related to the mismanagement of sugar production but was related to its having to make provision for non-payment by people who owe it for cotton sold. So the House has to understand, Sir, that where sugar production is concerned the BAMC is now virtually succeeding in breaking even and they are really, Sir, where that is concerned, moving towards realisation of the objective.

I do not have the numbers, Sir, but I have every good reason to believe that the independent growers of Barbados made money last year. Last year was, I believe, profitable. The 1996 crop has been a profitable crop for independent producers in the country. The financial outturn realised by the BAMC was a considerable improvement over what was budgeted and it was due in large part, Sir, to strict control of cost and really an increase in revenue arising from sugar sales going to relatively high sterling prices at a favourable exchange rate. We are therefore somewhat sanguine that an expansion of the sugar industry from 65 000 to 75 000 tonnes would allow the BAMC to rationalise its own per unit cost of production even further by spreading its management costs over a larger scale of revenue and therefore by that mechanism, Sir, reducing management costs even further.

The attempt to rehabilitate our sugar industry, Sir, was also intended to realise increases in yields per acre. The attempt to **restructure** the industry by having land reformation and a heavy scheme of planting at its centre was intended to lift cane yields per acre and in fact, Sir, I should report to the House that yields per acre at the BAMC managed lands for the 1996 crop, Sir, were 24 tonnes per acre as compared to 17 tonnes per acre realised in 1995. Therefore the objective of increasing productivity on sugar lands ...

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: Let us proceed, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, the objective of lifting sugar production has been, in many respects, realised.

Now, one critical issue, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the question as to whether this Government was justified in its decision to keep Bulkeley open as distinct from following the bankrupt exercise that was prescribed by the former administration of...

Aside.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I said, Sir, that the Member for St. John is scrapping around, Sir. He is not a happy man. I did not choose his candidate for St. Michael North West and if he is not happy with him he must show it in different ways, Sir. He is too miserable today, Sir, and nobody has troubled him yet at all. What is his problem? He is a very unhappy man. Give the young man a chance to show that he is an expert in losing in strongholds.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in 1995 our Government took a conscious decision to reverse ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Could we have some order, please?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I am waiting for you to get the Leader of the Opposition ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Could we have some order, please? Order, please!

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: He has a problem, Sir. But I am not his problem. My name is not Mr. Mascoll. Mr. Speaker, Sir, in 1995 Government took a decision to reverse a previous DLP decision to close Bulkeley. We were of the view that a 2-factory industry in Barbados, seeking to manage sugar tonnage of 60 000 tonnes with **Portvale** at the centre of the factory scheme in this country was likely to be a disastrous situation for the country. The record now, Sir, is that for the last crop we were put to the test as to whether Barbados can operate with two factories, namely Andrews and Portvale. The facts are, Sir, that in 1996 both Andrews and Bulkeley operated without major problems and completed their crop in accordance with schedules. **Portvale** however, Sir, experienced massive problems and the report is that in terms of overall performance Andrews factory was the best performer with Bulkeley second and **Portvale** a dismal third. If we had followed the Democratic Labour Party decision and closed Bulkeley after the end of the 1995 crop, Barbados would have been in potter in trying to reap a sugar harvest of over 60 000 tonnes because Portvale, even now, is not as efficient a factory as Bulkeley despite the fact that Bulkeley is by far an older operation. I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that this financing to be approved by the House will in some respects allow us to make sure that our decision to keep Bulkeley in operation indefinitely turns out

to be money very well spent and turns out to be a bonus for the sugar industry of this country.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this request to this Parliament to guarantee additional funds to continue to finance the restructuring of the sugar industry coincides with and is associated with a plan of action for the restructuring of the Barbados Agricultural Development Marketing Corporation and the two things must be seen as going hand in hand. The Minister of Agriculture within the course of the day's presentation in Parliament will speak to the restructuring of the BADMC. But the House is to be made aware that of the bond issue that is to be raised, part is to provide the BAMC with \$2 million for it to be able to carry out cultivation on estates which were under the former management of the BADMC but which have been recently transferred to the BAMC. One wonders, Mr. Speaker, why the BADMC's estates were not put under the BAMC to begin with, because the Government had the opportunity in 1994 to set the example by using a publicly owned company to help rationalize production and cost on lands owned by the public. But the BAMC was established with a view to rationalizing cost and production on privately owned estates which were in great debt to the bank and the BADMC has between 1992 and 1996 had to limp on with unprofitable estates whose structures of production have not been rationalized, whereas privately owned estates have benefitted from a system of financing and rehabilitation financed by the State.
11.50 a.m.

I am saying, Sir, to the extent that BAMC exists as a publicly owned institution in the business of rationalizing costs and restructuring the production on estates, that it is all the more reason why estates owned by BADMC which are unprofitable should be put under the management of the BAMC with a view to our being able to reduce cost in management and further reduction in the cost of production on those estates through that transfer.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is a broader matter in all of this which the House needs to be aware of. In 1993 when the BADMC (Barbados Agricultural Development Marketing Corporation) was formed through an amalgamation of BADC as it was then and the BMC as it was then, the future of that corporation was predicated on its ability to raise revenue from its continued importation and sale of foreign sugar in this country. So that we had an institution owned by the State created for the purpose of continuing to import into Barbados other people's sugar and realizing a profit from the sale of that sugar as the basis upon which it underwrites its very existence as a State owned corporation.

Mr. Speaker, obviously if we are on target to make Barbados capable of meeting all of its domestic

sugar requirements from domestic sugar production, a State owned corporation or any corporation which exists to enjoy a monopoly over the importation of other people's sugar ceased to have a rationale for that part of its enterprise by that very fact. So that our setting a sugar target of 75 000 tonnes that will allow us to meet our preferential market requirements and fully satisfy our domestic requirements puts that part of the BADMC that is exercising monopoly rights over the importation of sugar from Costa Rica and elsewhere in jeopardy. I must also add that we can only begin to speak of a profitable sugar industry in this country if the profits realized from the sale of domestic sugar in Barbados accrue not to a state corporation that has nothing to do with the production of sugar, but accrue to the industry itself. I want to stress that point, Sir, that the most lucrative market for the Barbados sugar industry is really not the European market nor the U.S. market. It is the price that the local industry can get for selling sugar locally which is higher than what you can get from selling sugar on any other market. As a result therefore, Sir, if we are speaking of a serious rehabilitation programme that will see the sugar industry restored to profitability, the industry must be able to sell the sugar and realize profits from the sale of sugar to its most profitable market which is the local market. The previous administration however in its wisdom concocted a situation where the profits from the sale of sugar locally, based upon imported sugar, was to be enjoyed not by the industry but by the Barbados Agricultural Development Marketing Corporation. Therefore, once we have set ourselves the appropriate goal of attaining self sufficiency in sugar, the corresponding requirement on our part must be to restructure the Barbados Agricultural Development Marketing Corporation to reduce the extent to which it intends as an institution from importing sugar into this country and selling other people's sugar. The BADMC's restructuring, Mr. Speaker, has to be seen in part in that context.

I should also say, Sir, that when the BADMC was formed arising out of an amalgamation of BADC and the BMC no sensible plan for rationalization was put in place. We then called for a financing plan to be brought to this House to satisfy the House that the BADMC was going to be a self-financing institution as it was intended to be. There was no such plan brought to the House. Rather, Sir, the corporation started with a debt of \$12 million for which no sensible provision was made and then 57 additional people were taken on at the new corporation, many of them for the most dubious of reasons, and contracts were drawn and subsequently revised and improved on behalf of people whose contribution to the output of the BADMC was negligible and perhaps could have even been targeted as negative. The Deputy Leader wants me to give names and, if necessary, in the course of this debate since we are supposed to cough it up, the names will be provided and the time when the contracts were withdrawn will have to be provided for the House to get a

feeling for the extent of the corruption and the inefficiency and the mismanagement that was allowed to obtain at the BADMC during the process of its management by the previous administration. But 57 people were added to the payroll of the corporation that started with a debt of \$12 million; many of them political appointees too, holding consultancies and so on with the full knowledge of the Leader of the Opposition; 57 hard core DLP supporters added to the payroll of a corporation that started with a debt of \$12 million. Then they took 2 corporations with a consolidated debt of \$12 million that could not pay their way and sank them further by adding to the payroll 57 people most of whom had no specific function.

12.00 noon

Then, Mr. Speaker, a year afterwards a privileged few of those employees were substantially improved on the eve of the election campaign. That corporation that started with that serious debt, unable to pay its way, laden with massive over staffing for political reasons, sank further and further under the weight.

We had some strange things being done at the BADMC, with sugar being imported through the Port, shipped to St. Philip for reasons best known to the Honourable Member for St. John, to be shipped back to Bridgetown, adding to the cost. You had sugar brought to the Port, shipped to St. Philip to be warehoused, then shipped back to Bridgetown to be warehoused and then sold, and at each stage some political person from the DLP picking up piece of the change. All of that happened at the BADMC, slackness in every one of the departments.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please. Order, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am being interrupted by the Independent Member for St. Michael South Central, the former Leader of the former NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the BADMC's estates, all unprofitably run for years, have been recently transferred to the BAMC for management and part of these funds that the House is being asked to guarantee is for that purpose. I want to say that this administration will attempt to carry out the restructuring of the BADMC with as much concern for the welfare of the persons to be affected as possible.

It is absolutely clear that a corporation that is wallowing in a debt of \$80 million cannot pay its way, cannot meet its expenses from revenue, cannot be a safe place where people's employment can be guaranteed. Some of those persons who have been working on those estates which will now be transferred to the BAMC will be reabsorbed. There are some who are over the age of 65.

In instances where the BADMC is going to reduce some of its commercial activities, and where those are in the nature of commercial activities, the workers will be given first option of taking over the schemes and running them. One example is the motor tractor cultivation scheme. All other motor tractor cultivation schemes in Barbados operate at a profit, but the BADMC's scheme operates at a loss. We will now have the opportunity to let the workers run it and make a living from running it.

The Hope Dairy has been the only dairy of its size in Barbados that has been operating at a loss. In recent months it seems as if the dairy might be able to break even or make a profit, but there is no reason why the Hope Dairy should be the only dairy of its size that is making a loss, only because it happens to be owned by the Government. That is the point. It is the only dairy of its size which is making a loss and we cannot explain it only by reference to the fact that it happens to be owned by the Government, so the people either have to get their act together, run commercial entities in a commercially viable way or they will have to be restructured. An enterprise that cannot meet its operating expenses from its ordered revenue at some stage will have to make adjustments.

Equally so, the commercial outlets of the BADMC at the Airport need to be substantially improved. We are not proposing to get rid of them but to give them an injection to be able to improve their service and their output with a view to underwriting a greater portion of the corporation's existence in the future. We recognise that in the immediate future the BADMC cannot divest itself of its commercially oriented operations, what we intend to do is to so restructure the corporation as to make those commercially oriented operations more viable, because some of them cannot only break even but can even carry and must earn a profit. There should be no reason why the only shops at the Airport not making a profit are those owned by the BADMC, and we simply have to get this message across that merely because you happen to be owned by the State does not provide a licence for a loss to be incurred at the taxpayers' expense.

There are some development functions the BADMC has performed and should continue to perform, particularly those related to its support for the export marketing thrust for agricultural products, and the intention therefore is to retain a sufficient corps of profitable and viable commercial operations at the BADMC to be able to allow the net proceeds from those commercial operations profitably run to support the developmental activities the corporation must perform on behalf of the farming community.

It will mean that very shortly this House will also have to look at dealing with the debt of the BADMC, and I am also saying that we will deal with it in the context of not just meeting the debt but we will provide the corporation with some wherewithal to have access to

working capital to ensure that its commercial operations can be commercially run, and I must stress this point, Sir. In 1993 when the BADMC was established, the fundamental mistake simply was that if you were going to set up a commercial enterprise and you were short of working capital, it should have been provided with working capital up front to be able to give it a chance of at least being successful. What the then administration did was to set it up, there was no capital injection, there was a massive increase in the payroll by the addition of 57 people, and all they were doing was laying the basis for financial and commercial calamity, which is where it has reached, and that is what we now have to restructure.

I am saying, Sir, that at some point soon, since the BADMC is a Government corporation, we will have to deal with meeting its \$80 million debt, which I think is \$20 million now. That is our responsibility. I am urging the House to do so in the context of a financing plan for the corporation that gives it a chance of success by making provision not just for debt service and debt retirement and consolidation, but also making some provision for working capital to allow the potential of the corporation to be realised. There are still some areas of the corporation that have the potential we must not turn our backs on.

Mr. Speaker, these two matters should go hand in hand. We have taken the decision to relieve the BADMC of its sugar estates that have been unprofitably run and that have, unlike the rest of the industry, been burdened by archaic systems of management.

12.10 p.m.

Those estates have been transferred to the BAMC and part of the proceeds to be realised from the bonds to be raised to enable the BAMC to carry on cultivation at the commercial estates of the BAMC itself.

Aside.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: ...Spencers, Spring Hall and Bath. The Minister can give those details. The point I am making is that what we intend to ensure is that the sugar lands owned by the Government, the BADMC, are not lost to sugar production at a time when we are seeking to raise the production in this country to a point where Barbados can become self-sufficient in sugar again. I regret, Sir, that when the whole restructuring started that the value of having unprofitable sugar lands under the BAMC management was not seized.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that has to be dealt with is the question of the validity of the 75 000 tonnes sugar target. I am of the view, Sir, that if we are going to have sugar growing profitably in Barbados and sugar will not survive in Barbados if it is not grown profitably... People will only invest in the industry if they can realise...

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter is misleading the House. Any allegation which suggests that at the time of restructuring of the sugar industry sector none of the estates operated by the BADC were brought under the operation of the BAMC is entirely misleading. A number of those estates, including River Plantation for example, and I can list many others, were brought under the operation of the BAMC. It is not true and I am not suggesting that all of them were but many were brought under the operations of the BAMC.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The Honourable Member said many were. He was the Minister of Finance of the day who was responsible for the affairs of the BAMC and the BACT. He knows some of the things he did at the BACT that will have to come to this debate and Sir, I am taking no prisoners. He know the things he did but his memory should not be so faulty that he could come to this House and talk about many BADMC estates when this week we have had to restructure the BADMC by putting out the people who are working on estates and transferring them to the BAMC.

Who are the many? The big lie!

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member, if he does not know, he should say so. He doesn't have to get up in that mode. Mr. Speaker, Sir, right now River Plantation is under the operations of the BAMC. I reside on the boundary of River Plantation. There is nobody in St. Philip who does not know it, and there are other plantations, and it is for the Honourable Member to check it. I am not doing your homework for you. If you are incompetent, I am not to solve that problem and I don't intend to right now.

Certain remarks made by the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter were ordered to be expunged from the record by Mr. SPEAKER.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Member for St. John gets up on a point of order to say that many estates owned by the BADMC were before now transferred to the BAMC management. He said "many" and he challenges me to say which those many are. I am saying as a matter of fact that it is only now that many estates are being transferred from the BADMC to the BAMC but he believes that the bigger the lie, the better he is. It is part and parcel of his character.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member has to withdraw those remarks. First of all, the Honourable Member is misleading the House by dishonestly alleging that the plantations which are under the management of the BAMC right now, which he can check independently... He is alleging that I am misleading the House.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are presently plantations which are owned by the BADMC which are under the management operations of the BAMC. It is for the Honourable Member to check. His Minister has gone to solicit information. If they do not know what is happening in the sugar industry, that is not my problem, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I am in Opposition. Do your homework, get the facts, and stop alleging that other people are lying when you as usual are telling lies.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please! Do it orderly, please. Let's proceed.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. John is a bluffer. I have seen him get to the Floor of this House and purport to read from documents things that the document did not have in. That is his style. He is the kind of person who will go on a platform to invite people to come to hear a big lie about a secret deal cut with the International Monetary Fund. That is what the public has come to identify the Member for St. John with.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: We came to this House Sir, having a peaceful debate and the Member for St. John has been grumbling from his seat straight through this debate. He wants me to talk about the Kola Syrup letter that he just produced. That is the kind of man that he is. He wants me to speak about things like electoral fraud that 3 500 people in his count are missing from a list that has not yet been produced. That is the kind of man that he is. No list has yet been produced as required by law for the St. Michael North West constituency but he can find 3 500 people missing from a non-existent list.

Mr. SPEAKER: Can the Honourable Member now get back to the debate, please?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I am setting it in its proper context. It is the kind of intervention that you can expect from the Member for St. John, that he has a history of lie after lie after lie.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member has to withdraw that. River plantation is presently under BAMC management. He cannot deny that. He cannot allege that anybody is lying in here and Mr. Speaker, he has listed a litany of things, most of which are untrue. I never produced photographs of white people in here and when you looked at them they were black and then curse the Speaker for allowing a member of the Opposition to bring the truth on TV cameras while you sat in your seat in silence. That is the kind of person that you are.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay. Please! Honourable Members, please! Let us proceed orderly.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, we were having a very orderly debate in here but the Member for St. John wants me to discuss who were employed in these corporations when he was Minister of Finance and he wants me to say on the Floor of the House that there is a certain political appointee at the BACT who has no qualifications for the post and who only got the post because the Minister of Finance of the day, to whom the BACT was reporting, was his referee. He can talk about people's wives getting consultancies... Blows like peas!

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Sir. I would also want to add this so that the Honourable Member can check it that one of the persons who applied for a job you advertised put you down as a referee as well. I want to see what you are going to do about that. Check Bovell. See if he didn't put down your name as a referee. 12.20 p.m.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I want to say for the records, Sir, he wants to pump up in here today, so we will pump it up for you, son.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please, order please,

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I have not given anybody permission to use my name as any referee for any post. I want to say that anybody who has done so, Sir, cannot get a post in a Ministry or under my Ministry at all.

The Member for St. John cannot get on the Floor of this Parliament ...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, it has to be said for the records.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I am hearing talk from the Member for St. John that there are all these people who are Barbados Labour Party supporters, who are getting these consultancies to work, Sir. I am not hearing him say that at the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust, which was an institution created by him, that a person who did not meet the criteria and who has not yet qualified as an accountant, was appointed to work, with the Minister himself being the referee. We have not heard about this, Sir. That is what he wants me to say in this debate. That is what he wants me to talk about in this debate, Sir.

We were having a peaceful debate. He decided to subject the House to deal with these matters within the context of the development of the industry, but he wants me to talk about all of the corruption at the BADMC and I am not yet ready for that. He wants me to ask him, Sir, to explain why it was that on the very day of General Elections in Barbados, Sir, contracts were being redrawn for people employed at the BAMC. I want to repeat that, Sir. He wants me to get into that kind of talk, the rough and tumble, as to why it was that on the very day of the Elections, contracts were being drawn giving radically new and improved terms to people employed at the BAMC, substantial variations in their contracts.

He wants me to also speak to the issue as to why only a few people at the BADMC had many of their contracts approved.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I am talking about the BAMC, Sir, that he was responsible for. He wants me to talk about these things, Sir. I am not ready yet, because a day is coming when the rough and tumble will start, and I shall be taking no prisoners.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I have never yet in all my experience, Sir, seen a political Leader in a constituency that is a stronghold for his party in such a confused manner. The Member for St. John in his every utterance, is reflecting a lack of confidence. He has come to this House, Sir, to get this House tangled up in contentious issues. We were having a peaceful debate.

I sympathise with him because he knows that his candidate is an expert in throwing away seats in strongholds, his entire political history, his candidate and standard bearer of a party in a stronghold, Sir, and he finds the exact way of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The Honourable Member for St. John is in a fretful mood.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please, order, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The Member for St. Philip South said you have thrown away a stronghold too, the implicit fears of which the DLP camp is going into this by-election campaign ...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: They recognise, Sir, that...

Mr. SPEAKER: Could we proceed with the debate, please?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation, Sir, was a cesspool of corruption under the Democratic Labour Party, a complete cesspool of corruption. You had people, Sir, all supporters of the Democratic Labour Party, given contracts to have chauffeurs and motor cars at their disposal, Sir. The Food Promotion Officer, a former DLP Senator, given a most generous contract at the BADMC and an unusual arrangement that does not even obtain in the case of a Minister, a chauffeur on duty 24 hours a day plus a car. You had secretaries of constituency branches employed by a corporation that was already deep in debt. You had all kinds of wild practices obtaining in the importation of chicken wings to the point where Members of Parliament had to get in. You had selected monopolies created, Mr. Speaker, where in order to get chicken wings in this country you had to know somebody at the BADMC, and show your passport.

These are the bad old days of the BADMC. That is why it is called in this country the "BAD MC." You had a situation, Mr. Speaker, Sir, where corruption was rife. In the arrangement for the sale of onions and in every facet of the BADMC, corruption supervised by the Member for St. John, was rife.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. You cannot accuse anybody in here of corruption. It is against the rules. Those remarks will have to be withdrawn.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Peter, you will have to withdraw those remarks.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, he was part of a Cabinet that presided over gross infelicities at the BADMC, and he himself was speaking with people in relation to transfer tax. That stands as a blot, a complete blot to the functioning of governance in this country.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member cannot accuse me of any infelicities. He has to withdraw that, Mr. Speaker, Sir. It has imputations on the integrity of Members of this Chamber.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I will talk about the Water Authority ties.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please, order, please.

Mr. SPEAKER rose.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please. The Honourable Member for St. Peter and the Honourable Member for St. John, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I was about to make the point, that the BADMC needs could not have been provided for because the then Minister of Finance, the Member for St. John, was then waiving the transfer ~~tax~~ of persons on whose behalf he had started the matter as the persons' attorney. It is public record, Sir. It stands out as one of the most disgraceful conflicts of interest, Sir, ever recorded in the financial history of this country.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, my concern is not with who was the lawyer who finally submitted it to the Member for St. John. My concern is that the Member for St. John, at the time when he as a Minister of Finance, was taking the decision, knew that it was a matter that he had initiated as a lawyer. It was not a routine matter, Sir. It is a very serious matter.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. John were ordered expunged from the record by Mr. SPEAKER.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Under the laws of Barbados, the only person who can grant waivers of taxes in Barbados is a Minister of Finance. There is nobody else who can waive them, and if the Honourable Member does not understand the law, people cannot suffer, simply because in a previous incarnation somebody was their lawyer, or their priest or their mother. 12.30 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter because if a man as a lawyer initiates a case on behalf of a client and he thereafter becomes a Minister, I feel he has a responsibility, Sir, to disassociate himself from that decision. I want to make the point, Sir, my Cabinet knows, I have told them, I have shares in a bank in Barbados and every matter that comes before me pertaining to that bank, Sir, is referred to Cabinet for a decision and I excuse myself from the decision because it would be a serious conflict of interest.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: On a point of elucidation, Sir. Would the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please! Could we have some order, please? Just one minute please. Order, please! Order, please! Let us hear the Honourable Member, please!

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Mr. Speaker, I am asking for **some** further information from the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister, the name of the Company, the amount of shares that he owns and the net profit for last year.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will let that one pass outside the off stump because that is my business, Sir, how many shares I own and so on. I am attacking the principle. You could have a relationship with a bank and you could have relationship as an owner and you could have a vested interest in having initiated a matter on behalf of a client. That is an interest, Sir, a serious interest.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please!.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I have never yet drawn a penny from Mr. **Rayside**, Sir. Never yet. I will say this, Sir, he likes to talk about helping poor black people in Barbados and I want to say again for the record, Sir, that once I am Minister of Finance and there is anything I can do to make sure that businesses like **Rayside** Block Works do not go out of business I will do it. I say that, Sir, without apology to anybody like the Member for St. John.

I want to come back to the point, Sir. It was a terrible conflict of interest that at a time when the revenue was struggling and should have been replenished by the property transfer **tax**, the Member for St. John was waiving the property transfer **tax** of a client against the advice of the public service.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, on a point of order, the Minister of Finance cannot have a client.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please. Your point of order, please.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member cannot make that allegation. I am saying, Mr. Speaker, for the **record** that I was not practising. I never sold any property down St. James like the Honourable Member for St. **Andrew** and had George Walton Payne ...

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John, you have made your point.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not understand what is ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat just one minute. Honourable Members, order please! Honourable Members, unless you want me to suspend ...

Honourable Members I know you have decided that it is not supposed to be dead today but let us do it orderly. You can say what you need to say but let us do it orderly, please. I am begging the Honourable Members to desist from shouting across the Floor. Could you proceed, please?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would let this House know, **Sir**, he said he is in a rough and tumble mood but I do not bluff. You bluff.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, could you proceed?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want him to know that if he is in a rough and tumble mood because of what he faces in a by-election campaign we are going to be even rougher and more tumbling over here and I do not bluff. I am going to produce the evidence of what you have done as a Minister of Finance in this country. I am going to produce the evidence and I do not bluff.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John, please.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John, I am warning you, please, if you do not desist from interrupting the House and shouting across this Floor. Proceed, please!

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear a voice like that of Paula. He looks like Paula and he sounds like Paula. He is just interrupting me all the time, Sir,

Mr. SPEAKER rose.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members we will take a break for 10 minutes.
12.40 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. Honourable Members, I am appealing to you. As you make your points, let us do them with regard for the Standing Orders of this House please. Let us proceed.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am anxious to come on to the extent of Government's subvention to the sugar industry because we must

understand that there are no easy solutions to the financing of the industry. But I really had an obligation to this Parliament to set the need for reform of the industry and the need for the reform of the institutions in the industry, particularly those that are owned by the State, in the context of the infelicities that went before. Unfortunately, Sir, I had not concluded that aspect of my presentation which is rich in history and I feel that I have to come back to it, Sir.

There is no financial logic that could rationalize the establishment of a sugar bond in St. Philip for the purpose of transporting sugar from the Port to St. Philip and back to the Port again. There simply can be no rationalization of an arrangement to rent forklifts for over \$500.00 a day from Franklin and Franklin at the sugar bond in St. Philip when they could have been bought by the corporation. That was part of the infelicity, Sir, and the Member for St. John well knows who are the lawyers who benefitted or even the lawyer who benefitted from all of the legal work surrounding the establishment of the BAMC and the BADMC.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Sir, since the Honourable Member has drawn me into this debate again. The only lawyer I know who received a substantial fee for work which he did was the Honourable Member for Christ Church South who worked for the sugar planters of Barbados when they were trying to restructure the sugar industry and that fee was in excess of \$100 000.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: But the Member knows who worked for the private people, Sir. As Minister of Finance responsible for the establishment of two companies under his Ministry, he does not know conveniently who was the lawyer who worked for the Government. I do not want to call the name of Garth Patterson. I do not want to call any names in here at all. I do not want to call the name of Patterson in here at all today, Sir. But he must know, Sir, who were the lawyers who benefitted amply so from the establishment of the BAMC and the BACT. He must know who they were, Sir. But he knows of the Member for Christ Church South who worked for the sugar planters...

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Sir. The Government's lawyer both at the level of Barbados National Bank and at the level of BACT and the BAMC was Mr. Carol Fields, Q.C., former Crown Solicitor, former magistrate and a man of great distinction in Barbados. His office is at Fields House, Spry Street and he was the lawyer for all of the restructuring of the sugar industry.

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I am saying that we are not going to have this. I will suspend the Sitting for the day.

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: Could you proceed, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, while all of those lucrative contracts were being drawn with the knowledge of the Minister of Finance, they were putting out to pasture people at the Child Care Board, eminently well qualified to work and sent home to suck salt, and that is part of the history.

But, Sir, I want to come to the point of the Government's subvention to the industry. The financing of the rehabilitation of the Sugar Industry in Barbados has not been without...

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: Proceed, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, the financing of the rehabilitation of the Barbados Sugar Industry...

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please. Go ahead.

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John, please let us proceed orderly. Continue.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I have never seen anything like this. I plead for your protection, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay. Order, please. Could we hear the Honourable Member for St. Peter please? Would you proceed please?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, the financing of the rehabilitation of the sugar industry is going to be attended by major cost to Government. In 1993/94...

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: Go ahead. Proceed, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I did not choose Mr. Mascoll. It is not my fault. It is unfair to me. I did not choose Mr. Mascoll. In 1994/95 \$1.8 million was provided to independent growers to assist in the replanting scheme and another \$1 061 000 was provided to help redeem the Barbados Sugar Industries Limited. In addition to that \$2.8 million, Government provided an additional \$6.5 million in 1994/95 to the BAMC to assist it with bond redemption for servicing of the interest on the bond and payment of a bond arrangement fee. So that the

Government's financial support for the restructuring and rehabilitation of the sugar industry for the financial year 1994/95 amounted to some \$9.4 million. In 1995/96, Government made a contribution on the budget of \$3.9 million to the independent growers made up of \$1.8 million to assist independent growers in the planting, \$1.8 million to independent growers to assist them in facing the losses and \$300 000 in the form of a productivity bonus.

In addition, Sir, in 1995/96 Government through its budget provided \$6.9 million to assist the Barbados Sugar Industry Limited in redeeming bonds which had been issued in the 1980's that fell to be redeemed. As a result, Sir, in 1995/96 Government out of its own financial resources in one form or the other provided \$11.2 million to assist in the financial rehabilitation of the sugar industry. In this financial year, we are providing \$1.8 million again to assist independent growers to replant so as to help realize a 75 000 tonne crop. We have provided \$617 000 to help redeem the Barbados Sugar Industry bonds. We have provided \$2.3 million to meet the interest payable on bonds falling due this year and another \$734 000 as a subsidy on sugar.
1.00 p.m.

Our full contribution this year already has amounted to some \$5.5 million. I must stress again, Mr. Speaker, that in the amount before Parliament there is a provision for a productivity bonus to be paid in the amount of \$1.1 million to the workers on independent estates. We are providing funds to carry out a suck-well cleaning programme to assist in the drainage programme for the country, and \$1.8 million is being provided to bring back abandoned land into sugar production.

The point I am coming to is that over the course of the last three years, including this financial year, over \$25 million of Government's financial resources have already been devoted to assisting in the financing of the sugar industry. That \$25 million is in addition to the resources that the industry would have borrowed and would have been put into the purposes as prescribed by the plan. It is against this background that all in the industry must understand and appreciate that a tremendous sacrifice is being made of the people of this country to establish that it is possible to restructure a change in the sugar industry to make it a viable, profitable enterprise.

Twenty five million dollars, Sir, is a lot of money. I am satisfied that the money has been responsibly spent, that there is a viable programme of restructuring carried out by responsible and professional people. We are beginning to see the results of the effort but we must by no means misinterpret or understate the sacrifice and commitment that must be undertaken and sustained to ensure that our sugar industry is restored to a level that would make it a

substantial contributor to employment, foreign exchange and income in this country.

I have brought this matter to Parliament in the belief that the programme of restructuring now embarked upon should be allowed to work itself out. The signs of renewed profitability in the industry would suggest that if we stay with the industry the day will come when the industry will be able not only to meet its operating expenses but also make a serious contribution to the servicing of this debt. It is those initial signs of a more viable industry that reinforces my confidence that what we are doing here today is the right thing, and because it is seen that we are doing the right thing, despite the sacrifice, I beg to move, respectfully, Sir, that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF SITING

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until 2 o'clock this afternoon.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. John.

Before the Honourable Member speaks, let me say a few words relating to this morning's session. I am asking all Honourable Members please to observe the Standing Orders of this House and also to recognise that this House is a House with a history of much dignity and respect for the Chair. I am imploring you, as we continue this afternoon, that you do so recognising that we are all Honourable Members, please.

The Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In keeping with your injunction I hope to respond in a very orderly and systematic way to the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. Peter in here this morning in relation to this Resolution.

Mr. Speaker, the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. Peter was akin, and particularly to Members on this side, to having to sit through

a lecture when you had in fact written the lecture notes, so that as he presented, not his vision, but the Democratic Labour Party's vision for a robust restructured sugar industry in Barbados, the speech came over as a bit otiose, a bit blunt and dull. Because, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it was in fact the Democratic Labour Party which took the bull by the horns in 1992 and ushered in the new era of sugar sector reform which Barbados now enjoys, put in place the majority of reforms, including the design of the financing arrangements for the sector, including the sugar bonds, including the capital financing from CDB, including the way in which the sector would be financed over crop years. All of that formed part of the Democratic Labour Party's reform of the sugar industry.

The overall rehabilitation of the sugar sector is not anything for which this Government, in two years of otiosity, can claim any credit for, even though I must say, Mr. Speaker, it is a Government not reluctant to claim credit even in the face of the fact that the rest of Barbados, including the trade union movement and the private sector, is not chomping at the bit to give them that credit for things which they have in fact not done.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the sugar sector reform began in 1992. That sugar sector reform was my responsibility up to the time I demitted office and therefore the lecture notes which the Honourable Member for St. Peter read are notes prepared by me and by other officials in the Ministry of Finance many years ago and we do not need to be lectured to by the Honourable Member for St. Peter on matters of this sort. In fact, I would say that the criticism of those who believe that the Honourable Member for St. Peter has introduced very few reforms – and again I include among them the leader of the coalition of trade unions in Barbados, I include various individuals in the private sector and I include the people of Barbados as a whole – certainly have never satisfied themselves that this Government has done anything by way of economic reform and engineering to produce the results which the economy is now benefiting from. That criticism is consonant with the Honourable Member's own view of his performance, because as I had to point out recently he was quite gracious as we attended a function at Sam Lord's Castle to honour the Entrepreneur of the Year to point out that the majority of projects...

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, Sir. I made no such statement about a majority of projects and I will be correcting the Honourable Member every time he makes the mistake. I made no such statement at Sam Lord's and I would ask that that particular reference be withdrawn.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I would use the word "many", with which the Honourable Member had difficulty this morning, and I will show why the word "many" gives him problems. I will use "many". Many of

the projects for which people were being singled out on that night were projects which were started by the previous Government, but the Honourable Member said that in his philosophy there is only ever one government of Barbados which constitutes a continuum. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I don't wish to misrepresent him. So I wouldn't say he said so. I would say that everybody at that function would have said that those projects for which people were being singled out were Democratic Labour Party projects, projects conceived of in the period leading up to 1994 and executed after 1994. Westmoreland Golf Course, Julie'N Complex and then you could go to other tiers – companies like Automotive Art, Rent a Tool company, all of those enterprises began under the Democratic Labour Party and came to fruition at the most difficult time in our economic history which gives lie to the suggestion that confidence and investment were at an all time low and to all of the other epithets applied to that period.

2.10 p.m.

So I say that what the public perceives is consonant with the Honourable Member's own understanding and therefore he should not go too far out in trying to claim credit for small reforms and reforms which certainly are not going to energise this economy based on the recent information which the Central Bank Governor has made available to Barbadians at his press conference today. Mr. Speaker, Sir, it will take much more than that to excite the imagination of the people and to have sustainable growth in this country. In due course, Mr. Speaker, we will have a lot more to say about this.

I want to compliment in particular the management team of the sugar industry because for two Estimate Debates and two Budgets, the principal manager of the sugar sector in this country has been bitterly criticised by the Barbados Labour Party Administration because of the level of remuneration which was paid to him. Mr. Speaker, while we are at it, I did a rough calculation. We heard that the sugar industry lost about \$450 000 in 1995 and broke even this year. Let me put it another way, the management operation sustained a loss in 1995 and broke even this year. The Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter quoted a figure of about \$400 000 in making that statement. We did a rough calculation Mr. Speaker, what the sugar industry lost in 1995...

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. At no stage did I refer to a loss followed by a break even. I referred to the fact that BAMC made a loss of \$453 000. I did not speak in terms of breaking even. I tried to explain the loss with reference to the fact that part of the loss was due to the non-payment which is another story for another time.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, for all the hard work that the people at BAMC have done in

bringing the industry to a point where it may break even the Honourable Member for St. Peter diverted that \$400 000 to the Tourism Authority to pay 3 people that \$400 000 to bring the tourism sector to the point where it is now in the red. For the past 3 months, Olympio high flyers have now raked in the \$400 000 to produce a fraction of the results which the managers of the sugar sector, in taking a very complicated sector that did not have the level of public support that the tourism sector has, did not have the level of foreign exchange earnings which the tourism sector has, did not have the level confidence by the private sector operatives...

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The Honourable Member is misleading the House, Sir. The management of the sugar industry is not one man but is made up of a management team paid many millions of dollars to manage the industry. I really believe we must focus this matter but the member for St. John is trying to focus the image of a one-man management team. It is a team of people who earn far more than the management of the Barbados Tourism Authority.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter is talking obviously about the white people that he said I brought here to give the industry to them some years ago. That is who he is now talking about. He has so convoluted himself. I can only describe what the Honourable Member for St. Peter represents politically in Barbados as somebody who has attended a political bush bath and the result is now this political conundrum which I am trying to unravel and the rest of Barbados is trying to unravel.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter just praised the management, but he doesn't want to give the praise to all the management. He wants to segregate it. He wants to praise people whom he was cursing 2 years ago and continue to attack the head manager. It is this kind of convoluted politics that is causing people who have to function with this government to believe that less than good faith is being demonstrated at all levels.

The restructuring of the sugar industry should not be an exercise which should generate this low level of debate in Barbados today. It should not, because it was a lot of hard work against adversity on that side when they were over here which has produced these reforms. To say that you are keeping a factory open or that you are carrying production to 75 000 tonnes from 65 000 tonnes and to herald, in my view, the minor changes as some kind of major engineering and vision for the sugar industry when the previous administration had to take the sugar industry from a stage of decline that it had reached, restore confidence in it, bring in managers and make tough decisions about its operation and bring it to the level of

success which it presently enjoys... The praise and accreditation for that belongs to the Democratic Labour Party and that must be very clear.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, rehabilitation, financing design, the land use scenario contemplated by the new sugar industry arrangements and the rationalisation of the operations of the BADMC, the BACT and the BAMC would all take time.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Democratic Labour Party was only able to see one sugar crop consequent on the reforms. The Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter has been in office for 2 years and has come to this Chamber today to give the impression that the level of corruption which he alleges he came and found operating in these corporations when he came to office continued for 2 years; and many of these corporations only existed for one year under the Democratic Labour Party.

He has continued corruption which he found in an entity which existed for 1 year, allowed it to continue for 2 years, and is now coming to this House trying to give the impression that he has suddenly unearthed corruption, infelicities...

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order, Sir. I ask that words be struck from the record. The Member said that I have "continued corruption". Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have not continued corruption. I don't condone corruption and I give the Member the assurance that if he is conceding that there was corruption for a year under the Democratic Labour Party we will be restructuring the institution...

Sir, I want struck from the records that I continued corruption.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am asked that the word be struck.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: No, no, no. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to quote the Honourable Member for St. Peter as closely as I can. Where the imputation lies would not really be my fault.
2.20 p.m.

The Honourable Member said that when the Democratic Labour Party demitted office, this was the state of affairs, and that he is now trying to come to grips with dealing with that state of affairs. I am saying that if that state of affairs continued for the last 2 years and the Honourable Member is only now trying to come to grips with it, it must mean that that state of affairs had persisted for the last 2 years. Corruption is not something that you cannot bring to a halt immediately.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You alleged that it exists. So, it would be as much an indictment, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and that is why the speech does not make sense. The presentation which we have had in here today does not make sense. Unless the presentation is a criticism of the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, who was Chairman of the BADMC for a very limited period, and who was asked to prepare a financing plan, which financing plan apparently did not exist before, who said that the job was too big for him or small. I do not know which. You can correct me. I do not know which.

Asides.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: On a point of order, Sir, I never said that the job was too big for me. My comments were that... press releases were issued. I never said it was too big nor too small. I had the courage, unlike a lot of Members on that side, to decide that in view of the fact that there was supposed to have been a restructuring, that somebody who was more skilled and more experienced in agriculture should be allowed to undertake that job. That is what my press release said. That is what I have said before and that is what I stand by.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Member, Sir, is misleading the House. I spoke in terms of a number of contracts being drawn on the eve of the Election campaign that bound the Government for 5 years and the Government cannot easily renege. If the Member, Sir, is trying to say that **contracts** drawn in favour of his supporters on the eve of the Election for 5 years, Sir, binding the Government 5 years is **corruptive**, Sir, I **am** glad for the inference he is drawing.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member is only repeating himself. Going around in circles. It is immaterial to me what he said about what happened before 1994, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

The Honourable Member is free to...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please. Let us get through this orderly.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Let us get to the facts, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member for St. Peter came to this House, consistently, during the Estimates and said that he expected for every statutory corporation in Barbados, a financing plan. He gave the NCF a limited vote on the basis that it was to produce a business plan. He gave a whole set of statutory corporations, and he said

that business as usual was at an end. That statutory corporations must function on a business plan.

He gave the Honourable Member for Christ Church East the task, together with his Board, and I **am** not to pronounce on the level of intelligence, qualification or skill of the Board or its Chairman, even though I have a lot of information on which to base that decision now. He gave them a task of coming up with a business plan for the BADMC, and a response that the Honourable Member for St. Peter was met with, was that I **am** not competent to do it. Fine, we accept that.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: On a point of order. Mr. **Speaker**, Sir, I wish to say that the Honourable Member for St. John is misleading, and that any reference to my resignation from the BADMC should not be couched in any language which insinuates that the resignation should have anything to do with the financial plan nor the business plan.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. I also ask that those remarks be **struck** from the records, Sir, because a business plan and a financial plan for the BADMC were in fact prepared for the person. They got a financial plan as a business plan, Sir. The reasons why we are taking decisions now, is because they have had to be submitted appraised, and they are taking decisions now upon the basis of a financing plan and a business plan, and the fact that they had been prepared now, Sir, is testimony that the BADMC was set up without a financing plan and without a business plan. It is precisely the point that I am at pains to make, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The point that I **am** at pains to make is that it took the Honourable Member, the brilliant economist that he is, 2 years before he could announce to this Chamber, as he had just done and he did not do it earlier today, that, finally, there is a financing plan and a business plan for the BADMC.

The only thing that one could describe that as is bureaucratic bungling, monumental incompetence and mismanagement by an Administration, which itself said that it had all of the skills necessary to bring a new business environment to Government.

I heard the Honourable Member for the City on TV last night quoting effusively, both in language and demeanour the words of her leader, when she said that he said that, I thought that it must have been a brilliant pronouncement, "That you have to learn to do old things in a new way, and new things in a new way." I wrote it down so that for future reference I can **try** to understand.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. **MOTTLEY**: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member referred to the NCF and its business plan, Sir. The NCF not only produced its business plan and submitted it, Sir, but it met **all** of its revenue targets for 1995 to 1996. For 1996 to 1997, in the first 6 months of the financial year, it has already surpassed the financial targets for the whole year.

Mr. D. J. H. **THOMPSON**: The loss in 1995 was targeted, even though we were told that about \$200 000 was going to be made from Crop Over and thousands from the East Coast. I am very grateful for this information, Mr. Speaker, Sir. It supports the allegation which the Opposition makes. This is all the evidence that we need about the mismanagement, the incompetence with which this administration had been undertaking its affairs, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Members on that side have nothing to claim as any victory in relation to the operations of any statutory corporation in Barbados. I have already spoken about the Tourist Board, we spoke about the BMC, BAMC and, finally, now we heard the story of the National **Cultural** Foundation. Mr. Speaker, except for the BAMC, it appears that all may be lost in relation to the other statutory corporations which exist and which are presently under the direction and control of the present Cabinet of Barbados.

So this, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I said, is an example, buttressed by all the fact that we need. Mr. Speaker, Sir, having gathered the evidence, chided the Democratic Labour Party, and convicted the Democratic Labour Party in 1994, the Honourable Members on that side are acting now **as** if they have to carry out the balance of our sentence, they are bound by our sentence which they imposed upon us.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter does not understand why it is that the head of the Trade Union **Coalition** and so many others in this country are telling him that he can take credit for nothing, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Now why would they say that? These are people who said they like his management style, they like the brilliance and the aplomb with which he undertakes his duties and, Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the eve of the first test of that ability, like an avalanche, they are able systematically and with evidence, to point out the level to which management of public affairs in this country has sunk in the short period of 2 years.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter went **as** far in his speech **as** to suggest that I was misleading the House when I said that many estates were taken over by the BAMC. Many BADC estates were taken over by the BAMC and are now under active management.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, River plantation, a BADMC estate, under BAMC management since 1993. Dodds, a BADMC estate, now under BAMC operation.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. **THOMPSON**: Owned by the Crown does not matter. It is a question of management. That was the issue. Ownership is not the issue. Just like ownership of the indebted plantations is not the issue.

In relation to the sugar industry in Barbados today, anybody who has a modicum of intelligence and common sense, would recognise that ownership is not the critical issue. What is critical to meeting the targets, is management and control of the sugar industry. The Democratic Labour Party was able to wrest the management and control of the sugar sector out of the hands of those who were incapable of using that land to **fulfill** the requirements of the country.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. **THOMPSON**: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Belle, **which** the Honourable Members on that side laughed at and "boo booed," and said that it would cost too much to bring the Belle back under sugar production, is now under active sugar production. It is a BADC estate, which is under BAMC management.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if that is not many estates, I will like to ask the Honourable Member for St. Peter, I know he has a problem with counting since he said that he created 10 000 jobs a year ago, Mr. Speaker. I see no reason why I should believe anything that he said when it comes to counting. I think the public has their own doubt about his ability to count. But 3 estates, Mr. Speaker, Sir, even 2 would constitute many. If you have 4 estates, right now there could only be about 3 or 4 other BADMC estates which would come under BAMC management, Bath, Spencers... What is the name of the other one? So three out of six are now under BAMC management and the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister did not even know that and he is the Minister responsible for the sugar sector, as far as I know, in this country.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, he challenged me to tell him and now I am telling him he is laughing because he considers it to be a joke. But the Honourable Member for St. Peter has the destiny of this country in his hands and if he can pooh pooh things like that and if he can say that people are lying when they bring facts to this Chamber and time and time again we have had to do that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, his credibility, not ours is on the line. Mr. Speaker, my credibility could not be on the line in relation to how many estates are being managed by BAMC. The Honourable

Member challenged me and I have given him the facts and he is not contrite. Just like the 10 000 jobs allegation. He is not contrite about those things. He believes you can play around with that. The Electoral and Boundaries Commission says that people **are** not on the voting list. Not me. They say they cannot locate 37 thousand people based on their enumeration.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, on a point of order, this arises out of the enumeration exercise, not the voters list. The Member has just said that the Electoral and Boundaries Commission has said that they are not on the voters' list. That is a lie. An official register was published at the end of January as required by law, what comes out of an enumeration exercise, is not a voters list. I am asking that those remarks that cast a very serious doubt on the integrity of the electoral officer must be withdrawn. They must be withdrawn, Sir, because there is an official register of voters in this country published on the 31st of January.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I was travelling a few days ago and I returned to Barbados and put on my television and after the news headlines a gentleman from the Government Information Service said that 35 000 persons whose names were on the voters list could not be located and that the Electoral and Boundaries Commission is going to have to write to all of them and try again to locate them.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can count. I assume the Boundaries Commission can count. The only person who cannot count again is the Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please! Order, please!

The Honourable Member, when you raised this point you were making a point in order to make a point that you were making. I do not want you to proceed along that line. Could you proceed please, with the original point that you were making.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yes, Sir. I will get back to that. The point I was making is that the Honourable Member for St. Peter, even in the face of statistical evidence, in the face of all evidence, once it involves numbers, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter is likely to twist it and is likely to change the interpretation which any reasonable citizen would put on those numbers which are made available to the citizens of this country.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yes, he may not be numerate. That is quite possible. There **are** other economists who are not numerate. There are two kinds of

economists, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and Mr. Wendell McClean always says this. There are those who are numerate and there are those who are not. We will soon have a numerate economist in this Chamber. But right now we do not have a numerate economist as Minister of Finance in this country, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I rise to bring the Member's attention that I have served in this House with the Member for St. Michael South and a former Member for St. John who were trained in economics and if the Member wants to say that those two persons were not numerate economist, because he said we have never had one before, I want that to be part of the record of this Parliament.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Sir, I entered the Chamber not so long ago. I am on a point of order but the Prime Minister is obviously trying to get me into this debate by some means or another. May I say, Sir, that while I have **training** in economics I am a political scientist.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: So, Mr. Speaker, Sir, he cannot even count the economists now. He has difficulty counting even the economists in this Chamber. So, Mr. Speaker, Sir, numeracy is not one of his skills and I think we need to accept that and move on from there to where his skills may lie if he can detect them and I will ask the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, who has been searching valiantly at the University and elsewhere to locate exactly where that body of skills can be identified for the public benefit.

So, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the plans for the industry now are to carry it to 75 000 tonnes and to adopt a 3-factory scenario. The Democratic Labour Party paid all the workers at Bulkeley Factory severance pay.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: **All** the workers who were entitled, who were working with BSIL to the best of my knowledge, information and belief, were paid severance pay. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we had to look for the sum of almost \$5 million to pay those persons who unwittingly had been severed when the arrangements were made to transfer the assets from BSIL to the BACT.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if the Honourable Member for St. Peter and his Government make a decision to keep Bulkeley Factory open and they can finance the **sugar** industry, reach the level of production and do all of the other things that they need to do while keeping it open, I accept that any Government should make a decision to keep Bulkeley Factory open. But I want when the

Honourable Member for St. George South who always talks for the poor man in this country gets up and speaks about the good society and fairness and all of those things, to tell me if he feels comfortable exchanging all of his rhetoric about Bulkeley Factory for the fact that hundreds of workers at the BADMC may be severed shortly. It is immaterial that they are going to be re-employed because when we went to re-employ them the Honourable Member for St. George South was up in Bulkeley yard agitating even though we were going to pay them severance and re-employ them the next day. I would like to know from the Honourable Member for St. George South what materially has changed in Barbados in 1996 such as to make the prospect of hundreds of workers being severed from the BADMC a reality. I have not seen him go into one single plantation yard in this country to get details as to when they would be paid their severance or what the future is for them in the sugar sector. That is the level in my view, Mr. Speaker, Sir, of double dealing which the Barbados Labour Party foisted on the people of this country from 1994 and it is now coming to light in 1996.

Some of the workers may be re-employed at various estates. No guarantee has been given that all of the workers who are going to be severed from BADMC would be re-employed and that is the kind of guarantee which I know the Honourable Member for St. George South would be seeking because he is interested in poor people in rural areas who have families to feed and I hope that he will address that point with the same vigour and vitality with which he has continued to address his concerns over Bulkeley Factory.

We have no problem with the continued operation of Bulkeley Factory. The financing plan as we conceived it did not include it but if somebody else comes along and can design the future of the sugar industry such as to continue the operation of Bulkeley factory and it is feasible then we would accept that they have been able to achieve something, Mr. Speaker, Sir. But that is not any major reform. That is not what is going to push sugar production to 75 000 tonnes. That is not what is going to signal the future of the sugar industry. Keeping Bulkeley factory open is not going to be a decisive decision in relation to the sugar industry as a whole. The fact that the other factories have problems may have been as a result of the level of maintenance or some other factors which would explain why they did not come up to standard during the sugar crop. In addition to that to keep Bulkeley factory open meant that they would have been substantial capital injections, or there will be, to keep that factory. Even when that factory was not under the BAMC, keeping Bulkeley factory open required substantial capital investment, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

We have a lot more to say on sugar industry only because the Honourable Member for St. Peter raised it and seems to think that he has wrought some major

achievement. The Honourable Member was Chairman of the BADC as it then was for many years.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Expert in growing bush. That is right. That is what was said of him at the end of his tenure and there is nothing wrong because I say if you prepare that bush and then have a bush bath with it after and can convolute your own principles so that what the Democratic Labour Party was saying you can now say with impunity, but when you were on this side you were saying the opposite, it is in keeping, Mr. Speaker, Sir, with the kind of leadership which we presently enjoy in Barbados.

Subventions. A subvention for the 1994 drought was a big issue. Any Government which was committed to the future of the sugar industry would have given a subvention for the 1994 drought. That is not a chest thumping achievement. A subvention for the independent growers. There was always a conception in the design of the new sugar industry under the Democratic Labour Party that the independent growers would benefit from various kinds of relief. That is nothing new and it is not a chest thumping achievement; it is part of the natural design of the sugar sector which the Democratic Labour Party engineered in 1993. There is no doubt about that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and we only saw one sugar crop thereafter. This Government has seen two sugar crops since that time and the Honourable Member for St. Peter acts as if he only just came to office and just realised that these were issues which needed his attention. Redeeming the National Bank Bond, Mr. Speaker, Sir... If the National Bank is owned by the Government of Barbados there would have come a time, in any event when the Government would have redeemed the bonds and would have to make up the shortfall in relation to the interest rates which were paid on the bond which BNB held. It was a judgement call by the Minister of Finance based on what his financing in a given fiscal year could accommodate and the Honourable Member chose to do it early and he came to the House with a Resolution for money to be provided to account for the difference between the amount paid on the sugar bonds which BNB held...

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: That would not have broken any bank. You cannot break the BNB just like how you cannot break the BDB. The BDB was insolvent for years and you said so. You never said it was broke.
2.45 p.m

So to say that you would break the bank, Mr. Speaker, is a nonsensical remark for anybody who is trained in public finance or private finance or both, or is numerate would say to a Chamber like this. It is

a judgment call. If the bank can carry that deficiency for some time and it is a national bank which was on the verge of being privatized and for which the entire portfolio at some point would have to be cleaned up, it is a question of just shifting money around. Mr. Speaker, that also points to the nonsensical conclusion which one could reach from the statement by the Prime Minister that the best price for sugar is the domestic market. I am not sure how to read that statement. Should we produce sugar only for the domestic market? What is the sense of that statement? We all know that. The reason why the best price is here is because built into the price which the consumer pays here are aspects of the sugar industry's operations. There is a tax which the Democratic Labour Party put on imported sugar which goes into the redemption of sugar bonds and in relation to the price of sugar on the domestic market in Barbados there are elements of financing that any sensible economist who could trace back into the operations of the sugar industry as a whole and which provides extra subsidy for the sugar sector. I do not understand.

It is just shifting money from one place to another and treating it as a big achievement. That is what the Honourable Member for St. Peter does. He gives you the impression that because he filled a hole which another Government left and is shifting money from one Government department to another that he is making some big achievement. When he shifted some money from Central Government into the BNB, that is some major achievement because the bank would have collapsed or was on the verge of collapsing without those funds. I have to dismiss those kinds of things, Mr. Speaker, for what they are because they are not the kinds of statements the Honourable Member for Christ Church South would make. He has a better understanding of these things. But he wants to get up and beat his chest for these achievements and make the country think that you are involved in major reform and major engineering against a background where a guarantee cannot be given to this Chamber that all 300 workers from the BADMC in the sugar industry who are going to be laid off will be re-employed. But we can hear all kinds of other minuscule achievements listed by the Honourable Member for St. Peter as if he is involved in financial and structural engineering in the sugar industry. Mr. Speaker, Sir, he opposed many of the reforms which he is now praising in this Chamber today.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I heard the Honourable Member for St. John say that 300 people will be sent home from BADMC. That figure is not a correct figure.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I was waiting for that to sink in, Mr. Speaker. What we have in Barbados today is Government by misinformation and Government by lack of

information. Anytime that it can fall from the mouth of an Honourable Member of this Chamber and he can get up when somebody has said that "X" Number of people based on reports in the newspaper are being laid off and the Minister gets up and say that is not true but does not have the courtesy to tell this Chamber what the accurate information is, it must tell you the level to which public debate in Barbados has sunk.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I feel sorry not for the Honourable Member for St. Peter but for those directing heads in the Barbados Labour Party who are trying to unravel the forces which hold this administration together. Competence is not one of them. I know that and I suppose, Mr. Speaker, that we will have ourselves to get out and carry on an investigation to find out what it is that could prompt the level of indifference from this administration. The Minister did not get up and give an assurance to the workers. He has not gotten up from his seat to tell the workers to have no fear, that your families are not going to be without bread next week – have no fear. You are not going to face the prospect of a lay-off. The Honourable Member got up and said that it was not 300 but he may not be numerate enough to know how many it was. So we have another numeracy problem in the Press and with Honourable Members on that side.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reform of the BADMC could not have been a one-year exercise and the Honourable Member for St. Peter said that he called for a financing plan. We called for the micro-economic plan which the Honourable Member said was a rolling one. I can very well reply and say that that financial plan was a rolling plan.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It is his plan that rolled not mine. Mr. Speaker, Sir, there was always a financial plan. There was a design for the restructuring. The design was carried out with the assistance then of the international institutions which were working with Barbados at the time. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter may not understand what the plan was but there were many facets of it and the Democratic Labour Party Government set about in one year since the restructuring to undertake many of those reforms. I will not say, Sir, that I was happy with the financial arrangements of the BADMC. But there was no Minister of Finance ever who could have been happy with the financial arrangements which were obtained at those statutory corporations. We are not going to dispute that and the Honourable Member for St. Peter does not have to make it appear that he has suddenly come like a wizard and has been able to solve all of those financing problems simply because somebody has presented him with a business plan and a financing plan. In our time,

Mr. Speaker, if we tried to sever those 300 workers while a Prices and Incomes Protocol was in place, the unions would have been **licking** down the doors at Government Headquarters telling us that they want to put wage restraint on hold. They did it when we tried to increase the housing rents, but the Honourable Member is doing a good job today because he already launched a bitter broadside on a constituent of St. Michael North-West. He may not have known what he was doing but it will have its ripple effect. A very bitter attack was launched on the qualifications of somebody who lives in the St. Michael North-West constituency and it is a pity that the Honourable Member is so narrow and unfocused in his outlook that we could not get to the level of debate which would have explained the future of the sugar industry in Barbados in the best possible light.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, many of those reforms would have taken place over a longer period of time and one has to understand, as I believe the Honourable Member for St. James North should by now, that with an arrangement in which the BADMC is under the Ministry of Agriculture and the sugar companies are under the Ministry of Finance that there is bound to be substantial tension in trying to get many of those technocrats to agree on the way forward for the institution. That is not new. I cannot think there was ever a time that it would have been more heightened than now **when** it was in fact the Ministry of Finance which had to take the sugar industry and design the reforms for the sugar industry in 1993.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter said that he never saw our financial plan. Well, we have not seen his financial plan either. So what kind of empty criticism is that? Has the Honourable Member for St. Peter brought a financing plan in here for the BADMC? The Honourable Member said that he called for one in 1994 and did not get it. I **am** calling for the financing plan for **the** BADMC. Just like we were to get the report before the VAT legislation was introduced and a whole set of other things, Mr. Speaker, I **am** waiting on that financing plan or maybe there is a consultancy which has to be undertaken to draft that up and which will cost the taxpayers of this country some exorbitant sum of money and which the Honourable Member and his Cabinet will hand pick.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am not talking about that now. You can talk about that and it took you all 2 years to introduce it. After finding 18 months of work, you took another 2 years to introduce it. So you should be the last people to **talk** about how much it cost to introduce a VAT. Two years of dithering and two years of dithering in relation to the BADMC have produced precisely the

problem which we presently have today. The persons who are going to be making the greatest sacrifice are the workers at the BADMC estates and the workers in the Corporation as a whole. At the end of the day, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East was right. I know that he was not going to send home no 300 people from that statutory corporation. He made that clear. They had to send him home **first**. He was not going to do that. So, Mr. Speaker, we hear all **kinds** of explanations about courage and competence and so on. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East has his head screwed on properly and he therefore avoided the problem which would ensue from having to undertake those difficult **kinds** of decisions.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter waxed warm and apparently he was carried on the radio stations about the storage of sugar in St. **Philip** and so on and so forth.
2.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter sometimes amazes me, the ease with which he trots out these very trite, uninformed statements which at the end of the day mean nothing unless you look at them in their historical context. Until the Government took the storage of sugar under its own belt, the private sector was involved in the storage of imported sugar. I want the Honourable Member for St. Peter to go and check and see what the interlocking companies, owned by large conglomerates in this country which had shares in the sugar industry, used to charge for the storage of sugar. That is what I want the Honourable Member to check. You see, it is a problem if it is Government and some poor Barbadians who now have the opportunity to be involved in that exercise, but when that exercise was being undertaken by the large conglomerates in this country...

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You go and check it out. You see, you are too quick to attack small people in this country and then when you go and check the record you will see the truth. The only time **corruption** is ever alleged in Barbados is when black people are being involved in some **enterprise**. But when that sugar industry contract for the storage of the sugar and for all of the interlocking things, like the purchasing of fertiliser, and when you look at all the **mark-ups** and who owns what in the **sugar** industry, when you check the mark-ups on the fertiliser and who had imported them, when you look at who provided the insurance in the sugar sector, when you look at the commissions, when you look at the fees for storage and all of those **things**, see where that money was going to until 1992. **Once** again, nobody said anything. Nobody alleged corruption, and the Democratic Labour Party changed those arrangements, **as** we did several others in this

country, and we will change them again. I make that point to you, Sir, on a solemn vow...

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is making a broad statement without calling the name. I speak subject to correction by the Member, but as far as I recall, one of the major companies involved was Plantations Limited, owned by CLICO.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, all of that is irrelevant. I am a shareholder of neither company. It is not Plantations, but I leave the Honourable Member for St. Peter, if he is interested, but the Honourable Member wants that information to walk about and call people's names, because he is a past master at that level of politics.

Mr. SPEAKER: All right, let us keep it...

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am not giving anybody's name. I did not ask Your Honour's permission to give anybody's name, but the Honourable Member called names in here and he called the name of a partnership in Wildey which does not even own forklifts. He called the name Franklin & Franklin. Franklin & Franklin neither owned nor were paid for forklifts.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Well, if you have that evidence bring it in here. You may be mixing up the wrong thing, but that is your problem. You should check behind, check carefully. I am saying that it is a dastardly act for anybody, without the benefit of those facts, to seek to drag the names of people through the mud simply because they are black professionals in this country. The Honourable Member did not even have the courage when he was Chairman of the BADC, he did not have the courage when he was Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, and he does not have the courage now to face what was happening in 1992, to unravel it and to present to the people of Barbados the information about what his Government consecutively and successively supported as the sugar industry in Barbados, a lot of interlocking relationships involved in activities which under scrutiny by sensible persons would have brought the greatest opprobrium on their heads, but we had to walk skilfully in wresting the sugar industry from their hands.

Mr. Speaker, what hurts me is this, that the assets of BSIL, in which the Government of Barbados is a shareholder, and a major shareholder at that, are being sold without proper scrutiny. I will go as far as to say I have asked, and I have a Question on the Order Paper, which the Honourable Member for St. Peter will not answer.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Member said that the assets of BSIL are being sold without proper scrutiny. As far as I am aware, Sir, only one factory owned by the BSIL was sold by the BSIL, and it has been sold on the basis of a public tender, advertised for sale, people bid to purchase it and it was sold to the highest bidder. I do not know of any greater scrutiny than the scrutiny of public advertisement and sold to the highest bidder. But the Government of Barbados does not own the BSIL, the assets of the BSIL have not yet been transferred to the BACT because of complications with a lease the Member for St. John must know about.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, two things. The Government of Barbados has substantial shares in BSIL.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: That is not in doubt. What foolishness am I hearing, that the Government does not own BSIL? The Government of Barbados is a major shareholder in BSIL. That is a well known fact, and the Honourable Member said the Government does not own anything in BSIL. BSIL has been selling more than plantations, BSIL has been selling the assets, some of the old iron, scrap iron and other things, for the longest time. What foolishness am I hearing in here today, Mr. Speaker? That the only thing they have sold is a factory. BSIL has been advertising for the sale of assets over the past two years, but I want to make this point, Mr. Speaker, that what the Honourable Member for St. Peter would not tell you is that the person who bought the plantation is the Chairman of the new Barbados Agricultural Management Company. The BAMC is owned by Government and I am saying if they want arm's length dealing, no Chairman of the sugar company, which is a successor to BSIL...

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: BAMC and BADC are the successors to BSIL...

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The BAMC is not a successor to the BSIL, the BAMC does not own any assets that formerly belonged to the BSIL either. BSIL's assets, the factories, have not yet been transferred to the BAMC or to the BACT and it is therefore wrong-headed of the Member for St. John to come to impute mischief on the part of a person in BAMC, because the relationship was a purely arm's length relationship, BSIL functioning as an entity unto itself, advertised for the sale of a factory, somebody not related to BSIL bid for it and was the highest bidder. The factories are not vested in the BACT nor the BAMC and it is

because of the complication of the lease that the Member for St. John was party to, making it almost impossible for us to get hold of the assets of the BSIL. He is speaking with forked tongue this afternoon.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government of Barbados owns a large number of shares in the BSIL; point one. I am going to put the scenario to you, Sir, not to people who are trying to hide the facts. The Government of Barbados owns a substantial number of shares in BSIL. When BSIL sells shares, sells assets, that is a fact that must be relevant to the shareholders, and the Government of Barbados is one of the shareholders. Some of the assets of BSIL are under the management of the Government's company, a wholly owned company of the Government of Barbados known as the Barbados Agricultural Management Company. Who do you think owns Bulkeley Factory? Who do you think owns Portvale? Who do you think owns Andrews Factory? The Chairman of the Government company which is managing those assets is the same person who bid for and purchased Foursquare Factory in Barbados.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Chairman of the Barbados Agricultural Management Company is not involved in the management of any assets owned by the Government. The Barbados Agricultural Management Company leases land to farm. If he was the Chairman of the BACT in which the assets are vested, it would have to be a different issue. The BAMC leases. It is simply a company that leases land to farming. The BACT, as the Member should know, is a company in which property is vested. What foolishness is he talking! Nonsense! A criminal mind.

3.05 p.m.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I want to go on now. The BACT and the BAMC are sister companies. They have the same office, and if the Honourable Member for St. Peter can tell me that a man who chairs a company which is managing the sugar industry including assets of BSIL in which Government has shares, whether by lease or management contract, if there can be no interlocking relationship there, Mr. Speaker, Sir, well, there cannot be an interlocking relationship anywhere.

I had to ask a parliamentary question and if the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter was so quick to answer he would not rush to send for the BACT people here some months ago when I asked the parliamentary question. I had to ask a parliamentary question:

"Will the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs state whether a decision has been taken to sell Foursquare Sugar Factory?"

I am saying BSIL is a shareholder. The Government is a shareholder of BSIL and when BSIL sells it, the Government of Barbados has to be imputed to know that it is being sold. If you want arm's length dealings let us have arm's length dealings

The second part of that question:

"If such a sale has been agreed, will the Minister state whether tenders were invited and received and which tender, if any, has been accepted?"

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Democratic Labour Party is going to have to say a lot more about that in due course. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am charging, just as the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter has charged today, if the Rt. Honourable Member feels that for rental of forklifts or a forklift could be an issue, when a man takes over a whole factory before he pays the deposit on it and then pays the deposit after I ask a parliamentary question and then cannot even complete the sale but is about to open it up, there is no black businessman or no black Barbadian who could get a sugar factory in Barbados under those conditions. He has all the knowledge he needs. He was a chairman of a sugar company and he now owns an obsolete sugar factory and he is a big merchant and a supporter and financier of the Barbados Labour Party.

You are walking around in here talking about corruption? You have to look in the mirror when you get home.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please! Please! Don't let us go down that line.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I refute those baseless, untruthful allegations which anybody attempts to make about corruption in relation to the BACT, the BAMC or the BADMC, if any such allegations are being made. I can say that when the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter is telling us more rest assured that not only will we on this side be telling more but we will be telling Barbados how we are going to extricate them from those economic arrangements which are doing so much to stifle the ambitions and the aspirations of the average citizen in this country.

We are not just going to trot out allegations of corruption. When we trot out those allegations we are going to back up our statements by pointing a way forward in this country so that the masses of the people of Barbados have a better opportunity to be involved in the economic arrangements.

The Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter has not even told us if it is going to be feasible at some

point in the history of Barbados if the sugar industry is going to be successful for persons to own shares and be major participants in the ownership of the sugar sector in Barbados. A whole speech was delivered in here by the Prime Minister who says that he is going to deliver economic democracy – because he says he is going to do that too – and not a single word has been uttered by him about whether there is going to be any larger participation in an industry which is so heavily subsidised and which takes so much out of the pockets of the taxpayers in this country. Is there going to be a future for your children, my children and the children of other members in this House to be owners eventually of the sugar sector of this country? That is a question the Rt. Honourable Member should be answering, not foolishness about keeping Bulkeley Factory open and pushing sugar production to 75 000 tonnes. Those are technocratic details, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

The Rt. Honourable Member needs to have a vision for Barbados and a vision for Barbados which shows that he is fighting on behalf of the majority of people in this country for them to have an opportunity to be involved. Their grandparents would have been involved in the sugar fields. Their grandparents, including my grandfather who was a pan boiler at Bulkeley Factory most of his life, all have part and a stake in the sugar industry in this country. The independent farmers and their children had a stake or we assume their children should have a stake in the future of the sugar industry because the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter has nothing to say about that.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, he is not empowering any of those people in Barbados. The Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter knows who it is that he wants to empower.

Let us not talk foolishness about a warehouse and a forklift, let us get to the bigger issues.

Perhaps I should end where I began, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter wants to take credit...

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, could we hear the Honourable Member.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It doesn't bother me if they are listening to me or not, Mr. Speaker, Sir. They will hear me over the next few weeks until they get a headache. They will get a headache when I finish with them.

This, Sir, is a journal. I am quoting, not from a newspaper or a magazine. I am quoting from the Offshore Finance Annual, 1996. This is an interesting document. It starts with a picture of the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter teeing off at the new world standard Royal Westmoreland Golf Course with an abundance of officials surrounding him.

To show you the extent to which this Government has embarked upon a public relations smoke-screen, I want to read a few paragraphs of it because it is relevant to economic engineering in this country. I will make it a document. It has a lot of lies in it and I would like people to read them and digest them and understand what is going on.

The first point, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I am not talking about the part which highlights the Rt. Honourable Member for Christ Church South. They have you in here too. A very nice picture. I must say it makes you look younger than you really are. Yours is An Ever Changing World and Senator Goddard's is the Long-term. He is the man for the long-term. Not you, or the rest of you all. The Senator is the one who is for the long-term. He is looking towards the long-term. The non-elected member of Cabinet is the man planning the long-term.

Mr. SPEAKER: Proceed, please.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Foolishness that I have to accept in a country that my children must grow up in. Time will come.

Listen to the opening. It is not a newspaper. It is a journal. Offshore Finance Annual 1996.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just proceed, please.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: "Owen Arthur is not a man who is afraid of taking on a challenge. Just one year into tenure as Prime Minister of Barbados..."

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South would be interested in this because I know we have a lot of correcting of the record to do. Listen to what they say.

"...he has already terminated a long-standing agreement with the International Monetary Fund."

There was no agreement in place when the Rt. Honourable Member came to office in 1994. That had come to an end months before but they blow him up as a hero who rushed gallantly into the Ministry of Finance...

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I came to office finding an undertaking that Barbados should have an enhanced surveillance programme with the International Monetary Fund, that they would be allowed to run this economy even though they did not have any funds. I came to office, Sir, finding an official of the International Monetary Fund stationed downstairs. The only country in the world which did not have a programme with the IMF but an IMF man downstairs telling the Minister of

Finance what to do and I stopped that. If they refer to it, Sir, I thank them for their honesty.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order please! Your reference. I believe you will try to show some sort of relevance.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am bringing it into the productive sectors. They said he terminated a long-standing agreement. The only long standing agreement would either have to be the one in 1981 or the one in 1991 both of which had come to an end. But he rode in like General Custer, guns blazing and terminated an agreement. What foolishness!

Mr. Speaker, Sir, somebody handed this to me on an airplane in fits of laughter. Listen to it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Were you supposed to throw it through the window?

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I should have because a quick death to this kind of foolishness would have been the best thing.

They say:

"...transformed the laws governing offshore finance."

All he did was bring laws which we had in the bill stage and ready to bring to the House of Assembly.

"...inward investment which began a **tranche** of economic reforms which could..." That's the right word to use.

3.15 p.m.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the funniest part is on Page 80.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: This is the point about the relevance now?

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yes. Economic engineering, including the sugar sector.

"The first charge **Arthur** made was to terminate the IMF Agreement. According to the Government figures, investor confidence grew as soon as the Agreement was scrapped."

Mr. Speaker, Sir, according to figures, investor confidence in the tourism sector reached its highest level in tourism in 1994 when by the time the Democratic Labour Party had left office the sugar reform was already in place.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is an interesting thing. It then goes on to say that the Honourable Member's first move was to set up a Government Department dedicated to the development of the financial services industry, that is the department for international business, the new department.

I was at Ilaro Court in 1992, December, in the presence of the former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Mr. Tom Poley, when the Honourable Member for St. Michael South launched the unit, which is now doing so much, and has done so much to revolutionise the offshore sector in Barbados. It is these constant false claims, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and we have had a litany of them today in relation to the sugar industry.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this article is not worth the paper it is written on. It goes on, the last point which you will find funny, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and the Honourable Member for St. Thomas will like this:

"A long-time supporter of the Barbados Labour Party, Arthur was first elected to Parliament in 1984 as part of a three-man Opposition." He was elected to Opposition in a three-man Opposition! Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is hilarious.

This is the kind of publication, Mr. Speaker, Sir, endorsed by the Government of Barbados. It has an endorsement in the centre pages written by the Honourable Member for St. Peter, Mr. Speaker, Sir, excelling all of the virtues of these reforms which he has undertaken on behalf of the people.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The Member must not mislead the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: On what do you rise?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I rise on a point of order, Sir. The Member, Sir, is speaking in terms of an endorsement by the Government in a magazine that I have not seen, and linking that to an article, which he claims, Sir, to be not truthful, Sir. I do not know the source of the article. I do not know the authorship of the article, Sir. The Government of Barbados has commissioned no such article, Sir. I do not know the author of it and I really want to put that in the records because I think, Sir, that it is an extraordinarily childishness from the Member of St. John against the Government, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: You have made your point.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South will say that is "puffiness" about this administration taking credit for things they have not done. Not being able to get any

major reforms off the ground but at the same time believing that they have a record to defend.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we do not bother about that. We are happy, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to be able to show, to use the words on that side, the decisive difference between an administration which took the bull by the horn, restructured the sugar industry, undertook other reforms. We did not have to pay any wise men \$400 000 to throw the tourism sector industry into decline. None of those things we had to do, Mr. Speaker, Sir. A proud record of reform, by the Democratic Labour Party as distinct from the monumental incompetence, the mismanagement and the absolute indifference which this administration is demonstrating to the people of Barbados for the two short years that it has been in office.

Taking all kinds of small, frivolous achievements, Mr. Speaker, Sir, which other Prime Ministers will dismiss as part of the ongoing process. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South, when he was in office, he was never a big PR man. When he achieved something, he felt good about it and moved on. All of a sudden you have these people occupying...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: ...As rare as it was, but whenever it happened he moved on.

Now, Sir, they are blowing all kinds of minor achievements, including non achievements. There is none in the sugar industry of which the Honourable Member can boast. Sugar has not yet reached 75 000 tonnes, so that is a nonsensical boast, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and the sugar industry has been able to continue with the reform which the Democratic Labour Party undertook in the face of much opposition and criticism on that side, sometimes constructive but most of the time destructive.

So, at the end of the day Mr. Speaker, Sir, we on this side have to express our concern about that kind of politics in Barbados. Within the Honourable Member's presentation this morning, was the presentation of a man who was in doubt about his own achievements.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the only advice that I have for the Honourable Member for St. Peter, is that as much doubt as he may be in, as much doubt as the Honourable Members on that side may be in, the people in Barbados are in absolute no doubt about who should take credit for these major economic reforms which Barbados has undertaken and the success which is being felt throughout this country now.

Thank you very much.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make a brief intervention in this debate, and make a few comments on the position of the National Democratic Party.

Asides.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Now, Sir, you know a week ago on Thursday, in a lawyer's office in this country, a transaction relating to the purchased of a small business was completed for \$2.5 million paid for in cash by someone who was supposed to have owned an estate and has gone into bankruptcy. Listen to me carefully.

A man with a sugar estate that was supposed to be bankrupt, and he was supposed to be bankrupt, walked into the office of a lawyer in this country a week ago, I was present there, and in cash, I am **talking** about cash, purchase a business of \$2.5 million. That has confirmed much that I have said in this country over the years relating to public involvement in the sugar industry in Barbados.

I also reflected on a statement made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South. On the last occasion when there was some kind of debate on sugar, and he made the point that the overall cost of all this exercise down the road is going to be more than \$300 million – three hundred million dollars, the overall cost – that the only security, or the mere security, would reside in land ownership, land use and future use of the lands available for non agricultural purposes as one tries to satisfy the overall housing and other needs of this country for land.

3.25 p.m.

I would have hoped today, Sir, that we would have had a debate that might have gone some way to addressing the public sector errors of the past and pointing to the future to let Barbadians know that this additional commitment that we are making here today by way of guaranteeing a large sum of money would somehow down the road not result in ever increasing liability against the public purse.

I would have thought, Sir, that it would have been in that context that the Minister of Finance would have been able to bring a further dimension to the debate, particularly in a manner where huge sums of money is being guaranteed by an Act of this Parliament.

I am also troubled, Sir, that debates about sugar in this House used to be debates about matters affecting the people of Barbados, debates about jobs, debates about conditions of service of persons employed in the sugar industry. That was the situation up to about 1975 when there was an extensive debate in here over a **tax** and

since 1981 we have had different categories of debates, a kind of reverse of the debating situation, the extent to which we can subsidize the existing ownership structure in the sugar industry and then later on when all of that collapsed, after the commitment of large amounts of public funds how the public purse could then be used to salvage the situation, and what directions they would be moving in, in the future.

Sir, one thing we can be sure of, we are not talking about jobs, we are talking about loss of jobs. What the people of Barbados must understand is that in all the projected plans for the sugar industry we are really talking about a reduction in the number of people employed in the sugar industry by over 50% between 1994 and 1999. When one reads in the newspaper of projected layoffs from the BADMC one is not surprised. That is part of the total picture so whatever financial commitment we are making by guarantee or otherwise. It is not about jobs, it is about job losses in the long run and job losses to the extent of roughly 50% of the number of people who were employed in the sugar industry two to three years ago. By the turn of this century half those people would have gone home so this is not part of any programme to bring joy, to bring money to workers in the sugar industry, this is part of a different exercise and jobs is not a priority.

The second point I want to make, Sir, is that we must not fool ourselves or be content with the fact that an industry is returned to profitability when the most lucrative income source to that industry is one that depends on a heavy subsidy and I am talking about the prices that Barbadians pay for sugar produced in Barbados, the money that goes to the sugar industry. That price was originally increased in the 1980s. In fact, there should be a contribution made out of that increase to a sinking fund to redeem the bonds that Government had guaranteed in the early 1980's. So that it must be understood that when you talk of profitability, there should be an important discounting of the extent to which the price that you get for local sugar is increased by a subsidy. Now I am not saying that a subsidy is not desirable. I am not saying that a subsidy is not necessary particularly when one sees for example in the state of Florida that the sugar industry is subsidized to the extent of something like 60 cents per pound of sugar paid for by the public of the state of Florida or perhaps throughout the United States, and the sugar subsidy through consumer prices amounts to billions of dollars in the United States every year, I suppose that, if we are going to deal with the issues of competitiveness or relative competitiveness in terms of the cost of production that are on an international scale, there is some degree of acceptability of the process of subsidies for sugar. But at the same time I think that it should be discounted in your accounting system when you are looking at the true cost of production in terms of what the market can bear.

3.30 pm

I then, Sir, want to move on to another area and it is this. I sincerely believe that that \$300 million already committed to the sugar industry between 1981 and today is gone for good. You will find some of it locked up in the re-arrangements of the Barbados National Bank in all sorts of different areas. You can shift it around but I think that it is important that we understand that that has been the cost and salvation of the industry, and the question now is: What do we have in return? I pointed out that we are not going to be getting any more jobs in the sugar industry. You are going to get a reduction in the number of jobs. We are likely to get a fairly stable amount of foreign exchange earnings depending entirely on what happens in our protected markets abroad. That is another possibility.

I do not want to go into the agricultural benefits from having sugar under production in terms of environment and various other factors. But the missing link that I see in all of this is the question of ownership. That is where I find that there is a missing link. That is why I started off with that example that I mentioned of the \$2.5 million cash payment by someone who was supposed to be bankrupt as a result of the operations of a plantation in Barbados.

Regarding the whole question of the factories, I think that in the long run as part of the re-arrangements of the sugar industry that we have to start looking at major expenses in terms of having efficient factories in Barbados. It was right to have kept Bulkeley opened but Bulkeley is an old factory and some consideration might have to be given in replacing a new factory in due course at the site where Bulkeley is to service that particular section of the island. Portvale has been a disaster from the very beginning. It was extremely costly. We were told in this House that it was a new factory and it turned out to be a new old factory. A whole lot of Caribbean Development Bank's money was wasted which the Government had to service and still has to service over that particular exercise at Portvale. That was one of the reasons for the late start of the crop in 1981 that started the disastrous slide of the sugar industry. So Portvale for a long time has been the centre of a disastrous situation and certainly it probably has more breakdowns in terms of the amount of load that it carries than any other factory in Barbados. So that in the long run I think that probably Andrews and Bulkeley have functioned far more efficiently despite the fact that they are older factories. Because I believe that some imported parts at Portvale came from an old factory in Antigua or somewhere when everybody in Barbados thought that we were having a shining new factory. In fact, what was happening is that old factories overseas were being bastardized and the equipment was brought into this country at tremendous expense to the taxpayers because that CDB loan was never serviced by Barbados Sugar Industries Limited which all of its assets and liabilities are now substantially taken over by the public of Barbados.

So that, Sir, I think that we have to try to work out how we are going to match this commitment of the public purse to these huge sums of money down the road and get in return for that, some kind of ownership hold on the lands and the assets that are involved. Of the Barbados Sugar Industries Limited assets regarding the whole island, that is fairly easy. What is going to happen in terms of the plantations in the long run? I do not know but it would seem to me that at least the Barbados National Bank should be insisting on the clearing of all debts due to it and hope that some money somewhere along the line will feed back into the public purse through that mechanism to the Barbados National Bank.

Now, Sir, I believe that we need to have a much clearer vision of where we **are** heading in terms of sugar in Barbados. I have been asked again and again on the floor of this House to apologize for certain statements that I made 10 years ago. I am satisfied that those statements were highly justified and **correct**. I look back over the past 15 years and it is absolutely nothing that I have said that has not been borne out from my own experiences over the years in terms of what has happened to the sugar industry. I sincerely hope that once again today we are not embarking on a process where in 4 or 5 years time we will find that the people of Barbados have been saddled with even more debt over an elusive sugar industry.

Aside.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: I did not say that. What I am saying is that we have to be very clear about that. There have been many public sector errors. Let me tell you what was the fundamental error in relation to the sugar industry.

The fundamental error does not relate to any decision that this Parliament took in relation to sugar directly. The fundamental error was when the Barbados National Bank was set up for that bank to take over the portfolio of the Sugar Industry Agricultural Bank and then allow the other commercial banks to pass on to them the debts of a substantial number of estates in Barbados. Then we found ourselves in this Parliament with a situation where we had to prop up not only the industry but to prop up the bank itself. What that did was to block what would be the normal market forces operating where when one plantation got itself into a lot of debt the owner went bankrupt, somebody bought it, and gradually one by one there would have been a system in this country whereby those estates would have been re-financed as happened in the days when they went through chancery in the 1920's and 1930's. But the intervention of a public sector bank blocked that process and created a situation where all of these estates all of a sudden were in a whole lot of debt and there was no mechanism to deal with it other than a total collapse of the industry. So in a sense, we created the instruments whereby

that situation could have arisen because it would not have arisen otherwise. All that would have happened is that those estates would have gone through chancery one by one with each successive owner having a better equity debt ratio and at the end of the day people would have had their losses as individuals but the industry would have survived for Barbados in the long run and jobs would have been protected.

So that whilst I hear all of these wonderful concepts within this Parliament about financing, about the future of the industry and all of these things, we have gone through this before, Mr. Speaker. We can look back and see the errors. I can look back at those debates in the 1970's when I warned that that is what would have happened. As a consequence of that, Sir, another major thing that has happened in Barbados over the years is that whereas prior to the 1980's much of the public sector effort was in trying to help small farmers, trying to create situations where you have a wider spread of land ownership in Barbados. So much resources have had to be diverted to this particular sector in Barbados that they have been left far behind and it is not much that any Minister of Agriculture can do unless he has those resources available to him.

So I caution in looking back historically over what has happened. I heard the Prime Minister today talk about total farming or the total farmer and all of this kind of thing. I remember the wonderful theoretical considerations that he brought to bear on agriculture believing for example that 2 people could work 10 acres of land, a man and a wife, as total **farmers**. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you ever forked land, hoed land or cleaned up weeds. I am telling you that it is very difficult particularly when the rain is falling like this to keep a half an acre cleaned. It is back breaking to keep half an acre cleaned and, to talk about people without any money to buy equipment and work 10 acres of land, is to make a joke. **You** see I bring the practical experience of a small farmer who has been forced out of business because of economic circumstances. So I understand exactly what is going on. I am someone who was able to produce sugar 40 tonnes an acre and I see here that they are trying to lift it from 17 to 23. I used to produce 40 tonnes an acre.

Aside.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Never mind – 40 tonnes an acre and these experts now are congratulating themselves if they can lift it from 17 tonnes an acre to 24 tonnes an acre. If you were to look back at the sugar yields or if you were to get the Annual Statistical Digest of the Central Bank of Barbados and look back to what used to happen in the 1950's and 1960's, then you will see that in fact 40 tonnes an acre was nothing unusual at one point in Barbados in terms of sugar yield. The other factor that people

seem to discount in this whole exercise is the fact that sugar production is something that is very dependent on weather. When you get a year like this depending on the distribution of the rain, it is very easy to lift sugar production by 10 or 15 or even 20 per cent sometimes depending on the area of Barbados where the rain is falling and the particular distribution as you lead up to the crop. Nobody says anything about that and this is what has happened to sugar over the years. Because it is largely dependent on rainfall distribution and also on market conditions. Sugar has never been an industry where each year you got the same kind of return. What used to happen over the years was that you got a windfall year that would wipe out all of the debts of the past.

3.45 p.m.

Many Members of this House would not know that even since I was a Member of this House – as a matter of fact, in 1980 – there was hardly any indebtedness in the sugar industry. The lock-ups were wiped out by the good prices of 1980 and then all of a sudden, in 15 years' time, we find ourselves in this mess, and it is a mess. I am satisfied that taking the total economy into consideration, taking the foreign exchange earning factor and environmental factors, we have to continue with the sugar industry and the support that that can give in terms of providing agricultural impetus to other crops as well. They are the justifications for it, but let us understand clearly that this is not part of any exercise to create 30 000 jobs, let us understand clearly that this is money that will eventually result in job losses in Barbados. Let us also understand something clearly, and the public has to understand this, that by whatever name it is called, by whatever device is used, in the long run there is a \$300 million deficit there, it is a public sector deficit and we have to find creative means of dealing with it.

In a real sense, Sir, it is the Minister of Housing, not the Prime Minister, not the Minister of Agriculture, who could make a difference if we had an independent plan for housing well integrated with agriculture. Unfortunately, the Minister of Housing is not in his seat and therefore I cannot be critical of him. I do not like to criticise Ministers when they are not in their places unless it is absolutely necessary and this is not a case where it is absolutely necessary and intrinsic to the matter before the House, but I believe that whilst we are talking of shifting BADC properties, plantations, to BAMC ownership it is at the same time we should be looking to see how we can satisfy the housing needs of Barbados by looking at the marginal areas within that whole structure, so that you are satisfying a major social need, you are generating income that can go to the company to help wipe off some of the debt and certainly reduce the need to come here for guarantees of this nature.

There is a reason why we are here for this guarantee. Banks outside of Barbados do not usually ask for a guarantee if they are satisfied with the capacity of the borrower to repay. In Barbados, after they have taken your head and belly and all the security, after they make you go and take out insurance that you do not need, and all those things, they still ask for a guarantor. But, generally speaking, the Government is being asked to guarantee this because the Bank is not satisfied that the company has assets to secure this loan and this is why we are coming here for the guarantee. That is why I am saying that if you can raise the value of the assets of the BAMC by a constructive use of as much of the non-arable land – and I suspect there will be a lot of non-arable land that would be available in the context of what we are talking about, particularly when former ADC plantations which were predominantly marginal lands are transferred to the BAMC – and that would create an opportunity to establish a genuinely viable company which in the future can meet the foreign exchange needs in Barbados and also contribute substantially to the other intrinsically agricultural reasons which I have declined to go into in any detail today in order to support the economy, the ecology, agriculture and various things.

So that, Sir, I would have no difficulty in supporting this Resolution, but I am supporting it with a very clear knowledge of what has gone on in the past, the extent to which the public sector has been sucked into this exercise, with a very clear knowledge that we are not talking about a job generating exercise here, we are talking about job losses, with a clear knowledge as to what seem to me to be the ultimate benefits here, and also in the hope that it be recognised that at the same time as we pursue this kind of rationalisation we have to look at higher levels of return on those parts of the estates which relate to housing and other uses.

I want to see the day come to an end when we have this major social and economic issue before us, when every day a Minister comes in here acquiring a few house spots in Bank Hall, new house spots here, new house spots there, where the Deputy Prime Minister has her problems with Murphy Pasture, and so on. Let us look at the possibility within this context of developing major housing development to meet the various needs of the people of Barbados. Let us look at it. In other words, instead of coming here with 50 Resolutions in one year to site 200 houses, let us come with one Resolution that is going to produce 500 or 600 houses, one set of infrastructure that is going to contribute to the survival of this kind of operation, spending \$20 – \$30 million over a three to five year period. That is what I think is needed, otherwise it is my feeling that all you have to do is to have a year when there is a dramatic decline in sugar prices, we do not know how long that guaranteed market overseas is going to last,

we do not know what is going to happen in relation to the forces operating within NAFTA and free trade, we do not know these things. We cannot predict with any degree of accuracy what is going to be the weather pattern, which is very critical to Barbados' sugar production over any given period of time. So in the presence of all those variables, one thing we know, how we can strengthen this exercise and I am not satisfied that enough global thinking is being given to this. That is our job in Opposition. The Government has to concern itself with little files here and there and tend to be looking at things on a day to day basis, but in Opposition we have a duty to be able to conceptualise these matters and see back at the past and look to the future. Everybody in this House thought they were doing the right thing 15 years ago. I remember those debates in here and it all came to nought. All we were left with was very low levels of sugar production and huge debts which the people of Barbados had to carry on their shoulders. We come to a situation of restructuring but the debts are not going to go away. They are going to have to be paid so that the task now I believe is to see the plan that I want to see which is a plan that is not only going to tell me we are going to produce 75 000 tonnes of sugar.

3.55 p.m.

We know that Barbados can produce 75 000 tonnes of sugar. Barbados is a place that produced 260 000 tonnes of sugar in the past. I don't have a problem with that. What I want to see is a plan that will tell me how we are going to marry this production with the outstanding debts which the public have had to accept, how we are going to reduce the possibility of wedding it to the same kind of situation 10 and 15 years down the way. When I see that plan I will be satisfied that this Parliament has done its job. Until then, I will never be satisfied that this Parliament has done its job, because I refuse to look at this thing without looking at the total economy and the total implications any longer. We have gone down that road before and it has been a disaster. Let us now think more constructively and look at the matter more globally. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to raise a couple of questions and make a few observations on the Resolution before us. Everyone would be familiar or should be familiar with the major debates that took place in this House over the course of the last 20 years with respect to the sugar industry, its contribution to the economy and the need in Barbados to ensure that there is agricultural activity over a large area of the 106 000 acres which Barbados is made up of and of which only some 40 000 is in cultivation of which some 25 – 30 000 is in sugar cane production. So one must always bear in mind the fact that in truth and in fact sugar cane production in Barbados takes up less than half of the arable land.

The next point that I would like to raise here is that we must never forget that Barbados is a producer of

agriculture, and cane in particular, in which the cost of labour is around 50% to 52%. So whenever we look at the total amount of money to be given from the public purse to sustain production one must never forget that 50% to 52% of that is labour costs.

When the reorganisation of the sugar cane industry came before the House I would have thought that there was a large measure of agreement that every effort had to be made to look at a structure which would ensure that this existing cost of production would be reduced. Barbados in the 1980s could have taken the decision, particularly in 1982, that it would have done what many other countries, reeling under the impact of the oil price increase did. They devalued and Barbados did not devalue and, as a consequence, always recognised that one of the consequences of not devaluing would be that some measure of subsidy would have to be given to the sugar industry because the major market for our production was the European Economic Community and the European Economic Community currency fell in relation to the U.S. dollar and Barbados structure was in relation to the U.S. dollar.

Now, Sir, in the 1990s when the reforms came it was agreed that a clear distinction would be made between cultivatable land on the estates which were going to be the subject matter of an integrated management by the BAMC and the non-agricultural land. One of the outstanding matters which has not been settled up to this day and which, when the Opposition was in office, I repeatedly tried to draw to its attention that it was necessary for it to settle and I repeatedly tried again to draw to the attention of the bureaucrats and others is that you must settle the matter of the town planning relationship between the leases of agricultural land and non-agricultural lands.

We have pointed out that when we were doing the Tenancies Freehold legislation it was necessary to introduce special clauses in that legislation exempting the tenancies from the operations of the town planning law. Many of us felt that that should have been done at the time. It was not done and there are those of us who still advocate it and I believe that the evidence is quite clear that the view is that it has to be done. The sooner that it is done, the faster we will **be** able to **realise** the **full** potential of the non-agricultural land on these estates.

I have never been worried about the measure of money – \$300 million because that is a mere bagatelle in relation to the **true** value of the non-agricultural land. It is small in relation to the true value of non-agricultural land. There is no question about that. If you doubt that, you should go to St. Peter on a little strip of land, **see** a development there, and see that that is going to sell for nearly \$400 million. That is what happens in small

countries where there is a limited amount of land and a demand for land, and there is demand for land in Barbados.

Therefore, I believe that the Government has the mechanism within its power to ensure that some of the \$300 million is recoverable relatively fast by way of bringing to market some of the non-agricultural land. It is ironic that the people with the largest indebtedness to the BACT now or the groups of the plantations that have the largest indebtedness to the BACT **are** those very plantations that have a large acreage of marginal land. Therefore, some of the \$16 million, I believe the largest debtors is in the vicinity of \$15 to \$16 million, can recoup a considerable portion of their land by the release for housing and other uses of the sour grass land. Therefore I am not one of those who is worried.

4.05 p.m.

The second point that I will like to make clear, Sir, is the fact that today the BAMC is still only the manager of a lesser amount of land that is devoted to sugar cane, because the independent farmers, as I understand it, **are** still in control of 15 000 or 16 000 acres of the 25 000 or 26 000 acres of land that is presently devoted. So the BAMC, the Agricultural Management Company, has the **smaller** amount of land, but they are in control. They manage the factories.

I always hear a lot about the factories in Barbados. It is a fact that the Government of Barbados, in various capacities as a land owner, has shares in the BSIL, but that is because BSIL was essentially a kind of service company for the land owners. The only people, who could have shares in the BSIL, were people who owned land. It was specifically set up in one of the first reorganisations in recent times. In the 1970s, BSIL was set up as a service company to all land owners, and the Government, via the Agricultural Corporation, became a shareholder of that company.

The issue about the transfer of BSIL's assets to the BAMC, the Agricultural Trust, is a matter that cannot be discussed in the House because it is still before the court. That is still before the court. Although the matter has not been terminated, Sir, I would declare an issue relating to the remuneration of the directors before the court, and there is an order in 1992 or 1993, that all of the assets until the matter is determined, and I am not making a determination, is the Court of

Appeal and it is now back down. Everybody recognises that.

Until that matter is completed, the finalisation of whatever arrangements are made in respect to the assets of BSIL, which consist of the land area, the buildings and the machinery, which formally comprised the totality of the factories in Barbados. That is what we must understand. BSIL assets were the factories and the land surrounding the factories. Some were considerable, some were extensive because many Honourable Members would recall what a factory was like.

Now, obviously, when the time comes for that matter to be settled, the debts of the BSIL to the BACT, in the form of the old loans, will have to be dealt with too.

Again, part of the \$350 million was invested in lending money to the factories whose assets had to be purchased or handed over in return for relief of the debt. That is a very important point, Sir. That has not yet been finalised.

Now, I am one of those who believe, Sir, that given our cost structure that we would have to have an early decision as to what to do with the Government-owned agricultural land which was vested in the BADC. Certainly in our last period of office, decisions were taken, particularly with respect to the Scotland District and parts of Christ Church, that as a matter of policy, the Government would encourage the leasing of land for agricultural activity. The majority of which would not necessarily be in the cane growing. Efforts were made and started to realise this concept in the form of land settlement schemes.

Regrettably, the pace of development of that concept has been slow. The late, L. B. Brathwaite, when he was a Minister of Agriculture, was particularly interested in the utilisation of Bawden and River. I remember he used to speak of it regularly, in this area. Particularly for fruit crops and things of that nature.

The scheme in that area for land settlement, as it was called, formed the basis of an application for the utilisation of LOMÉ Convention funds. Belleplaine, St. Andrew, Hannays in Christ Church, Fairy Valley and among those areas, small farmers were granted some lands. You can go there and see the small farmers still producing.

Around every airport in the world, of any significance, that you go to, which is not inside of a city, situated a distance from the city, you would see that efforts are made to cultivate land, and to use the land around with some kind of economic activity.

We are fortunate in that around Grantley Adams Airport you have 2 pieces of land, one on the left

side when you go into the **airport**. I see some enterprising decisions were taken that there was going to be an informal subdivision for **rum** shop keeping. By the last roundabout, just before you come to the gas station. If you go up there, you will **see** it. I believe they call it "**Frankies Bar**," and that is a significant name because it happened during a particular regime when an ad *hoc* decision was taken that land would be used for that purpose.

I believe that the whole of that land should be used for commercial activity. I believe that.

Asides.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: There is no agricultural crop that can be planted there. None at all. There is no agricultural crop of any kind that is planted there. The people there have tried canes, they were burnt down, they tried yams, I believe that they got a quarter of it, they have tried cotton, the sheep ate that, because human beings do not eat that.

Therefore, it is my belief that this analysis of the non agricultural land, and this utilisation of the non agricultural land to its maximum value will help to relieve some of this debt burden. All Honourable Members are concerned because of the fact that it is a charge to the treasury. I looked and I reviewed the needs, Sir. It is quite clear to me that once we have the cost structure that we have now in Barbados, that there has to be an element of subsidy to the industry as long as we have the desire for it to continue.

We should not feel in any way ashamed about that. In the developed world, 90% of agriculture is subsidised. People must understand that. The Honourable Member talked about Florida, but sugar in Florida is only one example of the subsidisation of agriculture in the United States of America. Oil is subsidised as is soy beans. There are all kinds of methods, and we are not yet examining the levels of subsidies that takes place in the European Economic Community. That is the position. If you wish to have agriculture, and you have a certain cost structure in respect of many of the crops, a decision has to be taken to subsidise it.

Now, it is true that by putting this money into the sustenance of the sugar industry, we are not going to have any great employment creation. That is a fact because the trend is more mechanisation, the increase of productivity per employee so as to reduce the cost, but agriculture again is such an activity that the more efficient it gets the less human beings that will be used. But these are decisions that politicians have to take because we cannot think of Barbados as a place where organised agricultural activity does not take place.

4.15 p.m.

Just look around Barbados if you want to see what it would be like, and see those areas where agriculture is abandoned. See those areas, particularly at this time of year, this is a good time to look around. Even in the suburban areas where there are relatively large house lots no attention is paid to those lots, and you will see how they are overgrown with bush and necessitate a special programme which I have no doubt will soon be started because this is the time it has to be started. We have to recognise that for environmental reasons also we need to have this agricultural activity.

The last point, Sir, that I would like to raise in respect of this, is the issue of the subsidies in relation to the independent growers. I believe that programme has been a worthy programme because it has helped to ensure that those estates which were not heavily indebted and were sufficiently large as to be reasonable economic units, have continued into production and I hope that in the evaluation of our programmes in the future that we recognise that in **truth** and in fact it is in those estates that you probably have the best chance of reducing your costs so that that aspect of the sugar cane production will continue to survive which is necessary to ensure that you reach what is called the critical mass of production.

I commend the Government, Sir, for the continuance of the efforts to finalise the programme of restructuring the industry but we must do it in the context of the realisation that the money that is spent is not necessarily money that you will **see** a quick **return thereon** but it is beneficial to the economy as a whole.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, my intervention will be very brief on this occasion. I am prompted to get into the debate for 3 reasons. I sat and listened to the debate, Sir, a lot of it was cerebral, a lot of it was pseudo intellectual, a lot of it, Sir, was highly technical but I am not **knocking** what I have heard, Sir. Maybe there is a lot of wisdom in what was said. I am concerned, Sir, about the fact that in the welter of words, the reforming and the reorganisation and the rationalisation, the structural changes, all of these things, very little has been said about the people who work in agriculture.

There was a time, Mr. Speaker, not many years ago when many a political career was launched on and succeeded on championing the cause of the agricultural workers in this country and indeed, Mr. Speaker, in being agitators in their interest. Now, I heard the Honourable Member for St. John speak almost pejoratively about the fact that I went into Bulkeley yard, **as he said**, to **agitate** with the workers at Bulkeley factory over the fact that **they** were not paid their severance pay. **There is no** **fact that I did in that year that I was more** **fact that I could go into Bulkeley**

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, I never made that allegation. The allegation I made is that despite the fact that we assured the workers they would be paid their severance pay, the Honourable Member for St. George South went into Bulkeley yard. I need to make that point, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to say that I was only trying to ask **him** why he does not go on the estates now. I would like to **see** him there. I would like him to go now. That is the question he should answer now. Do not get sidetracked by what he did in 1994. That is of no consequence now. It did not help them because they were paid already. That is grandstanding.

Mr. L. R. TULL: The Honourable Member only **needs** to take a look at the result of the polls in that part of St. George to find out if it did any good. I also, Mr. **Speaker**, Sir, want to say that being in Bulkeley Yard, **agitating** for the workers of Bulkeley in the face of the intransigence of the Government of the time paying them **their** severance pay, I am proud of that. And I am saying in this debate I have not heard much about the...

Aside.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South **Central** say that I went into Bulkeley yard the **day** after **him** but when he went into Bulkeley yard nobody came out. When I went into the yard the whole factory closed down and the people came out and spoke to me. When **they** spoke to me, Sir, the same people who were **intransigent** realised that they had to hurry up and get the severance pay into the hands of the workers, but as I said it was problem getting in there for three reasons and one of **them** is the fact that a few fell through the cracks. There are persons who, despite the agitation or the promises made at the time by the Honourable Member for St. John, the adventitious visit by the Honourable Member of St. Michael South that there are still persons who work at Bulkeley Factory and who were severed who have not received their severance pay.

Aside.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Yes, I am telling you because I deal with these things on a regular basis. I am the person whom you have to contact

Mr. Speaker, I cannot **find** out, Sir, at the moment whether it is the Receiver, BSIL, the Severance Payments Board, who is responsible for paying the outstanding severance pay and these persons are driven from pillar to post, up and down. I am therefore **appealing** to the Minister of Finance who has responsibility for the financial sector of the industry. The Minister of Finance is also the Minister of National Insurance. I am also appealing to the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Agriculture, the

three of them, to look into this matter with utmost urgency because it is not fair. When I am going to vote as I will, Sir, for a guarantee for \$52 million for the sugar industry's revitalization, I want to mention that less than a million dollars outstanding in severance is not being addressed. Some of those people are still working at Bulkeley because they were severed by BSIL and they were then employed by BAMC and they need their money. I am asking all of these important agents of the Government to do what they can and make sure that these people get their money.
4.25 p.m.

I also want, Mr. Speaker, to deal very, very quickly with this question of the use of land. I am a little puzzled. There was an invested sector reform programme that was agreed between the Government and the Inter-American Development Bank and it set out with the greatest specificity of questions of the reform of the Town Planning Department and also of the introduction of a Land Management Efficiency Programme. So that all of the guessing **about** land use and what you can use land for will be brought to an end. This whole question about operating under a Town Planning legislation sometimes is so powerless that the average intelligent person cannot interpret it. There is **great** difficulty in understanding the Town Planning legislation and the agreement that was made between the Government and the Inter-American Development Bank stated that it was not only restructuring the Town Planning Department but it will also make for what they call greater transparency in land use.

Mr. Speaker, why I mentioned this is because I find that from time to time as a professional it is extremely difficult to advise clients. If it is one thing that we in the legal profession learn very early in Law School is that the law must be certain. We must know what the law is and wherever, Mr. Speaker...

Aside.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Whatever the law is, the lawyers must know it. It is very difficult to advise clients on areas in relation to Town Planning and the use of land because of its complexity. I am glad to see the proposal by the Government for a new Land Management Efficiency Programme and we will be able to put all of that behind us. Another reason why I felt compelled to get into this debate is when I heard a lot of words spoken about the retention of Bulkeley factory in the sugar producing process. I am pleased to see that we have got a number of late converts to the cause of having a three-factory system and the retention of Bulkeley as an important element in that restructure. I am glad to see these late converts. I mention this, Mr. Speaker, again in the context of some assurance of how long this factory will remain operational. I believe that it was in July last year that the Government gave

an undertaking that Bulkeley would remain open for another 2 years. About a year and a half of that period is almost gone and I am wondering just like the workers at Bulkeley who have brought it to my attention. They want to know what will happen at the end of the next crop if they will have jobs or not and if the factory will remain open. We want a certain measure of certainty in these things so that people in that area can plan and get on with their lives. But I also know that in the report of the five-year plan for the sugar industry there is some talk of 1999. There is some projection for 1999. This is in relation to the use of factories for sugar purposes. Therefore, we cannot be sure what exactly is the projected period that the Government has in mind. All I am asking on behalf of the people who live in my constituency who work at Bulkeley factory is that they be given some measure of certainty as to how long the factory will remain open so that they can be making plans for what to do later on.

One final point, Mr. Speaker, Sir. It relates to the question of **safety** at Bulkeley factory. Sometime ago, Mr. Speaker, a study was done by the Centre for Disease Control of Atlanta on the continued prevalence of asbestos in a number of public buildings in this country. Bulkeley factory was among the high danger list because of the high content of asbestos in that factory. I understand that the heat in the factory compounds the problem. I see that the industry proposes to spend about \$11 million on Bulkeley for the provision of new parts and equipment over the next five-year period. I again would like an undertaking from the Minister of Labour who is responsible for the safety of workers that the industry is about to make another investigation on the dangers to the health of the people who work in factories from asbestos and that all asbestos will be removed from the factory before the beginning of the next crop.

The report that I alluded to, and there are others, but I mentioned one of Atlanta, Georgia, repeatedly highlights the level of carcinogenes as a result of fibres from the asbestos. There are other institutions mentioned in Barbados, but that is one of the highest areas of risk. I would really like the Government through one of its spokesmen – the Minister of Health or Minister of Labour – not today, to look into this matter and to give the people who work in that factory an undertaking that these dangers to their health will be removed with expedition and that they will not have to go through another hot crop season in that factory with all the problems added in relation to the presence of the fibres from asbestos. I am grateful to you, Sir.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in this debate which deals with agriculture and it deals with the assistance being given to BAMC. I am rising primarily, Sir, to deal with the relationship between

BADMC and BAMC. Sir, it is never a pleasant thing to have to put people on the bread line.

4.35 p.m.

It is therefore with some degree of pain that I look at the severance of workers from the BADMC. I relate this to the BAMC, because my understanding is that a number of these workers will be taken over by BAMC, or that the intention is that the BAMC will be taking over these workers. I have, however, been reliably informed that BAMC will not be able to hire all of these workers who will be severed from BADMC and I therefore rise to propose that the Government look at having a system put in place so that these workers can be placed at other institutions so that appropriate investment opportunities can be made available for these workers who are severed. I use the word "appropriate" advisedly, Sir, because these investment opportunities should be within the means and the financial capabilities of these workers who **are** being severed.

In this context I refer particularly to the offer of the motor tractor cultivation scheme to the workers. I have been reliably informed that these workers are in no position to take over this enterprise, **Mr. Speaker**, because of the great risk involved. A number of these vehicles **are** in a state not suitable for the job which they have to undertake in a competitive environment where they have to deal with other people who will be doing a similar job with better equipment. I would wish that these workers be given the opportunity to be employed suitably within the public sector, or that they be given other investment opportunities from which they can get some kind of return instead of having to go through the pain of greater loss.

Sir, I remember when the great Intel left Barbados they had a programme put in place to place their workers. I believe that the same thing should obtain when a Government corporation, for whatever reason, has to lay off workers. It is not something I believe Governments would want to proceed on whimsically and it is never a pleasure to have to lay off persons, but I believe that the pain of the laying off must be minimised by putting in place measures so that these people can be suitably placed in jobs in the near future. I am not aware of any **arrangements** being made in this regard. If this is the case, I would want to encourage the Minister to ensure that those people who have been laid off, some of whom come from my constituency and are related, and therefore that makes the pain greater when a number of people within connecting families are sent home...

I will personally be seeking to get **the list** of those persons from my constituency who are being severed and to follow up with the appropriate agencies to make

sure: that these people are re-hired as quickly as possible. I am getting information from various people, but I believe I will get this information officially and I will be requesting this information officially so that I can have the necessary factual information from the corporation as to these people who are being laid off and to follow up efforts, whether they be in the public sector or private sector, so that they can be placed in jobs as soon as possible. I believe that suitable opportunities can be provided for those who want to be retrained so that they might be able to find a different job in the near future.

We also have a situation with allocation of agricultural plots. There are some people in this area who are interested in agriculture and want to have access to some kind of agricultural plot so that they can carry on the kind of work they did at the BADMC. I am referring particularly to those whom the BAMC would not necessarily be hiring. I believe too that it may be necessary in some cases to provide financial assistance to people to set them up in some kind of business. That is very important. If we are speaking of providing assistance to BAMC, I think it is quite fair for us to think in terms of providing assistance to those people who are interested in agriculture whom the BAMC cannot hire.

Sir, I have to speak in these terms because I see the pain and I feel the pain of people who are unemployed, and there is nothing like having people unemployed and having to feel the pain of these people. I believe that whatever is said and done we have to focus on how we can make life easy for these people in the short-term and not have them looking around for jobs for two or three years, as happened under the Democratic Labour Party. I believe we have to show the right way of dealing with a situation where people have to be severed for financial reasons.

I believe, too, Sir, that the Ministry of Agriculture can play a key role in giving advice to these people as to opportunities which they can seek out. I am not here to criticise the Ministry of Agriculture, I would never do that. What I would say is that I think in a modern age some Ministries need to look at addressing modern day concerns, and that is where I feel that officers of the Ministry of Agriculture can look at ways of advising people as to the kind of agricultural endeavours they can get into, especially since we have a situation where the BADMC is being whittled down. It therefore is critical that the Ministry of Agriculture be so poised that it can give the advice that is necessary in modern day Barbados, just as other Ministries have to address concerns in modern day Barbados and not just be concerned with forms and fashions of bureaucracies as obtained in a lot of these industries where when you seek for information on simple matters you cannot get this information and you have to be calling around week after

week and cannot get simple information that should be available to a functioning bureaucracy which is following modern day trends.

4.45 p.m.

I think it behoves officers in that Ministry to look for new avenues, to look for new enterprises that people can be placed in who are interested in agriculture, because things have changed. We are no longer in the 1950s and 1960s and we therefore have to look for new opportunities.

Sir, I support this Resolution and I hope that the necessary mechanisms can be put in place so that the pain of these people who will be sent home, so that the poor people of the rural areas of Barbados who come from Christ Church East will be placed in a position where they can have a good life.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it has now become customary for this Honourable House from time to time to take action in the interest of the sugar industry. It is ironic that an area of economic activity that started 300 years ago as strictly a private sector business has in the last 30 years or so attracted a considerable amount of public attention and also public sector funding.

If one were to look at the purpose of this Resolution, especially as one takes into account the condition of the sugar industry 5 or 6 years ago, one would no doubt recall a position where our sugar production had so declined that we actually became importers of sugar. One would no doubt, Mr. Speaker, remember a situation where there was a public furore about the importation of sugar from Guatemala and where for some time, Barbadians have been clamouring to have their own locally produced sugar available to them.

Mr. Speaker, one of the objectives of the Resolution which is before this Honourable House today is to raise funds of which some \$200 million are to be allocated to funding 4 estates which have been transferred from the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation to the Barbados Agricultural Management Company. These 4 estates, Mr. Speaker, are the Spring Hall Estate, Bath, Spencers and Fairy Valley. The question arises as to why these estates had to be transferred and the answer to that is that in a situation where this Government has pledged to the public of Barbados and is trying to aim at increasing sugar production to the order of some 75 000 tonnes it has been necessary to increase acreage of land in sugar production.

I would want from time to time, during the course of my contribution, both to look at the implications of this increased plan for enhancing sugar production as well as to respond to the number of charges which came from the

Honourable Member for St. John. If I can dignify what he said as a contribution to the debate of this Honourable House, he started out by **saying** that there was no need for the Barbados Labour Party to praise itself for the success story of sugar because in his words this success story has been the achievement of the outgoing Democratic Labour Party Administration.

It is ironic that in a situation where the Honourable Member of St. John is saying that we should not congratulate ourselves because it was their achievement, he still spent in excess of 90 minutes so blasphemous as to both undermine what he was saying and at the same time to reveal a particular political inclination that one can best compare to a person doing a dress rehearsal for recitation not **sure exactly** what he is saying through the course of his recitation and hoping that his rehearsal could some day in the foreseeable future serve him in good stead.

It is ironic too, Mr. Speaker, that the Honourable Member for St. John accused this Government of indifference and apathy. Three times during his contribution he accused this Government of indifference and apathy when it comes to the management of sugar and the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation. How could he so accuse us of apathy when once when he was Minister of Finance and a journalist of Barbados he was asked what his reaction was to the alleged disappearance of \$70 million from the Central Bank and he said that he would not lose any sleep over it. What better example of apathy it would have been? Seventy million dollars were not properly accounted for and when the Honourable Member for St. John was pressed for an answer he said he would not lose any sleep over it. It sounds very much like another person from that side who said "like it or lump it", Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, much as I believe that the point I was making would be a difficult one for the Honourable Member for St. James North to grasp, I said that I would not lose sleep over the decline in foreign reserve, I would lose sleep over finding millions to increase the foreign reserve. That is precisely what I lost sleep about.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, Sir, based on what might happen to him in the near coming weeks in a part of St. Michael he may still lose more sleep.

He also said Mr. Speaker, that when he was Minister of Finance that he was not happy with the finances of the BADMC. If you are a responsible Minister of Finance and you are unhappy about a particular state of affairs, then do something about it. Gird yourself with the moral fortitude to deal with a challenge or difficulty. Face it head on and resolve it in the interest of the country. Do not be both

concerned at the parlous finances of an institution that is financially strapped and then excuse yourself by saying that much as you were concerned you were prepared to let the status quo remain.

He also said, Mr. Speaker, that there had been tension between the BADMC and the BAMC. Mr. Speaker, I take it that when he was Minister of Finance the Agricultural Credit Trust and its child company, the BAMC, had been created during his time and when he was Minister of Finance he was capable to put the Agricultural Credit Trust and the BAMC under the Ministry of Finance and allow the BAMC to continue under the Ministry of Agriculture. Yet, he talked about tension between the BAMC and the BADMC when he would have created the very tension to which he referred.

In a long perambulation, characterised more by incoherence and **illogic** than by commonsense, at times he strayed away blasting the electoral process, accusing the Electoral Commission of disenfranchising 37 000 and when he was not on the Electoral Commission he strayed down the road of VAT with no conviction, did not at any time put his heart in his speech and ended up leaving this Honourable House no wiser than it was before he started to speak.

Mr. Speaker, we have to hold the Honourable Member for St. John, especially when from time to time he is the first to share blows, when he feels able to share blows, not that his sharing of blows achieves the results he sets out to as he tries to share them...
4.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look at this whole Resolution in its proper context. In 1993, the Government of the day brought a Bill before this Honourable House, where that Bill purported to have abolished the Barbados Agricultural Development Corporation and the Barbados Marketing Corporation, and at the same time created a new entity call the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation. This was in 1993. The Minister at the time was the Honourable David Bowen. Mr. Bowen said, on the occasion of the merger or the abolition of the ADC and the BMC and the creation of the BADMC, that a new entity was being created, and that there was going to be financing, and that it was going to stimulate agriculture.

What we are now realising, Mr. Speaker, is that when that entity was created in 1993, it started with cash liabilities in the order of \$12 million. A new entity was being created with a \$12 million debt, Mr. Speaker and no indication given to this Honourable House then where the start-up capital, whether cash fixed capital or floating capital would have come from at the inception of this entity.

Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, not only did the Honourable Minister of that day not indicate how the debt was going to be dealt with, but within 8 weeks of this BADMC being created, it was given instructions to have 57 political sinecures. If ever, Mr. Speaker, as I indicate, those 57 political sinecures were appointed to staff of the BADMC in 1993, if ever there comes a time when the truth must be spoken, it must be said that the Democratic Labour Party administration at the time saw the BADMC as a pork barrel institution, staffed it with sinecures, put square pegs in round holes in such a way, Mr. Speaker, and to such a degree, that in the accounting department there were 7 people called accountants. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East could tell you, Mr. Speaker, between 1993 and up until recently, those 7 political sinecures, posing as accountants, were unable to prepare accurate financial information.

One of the principal reasons, Mr. Speaker, why we have been rather tardy in bringing this thing here, it is only now, Mr. Speaker, that we are getting an accurate picture...

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. It surely must be seen now, Sir. It surely cannot be 7 persons as 7 accountants at the BADMC. The Member, here has to be misleading the House.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I am telling you, that based on the advice given to me in my capacity as Minister, I was told in no uncertain terms, that there were 7 people called accountants, literally in the same position as too many cooks, I did not say too many "crooks", too many cooks, Mr. Speaker, spoiling the broth. I did not say too many "crooks".

Mr. SPEAKER: Just for clarification of the Chair. You said "called accountants."

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: The nomenclature given to these people, Mr. Speaker, was the nomenclature of accountants.

These poor persons, not known to be sympathetic to this Barbados Labour Party, these poor persons not known to be followers of this great administration here, were unable, Mr. Speaker, to give the correct, accurate, financial scenario of the corporation, stood in the way of our being able to review the corporation at an opportune time. Only after severe urging, did we understand, Mr. Speaker, that this corporation as by the year 1996 moved from a position of \$12 million in debt at its inception to about \$19.5 million in debt right now. Mr. Speaker, soon and very soon, this Government is going to set out on a rescue plan for the BADMC, and that rescue plan is going to be based on a new plan for the Corporation which I am prepared, in

the future, to bring and make a document of this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is this. Notwithstanding the fact that the Honourable Member for St. John made a contribution in here today, when it came to our truthful statement that one of the problems with the BADMC in addition to the political sinecures that were appointed, was a strange curious type of management of business, which in the word of the Honourable Prime Minister, was symptomatic of an organisation that was drifting and an organisation that lacked focus. The example that the Honourable Prime Minister gave has been an accurate example when he said that, "the BADMC literally received imported sugar at the port, transported it to St. Philip and then transported it back." All the Honourable Member for St. John could say in a situation like that is that, "it had to happen so if not big white businesses would have handled it." That is the effect about this thing.

How absolutely, Mr. Speaker, illogical? How absolutely irrational? How could the Honourable Member do that? How could he when confronted by a charge that the importation was costly, that the transportation was misconceived, respond by saying that the alternative was to leave it in the hands of white corporate Barbados, with interlocking directorate, I use his exact words, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are saying that as a consequence of the transfer of these 4 estates from the BADMC to the BAMC, the following are indications. In excess of 35% of the workers are over 65 years old. Under the laws of Barbados, Mr. Speaker, persons over 65 years cease to be eligible for severance. We will still pay them their severance. Mr. Speaker, Sir. In excess of 35% of the work force on Spring Hall Estate, Bath Estate, Spencers and Fairy Valley is over the age of 65. Under the laws of Barbados, Mr. Speaker, Chapter 355, The Severance Payment Act, when a person reaches 65 years old, the person ceases to be eligible for severance, but as a humane gesture by a humane, caring Government, those persons who have been superannuated and gone past 65 will be given severance.

Now clearly, Mr. Speaker, those under 65 years who are eligible to work, and who offer themselves to the Barbados Agricultural Management Company, will stand an opportunity of being reemployed. The Government is going to seek to modify and mitigate the impact of this restructuring.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to the scenario where the Board of the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation has contemplated a policy wherever workers have been working for years, and the workers are desirous of taking over entities and becoming small

black businessmen, they would be given an opportunity. One such opportunity will arise, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the Motor Tractor Cultivation Scheme. Only last week some person at Haggatts and Bawden Estate met with officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Chairman of the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation to put their plan for taking over these estates, rehiring their colleagues as workers, and running them as private sector entities.

Even though Honourable Members, Mr. Speaker, have expressed some concern as to the effect of the severance to workers, we in the Barbados Labour Party, sometimes are aware, Mr. Speaker, that politically certain things *prima facie* do not seem too easy to swallow, but in the long-term interest of the country certain actions would have to be taken. We are not going to find ourselves in the same situation as the Honourable Member for St. John who admitted that he was unhappy, as Minister of Finance, with the finances of the BADMC, but who acquiesced in the decline of the BADMC by doing nothing at the time.

Mr. Speaker, let me inform this Honourable House, with all the accuracy at my command, as to the true picture on these estates that formerly had belonged to the BADMC. I refer, of course, Mr. Speaker, to Spring Hall, Bath, Spencers, and Fairy Valley. These estates were producing an average of 10 – 11 tonnes per acre, at a cost of \$22 per acre. In a situation where economies suggested that you should spend no more than \$11 per acre to capture 30 tonnes per acre. Now, even if somebody might say that the BAMC was not directly created by this Government certainly it cannot be denied that the BAMC is better placed and better structured to manage these sugar farms than the BADMC's history with managing them.

5.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we have every confidence that the excellent work done by the BAMC in managing the sugar industry in Barbados will continue and will govern these new estates that have been taken and we are of the view, Mr. Speaker, that in time these estates would take us closer to our target of 75 000 tonnes than would have been had they not been taken. But two factors in this debate divide this side from that side. Two particular elements in this sugar plan dramatically and markedly divide this enlightened side from that misguided side and these are as follows: On no occasion did that side contemplate maximising sugar output beyond 65 000 tonnes. At no point did those Honourable Members and their party envisage a situation where sugar would have exceeded 65 000 tonnes. At the same time they not only hinged their plans on a 65 000 industry but they hinged it on a 2 factory option. The divide I was referring to, Mr. Speaker, is the divide where we have taken the challenge to seek to carry the industry to 75 000 tonnes with 3 factories.

Now this thing about the movement from 65 000 tonnes to 75 000 tonnes should really be looked at. We were already hard pressed for land. In fact the Honourable Prime Minister would have told you that \$1.8 million would have been spent taking abandoned land and putting it back into sugar. At the same time \$2 million was being allocated to the BADMC. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the BAMC itself had to have a particular focus and plan to increase the industry by a further 10 000 tonnes in a situation where the movement from 65 000 to 75 000 was not easy and could cost us as much as \$5 million – \$1.8 million on the abandoned land, \$2 million on the BADMC land and of the operating expenses of \$5.6 million, perhaps 2 or 3 million of that would go that way. It is not as easy as the Honourable Member for St. John, in a very poor speech would try to make it out to be.

At the same time I listened attentively to the Honourable Member for St. John who said, in relation to Bulkeley, and I have his exact words here, that the DLP had no plan to keep it. Those were his words in a sort of plaintive expression. Bulkeley, Mr. Speaker, not only proved its worth as an efficient producer of sugar, Bulkeley is an important institution on the social landscape of the fair parish of St. George as the Honourable Member for St. John knows and the Honourable Member for St. George South would no doubt confii.

It is not really good debating nor good politics, Mr. Speaker, to say they get Bulkeley so what. They increased it by 10 000 so what. Mr. Speaker, the significance of all this is that this Barbados Labour Party administration is bringing this country gradually to a situation that the very Barbados Labour Party Government has promised, that is to restore Barbados sugar to the supermarket shelves for all Barbadians. That is the fundamental point and that is the basis on which we are divided in this Honourable House. The basis on which we are divided is that we are not accepting their policy that if you export your quota and import cheap Guatemala sugar that your net foreign exchange earning is so much that you benefit from it. That is the basis of this debate, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely honest and well meaning in this debate. I have checked carefully the policy. I will repeat it for the benefit of all Honourable Members. Not even total strangers in the gallery would be so purblind or so ignorant and would be in the same position as the Honourable Member for St. Michael East when it comes to purblindness and ignorance on this matter. Let me enlighten this Honourable House for the benefit of the Honourable Member for St. Michael East who up until today has....

But, Mr. Speaker, this is the point. The Democratic Labour party policy was predicated upon this assumption, that if your sugar output has declined you produce enough to meet your contractual quota and then what you do,

you sell that and import cheap sugar from a source where the cost is not high and then when you match what you earn from exporting your quota, compared with what you spend on the imported sugar that is your benefit.

I am shocked that the Honourable Member for St. Michael East who has demonstrated some sanity in here today for a change can challenge the whole basis of this argument.

Mr. Speaker, I owe it to this Honourable House to say in the same way that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central said it, that even though the history of sugar has seen heavy **subsidization**, sugar still represents an important commodity in our economy. Sugar, at the environmental level, still represents a most important plank in our geographical landscape and in a situation where this debate has entertained the whole question of the mess in which the BADMC was, I am going to explain to this Honourable House that what we are going to do to the BADMC is take the courage to rescue it out of the mess. We are not going to say we are unhappy about it and leave it at that. To do that, Mr. Speaker, would be utterly and completely irresponsible and no Honourable Member on this side can be accused of that level of irresponsibility for which that side will pay in St. Michael North West in another couple of weeks, Mr. Speaker. I thank you.

Mr. J. O. **TUDOR**: Mr. Speaker, clearly the Honourable Member wanted to bring me into this debate and I am delighted to participate to represent the interest of this Opposition on an issue that I consider very fundamental to the development of Barbados.

It is unfortunate that the Honourable Minister of Agriculture took an unnecessary swipe at the former **administration** for a situation that developed primarily out of a wilful act by the holders of the agricultural land base in Barbados where they held this country to ransom for a number of years when they refused, as a matter of policy among themselves, to plant new canes and inject new funding into an industry which would have guaranteed yields from 1986 through the period 1992 that would have seen an increase in the yield of sugar production. Instead of that because of the need to **earn** foreign exchange for this country, they refused to invest money that they had borrowed from the National Bank into the proper production of sugar. Many profits were made outside of sugar. Yet, the people of Barbados were left holding the bag for some \$270 million. As a result, the yield felled to such an extent that it became necessary for the Democratic Labour Party to take a rational position in terms of trying to restructure the industry and obviously trying to regain lost ground as a result of persons who held this country to ransom. I say this in all seriousness that the Democratic Labour Party should be given the credit for having the courage to take over an industry at a time which for the

sake of their own strategy they held this country to ransom. It meant that we were unable to satisfy the local market. 5.15 p.m.

The whole question of whether you make profit off of imported sugar came as a result of having to import sugar in the first instance and it is known to all of us that we can import sugar into Barbados much cheaper than what it cost for us to produce it locally. That is a fact. What we can import sugar for is a lot cheaper because the quality of Barbados' sugar is very high and it has always been and we get an extremely good price on the world market for our sugar. It has nothing to do with any policy. It was a fact that the decline in the yield provoked the situation to the extent that we were forced to take that kind of a decision where we had to import sugar to satisfy the demand on the local market while at the same time trying to export, because of the higher price we were able to achieve from the export of the Barbados sugar. You will be able to note the results today two years later. It has nothing to do with the Barbados Labour Party.

The mere fact that there was restructuring and the mere fact that there was a new injection of funds, the mere fact that there was a new planting of sugar – that was started under the Democratic Labour Party. This country is now benefiting in 1996 as a result of the replanting programme that started in 1994. It takes 18 months before you can start benefiting from that programme. So it is silly for any of you to come in here and try to suggest that it has anything at all to do with the Barbados Labour Party. It has nothing to do with you. You find yourself in a situation where we have gone through the pain of the restructuring of the sugar industry and where we have taken the lands out of the hands of the people who were holding this country to ransom. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, what happened? I have found in Barbados that the Barbados Labour Party believes that they can jump up and holler and say **blah-blah** and confuse the minds of the people of this country. But on sober reflection when we sit without any rancour and really seriously examine what has happened in the industry we have to accept that the Democratic Labour Party took a very bold decision to take those lands out of the hands of the people. Because in any event the debt ratio of the said lands in relation to what they owed the National Bank was something like ten to one. The lands were worth nothing to them. So they had an attitude that they did not really care. Come and take the land. It does not matter. We are not going to lose anything. They would have benefited having borrowed up to \$270 million and certainly would not have to pay back a cent and just forfeit the land.

Mr. Speaker, what troubles me more than anything else is that in 1996 the Honourable Member for Christ Church East and some other Honourable Members are

painfully trying to explain why they have to lay off people and that they are in fact begging for accommodation for the said workers and some of them may be his constituents. What plan was there in place? Here is an administration again who came to this country and spoke about 30 000 jobs, yet they are now scrambling to find \$200 jobs for displaced workers and the Honourable Member for Christ Church East is begging...

Aside.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: I do not even hear because I cannot understand him when he is speaking. But they come now in 1996 begging for placements for 300 people after having promised that there would be some 30 000 jobs in this country.

Clearly, you must have had a plan because, if you are going to be employing several people in the industry, you cannot walk in here and say that we were making a profit off of sugar from placing it in a bond. That is a fact and it had to be done because a decision had to be made to satisfy the local market. We had to import sugar and we had to make a decision at the time. At the same time we were trying to restructure the industry so that we would have been able to increase the yield which would have had an impact on satisfying the local market. So it was not an objective of the Barbados Labour Party that you can come in here and grand-stand that you are trying to put sugar back on the shelves. We understand that all Barbadians like to know that they are using their own sugar. It is no policy of the Barbados Labour Party. It is part of the process that you came and found in your hands and you cannot come and claim it. But you had no plan in this Manifesto. There is no plan for agriculture. No where in this Manifesto at all is there any plan for agriculture.

We found a situation, Mr. Speaker, that called for a systematic restructuring of the industry. That system was thrust upon us by the same sugar producers and we were able to put in place a regime that had some vision and foresight and courage because we were able to turn around a very bad situation that today the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture can brag about the industry. But they can take no credit for it. It has nothing to do with them. They clearly lack the vision of having a plan for the industry because surely if they were promising 30 000 jobs some consideration must have been given to the agricultural sector so that at least 5000 people could be employed in it. There are several areas where we need to focus on agricultural development and I have argued in this House on several occasions how there should be programmes put in place to help landless farmers or small farmers. I have articulated that on several occasions in the Belle and in the Pine.

Aside.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: That is not true. I set about a small programme in even utilizing some of the land where we have a whole area in the Pine where a lot of small farmers now have cows and sheep and so forth there. There are about 30 farmers between the Pine and St. Barnabas who took advantage of that programme and I believe there are several areas across that we need to remove the stigma of agricultural development from the minds of the people because it is an area of economic activity that can create jobs. We have to be honest and we have to tell people that these are the areas where you can make money in this environment. But do not let us grand-stand on this issue or trivialize it because at the end of the day Barbados is going to suffer.

I have no problem in the continuing of the process by coming and seeking support by way of this Parliament. I have no problem with that. It is a continuing process that is necessary. If we are going to earn foreign exchange in this country, this is necessary and I feel comfortable with the restructuring that has gone on. I would like to publicly congratulate David Thompson who was the Minister of Finance at the time and the Right Honourable Lloyd Erskine Sandiford because they deserve the credit. I will not sit in this House of Assembly and allow anybody to trivialize the magnificent effort that was made by David Thompson as Minister of Finance in that reform programme. He needs to be highly commended for the work that was done by him during that period. History will record that that is one of the most profound pieces of work that has ever been undertaken by any administration in this country, and it is only a matter of time before that is fully ventilated.

Mr. Speaker, I really hope that we will remove this myth that there is any effort on the part of the Barbados Labour Party. They have done nothing. The Honourable Minister of Agriculture most famous act to date is one simply of presenting a bulldozer to students that blew up the very next day. He has no other record than to present an 18 year old bulldozer that to date has not functioned.

Aside.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: All those kinds of things you can trivialize, but at the end of the day I think that Parliament needs to take a very serious approach to these things. I do not believe that this side will have any divide on this particular matter but it is necessary for us to stop playing games with this. The turn around of the sugar industry to date is entirely due to the foresight, vision and courage that was undertaken by our own political leaders at the time in the Right Honourable Lloyd Erskine Sandiford and David Thompson. I just want to place on the record my congratulations to them and hope that this House once and for all will stop the foolishness in trying to trivialize the work of some very significant leaders in this country.

Thank you, Sir.
5.25 p.m.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I sense that all Members who have spoken in this debate have already exercised their wish to do so and I rise, therefore, to conclude the debate. I would like to thank Members of my side but before I do so I really have to say that this has been one of the saddest debates in my entire experience of Parliament. I was trying to find out exactly what motivated the cantankerous spirit of the Leader of the Opposition, that even before he got into his own speech he was trying to be disruptive. He was really a disruptive influence in this House today, Sir. It became apparent to me when I saw the document he made a document of the House.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Member for St. John is a creature of tantrums. He has been like that throughout his life. People who know him speak about the fact of how petty he is.

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the Honourable Member leave out the personal thing and let us move on, please?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I am coming to the point.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please. Honourable Members, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, it became apparent to me what was motivating all of this when I saw the **document** that was made a document of the House. Any time any international organisation, any reputable **international** body, any journal says that this Government is doing a good job, it throws the Member for St. John into a **deep** tantrum. Any time any constituency group, any group in Barbados, says that this Government is doing a good job, it throws the Member for St. John into a deep tantrum, because he has surrounded himself with a group of sycophants who are causing him to believe or putting out the propaganda that this administration is an incompetent administration, and he has started to believe his own propaganda.

What was at the basis of all this, Mr. Speaker, is a publication called the Offshore Financial Annual. The Member had just recently gone away to an offshore financial gathering at which Barbados' performance was being discussed among people of substance, and this is what he was presented with as Leader of the Opposition, the Government of Barbados is doing, in the minds of serious people, an excellent job and he could not stand it. What is very important for the House to understand is that

he quoted selectively from the document, which he made a document of the House, to try to discredit...

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I believe the Honourable Member, if I did not intervene, would be misleading the House. It is quite true that I travelled overseas, it is quite true that I received that document, but it is also quite true that the Minister of International Business in speaking at the functions said that the previous Government did an excellent job, and the former Minister of Finance was there, and he was merely continuing the policies the previous Minister had put in place, that all the legislation which had been brought was in fact designed by the previous Government.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I can now begin to understand why the Member for St. John finds it necessary to curse the Minister of International Business as an incompetent. If the Minister of International Business said that the former Minister had done all of what was done in the way of new legislation, he obviously was misleading the public internationally. The point I am making is, quite simply, that the Member for St. John cannot stand the fact that in the international newspapers, in the Offshore Financial Annual, which is read by all investors across the world, the Government of this administration is being praised for the steps it is taking. He gives the impression that this offshore financial sector has given an account of what was happening in Barbados that was replete with errors and put an unfortunate gloss on our state of affairs. What he did not say was that the same journal he cited so selectively from put these words in my mouth as attributed to me:

"Arthur sums up the situation as such. Barbados has still not emerged from severe financial difficulty. We must exercise utmost care in coming out of this situation lest we lose control and plunge to a situation which is possibly worse than that of our recent experience."

What he did not tell the House, Sir, was that the publication also went on systematically to chronicle all of the new things that this administration has done, including the introduction of new legislation in the field of international business to broaden the range of services that Barbados can offer, the introduction of new legislation that can broaden the nature of limited liability companies established in Barbados.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Do you know the Honourable Member's point of order?

Mr. SPEAKER: A point of order. Please, please,

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I yield on a point of elucidation, ...

Mr. SPEAKER: A point of order, please. Could you take your seat, please?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I yield on a point of elucidation, but a Member has to say what point of order he is rising upon.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, please. Could you take your seat please?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I yield only on points of elucidation. A Member has to say what point of order...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I am not misleading the House, that is a fact.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to yield except he has risen on a point of elucidation. I just cannot sit down because he rises. No!

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member. Will you take your seat, please?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House and I have been here when..... I will yield on a point of elucidation, Sir, but a Member cannot just rise in the House and say "On a point of order" without saying...

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has risen on a point of order. You are not in a position to determine whether it is a point of elucidation or a point of order, because you do not know what is the point the Honourable Member is going to make, and I am asking you kindly to take your seat, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: As you wish, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the Honourable Member make his point of order, please?

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am on a point of order and the Honourable Member is misleading the House in that I described quite carefully what the basic contents of the journal were about and I pointed out in particular that the journal highlights two major private sector projects – Westmoreland and St. James Beach Hotel

– as the only major projects, both of which are Democratic Labour Party projects and projects started under this Government.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just for the benefit of the Honourable Member for St. John, that really is a point of elucidation. There you are.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please. Let us move on orderly.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, the journal went on to say that in addition to our broadening the range of services in the international business sector, for which they gave us credit, they said that we also made immediate efforts to improve the fortunes of the manufacturing sector by abolishing the duties that were stifling the sector, and that is a fact. Mr. Speaker, it also went on to say that we moved also to remove the duties on agriculture that were stifling agriculture, and that is also a fact. It also made the point that this administration has granted certain concessions to the tourism facilities to upgrade the facilities beyond what existed before we came into office, Sir, and that is also a fact. The publication also went on to say that while many locals are still grumbling that the new Government's reforms are taking too long in coming, there are signs that an economic recovery is underway.

The Member for St. John tried to discredit this journal and this account by the view that the journalist did not know when the 24-3 electoral result took place, but he did not give the House the full benefit of the range of views expressed in this article. It is part of that set of tantrums that now informs why he is in the mood in which he is. The DLP has a problem. The problem is a very simple problem. On the one hand it wants to claim credit for the state of performance of the Barbados' economy and it wants to claim credit for it by saying that what is happening now, not only in his view but in the view of the trade union leaders and the private sector, is because of their policies, and then on the other hand it wants to say that the policies that are now being pursued reflect incompetence and mismanagement and that we do not know what we are doing. He cannot make up his mind **as** to whether to give credit for good performance because to claim credit for good performance is to say **that** there is a good performance taking place or to lambaste us for incompetence. At the centre of this debate is a conundrum in the mind of the Leader of the Opposition as to how he could pitch his attack at this Administration. That is what all of this is about.

5.35 p.m.

I say to him, Sir, that he resurrects the spectre of the Member for St. Michael South whenever he tries to say

that what is happening now is due to past policies, because the problem posed to the Democratic Labour Party by the Member for St. Michael South East is: if you are claiming credit for present performance on the basis of the policies of 1992, those policies were my policies and if those policies were so successful, why did you overthrow me as a leader and if you overthrew me as a leader for pursuing good policies should I not seek vindication?

All of you who threatened and promised those things – uneasy lies the head of the man who is Leader of the Opposition. That is all this debate is about. The folly, the froth, the tantrum thrown by the Leader of the Opposition when he was speaking and I was speaking has to do with the fact that he is caught in the midst of a dilemma whether to give Government credit for what is happening in this country and claim that it was our policies or whether to lambaste the Government and say that it does not know what it is doing, that it is caught up in incompetence. On the one hand, we kept hearing that the sugar industry is doing wonderfully well and it is their policy and, on the other hand, we are hearing that the Government is pursuing a policy of mismanagement in relation to the sugar industry. There is no problem on this side. There is a fundamental problem, in the mind of that child of tantrum, that leader of the Democratic Labour Party. I know that the Party has even within its midst people who can give it a greater sense of direction than the misdirection it is getting from that child of tantrums from St. John and the group of sycophants who have captured the heart and soul of the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, a lot of fanciful claims and he writes his own letters, signs them in all kinds of ways and he believes his own propaganda so that when Blair Simmons writes in his fine Italian hand he reads it and congratulates himself for the fact that somebody in the public is praising him when he is writing the letters praising himself. He has come to believe his own propaganda.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Please!

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: There is nothing worse than somebody believing his own propaganda. Now, Sir, I say to this Parliament that this nonsense that the Member for St. John has come with about the revolutionary nature of what is happening by way of sugar reform is a joke. The Barbados Sugar Industry has gone through changes time and time again.

In the 18th century and in 1897 and then in the early 20th century, over and over again the Barbados Sugar Industry has gone through a process of reform and in many instances it has involved a process of private estates running seriously into debt because of the fortunes of the international sugar industry and it has involved other

private entities coming and buying the estates out of Chancery and forming new companies. Many companies that have come to exist in Barbados today have arisen out of the crises of the Barbados Sugar Industry.

There was also an attempt at restructuring the industry in the early 1980s as well. What is happening now is not the first attempt and that attempt involved trying to put in place a sugar price support, linked to the sugar bonds, linked also to a process of diversification that would have caused the sugar industry to have a process of sugar production linked to diversification based upon the use of the sugar bonds and the price support mechanism as a trigger mechanism.

What happened is simply this. In 1986, the then Minister of Finance, who is not now in his seat, abandoned the price support mechanisms and the price support sugar bond mechanism as a way of restructuring the industry which had collapsed under the Democratic Labour Party. Now, Sir, this present approach to the reform of the sugar industry involved a number of simple variables. In 1992, the Democratic Labour Party found the sugar industry deep in debt. It could have allowed the sugar industry to go through the process that it has gone through historically, that is to allow other enterprises to come and buy it out, inject new capital and restructure the industry. That has been the fortune of the Barbados sugar industry from time immemorial.

What did the revolutionary reformer, the then Minister of Finance, the Member for St. John, do under the dictates of international organisations. He decided to set up a mechanism to block what could have been the most important process of land reform ever in the history of this country. The Government could have allowed the estates to be bought out by other private enterprises. It could have foreclosed on the estates and sold them out. But what did the Government do? The Government decided to assume the debt of the sugar industry, to put money into the sugar industry, to lease estates in debt from the owners...

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The records of the Ministry of Finance will document very clearly that foreclosure was not an option. The portfolio had been so badly managed by the Barbados National Bank that to this day they cannot attribute the exact debt to each plantation in Barbados. Foreclosure was out. There were two options: compulsory acquisition or leasing. That was all. So to put those...

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay. You have made your point.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, how could a Government have to compulsorily acquire estates that owed a government bank \$250 million? What

foolishness is that? What the Government sought to do, and what has been put in place, is a mechanism whereby the Government has leased from the same white people he likes to criticise estates that are seriously in debt to rehabilitate them and after 12 years they are going to revert to their previous owners.

Aside.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The Member says if the debt is paid, how is the debt going to be paid? The debt can only be paid by the sale of the agricultural assets or the non agricultural assets of the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust and how can that be done? Before the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust can sell anybody's property the previous owners have to agree first of all. I want to stress that point now, Sir. We have taken over estates from the same white people that he likes to curse with a view to working down the debt. To work down the debt, we might have to sell the assets. Before we can sell the assets, the previous owners have to agree.

5.45 p.m.

One of the reasons why this process is so slow is because a lot of companies are being formed for people to want to come and buy back companies at bargain basement prices in circumstances in which they have been allowed to do so because they have to agree if their property can be sold or not. The taxpayers have been committed to have their money put to restore those estates to good husbandry. It is in 12 years time that if their debts are not cleared they have to go back to the previous owners, and they can exercise the option to say whether the estates can be sold. This is revolutionary for the Member for St. John.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. What the Honourable Member is saying is not correct. The BACT will still have security over those estates, and even after the lease is completed, the owners still have obligations to the successor, the Barbados National Bank.

Therefore to make that statement as if the estates go right back into the hands of the owners with no obligation on their part means that the Honourable Member really does not understand the fundamental scenario which has occurred. He does not understand it, Sir.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I heard about the BACT having security. I wish that I could tell this House today, Sir, that the BACT is in a position to say that it has clear, unencumbered title deeds to all of the properties that are supposed to be vested in it, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please, order.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I would like to be able to say so, and I would like to be able to say that the BNB had itself clear of unencumbered title deeds to all of the properties of the past. When he talked about the BACT having security, what security?

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John, I have been speaking to you all day. All day you are sitting interrupting the House by shouting across the Floor. I am asking you, please. Could you proceed, please?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am begging this House to be measured in what we accept as this revolutionary process of restructuring which the Member for St. John is talking about.

The Government has leased estates from enterprises that were seriously in debt to the BNB. It is paying owners an income for the estates, and the estates after 12 years can revert to the previous owners. That is a fact. Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are fundamental problems also involved in selling off the non agricultural non arable assets of estates with a view of being able to work off the debt that the BACT is holding by way of bonds issued to the payment of the BNB. Each of them, Sir, is a subdivision. In some instances, Sir, title deeds have not yet been passed over.

In the case of Foursquare...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I am glad he raised it. One of the reasons why the transaction has not been passed over, is because there are problems surrounding payment of the Receiver who was put in place, and his use of title deeds as security and things of that character, Mr. Speaker. The problem is a complex problem.

Now, Sir, I am glad that the Member for St. John raised the question of Foursquare. I have nothing to hide. The matter of Foursquare was brought to the attention of the Director of Finance and Planning on August 10, by letter, after the transaction had taken place.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I have nothing to hide, and I would like to tell the House what happened, Sir.

Sir, on August 10, 1995, a Mr. Seale, the manager of BACT, who was appointed before September 16, 1994, wrote the Director of Finance and Planning bringing to his attention the circumstances under which Foursquare factory had been sold, indicating that a Mr. Seale had put up

an offer of \$350 000 to the BSIL to purchase Foursquare, indebted to the same Foursquare, which was owned by the Barbados Sugar Industry Ltd. We directed all enquiries to their Board.

The BACT however advised BSIL to obtain a valuation report and to advertise the property to ensure the best value was obtained. Two valuation reports were obtained indicating values of \$690 000 and \$650 000. The property was advertised in the local print media by BSIL. It appeared that the best offer made for the factory yard was \$450 000 by Hopefield Limited. The BSIL Board approved the sale and the Board of BACT agreed to release the security on completion of the sale. Mr. Reid, the Director of Finance wrote, "Please pass me the file urgently." After this, Sir, the transaction had been made.

Now, Sir, I am glad he raised it. The BSIL is a company in which the Government, Sir, is a very minor shareholder. I heard the Member for St. John quarrelling about the sale of these properties to white people who have controlled Barbados, Sir.

Now, he was Minister of Finance in 1993. He was also the Minister responsible for the Barbados National Bank in 1993/94. The Barbados National Bank is not an institution in which Government has a minority shareholding. It is wholly owned by the Government of Barbados ... the Minister of Finance. Not by the BSIL who can do whatever they want to do and then report after the fact. Barbados National Bank is wholly owned.

There is an estate called Bushy Park with a principal debt outstanding of \$1.78 million, interest of \$1.13 million, virtually \$3 million, Sir, sold to Foster Hall Estates Limited for \$1 million with the full knowledge and approval of the Member of St. John and a loss of \$1.9 million to the bank.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please. The Honourable Member, please, please. Could you make your point of order, please?

Asides.

Certain remarks made by the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter and the Member for St. John were ordered to be expunged from the record by Mr. SPEAKER.

Mr. SPEAKER: Could you make your point, please?

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He indicated that I gave my consent and had full knowledge of some sale to Foster Hall Estates of Bushy Park Plantation, Sir.

There is no record that I had full knowledge or gave my consent to the sale of that plantation. Those matters were dealt with at a technocratic level, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I never intervened in those matters.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay. You have made your point of order, Sir.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am also the Minister of Finance, and whenever the BNB intends to pay any serious transaction, it reports it to the Minister of Finance for prior clearance. It has to do so. It does so.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that the BNB sold to the Williams family that he likes to malign in this House, for \$1 million, an estate with a debt including principal and interest of almost \$3 million at a considerable loss to the bank with his full knowledge and support.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir. The Honourable Member is misleading this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: On what point do you rise?

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I rise on a point of order. Neither the Barbados National Bank or any other entity under my control raised the matter with me as Minister of Finance, and I saw no need for them to raise it with me as long as they were acting honestly, unless the Honourable Member is saying that the officer acted dishonestly, and he can say that if he wishes, but he cannot impute that to me; I had nothing to do with the sale of Bushy Park Plantation.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay, you have made your point, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, if the House believes that the Barbados National Bank, with a Board appointed by the Minister of Finance, would embark on an endeavour as serious as selling an estate for 1/3 of the debt of the estate without reference to the Minister of Finance, Sir, then you must tell me – I have to believe that the Board would have held the Minister of Finance in total contempt.

I know how the BNB operates, Sir. The BNB will not sell an estate with a debt of \$3 million on it for \$1 million without referring the matter to the Minister of Finance, Sir. 5.55 p.m.

The best offer for it was received. The BSIL in which the Government has only a very small minority share,

sold it upon the basis of an advertisement in the press and the best offer received, Sir, – and the Member for St. John will have now to come to explain because he likes to attack the Williams family and how much land they own and how these white interests in Barbados have consolidated interests – how come it could be that Foster Hall Estates Limited, owned by the Williams family could end up buying, out of the BNB, an estate for a million dollars that carried a debt of \$3 million. So all is hot air, a charade, by a man who has come in his time as Minister of Finance to be regarded as the great white hope by the white people of this country. They loved him, Sir because they knew the deals that he was prepared to cut. I say to the House, Sir, that if the international observers, like local people believe that Barbados is being better run, and if it upsets the Member for St. John, it is because they too know that if the DLP had been in office now, Sir, there would have been casino gambling in this country, thanks to the Member for St. John. They know, Sir, that Barbados is better run now than it would have been because had the DLP won office in 1994...

Aside.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Rum drinking? They had to pick you up often and **carry** you home drunk on people's shoulders. Up to Saturday morning the Member for the City saw you drunk in a man's house down in Brighton, after being out canvassing with the candidate.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay, please, please. Order, please. The Honourable Member for St. Peter, please! Could you press on?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I am pressing on, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Could you press on with the winding up of the Resolution, please?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I am doing that, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please.

Aside.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: That is too low.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member you have two minutes to wind up, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Fundamentally, Sir, a fundamental decision has been taken for the sugar industry of Barbados. It has been that the people of Barbados must not continue to endure the torture of having to consume dirty imported sugar and that Barbados must be put once again on the road to self sufficiency where sugar is

concerned. The fundamental difference, Sir, between the Democratic Labour Party and the Barbados Labour Party where sugar purchase is concerned, Sir, is that the Democratic Labour Party by its sugar policy committed this country to an *ad infinitum* process of importing sugar and it even set up an institution, Mr. Speaker, whose fortune depended upon the import of sugar and we have changed that. On that, Sir, this debate hangs.

The Member for St. John can regale himself about whether we are perceived by the public as making a change or not, Sir. But the public is satisfied that this administration wants to stop the foolishness of Government having people consume sugar from abroad and the racketeering associated with that sugar from abroad as distinct from the past dispensation. That is why I am proud, Sir, to be able to bring this Resolution to Parliament because this Resolution is going to survive to ensure that we will have in this country a sugar industry that can once again produce enough sugar in Barbados that will allow the Barbadian public to consume only Barbadian sugar. If, Sir, that is not a piece of psychological progress as distinct from and in addition to being a major piece of economic and financial progress, Sir, I will never see psychological progress in this country. With those remarks, Sir, I commend this Resolution to this Parliament. I thank you.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, could we have order, please? Order please.

ORDER NO. 2 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE SALE OF LAND AND THE BUILDINGS THEREON SITUATE AT SPEIGHTSTOWN, ST. PETER TO THE BARBADOS NATIONAL BANK

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Resolution before this House seeks permission to dispose by way of sale of 2 277 square metres of Government owned land, together with the buildings **thereon** at Speightstown, St. Peter to the Barbados National Bank for the sum of \$260 000.

The property was originally utilised by the Lions Club North as its headquarters for 14 years between 1979 and 1993 when the arrangement expired. Prior to that the building had been used as a health care centre for the Speightstown **area**. The Barbados National Trust identified the property as one of the great historical areas in the Speightstown area and included it on a list of areas to be renovated in the Speightstown Restoration Project.

The Barbados National Trust is of the impression that the restoration of Speightstown and its unique street

architecture would facilitate the re-establishment of the commercial life of the town as well as create a place of interest for visitors.

The Barbados National Bank expressed an interest in purchasing the property known as Arlington in February 1994 to house the bank's commercial operations in Speightstown. The Bank indicated that its plans for the property included the construction of a single park multi storey building stretching along the northern and western ends of the property and wrapping around the old building, yet revealing its architectural features. It was proposed then, Mr. Speaker, that the Government would be responsible for the refurbishment of the old building to such a level and in such a manner as to ensure its compatibility with the new structure and that the Government undertake to maintain the old structure at a standard which is acceptable and does not undermine the environmental integrity and efficacy of the bank's building. 6.05 p.m

Negotiations between the Barbados National Bank and the Division of Housing ensued after their offer. The purchase was made and these negotiations also involved Barbados National Trust. After prolonged negotiations, it was finally agreed that the property would be sold to the bank; for \$260 000. The Barbados National Bank would offer the building back to the Government for use as a civic centre on the following conditions: A lease of 99 years at \$1.00 per annum. Government would be responsible for a proportion of the taxes. Government would within a reasonable time refurbish and maintain Arlington for use as a civic centre. The Barbados National Bank should provide approximately 5000 square feet of space in the bank's new building for use by the Post Office and Branch Library. The Barbados National Bank would give consideration to renting the 5000 square feet of office space to Government at a concessionary rate. All the legal requirements have been completed. The property has been finally surveyed. The Resolution has been examined by the Attorney General and I now seek parliamentary approval for this Resolution.

I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Resolution and to speak as the Member for St. Peter. I am pleased that this particular action is within the real plan for the St. Peter area and to make sure is executed rather than to execute after I have left office. The going up being financed by a marina complex, which is a

cultural centre for Speightstown, duty-free shops, restaurants and so on. I must let the House know that the first developer who has applied for and is likely to gain approved status under the Special Development legislation is that black investor who has invested in Speightstown beside the site of the new BNB.

The BNB investment is going to transform the centre of Speightstown by not only erecting a building of architectural integrity but also ensuring that the old Arlington House that has been in a state of decay for some considerable time is restored to its former glory. It is also going to create scope for the re-development of Speightstown. As you are aware, presently the public facilities in Speightstown, constituting a post office and a library, are in a building located on the beach. Now they are not only cramped but there is absolutely no reason why a post office and a library should be located on a beach. The relocation of those public services to a building away from the beach will allow Government property on the beach to be pressed into a more high value and higher economic activity, and that is one of the properties that is invested in the Tourism Investment Development Corporation with a view to having it part of a process for the national development of Speightstown.

I am pleased to tell the House, Sir, that not only are we having a cultural centre built by private enterprise in Speightstown but on the outskirts of Speightstown a marina is being built by private enterprise. On Wednesday I will do the ground breaking for a new jetty in the centre of Speightstown to bring back pleasure craft and cruises back to Speightstown in the belief that the future of Speightstown has to be a centre for cultural activity. Most of these activities will not involve any public expenditure. The marina, jetty, Adrianna Complex, and the rehabilitation of Arlington are all private enterprises and it just goes to show that once the correct environment is created in which the private sector can see a way forward they will act. There is a Speightstown Association already in place to participate in the re-development of the town. We are now putting together plans for good housing on Queen Street and other initiatives to make Speightstown return to its former lustre.

I am also, Sir, aware that similar plans are very well advanced to bring real activity to the Carlisle Bay and the Greater Bridgetown area and the Minister of Public Works, in collaboration with the Minister of Agriculture and I think with the Member for St. Joseph, started to draft plans for putting together a Scotland District Businessmen Association because there is tremendous scope for investment in areas like Bathsheba and other areas of the Scotland District. But I want to say this, Sir, that the investments taking place in Speightstown are predominantly private sector investment or quasi-statutory investment.

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They will transform the town and it will cause the town to move away from being a sleepy fishing village to being a service centre. I am pleased to be associated with this particular investment by the BNB which will add to the range of services offered by the town, rationalize the use of property and be able to transform and rehabilitate Arlington House into its true capacity as one of Barbados' great heritage assets. For that reason, Sir, I am happy to be associated with the work of the Ministry of Public Works and I give this Resolution my fullest blessing.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I would just like also to say a few words about this Resolution because the development that is proposed bears on one of my Ministries. In the project, the Barbados National Bank has agreed to provide space for a new post office in St. Peter. As the Honourable Prime Minister said, the post office is presently located on the other side of the road on the sea side. It is not only inappropriately located from the point of view of its economic use and value, but it is insecure. We were very grateful to the Barbados National Bank for devising and developing the project which will allow us to have space in more commodious and more secure surroundings at Arlington.

I am also happy to support the Resolution because if Members are observing carefully, the Capital Works Programme of the Government is now beginning to take shape as our own programme. We have been caught this year in the back log of projects that languished under the Democratic Labour Party which were tied to international financing and which financing we almost lost. It was therefore necessary to fast track those projects with a view to complying with the obligations under the international projects as developed with the Inter-American Development Bank. And so I am pleased this afternoon to be able to report that in the next two years the House and the Public of Barbados will see the development of a number of projects which are home grown within this Government.
6.15 p.m.

In relation to the Post Office, in addition to this project an advertisement was published some weeks ago for substantial works to be done to the General Post Office at Cheapside. In 1982 that project was completed and there has been little maintenance. Since then the property is in great need of repair, the roof is in a very bad state and as a result of that there has been leakage of water into the electrical systems. I believe that the tender will be re-advertised shortly, Sir, and we will be able to make significant improvements to the property at Cheapside.

In addition to that, Sir, in all of the pre-election talk, the talk prior to 1994, one heard of projects that were uncompleted by the Democratic Labour Party, started and not finished.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The old Queen's College, St. Thomas Secondary School, Sherbourne. I never heard of the project at Oistins in Christ Church. It was only when I became Minister responsible for Home Affairs that I found out that hidden off the road, not easily visible, near the present site of the Land Tax Office at Oistins there is a massive steel structure that was put up by the Democratic Labour Party, ostensibly for the construction of a new Post Office for Christ Church, and that steel is still there and has been there ever since now nearly five years. It has been exposed to the elements for nearly five years. With a view to other things, Sir, I am trying to get the information as to what it cost to put up that steel structure. It was never completed.

I wish to assure the Honourable Member for Christ Church South that we have asked for reports to be done by the engineers as to the structural integrity of that steel at Oistins after all these years. I understand there is, and I saw it myself, some little evidence of corrosion, but I am not an expert in that area, so we have asked for a report on the structural integrity on that steel. Secondly, we are asking quantity surveyors to let us know what it would cost to dismantle the steel and what it will cost to construct the building, so that we will have options to determine. But it is quite a disgrace that that steel has been there... You cannot see it easily from the road, you have to look or go down there, and then you see more evidence of Democratic Labour Party confusion.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: You never talked about this in here. It was never mentioned in here or on any platforms, it was hidden from the public. You can't hide it from me, though.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: It will be a campaign issue? You know I will talk about it.

Sir, in addition to that, we are planning before the end of this financial year to do repairs to other Post Offices, including the Post Office at Welchman Hall where we have to improve the lighting. The lighting at Welchman Hall Post Office is bad and there are also one or two other structural things that have to be done.

I want also to mention one other project, Sir, we are looking at, that has to do with Post Offices. Two weeks ago the Honourable Member for St. George North and myself and officials went to St. George. The Post Office at St. George is really totally unsuitable for

use as a Post Office. The space in that Post Office is about from that wall to the Honourable Minister of Health and about this wide [*indicating a space just behind the Speaker's Chair to the middle of the Government's front bench*]. There are 19 people working in there... one toilet! A couple of yards away it appears to us, Sir, that there is a substantial structure, the old St. George Girls' School, a good, solid structure, and we need to just rehabilitate that and we can have a proper Post Office with ample space and ample parking. At the same time I wish to suggest that we can also assist the community by bringing services to that community in St. George by returning the Land Tax Department and the Licensing Department to the heart of St. George, rather than having the people who reside in St. George go all the way to Oistins to register their cars. Bring it back and we can have all these services there in a refurbished building and at the same time there is also enough space where I can get a small Police Post.

It is very important that we decentralise some of the operations of the Police. We are seeing very positive results from having a police post in Haynesville, in Deacons and having a police presence in Six Roads. We are also looking for suitable land in the Pine/Wilkey area. I am going to ask the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East later on this evening if he can find a spot or go with me a day next week to look at one, and I will tell you why, Sir.

This project that has been inaugurated by the National Bank, they put up the building and provide the services for other agencies, can be replicated in the area of the Pine. The Barbados National Bank needs a building to store documents. By law they have to keep documents and records for, I think it is 10 years. It may be seven, but I think it is 10 years. They need a building to put up all of this paper that is secure, and I believe from discussions with the senior directorate of the National Bank that they will be willing to put down a building in the Wilkey area where they can store their records and we can have a police presence there. We need space for probably eight or nine policemen, parking and so on. That is the kind of property we are looking for, somewhere to store documents and have a police presence. The value of that is that the police will be there also to render security to the National Bank. Once we find the location I am sure we will find a responsive chord in the Minister of Finance to that type of project. Again we would be decentralising the police services in the communities, helping to work within communities.

We are getting some very heartening results. As at September this year, in terms of crime reported to the police, this year compared with 1995, January to September we recorded 7 822 cases. For 1996 slightly less – 7 801, a difference of .003 and in relation to crime against visitors whereas in 1992 January to September we recorded 523

cases for the period January to September this year we recorded 309. Last year it was 396. The same period. So crime against visitors is coming down in harmony with the kind of crime in the society generally.
6.25 p.m.

I wish to pay public tribute to the police for the work that they are doing. I think the Honourable Member for St. Philip South will agree that since the police activity in the Six Roads Marchfield area that things have tended to quiet down in that area, whereas prior to the unfortunate murder we really had some serious problems in that district. It tells us that there still is respect for the police but perhaps we need to change our strategies and let the police interact more with the community and have more community police.

That is all I want to say on this Resolution and I am pleased to support the Resolution moved by my friend, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that his Resolution do now pass.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I could not let the opportunity pass. It makes me very happy to support this Resolution and particularly... I won't be long, Sir.

The tourism development programme of which I have spoken several times in this House, and Honourable Members will know by now, has 3 major sub-programmes, sub-programmes A, B, and C. Sub-programme B deals with the urban renewal, urban rehabilitation and restoration and particularly Bridgetown, Speightstown and St. Lawrence Gap. These are also three of four already designated special development areas that the Government is going to be pursuing as high priority.

This move by the Barbados National Bank today... and let me say, Mr. Speaker, that I would wish to congratulate the Chair and the Board of the Barbados National Bank for the far-seeing attitude that they have brought to this, the way in which they have conceptualised the role of a bank in the context of the redevelopment of a civic centre at Speightstown.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, 300 years ago, Speightstown was more of a vibrant, bustling city than even Bridgetown was. In those days, it was known as Little Bristol. We are hoping Sir, that in the early 21st century Speightstown will again become a vibrant and busy and bustling place where people will go to do business, where people will go

for recreation, where you will find wonderful tourist resorts and all of it is in the making and it is there on the ground.

We were in Government in an earlier administration when the Honourable Member for Christ Church South was a Minister of Tourism and when the then **Heywoods** became a tourist resort. Today, it is known as part of what is the beginning of a chain of the Almond Beach Resort, the hotel chain. The Rt. Honourable Prime Minister has made reference to the Port St. Charles marina. It is envisaged that the jetty is going to start up works which are expected to start up momentarily. It is expected that small **cruise** liners will call at that jetty bringing tourists to Speightstown. It is expected that **from** the larger cruise liners at the Bridgetown Port they will go by sea to that jetty as well, revitalising Speightstown.

Salt Pond. There is much that the Government has to do in respect of **infrastructural** works. Salt Pond has to be cleaned up and landscaped. The whole development along there, Fort Denmark. Mr. Speaker, Sir, Speightstown will again be the centre of a thriving community where people live, where people work and where people play.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this also speaks to public sector/private sector collaboration in the way that we want to see it continue and it is good that it should start at Speightstown. We have been giving lip service to it on all sides for many years but now it is coming to reality. I am really sincere when I say that the Chairman and the Board of the Barbados National Bank are far-seeing and sensitive when they would undertake not only to finance the restoration of **Arlington** House, by far the most historic heritage house in the Speightstown area... Remember what is happening here, Mr. Speaker. The Bank is fully taking on board the Ministry of Tourism's priority thrust for heritage tourism and nature based tourism.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I went down one day with officials from the Bank, including the Chairman, and we looked at what the possibilities were. It pleases me that as the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister said that a post office and a library would be taken off prime beach property. Now, the past administration, at Holetown, made a cardinal mistake. They took a magistrates court, a police station, post office, library and a satellite clinic and put them on one of the prime beaches in Barbados and it wasn't as though there wasn't alternative locations available for that. A terrible mistake so that even the projects that they finished or almost finished were poorly informed. Poor judgment!

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Administration will not make a similar mistake at Speightstown. What we want to do is to open up those windows to the sea. There is a lot of beach based activity which is going to flow from that. All kinds

of vendors, accommodation will be made for them at the beaches and all kinds of other activities which will add to the product offering that we have in tourism, these are going to come on stream very quickly at Speightstown.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can only say that this is the first salvo and it is good that it has started with a heritage connection and it is good that it will have started with this collaborative effort where the private sector and the public sector because, by extension, through the Barbados National Bank, the people of Barbados are making this investment. I have great praise for the Honourable Minister and I would wish to add my support to this Resolution. I thank you.

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

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, we gave notice of a Parliamentary Question at the beginning of this day's Sitting and I would like to call Question Time.

QUESTION TIME

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg that the response to Parliamentary Question No. 34 be laid.

Mr. SPEAKER: If that is the will of the House, so be it. The answer will be laid.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House be adjourned until Tuesday, November 12, 1996 at 11 o'clock in the morning.

Speaking on the Adjournment, Sir, I would wish to draw it to the attention of Honourable Members that one of our members of staff, namely, the Marshal of this House, Mr. **Orville** Best, is about to demit office, so to speak. Mr. Best has been a Marshal in this House since July 1, 1966. It is not without significance, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that this is the 30th Anniversary of the Independence of **Barbados**. He came to us as a Deputy **Marshal**/ Messenger¹ Library Attendant. He was a Jack of many **trades** in this House of Assembly in July of 1966. Now 30 years later – his service is as old as independence is in Barbados – he is about to retire finally from the service of this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Mr. Best was appointed Deputy Marshal and Library Attendant in the House of Assembly on March 10, 1970 with effect from July 1, 1966. He

was then appointed Marshal of the Parliament with effect from April 1, 1990 and attained the requisite age April last.

Mr. Best is going to be succeeded by the choice of the Management Commission of this Parliament, Mr. Lewis, whom Honourable Members would have seen being trained and brought on stream by Mr. Best. Even for that last, duty we have to be very thankful to him.

Let me say, Sir, that I was not here in this Honourable Chamber in 1966 when Mr. Best first came to us; but when I came into this House for the first time in May of 1976 he was there. I have to say that I have always found him to be the most courteous and polite person. I have always found him to have the bearing and the manner which I assumed, and today assume, that one would wish to see in a person in the post of Marshal of the House.

The Marshal, Sir, and I suppose in all Houses of Parliament, tends to be not so much heard but seen, scurrying up and down and they are in a way the glue that keeps this Chamber going. The Clerks at the Table have their special function. We come in here from week to week and we do our jobs. There are a whole host of people who are the support staff in here and who look after us and allow us to do as good a job as we do. There are policemen who work here. There are caterers who work here. There are cleaners. There is a reportorial staff. There is a security staff and so on but the Marshal has a very special role in every Parliament and I would believe that I would be speaking on behalf of all Honourable Members when I would say that over the 30 years Mr. Orville Best has carried out this duty with the greatest dignity and with the greatest respect to Honourable Members.

He is there at our beck and call. We would say to Mr. Best, "I want to see Hansard nineteen ... whatever." Sometimes you cannot remember which debate it is that you were searching for but somehow he finds it and he brings it to you. We do not have a Parliament where there is water standing by for us and if one wanted to have that he was there for you.

I know of my own knowledge that there are personal, little duties that Honourable Members would ask Mr. Best to carry out from time to time. Sometimes you don't even have the time to go to the bank and Mr. Best would do that for you. If somebody had a headache and there was no headache medicine, no Phensic, no Aspirin in here, Mr. Best is the one who would have to run out and get that for you. His role has been much and varied.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying this with the deepest sincerity. We are going to discover only now when he is taking his leave of us how important a function he carried

out in here and how important to the good running of this Parliament he was. It is going to take more than one person now to replace Mr. Best when he goes into his final retirement from here. We will have a Marshal. Already we have another security person down there. This Parliament is becoming bigger and busier and he has seen it through these 30 years most of the time alone in here carrying out these several functions. You are going to see between now and the end of this century that you are going to need maybe 2 or 3 or perhaps even 4 persons to carry out the functions that this man alone has shouldered over the past 30 years.

It is fitting, Sir, that in this month of Independence celebrations that we should pay high honour and high respect to you, Mr. Best, and wish you the very best upon your retirement.

I would like to think, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that at some point, especially in this month of Independence, an appropriate function would be planned so that we might toast Mr. Best and we might present a suitable gift to him and that he might be in a position to hear perhaps from us more intimately of the many ways in which we would like to say thank you to him, and that he would have a better appreciation of the very high esteem in which we have held him.

You know, in here can be a very rambunctious place, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and today was one of those days and Members can sometimes get testy and so on and so forth, but Mr. Best has always kept his cool. He is one of the most placid, if not the most placid personality, that I have ever met in my life. He never is ruffled and he always knows what his duty is. Visitors to this House have commented to me from time to time at the manner in which he so politely and so courteously has conducted them when they visited this Chamber.

He is always understated. He is not a person whom you would hear coming and that is the way we require it to be done in this House and he has learnt it well. It will not be an easy task for a successor to rise to the competence of Mr. Best and I have no hesitation, Sir, in wishing him well in his retirement and offering to him the very best wishes of this Honourable Chamber.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to associate myself with the remarks of the Leader of the House. As you would have noticed Mr. Best came into the service of the House in 1966. I believe that is the same year in which I became a Member of this House.

His unfailing courtesy, helpfulness to Members of the House is renowned. Throughout that period of time that he has served us he has earned the respect and the admiration of all Honourable Members on all sides. I well recall

the numerous favours Mr. Best has done for all Honourable Members and also the wide range of his experience which he has shared with Members from time to time. He is very proud of the fact that he is a Northerner, that he comes from St. Lucy and to judge the type of person he is, sometimes he tells me in particular, stories about his visits to the southern part of the Island, particularly Oistin Town. I am told that his admiration for Workmans is also well known.

6.45 p.m.

He started as a Library Attendant and it is in that sphere of activity that he has been particularly helpful to Members. He obviously, during the period of time when he worked in that capacity, paid great attention to the Library in Parliament for he is particularly capable of helping Honourable Members to find various documents, whether they be documents that have been laid on the Table of the House or documents that are recorded in the place where the debates of the House are recorded.

One of the other matters that one could remember Mr. Best by is the fact that he always dressed in this House in a very dignified and well tailored manner. I believe that at some period of time in his life he did pursue that profession. I would like to join with the Honourable Leader of the House and wish that for his contribution to this Honourable House that an appropriate occasion be found when all of us, in a lighter atmosphere, would be able to pay tribute to him for his outstanding service.

I would like to wish him a very happy retirement and I do hope, Sir, that periodically this House will be graced by his presence while we are Sitting. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. F. W. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I rise to associate myself with the remarks and to associate Members on this side with the sentiments expressed by the Honourable Leader of the House and the Honourable Member for Christ Church South on the issue of the imminent retirement of Mr. Best, the Marshal of this House.

I have not been a Member of this House for very long, a short two years, but in that short time I have had a chance to savour close up the dignity and the ease with which Mr. Best discharged his responsibilities as Marshal. I have sat here week after week and observed the alertness with which he pursued his responsibilities, always keeping an eagle eye out for the wave of Members of both sides of the House and always ready to respond to their requests as those requests came.

Long before I became a Member of the House of course, I used to come here to watch and to listen to debate and therefore before October 1994 I observed him as well. I think that he has become over the last 30 years an

organic part of this House and that he will be sorely missed once he goes into a well deserved retirement.

Like the Honourable Leader of the House I believe that in the very near future some occasion and opportunity should be found to pay more fitting tribute to him and to give him a more hearty send off into his retirement but for now I should like, on behalf of the Members of the Opposition, to express our gratitude to him for the massive, substantial and wise contribution which he made to the efforts of this House to serve the people of Barbados and as he goes into a well deserved retirement he must be assured that he carries the very best wishes of Honourable Members on this side of the House. I am obliged to you, Sir.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to associate myself with the remarks that have come from both sides on this occasion. I just want to say, Sir, that I am absolutely sure that another occasion will present itself when I will be able to speak in a more forthcoming way on all of the various attributes of Mr. Best that I know Members of the House may not be in possession of.

I, Sir, want to say on this occasion that this House is blessed with officers and persons serving it who have really been a credit to this institution and continue to be a credit to this institution and who add to the great esteem that this House enjoys in every place where parliamentary government is practised. It is the example of Mr. Best, Clerks, Reporters and other long standing Members and servants of this House that the best traditions of Parliament are upheld. I will have, as I said, more ample occasion to speak on Mr. Best's attributes. He has been unfailing in his courtesies to me as a Member of this Parliament but he has also, Sir, – when I was a young parliamentarian I used to attend dances in my constituency, every Saturday night and I would urge Members of Parliament to see the value of that exercise – distinguished himself on the floors of the dance halls of St. Peter, Sir, and in addition to teaching me good parliamentary practice, Sir, he has also taught me a lot about the fine art of dancing. I will not put it into practice this evening; but he has been a credit to this institution. His quiet, kindly, gentle manner has really been warmly welcomed by all Members, Sir. I regret his going but I cannot think, Sir, of a greater presence in this Parliament and I associate myself with the remarks that have been made.

I beg to second the motion, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, before moving the adjournment, of course I would like to associate myself, the Chair, and I am sure I speak for all members of staff here at Parliament, with all the comments that have been made about Mr. Best. Coming here two years ago,

not knowing much about what was happening, I found Mr. Best to be extremely helpful, very, very courteous and a very kind man who is always there willing to give you words of advice and to encourage you.

Mr. Best of course was a man who was very dedicated to his job **and** I think that all of you would agree, from the way how he carried himself, his dress, this would tell you how he felt about his work. We, at Parliament, of course are indeed very sorry that the time for Mr. Best to retire has come and we can only wish him all the best as he goes into retirement and hope that he spends very many years of enjoyable retirement.

Mr. Best of course is one of the many good examples that we have here at Parliament of a staff always cooperative and always very willing to help. Sometimes, of course, we get so busy we tend to forget that the work of

Parliament is dependent a lot on the staff here. I think that all staff members as exemplified by Mr. Best are very cooperative and always willing to assist at all times.
6.55 p.m

On behalf of the staff of Parliament, the Clerk and Deputy Clerks, I know the time will come when we will all meet and have the appropriate mast with Mr. Best. For the time being, we place it on record that all of us here are very appreciative of your service and we wish you all the best in the future.

The question that this Honourable House be now adjourned until 12th November, 1996 at 11.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative, and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the Sitting accordingly.
7.00 p.m.

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