

THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1994 - 99

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, November 11, 1997

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.20 a.m. on Tuesday, November 11, 1997.

PRESENT

His Honour I. A. ROETT, 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)

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

Sir HAROLD St. JOHN, Q.C., LL.B.

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

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

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

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.), (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)

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

Mr. D. CARTER (Chairman of Committees)

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed. (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.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY

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

Mr. D. St. t. KELLMAN

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)

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL, B.Sc. Econ. (Hons.), M.A. Public Finance.

Prayers were led by Rev. Canon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is now in session. Minutes of Tuesday, October 28, 1997.

MINUTES

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Minutes of proceedings of this Honourable House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday the 28th of October, 1997, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: If there are no corrections or observations, then let those Minutes stand confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR

THE SPEAKER

I am to report that I am in receipt from the Auditor General of the accounts and statements for the months of April and May, 1997.

PAPERS

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am commanded to lay the Annual Report of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation for the year 1994 and also, Sir, the Report of the Accountant General for the Financial Year, 1996-1997.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move the Severance Payments (Validation of Fund Contribution Payments) Bill, 1997 to be read a first time.

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

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

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move the first reading of a Bill to make provision for the payment of Government debts by the use of serial bonds.

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 7 - TO MOVE THE SECOND READING OF A BILL TO AMEND THE SHIPPING (OIL POLLUTION) ACT, CAP. 296A

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: The Shipping Oil Pollution Act, 1994, No. 16 subsequently retitled Cap. 296A at

section 56 incorporated a number of international conventions including the 1969 International Convention of Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage and its 1976 Protocol as well as the 1971 International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage and its 1976 Protocol. That also sets out some of the provisions of those two Conventions.

The Shipping Oil Pollution (Amendment) Bill before Parliament today seeks to amend Cap. 296A consequent on a decision of Cabinet that Barbados should accept the 1992 protocols to those two Conventions to which I just referred, The CLC Protocol, for shortness, and the Fund Protocol. These Conventions were formulated originally by the International Maritime Organisation to ensure that adequate compensation is paid to those who suffer as a result of oil pollution damage. Prior to 1969, in fact, the ship owner had no obligation to make any payment in relation to oil pollution damage sustained by a country.

The way the funds of those Conventions work, Mr. Speaker, is that under the CLC Convention, those persons who were affected by oil pollution damage were able to claim for damages from the owner of the ship which was judged to be responsible for the oil pollution. But, ship owners were able to limit their liability according to the size of their ship and then insure that liability. The maximum limit of liability under the 1969 Convention, what I call the CLC Convention, is in fact US\$21 million for an incident involving a ship of over 105 gross tonnes. In fact that is the maximum limit and it was even less for ships of smaller size. But then additional compensation was available under the 1971 Fund Convention which established an International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund that administers a system under the Fund and that Fund pays to those who cannot recover full compensation from the ship owner or insurer. That Fund provided a supplementary compensation up to a total limit for any one incident of US\$90 million.

Those two Conventions, I am speaking of the original Conventions, I do not have the Protocols as yet, provided some benefits to countries that had acceded to those two conventions. Because, we had a situation where compensation was available to Governments or to other authorities which had incurred cost for clean-up operations or even preventative measures after the escape or discharge of oil, and also to private bodies and individuals who had suffered damage as a result of the pollution. So that, for example, fishermen whose boats or nets had become polluted, or who suffered loss of income as a result of the pollution, and even hoteliers at the seaside were able to get compensation under those two original Conventions.

But, while those numbers that I have quoted earlier, US\$21 million and US\$90 million might sound high,

really it was recognised that from the outset, in terms of the excess of liability and damage that can result as a result of oil pollution damage, and increasingly over the years, it has become clear that, that level of compensation was really not satisfactory. Only a couple of years ago we had the Exxon Valdez incident where in fact, the damage exceeded US\$2 billion. So when you speak of US\$90 million it is really not a lot.

The Protocols, Mr. Speaker, of 1992 to which I referred earlier, retained the underlying philosophies of the 1969 Conventions, but also introduced a number of other improvements. In particular, they put in place a special liability limit for the owners of very small vessels...an owner of a vessel not exceeding 5 000 tonnes, his liability limit was set at US\$4.5 million. But then, the liability limit increased on a linear scale up to US\$88 million for ships of 140 000 tonnes or over. That is under the CLC Protocol of 1969. The Protocol to that Convention increased the amount recoverable from US\$21 million to US\$88 million and I am speaking in terms of maximum recoverable amount. But the fund which tops up any claim is the 1992 Protocol. That increased the limit of compensation payable including, of course, any compensation that would have been obtained under the original convention to the sum of US\$203 million. So this is in fact, a sizeable increase in both protocols, in the amount previously recoverable under the two original conventions of 1969 and 1971 respectively.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the 1992 Protocol also gave certain other benefits. For example, in terms of the scope of application for recovery, it extended the geographical coverage from beyond the territorial sea, in fact, to the exclusive economic zone. So, the geographical area was also extended. It also went on to enact that pollution damage caused by spills of bunker or engine room oil of unladen tankers, is also covered and damage resulting therefrom can also be recoverable. Currently, you can only recover for damage sustained as a result of oil cargo. These are the only cargoes that are covered.

Also, at present, expenses from preventative measures are recoverable even when no spill of oil occurs. Provided of course, that there is an eminent danger of oil pollution and you take preventative measures, you can recover the cost of those preventative measures. For clarity, a definition of pollution damage has been put in which retains the basic wording of the old convention but makes it clear that for environmental damage only costs incurred for reasonable measures to restore the contaminated environment are included in the concept of pollution damage. In a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, those are the benefits, primarily the increased monetary benefit to accrue to the countries who would accede to the 1992 convention. 11.30a.m.

In particular, in the case of Barbados, we currently have a number of ships on our register that operate in European ports and these European ports of course include ports of countries that are already party to the 1992 Protocol so that on each port visit by a ship under the Barbados flag to any of those ports the Barbadian ships are required to purchase increased insurance coverage since they are currently insured under the lower liability limit under the original convention of 1969 and 1971.

If we were to accept these new conventions, as we have already through Cabinet, Barbadian ships will be liable for a higher limit of liability. Barbados as a country would also benefit as well but the cost of acquiring the additional or higher insurance coverage by the ships under the Barbados flag would in fact be less than having to take out *ad hoc* insurance every time that they go into a European port that is already a part of the United Nations Protocol. It is of tremendous benefit to the ships under our flag and it makes things a lot cheaper for them.

The Bill before the House today, Mr. Speaker, really just seeks to make amendments to the Shipping (Oil Pollution) Act to incorporate the major points set out in the Protocols of 1992 to which I just referred and I am not going to go through them individually but just to say that section 2 includes a number of new definitions. The exclusive economic zone is now included. Some tidying up is also done there in relation to some typographical errors that previously took place. The definition of oil has also been changed to incorporate the definition in the new Protocol which means "any persistent hydrocarbon mineral oil such as crude oil, fuel oil, heavy diesel oil and lubricating oil, whether carried on board a ship as cargo or in the bunkers of such a ship."

As I said earlier, the original provision only dealt with oil cargoes so this definition has now been broadened.

The definition of "ship" is also broadened in the amendment to section 20 since it defines a ship.

"A vessel... shall be regarded as a ship only when it is actually carrying oil in bulk as cargo and during any voyage following such carriage unless it is proved that it has no residues of such carriage of oil in bulk aboard."

The amendments are set out in the Bill except that with respect to clause 5 there is an amendment which has been circulated and on the reading in Committee, I would want to move that amendment further into the Bill. This deals with the figures at section 23 of the principal Act which is to be amended at section (a) and (b) and section (b) in particular on this occasion. Section 23(1)(b) - the amount that is in the Bill circulated was not in fact amended to state the entire amount recoverable under the new Protocol. In Committee, I would want to move

this amendment which in fact gives the current position in monetary terms of the new limit of liability under that section.

Mr. Speaker, these proposed amendments this morning clearly are to tidy up the legislation. The Cabinet has already agreed that we should accede to the conventions and the process of instruments have already been done and the communication sent off and received by the International Maritime Organisation.

I would like members to see what we are doing here by acceding to these conventions as part of our strategy to make our Registry more competitive in terms of attracting new ships.

The growth of the ships Registry has been steady. At present the tonnage on the Registry has grown over the last year ending October 1997 from 462 000 tonnes to some 936 000 tonnes. During that 12-month period some 23 vessels were in fact registered. The total number of vessels today on the Registry are therefore 98 as compared to the year before.

You will recall that last year I came to this Honourable House with a Bill to enact the Shipping Corporations Act which made it possible for owners of vessels that registered under the Barbadian flag at the same time to incorporate companies to own the ships and also to manage the ships under the Barbados flag. The regulations made pursuant to that Act have also been produced to Cabinet and have already been signed by the Minister and therefore are in full force.

More recently, in September this year, we managed to put in place a most favoured nation status agreement between Barbados and Italy which was signed in September 1997 with an exchange of notes between the Italian Ambassador and the Barbados Minister of Foreign Affairs which means that anytime that a Barbadian ship goes to an Italian port it will now bear the same level of duties as an Italian ship using that port so there is a considerable benefit in terms of the lowering of the tariff applicable to the Barbadian ship on arrival at Italian ports.

We are also trying to put a similar arrangement in place in relation to Russia and discussions are going on as well in relation to a most favoured nation status agreement between Barbados and Russia. We are also making efforts in relation to the United States to have the Barbados Registry listed with the United States as on a list of approved countries. This would mean that US ships can come on the Barbados Registry but there will be an agreement in place that should there be any emergency in the United States, war or any domestic emergency, we would be able by agreement to suspend the registration of

the Barbados flag to permit them to go back to deal with the national emergency and return to the flag thereafter with minimal displacement.

Mr. Speaker, these are all things that we are doing with a view to enhance the competitiveness of our ships Registry and this action this morning is really merely the latest in the series of things that we have done and will be doing in the future. I do not believe that I should detain this Honourable Chamber any longer and with those few remarks I would just like to ask that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I beg to second that.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, clearly this piece of legislation falls within the general framework of reform started some time ago on the question of the systems by which the world would help to keep the shipping lanes and the ports as free of oil pollution as possible.

As Your Honour is aware, the old legislation under which these things operated did not take account the new thrust which has come in the last few years on environmental protection and the general welfare of the environment in which we live. This side will have no difficulty supporting this legislation as we have said when the previous legislation which the Honourable Member referred to was initiated, we had responsibility for government and so this is part of the kind of legislation which on all sides today there would be approval.

There are one or two questions which, however, the Minister might wish to advert to when he is responding towards the end. The one which comes foremost to mind is the readiness, capability and capacity of our existing Coast Guard to carry out the policing functions that are necessary, not only for this but for all the legislation dealing with the protection of the economic zone of Barbados. 11.40a.m.

I am very concerned, Sir, with some of the stories which have been written in the Press and on the broadcast media which have not had any response from the Government and therefore presumed to be true which suggests that the Coast Guard ships - and I am going to call them ships for want of a better description - have been essentially stationary and that one has been so damaged by a lack of regular routine maintenance that it now may never be able to move again except that it is towed.

I do not know, Sir, if these things are true but I believe that the body politic in this country has every right to expect that its Coast Guard will not only be in fighting trim so far as the personnel are concerned, but that

such equipment as we can afford would, at least, have the benefit of routine maintenance.

I think that the country has a right to expect some statement from the Government either confirming that they have had difficulty with the maintenance of the fleet, or that what has been said about it is not true, or that they are taking steps to correct the malady, whatever it is, but it cannot be sufficient for us to say we have a Coast Guard and the flagship is lying somewhere tied up in the harbour itself polluting the harbour because, the Honourable Member would be the first to admit if a ship has been reduced to nothing else but old iron then leaving it at rest in the harbour can only contribute to the difficulty connected with trying to keep the harbour and its surrounding waters pure or at *least* as pure as possible.

Our concern would not be with the legislation itself. We can find no fault with the legislation, and we will support it, but our concern is the capacity of the country to carry out the measures that are identified in this and other related legislation as part of our protection, both economic protection and other.

Mr. Speaker, there is doubt that a substantial amount of the pollution which has occurred on our beaches has come from the illegal washing of ships' holes on the eastern part of Barbados. We have not always been, and may never be in a position to police our eastern shores at the level and standard that might be desirable because the cost of patrolling the eastern shores of Barbados is not cheap and it would be in some ways dishonest, and certainly intellectually dishonest to call upon the Government to provide the same kinds of patrol in the eastern shores of Barbados as some other countries with greater resources could do in their respective seas.

We have a right and duty to speak out against some of the practices which have been apparent from some of the vessels that move to and fro beyond Barbados. Those who live in and around Bathsheba and those who frequent areas like Bathsheba and further north can attest to the fact that sometimes large globs of oil or oil-like substance, certainly a glutinous looking substance, can be located on the sands and shores of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, in case someone believes that this only applies on the East Coast, I can tell Your Honour that every morning that one goes into the water just along the Spring Garden Highway, one can find in the water itself what appears to be an oily texture. I say this not happily because those of us who swim in that area who represent people whose only recreation really is to swim and utilise that area must be concerned at the level of oil pollution which appears to be creeping up on our west coast.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the whole question of the pollution of the west coast is something that has troubled us for a very long time. There are steps which we have initiated when we had the opportunity to, and which we hope will continue to come to fruition not long from now by way of the sewerage of the west coast, but that is a matter which will call for a longer and stronger debate. I do not intend to try to tack it onto this oil pollution legislation.

It is a fact that along the west coast, which constitutes one of the greatest resources which the country has, one can actually see with the naked eye evidence of oil pollution in the water where one swims. I saw it up to yesterday morning. The sea was murky and even when the sun is not shining through the waters you can still see evidence as you go just below the surface of this oil that is floating near the top. It is something that we have to pay more than passing attention to.

This legislation therefore, Sir, is not only welcomed but it must not like its predecessors just be there to say that we have the legislation on the books. I think the time has come when the country must take a more than passing interest in these kinds of things. Our inspections of what international travelling vessels do when they come to our shores must go beyond simple lip service.

I am not here criticising the Government because this is not something that has started yesterday. It is something that has been insipient in the way it has crept up on us. It is therefore incumbent on all of us to join hands to ensure that we have the right kind of environment for Barbados and Barbadians in the first instance and for those who come to share our environment with us.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we on this side will have no difficulty supporting the legislation but we take this opportunity to call on the Government to renew efforts to ensure that those who come into our environment will pay attention to the need to preserve this heritage of ours.

Mr. Speaker, I think I should address the whole question of the emptying of garbage by visiting vessels, yachts, small vessels and some of the other vessels in our waters. I do not think that we have any force that is responsible for patrolling our harbours with a view to preventing this kind of pollution. It is a fact that many of the small vessels that come into Barbados dump their garbage overboard. They do it not only in Barbadian waters. They do it when they go into other harbours as well. It is time that we in Barbados equip our Coast Guard or some other facility to deal with this. There was a time, Sir, when we had a harbour police. I think Your Honour might be in the age range where you can still recall actively the harbour police. During that time, their duties included patrolling of the harbour. Now, in most

recent times we have been creating harbours, the Honourable Member on that Side has created a harbour in St. Peter and I believe that during our time a harbour was produced somewhere else and it would not be long, as I understand, before another harbour is created. 11.50a.m.

Be that as it may, Sir, it seems to me that the country should give some serious consideration, or rather the Government should because I believe that during our administration we re-visited the question of the harbour police and I am not talking about getting two people to put on harbour police uniform to take photographs for tourism purposes because that is what some people think that the harbour police should come back for. We have some people in Barbados who think of them as being very cute and they do not get serious about matters of development. We gave very serious consideration and it is my understanding that the process has begun to revive the harbour police with a view to assisting the Attorney General in his quest at that time, I do not know if this Attorney General still has the same quest, but in the quest to ensure that the harbour was as clean as possible not only of oil but all other kinds of pollutants because at one time drugs were being systematically left in and around that part of the harbour that had been created by the Deep Water Harbour and that area just off Mount Gay had become a place where they used to drop off traffic. I am not revealing any secrets but anybody who lives or has cause to function in the constituency which I represent becomes fully seized of information which seems to allude others whose duty it may very well be to become aware of that information. The Harbour Police as we conceived it when we had the Government last, would have in fact assisted the Coast Guard in the patrolling of the inner waters of our coastline.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that there is small boat activity on the west coast during the night. That small boat activity extends beyond fishing for regular fish and there is no question in mind that it is not necessary to have vessels of the size and capacity of the current fleet that we have in order to patrol the inner waters of the west coast. It may very well be that the Boston Whalers of which we have heard so much could be put to a useful exercise. Mr. Speaker, Sir, those Boston Whalers are amongst the best kept secrets in Barbados. I have heard about them.

At one time I heard about them officially and then I ceased to hear about them officially but I suspect that they are part of the fleet of the Coast Guard. I have never seen one going up the west coast but it may very well be that when I see a Boston Whaler, I do not know one so if there is any other member who has seen one and would enlighten us, I think it would be very helpful but it may very well be that the Minister would like to look at getting

the Boston Whalers and some other similar craft involved in patrolling the coastline to check on the kinds of activities which I have been describing and not incidentally, to check on the pollution that occurs in the small boats throwing what they have to throw over board from time to time.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I may speak of these things in a manner that allows easy listening but the point that I am hoping to make is a very serious point which I commend to the Government for their consideration. We do not have to spend large quantities of money to get some things done. A small force that is functioning efficiently within the police force, because as I understand it, the Harbour Police department still exists, could lend great assistance to policing this legislation as well as to policing the shores.

Mr. Speaker, recently there has been a lot of talk, some of it pure palabra about harassment in the country. There is talk about harassment in the country and that talk is usually focussed on some people who harass visitors when they come here but I think we need to pay attention to what is really happening to the change of the coast of this country by individuals who having had the privilege of coming to Barbados seem to feel that they should replace all Barbadians and that Barbadians who have walked the beaches of this country for in excess of 50 years have to continue to climb over big rocks and boulders when they are trying to do no more than they have done over a reasonable period of time.

People in Barbados have a right to walk on the beaches and I think that this has to be reinforced on a regular basis. It would be helpful if we had the type of patrol that I am discussing that could see some of the night activity which occurs in the man-made changing of the coast line.

Mr. Speaker, you would be amazed at what some people do to preserve what they perceive to be their property. You would be amazed at how some people wish to re-design the high water mark; you will be amazed at how their dogs on the west coast are trained to interfere with only people below a certain shade, or so it seems. Now there are some people who will say, there he goes again but the truth is that we have to be extremely careful that in looking after our perception of the economic development of our country that we do not destroy the social development of our country. That is not a criticism, Sir, it is a word to the wise that each of us has a responsibility, especially the ones in here to help to ensure that that heritage which we have remains a heritage and that it is not some distant thing that we care about that is not now evident.

Only a few mornings ago I was showing a young lady the part of Paradise Beach where we used to have to swim out to pass by Paradise Beach and how far we had to

swim out and up north and where we would come back in. She was absolutely amazed when I told her that boys of seven and eight and nine years old used to do that for fear that walking on the beach itself would attract a less than welcoming activity by the then owner. Mr. Speaker, I was then able to show her that the only difference between those who used to shoot at us in those days for walking on the beach and those who now put boulders on the beach is that the boulders are not as instance in their threats as the perceived shots were but you still have to swim out when you are on the coast.

Mr. Speaker, if you have not done it in recent time, and if any Honourable Members wish, early in the morning, take a walk along the coast, you do not have to walk too far. If you walk from where the old rum refinery was which I think is now Malibu and you keep walking in a northerly direction for about a mile and a half to two miles you will see evidence of where you have to swim out to go pass the beach and that is not good enough. It is not good enough. So that protecting the harbours from pollution is only one part of the protection which we have to do and I am confident that all Governments of Barbados will want to do that and I commend to the Honourable Member that as we look at how we are going to police this, we take account of the wider necessity so that if a small force, under the aegis of the Police can do the trick or if you can resurrect one or two of the vessels which we have in the Coast Guard they can do the trick, by whatever means. 12.00 noon

I have to agree with the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, we must not go begging. I do not believe that Barbados should go begging for old boats anymore. I feel that we should be able to acquire the kind of vessels that would be particularly useful for our purposes in the waters, especially on the west coast.

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I repeat that we will have no difficulty supporting this legislation.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to commend the Honourable Member, the Minister, for bringing this matter before us. It is a Bill meant to speak to certain international conventions relating to the pollution of the sea.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have made this point in here in the past but it is of such large importance to us in Barbados I feel constrained to make it again. The Caribbean Sea, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is easily the most threatened sea in the world. It is not well recognised, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that the refineries of the world, we may not be a major oil producing centre here in the Caribbean, apart from Trinidad and Tobago, of course and its neighbour

Venezuela, but the refineries of the world,, the largest refineries of the world some of them are to be found in the Caribbean. Billions of barrels of oil traverse what are known as the Caribbean corridors on a daily basis. We are only fortunate to be smiled upon by the Almighty, Sir, that we have not had a major oil spill that you could compare to the Exxon or the Theriaca...

We are just fortunate that that has not happened. We are fortunate too, Sir, in that we have the Gulf Stream and the North Eastern Trade Winds which help in the event of a spill to some extent but, Mr. Speaker, Sir, tourism as we all know is the major sector in the economy of most of the countries in the Caribbean. In some countries, Sir, it is the only sector and I shudder to think what a major oil spill would do to the industry if it were to occur.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, what this amendment cannot address or does not appear to address is as important as what it does address. The policing is important and therefore the role of the Coast Guard, as has been adverted to already by Honourable Members, will come into high profile. But these tankers, Sir, have a disgusting habit of washing out their bilges at sea. They often do it within our economic zone. It is very, very difficult to police that. Even if you have the most modern coast guard, on the lines of what they have in Puerto Rico or what they may have out of Miami, United States of America even with such sophisticated technology, Sir, in an archipelago of small islands like these it is excessively difficult to police that.

Now, the washing of the bilges is doing tremendous damage, Sir. It is part of the trans-boundary pollution which is now an international problem and we have more than our fair share of it here. When these bilges are washed out the oil floats on the surface of the water.

Now, those Honourable Members who know anything about fishing and certainly know anything about the national fish of Barbados, the flying fish, will know that the flying fish spawns on the top of the ocean. You can imagine, Sir, what would happen when the flying fish eggs come into contact with the film of floating oil. I am only a lay person in these matters, Sir, but I have for years believed that the decrease in flying fish catches that we have seen is not unconnected with the fact that they spawn on top of the ocean and that this floating film of oil which occurs when bilges are washed out at sea. There must be some connection there. The wave action then causes this oil to form into little soft tarry pellets and these sink to the bottom.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again I am only a lay person in this respect but I do believe that those pellets of oil residue do tremendous harm to bottom life in and around our waters and certainly do horrible damage to the reefs around Barbados, many of which are dead already and

do tremendous damage too to the near shore waters. They then come on to the beach and because they are sticky, they are covered in sand and with the naked eye as you look along, say like the east coast beach or at Bathshaba, you would hardly recognise them but you only have to walk on the beach and then look at the bottom of your foot to see that it is covered in this dark thick tarry substance.

Sam Lords Hotel for years now, Sir, has had on the beach what they call tar stations. It really is just a crude box with a 1V2 pint bottle of kerosene oil and an old rag so that you may clean that stuff off the bottom of your foot. It can be found all along the East Coast as has been pointed out by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is only the very thin edge of the wedge in terms of the environmental damage that this kind of pollution can bring about.

I am deeply concerned because it is not only in respect of oil pollution that I say without fear of contradiction that the Caribbean is the most threatened sea in the world because there is evidence of other trans-boundary pollution. In the Northern Caribbean... We are very south in the Caribbean, not quite as far south as you can get but we are regarded as the Southern Caribbean but in the Northern Caribbean, in the Gulf of Mexico you have the Mississippi, which is the longest river in the world travelling through mid-America, laden with industrial sludge and waste, vomiting itself into the Gulf of Mexico. I would not advise anybody who is visiting the North Coast of Jamaica or the Turks and Caicos Islands or even the Cayman Islands to eat any crust fish because they are all loaded with mercury. The Gulf Stream, at that point, cannot take quite all of that pollution away, but, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a very serious thing. 12.10 p.m.

I remember many years ago that the OPEC countries were approached on this matter and it was recommended that there should be a fund created so that in the event of major oil spills, damage control could be put into effect. But I am not here talking about major oil spills because there is a point beyond which you really cannot do very much if you are going to have a major, major oil spill. But, it is this constant, every night, seven days a week, 365 days of the year that you have this constant mild form, and I use the word "mild" very advisably here, of spillage, because that is what it is. So, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want very much to lend my support to this piece of legislation. It has been said in here already today, and I support the view that it is not enough to give lip service, to accede to conventions. You have to be prepared to put your preventive maintenance programmes in place and to invest in the technology which is required for damage control. But to little countries like ours, these are tremendous costs and this kind of technology does not cost a little bit of money.

It is a very costly thing and it has implications for the Budget.

We have tried and failed miserably in the past to trap, where we thought it possible, this kind of spillage, but it is very difficult. It is not often that a coast guard vessel will be in a general area or that somebody standing on the beach or living along the coastline will sight what will happen. Often when people see it, they do not even recognise that that is what is happening. The ship does not put up a big sign or a placard to say we are washing bilges and they tend to do it every night. They tend to do it under cover of night. So, it is very difficult.

I would like to suggest, Sir, again, I am only a lay person, and in my lay fashion, or maybe I could put it in a form of a question to the technical experts. Is it not possible that you could require tankers, oil tankers in particular, but there are other commodities as well, I mean I have not gotten on to nuclear waste, yet, but is it not possible to require oil tankers to certify that they have indeed washed their bilges within a controlled situation, however it may be done, within a port? Or is it not possible to make sure that they have not done it illicitly elsewhere and provide - I do not know - incentives or concessions of one kind or the other - as encouragement? But, we have to find a way to deal with this because, it is having, in my judgment, Sir, an accumulative effect. There is a build up on the east coast and certainly the immediate and medium and, not to mention, the long-term damage to the reefs of Barbados. The reefs are what protect us and without the reefs Barbados will not exist as an Island. This is not a volcanic cone. This is a coral island.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central is suggesting only half will disappear. But, the possibility for long-term damage, I mean damage that will go on beyond our generation, for hundreds of years is very large.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Bill speaks to oil pollution, but I believe that we have to look also at the tremendous potential of, for example, Caribbean seas being threatened by spillage and horrendous damage, in the event that one of those vessels taking nuclear waste from one part of the world to another, transit in our waters. Barbados protests at the United Nations, protest by way of diplomate note whenever this happens, because you cannot let an opportunity pass by, but you get all of the usual soft soaping, and so-called reassurances from the developed countries that they have taken all safety precautions and they have never been a spill and so on and so forth. That is all very good, but I am not a "where is it person", I am a "here it is person" and what I need to be reassured of is, that in the event that it happens the first time and that

it should happen in the West Indies, heaven forbid, what are the mechanisms for damage control. Now that is the nuclear waste that is tanked through the Caribbean waters, but, what about other hazardous wastes which may be as equally dangerous or more so, than nuclear waste. In other words, what I am saying, Sir, is that there is a lot of dangerous, seriously dangerous material being tanked through and shipped through our waters, our economic zone, in terms of Barbados and through the Caribbean sea as a whole, and we are still part of the Third World.

I do not detect that there is any international effort being made. The Minister responsible for the Environment may be able to reassure us, but I am not aware that there is any international initiative in respect of maintaining the pristine areas of the Caribbean Sea and of seeking to clean the Caribbean Sea in a way that 20 years ago, the Mediterranean, which was the most polluted sea at the time, was cleaned and preventive ongoing measures put in place to keep it so. I am deeply concerned about these matters, Sir.

There are other things which are threatening the Caribbean Sea. We live under threat of volcanic eruption both above and below the ocean, but that is something that we have lived with most of our lives in the Caribbean and will continue to do. Because most of the islands of the Caribbean are really volcanic "hoaxes", some thought to be dormant and some now obviously, not so. We live with threats of other natural disasters, but there are man-made threats which we should not have to live with, which in my judgment we do not have to live with and which we have to find a way to mitigate the possibility of major damage and a way to control it, in the event that it should occur.

These things have to be made known. The Japanese, the British, and the French in respect of nuclear waste are very quick, as I say, to come and try to give you all of the technology and technical reasons why it cannot happen and why it did not happen. We hear all these things. They said that the Titanic was unsinkable too. We are only human and anything devised by the hand of man is subject to that kind of error. It is subject to human error or technical error and it really is something that could terrorise you when you think of these things quietly in your bed in the middle of the night, that if there was a major oil spill, and particularly depending on where it occurred in the Caribbean, that it could shut down our economy for longer than it would be shut down in the event of a major hurricane. In 18 months or 2 years later tourism is back on track, bananas and sugar cane are back up, and houses are rebuilt in the event of a major hurricane. But in the event of a major oil spill, just try to visualise all of the dead fish and other sea life washed up onto the beaches; try to visualise the beaches covered in tar like jam and which nobody would want to go to; try to visualise all the trees

and the other shrubbery fringing our beaches turning black and dying. It is not a pretty picture, Sir. 12.20 p.m.

Whatever can be done, and I believe this is a step in the direction of something that can be done to help to mitigate, I would be very supportive of. In that respect, I give my full support to this and I congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Michael North that this matter is before this House and I commend this for the support of the House. Thank you.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Mr. Speaker, I would just make a brief intervention. It is not often appreciated that not only the economy but the survival of Barbados at all levels is totally environmentally dependent. It is a broad term and a broad concept which many do not grasp immediately. When they stop to think for a bit, whether it be sugar, any form of agriculture in Barbados, whether it be tourism, services, whatever, then it becomes immediately evident that Barbados' survival and development depend entirely on a healthy environment.

This is in stark contrast to what happens in many other countries, for example, China, which is very much in the news recently, Japan and other areas. Their survival in fact and their development has largely been contingent on and associated with significant environmental pollution. It has been reversed in those cases. Our survival and our development is entirely environmentally dependent and therefore issues relating to the environment while it should be a matter of concern to all humanity, of course, should have a very high level of concern to Barbadians and Caribbean people in particular, because of the peculiar nature of the geography and the economy of these islands in the Caribbean.

It is, therefore, essential that we take these things seriously and do not just regard threats to the economic survival of these islands due to environmental disasters as something that would never happen. We have had, for example, all sorts of conferences relating to the viability of small states, considerable concerns have been raised about a rise in sea levels, considerable concerns have been raised about disasters such as hurricanes and so on but as far as I am aware there has been no concerted effort and I do not even know whether the issue has been raised as to the impact of major episodes of pollution on small countries like Barbados.

It emphasises, Sir, the need for greater cooperation within the Caribbean and I wonder whether this could not be a significant initiative taken by the Government of Barbados to try to put this issue of oil pollution on a major scale on the international agenda for discussion and to come up with some kind of treaty by which all countries are bound, a treaty which not only speaks to the

prevention of large scale pollution of that nature from oil spills but also speaks to the question of liability in the event of such an incident taking place and causing widespread havoc to the economy of any country.

As far as I know, there have been some steps taken in the construction of new tankers and some are now being built where you have a tanker built within a tanker so that if the outer section of the tanker were damaged in a collision or something like that the oil is contained within a second tanker within the tanker.

This has been part of the new technology in relation to the building of new tankers, largely as a result of the intervention of the Americas in this area relating to the safety of the environment from major pollution.

Sir, unless we have such a treaty, unless this matter is raised at the level of the United Nations, unless pressure is brought to get states bound by treaties and to make sure that liability is clearly expressed in international law, then we will have major problems.

There is no way that Barbados will be able to recover from the crippling effect of a major oil spill because that in my view would call for a major restructuring and reorientation of the entire Barbados economy that would take many years to do. However, there are many things that can be done in the meantime. There is nothing you can do about a major oil spill off Barbados without oil coming onto the beaches and destroying all kinds of vegetation, destroying life, polluting and destroying the beaches. It would take maybe 30 to 50 years for those beaches to recover over time.

I cannot see anything that anyone can do except in the area of compensation and in the area of enhancing the surveillance of these vessels when they enter Caribbean waters. From time to time we think of these things in the realm of the impossible, as very unlikely, but we know that major oil spills have taken place and caused tremendous damage to various parts of the world, various parts of the shores of bigger countries. They can withstand that. They can shift their operations from one area of a country to another area but we cannot do that in Barbados.

As far as dealing with the nuisances and the people who within our internal waters on small vessels are a constant source of pollution, that can only be dealt with by better surveillance of our inner waters. For many years I have said exactly what the Honourable Member for St. Michael West said today, that we need an equivalent of a Harbour Police equipped with fast mobile vessels to deal with the many problems, ranging from drugs to pollution to whatever, affecting the inner harbours of Barbados. Unless you can police it, then the legislation would not be

enforceable. We have enough problems onshore dealing with the issues of pollution right here inland so you can imagine how much more difficult that is going to be at sea. The only way you can deal with that is to have effective policing of the inner waters. 12.30 p.m.

The other point I want to make, Sir, is when we think of the Caribbean we think of the land masses of the Caribbean. The land masses of the Caribbean constitute a very small percentage of the area of the Caribbean and a very small percentage of the value of the Caribbean. The sea is by far the greatest asset to the Caribbean people and this is not often realised. It determines the total environment, what happens in relation to the rainfall, what happens in relation to the supply of food, whatever you could think about. We have not even begun to tap the resources of the Caribbean.

I have always maintained that the Caribbean is not one of the poorest countries in the world per capita. When you look at the natural endowments of the Caribbean and you take into account that we have oil, we have massive unexplored marine resources, we have tremendous human resources and so on, the Caribbean per capita is one of the richest areas of the world. The problem is that there's been a massive shortage of capital in the region and we have not been able to explore the situation.

We cannot allow a situation to develop where that marine resource can be destroyed, not only by what we do to contribute to the pollution, what visitors to the country might do to contribute to the pollution, but also what foreigners do in terms of exploitation of our resources and at the same time creating all kinds of problems of polluting the area. For example, I believe that the Japanese and the Koreans probably take more fish out of the Caribbean in any year than we get for ourselves and that is largely because we cannot find people to invest in trawlers of that kind of size.

As far as I am concerned, we have a very rich heritage. This is something we have inherited by the accidents of birth in the Caribbean. It is a heritage that is totally environmentally dependent. We have a deep and profound obligation, not only to this generation of Barbadians, but to future generations of Barbadians because the danger in not dealing with matters relating to the environment in any one generation is that its effects are seen for several generations down the road and many of the matters I have heard raised here by previous speakers today, those effects will be seen on a long-term basis, apart, of course, from if you have a massive accident where you get thousands of tonnes of oil and so on then that would be an immediate thing, but even that would have an impact over the years, so it is a responsibility.

I do not think that in this country there is an appropriate conceptualisation of the role of the environment in economic terms and in terms of survival. It is very difficult to find people who, and I have often indicated to many young people coming into political life that the environment is an area where they can probably specialise and where they can develop a tremendous fund of knowledge for the benefit of everybody.

Some years ago I think John Connell took an interest in the environment but I have not heard him very much on this particular issue, but it is a very profound subject. It is a subject that has tremendous implications and anyone who really takes the study of the environment seriously in relation to Barbados and the Caribbean, we are really dealing with the totality of life in the Caribbean, it would lead them into all kinds of exciting areas of intellectual and academic adventures with practical, political implications.

Therefore, Sir, when one looks at the totality of the picture, the relevance and the importance of it, I certainly would have no difficulty whatsoever in giving my support to the legislation which is now before this Honourable House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to give support to the Honourable Minister and the Bill he has brought before this Parliament. Other members have spoken with tremendous breadth to the issues which this legislation excites. I would wish perhaps to start the focus of my own comments at the point where the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central concluded or certainly touched on during the course of his comments.

I think the Honourable Member made the point that Caribbean States are particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation and to pollution from all sources. In fact, the point can be made thus that the Caribbean is perhaps the smallest generator of pollution on a global scale, because we in the Caribbean do not have massive industrialisation which produces a lot of the chemicals, by-products and waste products from industrialisation so we do not pollute in that way. We are not major producers of equipment that contains fluoride-carbons.

We do not in the Caribbean have a nature of economic activity that is destructive of the ozone layer by producing the greenhouse gases. Our size, the fact that we are tiny islands, that we are within close proximity of one another makes us particularly vulnerable to changes in environmental conditions even where those changes in environmental conditions are small on the international scale.

It is true of me Caribbean. It is true of the Pacific. There are islands in the Pacific that have already had to be abandoned because of environmental degradation on those islands, because of sea level rise and other environmental matters that our own everyday activities as people, our social activities, our cultural activities, our economic activities impact on but which, as a matter of course, we take no consequence of.

It is not that there has been or is currently an insufficient conceptualisation of a macro-environmental framework or legal framework. I think where we have fallen down is that those conceptualisations and the initiatives which are in train have not been communicated sufficiently to the public, nor has there been up to now a sufficient public education programme that would allow the man in the street, the man who is resident in Haynesville, the man who gets on the Pine bus, the man who is even now walking up the Judge Gap, or the woman selling her trade in Bridgetown, or the fellows who are liming on the block in Gazettes even now, there has not been a sufficient public education or a communication of the issues to the wider public to sensitize them to what is their role in environmental protection, how their own everyday activities can degrade the environment and what, in particular, are the first short-term consequences of their conduct and secondly, what are the long-term consequences of that conduct. I am happy to inform the House that the Environmental Division of the Ministry now has two environmental Education Officers, their primary focus is to work in the schools and to sensitise the wider public to the issues to which I have spoken in my opening remarks. More than that, I think that it is necessary for us to employ the services of a professional public relations firm that can conceptualise the issue in a way that captures the imagination of the man in the street. It has been done very well, if I can make the point, with the Jam Buster initiative. All the little children are now singing the Jam Buster jingle. 12.40 p.m.

We have in many instances in relation to government policy left the work of P.R. to be done by the Minister himself or herself, who is caught up in policy development and in the day-to-day issues of the Ministry. Increasingly in government, we have to move toward the use of public relations firms, not for politicising but for the purpose of conveying policy initiatives to the public in a way that they can understand and in particular in a way that has relevance to their lives. This legislation is one of a large number of initiatives, currently under way to protect the environment and to deal with issues of oil and other forms of pollution.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central spoke to the point of the need for binding international agreements but the Honourable Member,

from his long parliamentary life and association, well knows that where the international conglomerates and where the major industrialised societies of the world perceive any environmental initiative as adverse to their economic interests, they do not support those international conventions and legislations. They do not sign, they are not signatories to them. If they do sign, they never develop the requisite national legislation. In fact we are seeing it even now as we get ready for the Kyoto Conference in December, where already the large interest groups of the United States have black Americans, white Americans, people at gas pumps and people in their business saying, why should we sign, this is going to drive up gasoline prices and the cost of business is going to become higher and I will have to send away my staff and I am not going to be able to own a car anymore. They are creating that kind of panic that can skew public opinion away from what is in the international good. So that the issue is being framed as one that can adversely impact U.S. economic interests but the advertisements are not saying that the U.S. and other major industrialised societies are the greatest polluters of the world and that unless these initiatives are now taken and unless these countries become signatories to the conventions currently under discussion, that the world will be destroyed and our international environmental well-being is going to be adversely impacted.

The Honourable Member for the City has already spoken in relation to what Barbados would look like if there was an oil spill. It has severe implications not only for the way the oil would coat the beach like jam, that is a very graphic and accurate description of what it would look like. You saw on television when they had the Exxon spill, all the wildlife, all the birds coated in oil and unable to move, flocks and species of birds dying by the thousands, massive fish kills, waters totally destroyed, all the reefs and marine flora and fauna destroyed. Barbados would, as the Honourable Member for the City rightly said, become a place where nobody would want to come.

You can think of the implication of any kind of oil spill or other pollution of the water on fish and food. There could be massive fish kills but even if the fish are not killed, the fact is that trace elements and toxins harmful to the human being could find themselves into the food chain and before you know it, we would be eating contaminated fish. This is already happening in other parts of the United States where high traces of mercury and lead are being found in the food chain and in fish. It is also true in other parts of the Caribbean where there are definitely higher levels of pollution that are affecting marine fauna and in particular the kind of fauna that we eat.

You only have to go, Mr. Speaker, to Guyana where there was a recent cyanide spill as a result of industrialisation and immediately other Caribbean islands

said, "we are not importing any seafood from Guyana". This decision has massive economic implications for the country. So not only does the food chain in terms of what we eat directly become affected but certainly it has economic implications for those people who make their life off of fishing. It has economic implications for our export industries.

We are at this time already signatories to MARPOL, the international convention for prevention of marine pollution. We have signed the Basle Convention on transboundary movement and disposal of chemicals, waste and hazardous substances. We are signatories to the London Convention For Prevention of Dumping at Sea. The Port Authority with the approval of Cabinet, has adopted the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code and strengthened its own protocols for the safe handling, storage and transportation of chemicals and wastes. That is important because all kinds of things come into the Port via the shipping lanes and the pleasure crafts and particularly, as the size of pleasure crafts increase to floating palaces and floating hotels and so on, the implications for pollution grow commensurately with the increase and the size of the vessels that come into our shore and what they are carrying with them, often we do not know.

The Government has in addition, established the Chemical Substances Working Group which has responsibility for the development for appropriate programmes and policy initiatives for the effective handling, storage and transportation of chemical waste and substances.

The Environmental Engineering Division of the Ministry of Health and the Environment has in place a contingency oil spill plan. Earlier this year, I think it was, or maybe late last year, one of the refineries had a spill off the south west coast of Barbados and immediately the Coastal Zone Management Unit, the Environmental Engineering Division had to be on top of the situation. Going out to sea and monitoring the spill 24 hours a day, using the equipment at our disposal for the control and management of this spill so that it did not affect bathers and so that it did not cause harm to our reefs or harm to marine flora and fauna. That contingency plan involved all of the private sector interests which are involved in oil production and oil retailing in Barbados. It involves all the agencies of Government which have an interest in this matter such as the Division of Energy, it involves even the use where relevant, in the case of large spills of international and regional agencies. 12.50 p.m.

The people at Hess Oil in St. Lucia have said that where necessary we can have access to their equipment. Clean Caribbean Cooperative of San Juan responds to large scale oil spills. They have the equipment, the expertise,

the personnel and all of the resources when called on by any private sector agency that has called for spills and they will come in and assist in the clean up so that there are initiatives and plans in place that deal with these particular problems in a comprehensive way should such a spill occur. We have had small spills that have been dealt with.

Truly, Mr. Speaker, the problem really relates to what the size of the spill is because with our sea currents as they are, with our islands being so close to one another the reality is that any spill could have such devastating effects, depending on the size of the spill and the location of the spill, that there is very little that we could do about it. It would virtually destroy the Caribbean.

The point becomes apparent, Mr. Speaker, when you think of us having an exclusive economic zone of perhaps 21 miles but that has no relevance in a chain of islands where you can stand up at some points and see your neighbour who is only perhaps 15 nautical miles away. So the notion of the exclusive economic zone in relation to issues such as this is not of tremendous relevance. The fact is that everybody would be substantially adversely affected if in fact there were to be such a spill. Immediately then issues of who would assume responsibility, how do you catch the polluter would arise. How do you get the polluter not only to accept responsibility but to pay and to help you undertake, urgently, mitigative measures?

I have heard the President of the Inter-American Development Bank put in a very strong way the long-term consequence of environmental pollution. He said that man sometimes forgives but nature never does and in reality that translates into the extreme long-term impact that an environmental disaster could have on our social life, our cultural life and our economic life.

I want to go back to a point which I was making earlier and that is the role of the man in the street and the role of the average citizen in any Caribbean island in relation to pollution. Often we do not think of our behaviour and the way we use the beaches as polluting the water but the reality is it does. Several of us go to the beach and have picnics and we leave our garbage there. We do not take it home. It then goes into the sea and pollutes the water. We carry golden apples and we have the golden apples in a plastic bag and when we finish handing them out to our friends we leave the plastic bag right there in the sea. It pollutes the water. If you ever go out, for instance, in the Atlantis Submarine you will see all kinds of plates, forks, plastic bags and all other kinds of things under the water. It is unsightly. It looks disgusting. It has no place there. It is disruptive of marine life. Many people do not know that the leather back turtle which is an endangered species eats jelly fish. The plastic bags floating underneath in the water appear to be jelly fish to the poor turtle who

cannot figure out the difference. If it tries to eat them it kills them. So that then shows how a simple act like a citizen dropping a plastic bag in the sea can cause the death or cause activity which could lead to the death or the total extinction of a species.

We have to think in terms of how we police pleasure craft, not only pleasure craft owned by locals and which carry locals but international pleasure craft, the yachts and so on, which come into our waters.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael West made the point that several pleasure craft tend to dump at sea. It is sometimes true and it is illegal. We are signatories to conventions that militate against it but people still do it. The truth is that we do not have the resources to police them but I believe we can change that pattern in our behaviour in the way that years ago we were able to successfully cause a change in tourists walking down town in their "G" string bikinis by a large sensitization programme which involved all of the sectors that tourism impacted on.

One of the difficulties caused by large scale shipping polluters is the whole issue of bilging. The Honourable Member for St. Michael West touched on it but did not go far enough. The reality is that a lot of these ships come into our waters. They want to clean out their holds and other compartments. They take water on board and they wash out the oils or whatever that may be in the hold and the compartment and in the process they take in sea water. Now what happens in that process is that if they previously, let us say, washed out in the Gulf of Paria there may be marine life there which is unknown to our shores and the traces of water that remain in their holds when they come in then and attempt to open the hold again to clean out with our water, that species goes into our waters. It may seem like a small thing but when you trace the fact that there are now fish in Miami that eat people's cats and dogs that nobody knows how those species came to live in Miami and the conclusion is that they came there through the bilging process, ships cleaning out their holds. That is a reality.

The whole introduction of new species into any environment can spell tremendous dangers. We know in fact that various species were introduced into countries to control other species like the mongoose was brought here to help control a species. They are now out of control. You had the green monkey being brought to Barbados because people thought that it was cute. That has now become a pest and is out of control and it is still legal, I believe, to shoot them and collect their tails and so on. I do not think that has yet become illegal. So that the introduction of a species into any eco-system can so off-balance the rest of the eco-system by the new species preying on other species present in the eco-system which have no defence to

the newly introduced species is really a major problem of which we have to be very careful.

All kinds of things could be introduced. Piranha could be introduced. I do not know if they are salt water or fresh water but it really has very serious consequences for your marine and coastal environment when ships do this kind of bilging and we have to be very careful of it.

This legislation thankfully would introduce a higher degree of control of shipping oil pollution and it would ensure that the polluter pays where his ship is responsible or his agency is responsible for polluting.

We are now moving to a determination of a register of waste. The Honourable Member for the City made the point that we do not know what comes through our waters. If in fact there was any spill there could be very serious consequences and we are moving, in the Caribbean, to have established internationally, a register of what is coming through our waters and when it is coming through so that we will know what the dangers are and when in fact those dangers are present because once you know what is coming and you can develop mechanisms or contingency plans for dealing with particular types of chemicals or particular types of waste then you enhance your own capability for self-protection. That is what we are seeking to do.

Of course that is yet another initiative that the large industrialised societies will resist. Because they want to be able to move their hazardous waste and their nuclear waste without interference from states such as ours. 1.00 p.m.

Aside.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: That is a fact. The United States had, to this day, never signed the Law of the Sea Convention. Already, as I said earlier, there is a hard press from their industrial lobby that they do not sign anything that emerges from the International Summits, like the one from Kyoto to be held there in a few weeks time. So that we are small players on the international landscape in relation to environmental issues.

But, we are, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central rightly said, truly environmentally dependent and unless we are able to put mechanisms such as this and other strategies in place which will enhance our capability for environmental protection, then really we are at the mercy of the bigger industrial societies and the commercial giants who are oblivious to the fact that they can, with one spill, totally destroy Caribbean life and Caribbean socio-economic activity as we know it today. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to give support to this initiative.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 2.15 p.m. this afternoon.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 2.15 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION Mr.

SPEAKER: The Sitting is resumed.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to debate the ^sues of the Bill before us which is called the Shipping Bill. I must from the outset admit, Sir, that I have some particular problems, especially When I sat in my seat and I listened to various speakers.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I, Mr. Speaker, cannot understand how a serious Government can bring an Act like this and then turn around, Sir, and tell the whole of Barbados, the wrongs that are being done by the ships that they are encouraging to come to this Country. We have a Minister telling us...

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member had better indicate early, whether* he is prepared to support the Bill or not. Because, the first speaker for the Opposition said that he was pleased with the Bill and that the Opposition was going to give it total support.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, no one can dictate, Sir, what I have to say. I am saying that when you get .a Government bringing a Bill like this and they brag about how many ships they are able to attract and then in the next breath, Sir, you have Members getting up telling you about how these ships are polluting the shore lines and in no where in this Bill, Sir...

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of order, Sir. No one on this Side confused the fact of the registration of ships under the Barbados Ship Registry amendment and the pollution of those same ships in the waters of Barbados.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that I was told in here today, Sir, that nearly every single ship that comes to Barbados dumps their waste in the sea and it ends up on the beaches of Barbados. As legislators, Sir, we should be concerned because our main

foreign exchange earner is tourism and we brag about having the most beautiful beaches in the world and I cannot understand, Sir, how we can have a Government that is prepared to bring legislation like this to Parliament and they do not bring an amendment to the Environmental Levy Act.

Sir, how can you tell the poor people in this country they have messed up our country and they should pay an environmental levy and you have ships, and every single one admitted it, Sir, polluting the beaches of Barbados and none of them are men or women enough to bring an amendment to the Environmental Levy Act to make the ship owners pay for the damage that they have done to our beaches.

I am saying, Sir,...

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of order. Sir, I cannot stop him. Only you can stop him. The Honourable Member made some cardinal errors of looking at amending legislation without going to the parent Act. If he goes to the parent Act which was passed in 1994, he would see that there are provisions in that Act which provide for the imposition of penalties on ships which pollute our waters.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, if they ever cite the tax system of Barbados, they would know that the Barbadian public was paying taxes for the cleaning of their country before and that was a special tax introduced in this Parliament called the Environmental Levy. I am saying that before 1994, the ships were polluting. If they had an Act, they need to have another one now, because the crisis is deeper, Sir.

I am saying that in the same way that poor people in this country, have been charged an environmental levy, that the ship owners of the world should be charged that same levy and when Government comes in here bragging about the number of ships that they are registering to come into Barbados, Sir, they also have to take into account the damage that they will do to our tourism. I am saying that if the Honourable Attorney General agrees that we need not worry about that, Sir, I have nothing to say to him on that matter. That is a matter of judgment.

But, I know, Sir, he is fully aware of the damage that is being done on the west coast of this country by those ships. I can tell you something, we have a strange scenario in this country now, Sir, where those same ship owners are buying up all the property on the west coast and they are attaching their boundaries. So, sooner or later we would not know the true damage of pollution on the west coast, because the police would not be able to get there, the environmental people would not be able to get there, and not even the Attorney General would be able to pass

legislation to make sure that it can be inspected. Because, they are using what we call the largesse in Barbados to make sure that all the beaches on the west coast are privatised and not by any act of Government. These people now are more powerful than us. We have to come in here and pass laws to get power, but they are using the dollar to make sure that they can own the whole of our west coast and they can allow their ships to pollute the west coast as they like. If a small, poor man in Barbados goes to the beach with golden apples and he throws a plastic bag in the sea there is something called the Environmental Levy to deal with him but nothing is done to deal with the ships that pollute our area every day. I am saying, Sir, that if we want to pat ourselves on the back... 2,25 p.m.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, as is his custom, is misleading the House. There is no environmental levy which deals specifically with small people dropping their plastic bags on the beach. In fact, that is not the way in which the Environmental Levy is applied. The Environmental Levy, for his education, though I do not think any amount of explanation...

Aside.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: The Environmental Levy is based on the principle that the polluter must pay. It applies to certain consumer items which will in the course of our daily environment end up in the landfill. It does not apply specifically to small men or to any single individual. His error may be an assumption of the limitation of his capacity to understand.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is certainly misleading the House again since section 5 of the Shipping (Oil Pollution) Act of 1994 sets out clearly the penalty for the discharge of oil in the territorial waters of Barbados or the exclusive economic zone, where the penalty in each case is \$240 000. He does not know that. He does not check anything at all.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, you can call me a madman. You can call me whatever you like but one thing you will never be able to call me is ignorant. I would not accept that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please! Nobody is referring to you as a madman. Let us proceed.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I have listened to a lot of ignorance in this House and the biggest piece of ignorance I have ever heard is just now because

if that is true it tells me that we have got a lot of \$240 000 in the Treasury of Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. D.-St. E. KELLMAN: The Speaker never speaks ignorance in here. I always defend .him.

It tells me, Sir, that if we have had legislation since 1994 which charges any ship \$240 000 whenever they breach the legislation, the Government and the Treasury of Barbados should be a rich place. It is bare ignorance for anybody to get up in here to tell me that they have something on the Statute Book where you can charge a ship's owner \$240 000 and nobody in here can show me where they have ever charged a ship's owner \$240 000. It tells me that that is an admission of the speaker that they have failed - not the Speaker of the House - in enforcing legislation and that is why a Minister of Government can get up in here today and talk about terror on beaches on the east and south coasts and not one Minister can tell me when they have ever charged a ship for those breaches, and they are talking about legislation on the Statute Book. I want to hear about action. Then you get another Minister talking about people going to the beach with plastic bags and golden apples - they are talking about small people, you know - and how the plastic bags choke the turtles and all that. The Honourable Member is not interested in the ships that are polluting the west coast but she is interested in people that go to the sea with plastic bags.

I am not saying that people have a right to go to the sea with plastic bags to choke the turtles but you cannot use that example alone. Yoti must deal with the ship people who can close down our tourism. I have never seen a plastic bag that had an effect on tourism in the way oil pollution can have on tourism.

We are a country that deals in tourism and we should be interested in oil pollution to that level and not just a simple plastic bag. Am I to believe that every plastic bag they are worried about, even the Red Plastic Bag?

Mr. Speaker, am I to believe that it is the plastic bags that stop us from getting flying fish? I never heard any fishermen, including myself, saying that they have ever seen flying fish eating plastic bags. I have never seen or heard of any fishermen complaining that plastic bags stopped them from getting flying fish. What they will tell me, is that it attracts flying fish and they are able to go to them and catch them. They would not tell me the same thing about oil pollution from ships. They would tell me it would destroy all the eggs. So the priority has to be the oil pollution and not the plastic bags.

The same way that we can formulate legislation to deal with poor people we must formulate legislation to deal

with the rich ones who own the ships and this House has been too long dealing with the wrong type of people and it is time that we get back to basics. This debate where people come in here and tell us that they have been able to attract 90 ships and all of that and cannot tell us how many ships that have polluted our country that they have dealt with. I am not interested in that. I want to hear about what we are going to do to stop those ships from destroying our environment because it might not affect us today but it will affect our children and grandchildren down the road and that is why we have to get back to basics. Thank you very much.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, in 1994, the then Government introduced the Shipping (Oil Pollution) Act and one of the purposes of this Act was to give effect to certain international conventions relating to pollution of the sea and to provide for civil liability for oil pollution by ships. A number of the conventions are set out in the Act in the Schedule to the Act. The conventions are referred to in Part VIE of the Act. Barbados was getting itself in line with international treaties dealing with oil pollution casualties, oil pollution damage, the International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage, 1971 and similar conventions.

This is an ongoing matter in the international community and from time to time it becomes necessary to amend the enabling legislation. The Bill before the House is brought to amend that legislation of 1994 and indeed to update and bring it in harmony with contemporary activities and contemporary international action.

The Minister has already dealt with the Bill before the House but I wish to reiterate what he said on an intervention on a point of order that sections 4 and 5 of the current Act deal specifically. Sir, in section 4 of the Bill it is provided that no master or owner of a Barbadian ship should discharge oil or mixture from a Barbadian ship into any part of the sea outside the territorial waters of Barbados and anybody who does so is guilty of an offence. Similarly, section 5 deals with the reverse situation where oil is discharged into the territorial waters of Barbados. The person making the discharge is liable, as the Minister said, up to \$240 000 fines. 2.35 p.m.

The fact that it is acknowledged internationally that ships all over the world contribute to marine pollution does not derogate from the need to bring this legislation today or indeed the need to have brought it in 1994. Whether somebody is prosecuted for an offence is a function of law enforcement.

Recently we may not have caught a Venezuelan vessel discharging oil, but we caught a Venezuelan

vessel illegally fishing in Barbadian waters. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy should be aware of that. Of course, successful prosecution for oil pollution depends, to a large extent, on getting the evidence and being able to relate the oil to a particular vessel so that to a large extent the question of proof, like in every criminal or civil case, is the difficult aspect of the matter.

All the law says is that in the case where we can catch somebody who illegally discharges oil into our waters, if we can prove it, then we can make a case and the person becomes liable to a fine of up to \$240 000. We must have the legislation on the books because we are party to the Conventions and to give them effect we have to enact them in local legislation such as was done in 1994.

Sir, I am not speaking too much on this Bill. I just rise really to set the matter in context and also to respond to some observations and, indeed, questions that were raised by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West before he left.

The Honourable Member also wanted to know about the efficiency of the Coast Guard vessels and our ability to police our coastlines. Barbados as an island state, has need to be ever vigilant in its territorial waters. Our ability to do so depends on our financial capabilities. Take drugs which are the most serious pressing social phenomenon in this region.

When the Ramphael Commission reported in *Time For Action* in 1992, they drew to the region's attention that drugs were not only a monstrous evil and pernicious cancer, as they say it, and that drugs was a social problem of immense magnitude, but they said that nothing like the drug problem exemplifies the powerlessness of our States in the CARICOM region for the reason that effectively to deal with the drug problem at the Maritime level requires resources which no State in CARICOM on an individual basis has or is able to raise. The only way that we in this region can begin to counter the narcotics trafficking in the region is through international cooperation.

None of us can successfully wage war against narco-traffickers on land, at sea, or in the air by ourselves. Having said that, it is important for every country at domestic level to adopt such strategies as will assist in the control of drugs in the region, and certainly in the particular State.

One of those strategies for islands will necessarily involve having some kind of presence, military or police presence, at sea. Barbados and six or seven other countries north of us, and one south, Grenada, have agreed, under the aegis of the RSS, to pool their resources and combine their efforts with a view not only to dealing with smuggling, arms trafficking, drugs and so on but even to deal with

matters of pollution if we could get the evidence because none of us on our own can do it.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael West wanted to know if we had any coast guard vessels that are in use. The answer to that is "Yes." We have one 40-ft boat which was recently provided by the U.S. Government under the Agreement that goes back to 1989. We have three Boston Whalers. We have two rigged-hull 27-foot vessels. All are in service. The police have one and there are ten officers assigned from the Police Force to operate on the sea.

In addition to that, of course, is the Trident. I have to let the House know that...

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The Trident will shortly be on its way to Miami. There was a decision that had to be taken earlier this year on whether the Trident should have gone to Trinidad for refitting and repairs or gone to Miami. We were hoping that it would have gone to Trinidad. The latest advice is that it is now recommended that it should go to Miami and it should shortly be on its way to Miami. I believe that the repairs will span a period of approximately eight months, but the Trident will soon leave the Port and go to Miami.

Now, the six vessels I spoke about earlier are all operational. If anybody wants to know the effectiveness of our small coast guard operation, in due course you will hear of that effectiveness as a result, for example, just one example, of what happened last night. A man was wanted for murder, a very dangerous man was wanted for murder for two months now. Wharfie was arrested last night at sea as a result of a joint operation between the Police and the Coast Guard, a joint operation very spectacularly done and very interestingly put together. I cannot give the details, I know that Honourable Members would not expect me to do that but it shows the kind of efficiency and effectiveness of the Coast Guard and the Police operating together at sea. 2.45 p.m.

I think that I have answered the two points raised by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West about the Coast Guard and the ability to police the coast. However, from time to time in operations, our local Coast Guard is supplemented by assets of the Regional Securities System and indeed from time to time we go into other countries in pursuance of the RSS treaty to assist in operations. Right now, Sir, the Royal Police Force has understudied, with a view to a submission for Estimates, a proposal for an additional ship for the Police now, not the Coast Guard. We are looking at the cost of that and then the recurrent cost implications of having such a vessel but if it is at

all within the competence of the Government's finances to support that, Honourable Members can be assured that Government will give favourable consideration. We are working on the cost implications of giving the police another sea borne vehicle.

Before I sit, Sir, just let me say a word about the Ships' Registry. Twice this year I have had occasion to go into the Ships' Registry in London and see its operation. I think that it was in 1995 when we had the Shipping Corporaton Bill out for public discussion, I convened a seminar at Sherbourne Centre one afternoon at which interested parties were invited to discuss the Bill and we had a presentation from Mr. Trevor Robinson. I wish to place on record that Mr. Trevor Robinson together with Mr. Kiffen Simpson have done an outstanding job for Barbados in launching the Ships' Registry in London and I think that the country owes them our greatest gratitude for the efforts which they have put in.

Barbados' Ship Registry is the fastest growing Registry in the world. We have 98 ships on book and there are a few super tankers to come on shortly within the next few months and we have and will always maintain a registry of integrity. We have been very careful in this area and in the offshore area to be very cautious about what we do because Barbados' reputation as a clean jurisdiction must always be preminent. In the offshore sector and the financial services sector, Sir, I think that it is true to say that we have a good reputation. Some people may say that we are a little too tight and perhaps a little too bureaucratic but it is all to the ultimate credit of Barbados and we are being very careful with the Ships' Registry.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: That Registry makes a useful and substantial contribution to the Treasury, I am told that you do not give the figures publicly and I will not give them but I have them.

Generally, Sir, on the question of the Ships' Registry I think we can be well satisfied with what we have achieved so far and we can look forward hopefully to better things in the future.

As far as maritime policing is concerned, I think we are doing an efficient and effective job with the limited resources which we as a country are able to afford. I expect, Sir, that in the next year I shall have other things to say about the operations of the local Coast Guard, the Defenc because a number of very important events will soon be taking place in the region to strengthen our capabilities as a region in dealing with the drug problem.

I will not anticipate the deliberations of a meeting in the Dominican Republic on the 8th and 9th of December but only to say and I want to make this one point because it is important to shipping, we have had two plans of actions in this region in the last year dealing specifically with drugs. The first one was the European Union UNDCP plan of action which was developed for the region. There were 87 proposals at Sherbourne in May 1996. More recently on May 10th, President Clinton signed a plan of action which incorporated justice and security issues and 53 items were in that plan of action. Both are about ready for implementation, Sir.

I hope that within six months to a year the region itself will see positive and concrete action as a result of the implementation of those two plans of action. They call for improved maritime co-operation and more boats for example and improved co-operation in the sky requiring more fixed wings aircraft to be assigned to this region within the next few months, two based in Barbados, two based in Trinidad & Tobago and two based in the Bahamas.

I began with a reference to the Ramphal Commission Report which says that in order to counter these problems we need massive resources from various sources. Those sources are coming together, the Europeans and the Amercians to help us in the region and they are not just talking, positive action is following those meetings and implementation of the plan of action... I am very satisfied and the implementation of the plan is going very well and I believe 1998 will see a new era in counter narcotic operations in this region.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: Mr. Speaker, I must say that this Bill the amendment to the Shipping Oil Pollution Act certainly gives us an opportunity to reflect on a number of issues that are relative to our sustained development and bearing the environment foremost in our minds.

I am glad that we have almost fully accepted all of the international conventions that have been put in place. The Democratic Labour Party in 1994 completely repealed the Shipping Act which is a very substantial piece of legislation and it brought an entire new Shipping Act which was introduced in 1994 and which included serious international established conventions which sought to protect varying countries from the ravages of oil pollution, the transportation of chemical waste and a number of nuclear substances and so forth. The Shipping Act as put in place really would detail and seek to provide the coverage that was necessary to protect respective countries. 2.55 p.m.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the Caribbean itself, and I relate to Barbados and the other Caribbean Islands,

these islands are being abused on a daily basis by a large number of vessels, cruise ship passengers, cargo vessels and so on that come into our waters for bringing visitors and whatever.

I am not sure that an environmental impact assessment has been carried out to determine the extent of the damage that has already been done to the entire marine environment as a result of a large number of cruise ships coining into Barbados. I want to make the point that we sometimes sell ourselves very short in the Caribbean. The large cruise ship companies make enormous profits out of travelling through the Caribbean. We have to ask ourselves in these islands what is the return for Barbados as a result of all of this profit that is being made out of the Caribbean product. Whether it is Barbados, St. Lucia, Grenada, the Grenadines or whatever, significant profits are being made.

It is important to make that point because if in fact there has been damage that has been done outside of an accident or a deliberate spill or a normal spill or an emission of oils etc., as the Attorney General said, you cannot trace it to a specific vessel. So unless there is an accident which provokes a spill then the continuous damage or the continuous emissions that are continually coming into the system, it will not be possible to measure them and we will never know to what extent the damage that has occurred.

You would be aware, Mr. Speaker, that in Barbados along the west coast today all of the sea life is almost dead because reefs are dying, the fish have backed off and gone somewhere else. Even the sea urchins, the black ones as well as the white ones have literally disappeared which says that something is fundamentally wrong with the marine environment. Something has to be fundamentally wrong that all of that marine life is just simply dying off. Maybe they might want to blame it on the fact that people were dynamiting fish. They might want to blame it on a number of things. We do not really know what the true reasons are but the question of compensation and of spending some money to protect what we have, I think, is an area that we must pay particular attention to.

I am not so sure if the legislation is able to do that. The point that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was making was relatively important in the sense that people have been abusing our waters. We do not know to what extent it has been polluted, but yet we can see evidence that damage has occurred and yet there has been no compensation whatsoever.

I made the point, Mr. Speaker, that damage might not necessarily have occurred purely because of the cruise ships that are coming into Barbados. It is quite possible that it may be as a result of the problems relating to

sewage disposal both on the west coast and on the south coast. Certainly we have evidence, as I said, that there is a problem because the fishermen themselves are now unable to catch fish within the Barbados territorial waters and find themselves having to go beyond the 12-mile barrier and find themselves in deep trouble to the extent that they even went and were caught fishing in Guyana's waters.

I understand that the Venezuelans are coming up here looking and they got caught up here. I do not know why they would have come up here because the fish in Barbados are going elsewhere and it has to be a problem why the entire marine environment is just moving away from the coastline. Something has to be fundamentally wrong.

Now, I do not know, Mr. Speaker, if the problems relating to the West Coast Sewerage Project or the South Coast Sewerage Project are creating the problem. I dread the day that there is a major oil spill in the Caribbean because one of the hallmarks of a good tourism product is to have an environment that is so friendly that people want to come into that area because the environment itself is so clean. I am not so sure that we can boast in the Caribbean that we have the cleanest of environments that we want to offer our people. We may be selling ourselves very short in that we are trying to convince visitors coming to Barbados that we have perfect environmental conditions when we in fact know that we have a major problem that is lurking out there.

Apart from oil and those kinds of spills I would like to invite the Members of Parliament to visit an area in Christ Church called Long Beach and you will see the debris, the pork carcasses and pig heads and cows heads that wash up on Long Beach from ships. All the ropes, all the buckets, you would see all of the debris that clearly comes from ships. The Honourable Member, the representative there would be able to confirm what I am saying and that is a cost to Barbados because the National Conservation Commission, from time to time is forced to put on crews to sweep the entire area and pick up all of this debris that is settling on the south east coast and certainly on the east coast. These are costs that are related to Barbados yet there is no charge.

I think the point the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was making is that here we have ships that travel the area, pollute the area not only necessarily with oil but pollute the entire area and there is no penalty that is applied. It may be available on the Statute Books of Barbados but there is nothing that is applied.

Aside.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: I accept that it is a problem but the point is, major operations are getting away scot

free and the country is paying a heavy price because the fishermen are being denied their rights to catch Bajan fish. It is our responsibility as a Government to ensure that not only do we have laws on the statute book that can facilitate or try to control the whole problem, but in the event that something happens you can say, yes there is legislation here available that we can prosecute, that we can do A, B, C, D, E. So it is important to have this legislation. I am not knocking this. In fact I would go further and say that this is necessary. We brought the Bill and this is enhancing the Bill. In fact I pulled a number of the new conventions off the Internet and there are a number of conventions that are still not even in here but I guess there are reasons why all of them have not been included in the amendment. I really am not knocking the Bill but I am just saying that we can take an opportunity to look at the entire issue.

Now that brings me to the question, Mr. Speaker, about the responsibility of Government...

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of elucidation. Before the Honourable Member moves on, I got the impression, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that the Honourable Member was moving to another point so I just wanted to take this opportunity to inform the Honourable Member and the rest of the Chamber that in relation to the issue of the determination of what comes through our territorial waters there is now a regional project that is being proposed to monitor the trans-boundary movement of hazardous waste and other material through the shipping lanes of the Caribbean. It is being undertaken on a regional basis because you will appreciate that no one country has the capacity, either in terms of human resources or financial resources to police the whole region. So, it has to be a regional mechanism and individual country projects and a regional project has been defined to deal with it and since July of this year, funding has become available. So it is now a question of actually accessing the resources available to start the projects going. So that in relation to the specific matter to which the Honourable Member spoke in terms of monitoring and developing mechanisms for the passage of such waste materials and those particularly disposed of in our waters, there is a process on the way that will seek to deal with that as far as we possibly can. 3.05 p.m.

But the Honourable Member will appreciate that the greatest difficulty in relation to islands such as our own is the whole issue of policing. Because you can have a legislation on the Statute Books but until you can actually see a ship do something or identify something that has been disposed of and create the nexus between that and the vehicle which did it, then it is difficult to bring charges.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intervention by the Honourable Minister, but I think that it is important for us to understand though, that we in the

Caribbean must still be beneficiaries in the event that there is a problem. There is a document that a local insurance company put out dealing with the problem of hurricanes. When you have a hurricane in the Caribbean, it can be declared a disaster area. It has implications because it means that the cost of insurance will rise and it means a number of other things. The building codes have to change and a number of things have to happen. Similarly, if people are coming into the Caribbean and it is likely that a major oil spill or chemical might be discharged in the Caribbean sea, there must be some mechanism put in place to charge some fee or some way we must be compensated because in the event that...

Aside.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: You have not explained that was in the project, but I would hope that at some appropriate time, you might be able to give more details because I have not seen the actual details. But I am aware that they were working on it. The last time I had discussions about it was in 1994 and I have not heard anything on that aspect of it.

Asides.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: I have no problem in accepting that it will come, but I am saying that it is the responsibility of the Government to fight on behalf of the people, to protect what we have as ours.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, I think that this whole question of the pollution of the marine environment is one that we in Barbados must not take lightly. This country is seriously in trouble in terms of our tourism development by our failure to have the West Coast Sewerage Project and the South Coast Sewerage Project put in place which, as you know, failure to complete these Projects will lead to a complete disruption of the Gold Coast, as we have as our own.

I am very concerned that with the present state of the levels of pollution and I am being very careful because I do not want to be an alarmist, but I am very concerned about the poor quality of the marine environment along the west coast of Barbados and along the south coast of Barbados. If nothing is done with a degree of haste, it is quite likely that the entire Barbados economy could collapse. As the result of the failure of any Government whether it is this present Government, or the Democratic Labour Party when we resume office in 1999, it is our responsibility to ensure that without delay, these Projects are put in place. There will be a significant impact on the environment, if we are not able to put them in place and I mean it quite seriously.

Now, I am uncomfortable that there is a major problem brewing with regard to the South Coast

Sewerage Project. If what we understand is true, it will mean that a significant amount of money will have to be found to correct a problem that has been created by the present Administration. If that money cannot be found and there are delays, we might not have to wait for an oil spill, because we may be creating the problem for ourselves by failing as a government, to protect our own environment which is under threat. As a matter of priority even though we were condemned when we were in government for progressing the projects, I think Government has come to accept and realise, and certainly the Minister understands, the importance of having those projects completed. So I have a fear that if there is going to be a delay in the South Coast Sewerage Project, that it is going to result in a further delay in having the West Coast Sewerage Project put in place and Mr. Speaker, I am telling you that it is a major problem and I do not want to be an alarmist.

I can go into details. I can provide all kinds of specific information about the kinds of problems that are associated with it and some of the players who are involved. I can provide all of the details that are necessary to be provided. But, if this Government is serious and not only just implementing this legislation because a few conventions have been recently handed down and there are available, and we are really looking at the total package of protecting the environment, then I think that we have to rethink this entire Bill. It does not make sense just bringing this Bill or these amendments to make the legislation look good, that really is an exercise in ignorance.

Aside.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: You need to go further and if all of this is taken into consideration and the Government itself is acting with an understanding that they have to act in haste and not just simply to get into an argument with a contractor, or to worry about what the spokesman of the environment says, they should get on with the business because it is a major problem. I say it in all seriousness.

Asides.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: You see that is true, because when I said it was a problem before, the Honourable Member who is now speaking from his seat got up in here and said I did not know what I was talking about, only two weeks after I said what I was saying, they confirmed publicly that I was right again. I have never in this House been wrong once on any environmental matter. There is only one Member in here that can back you on the environment and that is the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Deputy Prime Minister is respectful of the environment and knows the subject well and I will give her credit. She attends important functions dealing with the

environment and I will argue with her, but I will not argue with anybody else in here. She is the only person that can take me on when it comes to the environment. That is true. She knows the environment and knows it well.

Asides.

3.15 p.m.

In all seriousness, I am concerned that we may not have to wait for an oil spill to face a disaster because we are creating one for ourselves and Government must understand this issue in a total package. You have to...

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. I was not going to respond, but I think that I just need briefly to correct the record arising out of the comments made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael East. I would not wish the records of this House to reflect that the West Coast Sewerage Project is at risk of being delayed because it is not. It is on schedule. The designs and the work that are to be done are in progress and are being done in a very timely way. We have had presentations to the PPC and to the Cabinet in relation to that project. In addition, while there are difficulties in the way the contractor on the South Coast Sewerage Project is working, the Government is not going to allow those problems to delay the project and in fact every necessary step is going to be taken to ensure that the project is completed on schedule or as close to schedule as possible.

I would not like the impression to go abroad that there are going to be massive delays in either one of these two projects that cannot be controlled or managed.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that the Minister said that, because apart from oil pollution, there is a problem of dust pollution and any delay in the area that is presently affected will prolong that problem of dust pollution.

Aside.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: All I can say is that you said that it would take weeks.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Since the Honourable Member who is speaking has an interest in calypso I would like to remind him that Sparrow has a tune made in 1965 about the sewerage scheme that was implemented in Port of Spain, Trinidad. It is called Mr. Robinson and Lockjoint. Lockjoint was the company. Sparrow sings about the dust that men had to be wearing things like cow boys.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, obviously we do not want the debate to get into where you are taking it. Can we get back to oil pollution? Your time is now almost expired.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: Mr. Speaker, I just responded to the Honourable Member that made a point of elucidation. I think you should allow the quick comment because if we are discussing this whole question of pollution we have to be serious about every form of pollution, whether it is dust, whether it is oil or not, because it all relates and it is important. It does not look good for a government to be simply saying to the people you have to be disrupted to get this done and then leave it for businesses to be destroyed. People's future is on the line. Government has to act in a manner that is empathising with people who are affected. I know the problems you are up against but you should tell the people that you understand and show some degree of concern. Have any of you driven through to see...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please. I am not going to allow this debate to become a debate now about sewerage projects and sewage. We are continuing the debate on the Oil Pollution Bill before this House and I will not accept any further comments relating to any sewerage project and people and problems in this place and that place. Let us proceed with the debate before the House as it has been going all morning.

Honourable Member, we are not entertaining that anymore. I gave you a lot of latitude already.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate it but to make the point emphatically you sometimes have to expand.

Mr. SPEAKER: You are carrying your pollution all up Hastings and every place else. Let us get back to the sea.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: Mr. Speaker, pollution is pollution.

Mr. SPEAKER: Not in this case.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please! Honourable Member, could you stick to the Bill before the House?

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: Mr. Speaker, I will. But you have to be aware that the dust in the same areas where it is contiguous to the beach can do so much damage by blowing and polluting all the air around there anyhow. It is flying all over and will end up on the beach. We on this side will not oppose the Bill. We think it is right and proper to continue to upgrade the convention. In the unlikely event that a spill does occur and we can catch a culprit, I think every loophole possible is covered in the legislation and I think that that is important.

We have to move beyond the Bill which seeks to protect us by way of legal requirement. We have to move to implement some aspects of it because the Caribbean islands are being exploited and it offends me that so many people who have no roots within the Caribbean can simply profiteer off the system throughout the Caribbean, destroy what we have in terms of the environment, pay no penalties and the people themselves in the Caribbean and in Barbados in particular...

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of elucidation. Again the Honourable Member for St. Michael East has gone back to the issue of the protection of the Caribbean and the measures needed by the Caribbean region to protect themselves. I would wish to inform the Honourable Member and the Chamber that this week in Barbados all the Ministers of the Caribbean will meet and particularly there will be a sub-conference of the Ministers of the Environment in CARICOM and we will look at the SIDS programme of action as well as problems peculiar to the Caribbean region of which we need to take common positions to carry to the international meetings. We do not all have the resources to go to all of the international meetings, but we need to know what the common positions are. So we are meeting this week. The Ministers meet on Thursday and Friday. The technocrats of the entire region, I believe some 200 people are here for the conference and we are going to be meeting to look at Caribbean and CARICOM environmental issues and the measures which we need to protect ourselves in the global framework.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: The Honourable Member was attempting to wind up for me but I hope that the message goes forward clearly that we have to be very vigilant in the Caribbean. This is not an issue that we can simply come in here saying that we are bringing legislation to upgrade the convention and then pass it and gloss over it. This is a serious piece of legislation.

I assure the Government that I will be monitoring the situation until that time, that I am competent to deal with it myself to ensure that the people of Barbados are the beneficiaries of a good environment: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. 3.25 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Before the Honourable Member speaks if I may revert to announcements with the House's permission. I would just like to read a letter received from an Honourable Member. It is dated November 11 and addressed to the Speaker, House of Assembly.

"Dear Sir:

I am to inform you that I support the official Opposition in the House of Assembly under the leadership of the Honourable Member for St. John."

It is signed "Yours faithfully, M.P."

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to speak on this side of the House. I have even been advised that I look more comfortable on this side of the House, but this is not the time to get into that kind of discussion as other members on that side would want me to entertain them with. I would rather prefer to discuss the business of this Honourable Chamber instead of getting involved with personal matters. I will not speak about such things and I think they would be well advised not to want to engage me in such discussion looking at recent events in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this matter at hand, and in looking at the Bill I realise that it speaks of pollution at sea and also there are cases of pollution emanating from land to sea. We are talking about oil.

I remember very clearly, Sir, some years ago when a line was coming from Oistins going to the Airport, that line apparently broke underground and the farmers in Pegwell and the Gibbons area started to smell some kind of oil. Apparently that oil filtered into the system and it was found later that aviation fuel seeped into the grounds of the farmers in the Gibbons and Pegwell area.

Sir, that was a very serious matter and I believe that we need to look at matters such as these because they can impact very severely and immediately on the people of Barbados. I think we need to give consideration to looking at cases where the pollution emanates from the sea to the land, as has happened in the case where the oil affected the farmers in the Gibbons and Pegwell area. I thought that was a very traumatic experience. I am not aware of what, if any, level of compensation was given to those farmers, but I think it is something that needs to be seriously addressed.

We also have problems with carelessness, I believe, with oil tankers and their allowing oil to drip into the road. Sometimes this can cause some very serious accidents. I am not aware of any legislation to deal with this. This again is also a very serious matter.

You can also have instances where oil can, through carelessness, just drip into the water supply. I think this needs to be addressed. Whereas in the case of the people at sea it is difficult to find out who the culprits are but in most of these cases that affect the land, it is very easy to find out who the culprits are. I think if we are going to talk seriously about pollution, we have to address these matters that we have experience with. We have to address these matters that can impact severely on us because in the case

of Gibbons that could have affected all the farmlands in that area and it also could have affected the health of people who could have eaten the produce from that area, but fortunately, it was detected much earlier. I would hope that we would address that, if we make any further amendments at a future date because this is a very serious issue.

Sir, we are also looking at the issue of pollution caused by dust. While I would not want to belabour it, I believe that excessive dust pollution needs to be addressed where it reaches a point that it becomes intolerable. I think we need to have laws put in force to prevent excessive dust pollution.

If we are going to be having a case where we are going to be working in the south and the west at the same time, you are going to have dust wherever you go. I think this is something we seriously have to address. I know that the Senator in the Ministry of Finance has indicated that we are looking at pollution in its other forms in terms of having unleaded fuel. I believe these are things we need to address because we are in a small country and these are things we need to look at.

While I do support the Bill that is before us, I think we need to look at matters that are of more immediate concern to us and we need to focus on this and really serve the purpose for which we are placed here.

I am much obliged to you, Sir.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, the debate on this issue has been very full. Honourable Members on this side answered a number of the questions raised but I would just like to touch very briefly on a couple of points made.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael West in his contribution raised the point about the ability of the Port to respond to any oil spills in the Deep Water Harbour. I think he might have gone beyond that to give the impression that there was no capacity in the Port for response. In fact, there is equipment in the Port, booming equipment it is called, which is used by the Barbados Port Authority in conjunction with Esso, and even Mobil as well, to render assistance in utilising this equipment to deal with any spill of oil that should ever take place in the Deep Water Harbour.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael East raised the point of environmental impact and he felt that a study should be done to see what impact the ships have and visitors and so on, on the environment of Barbados. Actually an environmental impact assessment is being done in the context of the Port expansion project. In fact, a draft report has already been presented to the Port Authority

and the Ministry and that is being studied. It does include the question of the impact of the cruise ship tourism on Barbados and takes into account projections of some 900 000 cruise passengers visiting Barbados by the year 2000 so there is an environmental impact assessment being done and is pretty near completion at this stage.

Again the Member raised the question of pollution by cruise ships. I think he went a bit far to suggest that because a head of a cow, or the carcass of a sheep, or whatever might wash up on the shore that he can authoritatively state that it, in fact, came from a cruise ship. I do not know how he would be able to positively say that that is the case but I just want to say on the question of cruise ships being involved in any sort of pollution or dumping that is certainly something that is under very stringent view because even the land based hoteliers are some of the biggest critics of the cruise ship operators and they always ensure, if no one else, they like to ensure that the cruise ship operators comply with all the international standards in relation to pollution. In any case, at present, most of the cruise ships and certainly the newer ones all carry incinerators on board so that the question of disposal of garbage by cruise ships is almost academic at this time. 3.35 p.m.

The last point I would like to make is in relation to the issue of noxious and hazardous substance and the possible pollution by them of our waters. A diplomatic conference of IMO adopted two conventions dealing with this question of compensation for hazardous or noxious substance and damage occurring because of the spill of hazardous or noxious substances.

It is very new and it has the same kind of arrangement as the two conventions that I referred to earlier, the 1969 and 1971 Conventions where initially the question of liability is dealt with and a sum fixed in relation to that liability. Then you have the second Convention topping up a supplementary amount to cover as far as possible some of the damage that might occur in those circumstances. I have requested actual figures and if before I sit those figures are available I will disclose them, if not I will undertake to supply them at some stage to Honourable Members but I just wanted to mention that

The last point is in relation to the question of a nuclear waste. It is really unfortunate to report that at this point in time there are no legal steps that can be taken to prohibit the passage of nuclear waste through the Caribbean section of the high seas. There really is nothing that we can do at this stage. The International Maritime Organisation has however developed a non-mandatory code which provided specification regarding the ship's construction and the safe packaging of nuclear waste if it is to be trafficked through the high seas and the Caribbean waters. More recently in 1996, the relevant parties came up with a

recommendation that states shipping nuclear waste should really notify coastal states regarding the routing and dates of such shipment, but again unfortunately that is being observed more in the breach than in anything else. Coastal states are not in fact being notified as much as it has been recommended that it should be when nuclear waste is to be transported through waters.

In June this year, at the United Nations at a conference on the environment, the appropriate agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the IMO itself recommended that a joint conference should be convened to develop a mandatory code to govern the shipment of nuclear waste through waters but that meeting was in fact convened but to date we have not been apprised of the findings of that meeting but as soon as that is available it will be made available to members.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that there is anything else that I need to add. As I said, Honourable Members spoke freely and widely on the matter during the debate and with those few clarifications and explanations I will just like to move again that this Bill be read a second time.

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

On the motion of Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN seconded by the Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 4 were called and passed. Clause 5, as amended, was called and passed. Clauses 6 to 12 were called and passed.

On the motion of the Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, seconded by the Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, seconded by the Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Shipping Oil Pollution (Amendment) Act, 1997. 3.45 p.m.

ORDER NO. 11

On the motion of the Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, -Mr. SPEAKER

left the Chair and the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is now in Committee of Supply.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1997-98 No.10 -
\$3,720,715

HEAD 18 - AUDIT - \$18 043

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Public Officers Loan and Travelling Officers Regulations, 1977 were amended and that amendment took effect on March 12, 1997 and was backdated to April 1, 1995. As a result of the amendments the rate for travelling has been increased to officers in this Department. \$45 000 had been voted in March. We now need another \$18 043 to cover these travel expenses to the end of the Financial Year. I beg to move that Head 18 in the sum of \$18 043 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 19 - MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Chairman, there are a number of sums required under the various programmes of Head 19. First of all under Object No. 206 - Travel, an amount of \$13 504 is required. This again, Sir, is as a consequence of the amendment to the Public Officers Loan and Travelling Allowances Regulations. We dealt with them in respect of Audit. Now in this Ministry, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, a similar thing arises. Sir, I can give the figures. The amount approved in the Estimates, Sir, was \$48 540. At the 30th September, \$34 247 had been expended. There are vote book commitments of \$10 875 and we require, Sir, \$13 504.

Under Object No. 212, Sir, \$52 000 is required, Sir, in respect of the Budget and expenditure policy, Programme 04: Tax Administration and Public Expenditure. Sir, there are 5 temporary posts which were created as a result of the Public Expenditure Management Project and supplementary provision in the sum of \$92 590 and \$3 744 is required similarly for plant, equipment and furniture. \$90 000 is being sought to purchase Smart Stream Financial Computer Modules in respect of work that is ongoing on the Tax Administration and Public Expenditure Management programme which started in 1992 or 1993, Sir.

Under Program 04, \$3 000 is required to meet the higher cost of entertainment allowance paid to the Accountant General which was increased from \$300 to \$375 a month, effective 1st April, 1995.

Under Program 05, Sir, \$35 594 is required again as a result of amendments to the Public Officers Loan and Travelling Allowances Regulation. Similarly under the Land Tax Department, \$58 128 is required.

Under Program 06 - the Energy and Natural Resources Programme, \$8 749 is required and \$10 000 under Object No. 206 under Program 08 under Sub-programme 01 - Central Purchasing. All these are Public Officers Travelling Allowances.

Under Program 13 - Economic, Social and Physical Planning, Other Personal Emoluments, Supplementary Provision of \$39 611 is required in respect of Personal Emoluments under the Economic Affairs Division for payment of acting allowances and to pay substitutes in the Town and Country Planning Department.

Sir, it is all set out in the Addendum and Honourable Members will see that the majority of the money required is to do with paying the higher cost of travel owing to the increased travelling rates which became effective in March this year but backdated to April 1, 1995.

The big ticket item under this Ministry is the supplementary provision that is being asked for in the sum of \$2 million in respect of poverty alleviation. In the Estimates, Sir, an amount of \$4 million was approved under Subprogram 08 to provide a grant of \$350 to all minimum wage earners. An adjustment was made in June of the definition of minimum wage earner and indeed the ceiling was raised from \$150 a week to \$170 a week. The number of persons qualifying has been found to have increased from 11 427 to 16 471 and the supplementary in the sum of \$2 million is required to meet the additional expenditure.

On this matter, Sir, the latest information which I had on Friday at a meeting with officials in the Ministry of Finance was that the cheques which these poor people are to receive should become available by the end of this week. The Prime Minister spoke of this in his budgetary presentation, Sir. It was found that the NIS could not do the printing of the cheques. I am advised that the cheques will be in a form similar to those issued by the National Insurance Department. The Data Processing Unit had the matter in hand, Sir, and they were not able to process these in time. Moore Paragon whom I believe are printers, I know they do cheque books for the Banks, is the company that is going to print the cheques or have the cheques prepared at any rate and the latest information that I was given on Friday is that the cheques should be ready

by November 15th so that hopefully by next week, if everything runs to schedule and if the information is correct and the forecast is accurate the minimum wage earners should be getting their cheques.

I beg to move that Head 19 stand part, Sir. 3.55 p.m.

Dr. R. C HAYNES: Mr. Chairman, there are a few comments and maybe a few questions I would like to ask of our Minister of Finance. At the time of the presentation of the Budget it was my understanding that this grant of \$350 to all minimum wage earners was intended as an offset against the expenditure incurred in relation to the VAT on food. At the time, I raised the question of whether or not this will be in a one-shot payment, or whether or not some consideration will not be given to period payments, whether it is \$350, or less than \$350, bearing in mind that these minimum wage earners will still be paying the VAT on their electricity and telephone bills and so on and if the revenue holds up whether or not it would not be possible to continue to make payments of this kind, probably on a quarterly basis.

I think that the Minister of Finance at the time did indicate that he would give some consideration to it. I sincerely hope that if you are not in a position to answer me, as I understand you were Minister of Finance only up to yesterday, whether or not this particular issue would not be raised again.

In relation to the \$170 per week, I also brought to the Houses' attention at the time of the Budget debate that whereas by increasing the tax exempt amount from \$13 000 to \$15 000 that in effect meant that all of those who were earning more than \$13 000 a year, would get that benefit which is about \$500 a year or thereabouts, according to Coopers and Lybrand. Do you follow me carefully?

Asides.

Dr. R. C HAYNES: Those \$170 or under would get the benefit of this grant and I sincerely hope for a period grant to offset any other areas where they are committed to pay the VAT on essentials over time. There is a gap between those earning \$170 a week and I think \$289 a week, which is roughly \$15 000 a year, where in fact, the only benefit that they would get would be the removal of the VAT from certain items. I hope you follow me carefully. Everybody \$13 000 and over, would get a benefit apart from the removal of VAT on food. Those \$170 and under, would get the benefit of the removal of VAT on food plus the cheque of \$350. Those within \$170 and \$289 will be able to get only the benefit of the removal of the VAT on food. I wonder whether or not some consideration has been given to this particular matter which I raised at

the time, because it seems to me to be some kind of a gap there.

I also raised the issue and I believe that this is a matter which will fall well within the province of the Attorney General to pronounce on this policy today, whether or not we should not have minimum wage legislation in Barbados on a wider scale. We have minimum wage legislation that applies only to certain categories of workers, for example, to shop assistants. What I am saying is that whether the time, and I believe that the time has come in Barbados, when we should have legislation for a minimum wage covering everybody in Barbados, period. There are too many areas of exploitation that need to be dealt with and in any effective poverty alleviation, or poverty eradication programme, we need the legislative support to deal with these issues. For example, domestics, there are many domestics in Barbados earning less than \$100 per week.

Asides.

Dr. R. C HAYNES: A whole week, that is a fact. You all have some surprises coming your way. You will be surprised to see what is happening in Barbados and in particular, among many persons who live in Barbados who do not have their papers straightened out. These people are exploited by a lot of people in Barbados and there are many people who are involved. It exists. There is no question about it.

I think it is time that we put legislation with the appropriate penalties, on the Statute Book to make sure that this kind of abuse does not take place in Barbados. Now, I know the usual response you get is this, that if you fix a minimum wage, what is going to happen is that it might cost jobs.

Aside.

Dr. R. C HAYNES: This is what they say. They say it might cost jobs. But, that is not necessarily true. In the United States, for example, a year ago the main argument of the Republicans was that if you increase the minimum wage in the United States that what is going to happen is that it is going to cost jobs. The reverse has happened. The employment rate has dropped to about 6 percent, down by about 4.7 percent, or 4.2 percent.

Aside.

Dr. R. C HAYNES: The point I am making is that you have to be very careful at the kind of arguments put forward by employers who said that if you put minimum wage legislation in place that that is going to cost jobs. I will tell you what it is going to do:

1. It is going to stop exploitation.
2. If they need the people to work, they are going to employ them and make no mistake about that.
3. What is going to happen is this, that if people know that it is a serious offense to employ a maid for a whole week and pay her less than \$100, what they will do and will have to do under the or three days and they make the same \$100. Then that maid will have the opportunity to spend more time either with her children, or look for another part-time job.

The point is this, it will put an end to exploitation and I am a great believer in having legislation fixing minimum wages across-the-board. I believe that that is an essential component if we are going to deal with the issue of poverty eradication in Barbados because we cannot have a situation where we continue to endorse the practice of developing large scores of the working poor in Barbados. We cannot have that situation. We cannot allow it to persist and people who are working should be earning a wage where, at the very least they could see some escape from the state of poverty. So I believe that minimum wages legislation across-the-board is essential in Barbados. I am not persuaded that it will do harm to the Barbados economy. I am not persuaded that it will do any harm to job creation. I am persuaded that it will put an end to the exploitation of a significant group of workers in Barbados and I think that there are many people in this country who can afford to pay better wages to their staff. Let me tell you something, I have come across, examples of people in Barbados paying their maids at home under their company's account and paying them less than \$100 a week. They are getting the tax benefit paying on their company's account and yet will not increase the amount of money that they pay their maids. It is disgraceful. These are things that really need to be looked at and looked at in detail. I really feel that there needs to be a minimum wage in Barbados, that there needs to be adequate publicity given to what is a legal minimum wage so that every Barbadian will know that if anybody offers a wage that is less per hour, they are in breach of the law. That kind of protection, in my view, is needed at this point in time for Barbadian workers. As I said, I can see no reason why it cannot be done. 4.05 p.m.

The third matter that I want to raise is under the alleviation of poverty. You know I call for a poverty relief programme in Barbados and I support the alleviation of poverty programme. Make no mistake about that!

I want to bring to the Government's attention something that they can do this Christmas for the poorest

public workers in Barbados. That is, to resume the Christmas loans programme. I am serious about this. Let me tell you why.

Aside.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: The negotiations are going to be concluded by Christmas? Anyhow, the point I wish to make is that that is a programme that is very worthwhile in Barbados for this reason. The Government never loses a cent. If it is one thing you can be sure about is that if you advance money to persons who are employed by Government, since the money is deducted on a weekly basis, then the Government has never lost any money on that programme. The second point about it is that it is usually repaid within the same fiscal year. So it has no impact whatsoever on the fiscal deficit as reported at the end of the fiscal year.

From Government's financial point of view it is not a problem. As I understand it, the Government is currently running surpluses and therefore there will be no interest costs for so doing. Therefore there is no reason for-not doing it.

What is the benefit? Christmas is a time of merriment. It is a time when people who have, experience remarkable joy within society. For those who do not have, it is a time of severe depression. I keep saying this. You will see throughout the world that you probably get more suicides at Christmas time than at any other time of the year throughout the Christian world. There are not many suicides in Barbados. I am just illustrating the point that it is a time of severe depression and it is the time of severe upset for the poorest among the poor and the poorest among the poor in Barbados are still the children of Barbados and Christmas is a time for children.

If there are 500 homes in Barbados where some help could be brought by making those Christmas loans available, it is worthwhile.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has 2 minutes.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Mr. Chairman, I believe that it is a worthwhile programme that gives a touch of humanity to any administration. Although there are credit unions and other things available there will still be a whole lot of people out there employed by Government at the lowest level who can benefit from that little loan at Christmas. When you do it, you are really helping the poor children of the nation.

Mr. Chairman, do you remember when you were a child how you thought about Christmas, the magic

of Christmas? That magic can suddenly become torment for poor children from poor homes. Have a heart! Think about it! Enter into the kind of feeling that I am trying hard /> communicate to the House. Thank you very much.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Chairman, I am glad to see that Christmas is coming early in the House of Assembly because I really would have to hope that the Government would become imbued with the spirit of Christmas. You see, Sir, I have a constituency to which these matters are serious and real. Mine is not in theory. I have a lot of people in my constituency that either do not work, work sometimes, work spasmodically, work for low wages and all the above get exploited.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I have been working assiduously at it. They would have been dead if I were not there. One needs only to do a comparative analysis with the ones in my constituency and the ones in the constituency of the Honourable Member for the City to see what a difference I have made.

Mr. Chairman, that is while the Honourable Member is discussing a one-off payment to those persons who faH under the Wages Council (Wages Regulation) (Shop Assistants) Order, 1997 which was passed on June 12 this year. I remember when I spoke to my constituents soon thereafter I said that I did not understand how the tripartite team could come up with a figure of \$170 because if you consider that 15% had been added to all that these persons had to buy, and they spend about 98% of whatever they earn on food and necessities, in fact the \$170 would do no more if and when the VAT was taken off food items than put them back where they were. If you examine what has happened to those persons, it is not merely the food items that have been identified in the Budgetary Proposals. There are a number of items which these people, all of us, but in particular those persons who are at the bottom of the economic and social scale, have to deal with for which the 15% has been a completely new imposition and, therefore, their plight has been increased considerably. 4.15 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, if you take the question of just the telephone alone for persons who have telephones, and I would not like it to be thought that is a luxury in 1997 and anyone who has received telephone bills since VAT has been put on will realise that there is a substantial cost that is built into the telephone that is now to be taken for granted.

Sir, the question of the alleviation of poverty cannot be dealt with only in the terms which we have been discussing. Again, Sir, I am on record as having said to my

constituents sometime in July exactly what the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central just alluded to in his presentation, that when this Statutory Instrument came out, which brought the minimum wage for shop assistants - and it must be stressed for shop assistants - because what the Honourable Member said is valid. There are people in this country who are working for a weekly wage that is still in the vicinity of \$120 to \$150 a week. I have said that that in itself will not be enough. Even though I thought that \$170 was not enough, I did not understand how the Trade Union and the Government could settle for \$170. But assuming that they did settle, the point has to be made that if you want to see real poverty you have to deal with some people who are getting no income in a household.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The Honourable Member is saying from his seat that I did not make a speech like this in the early 1990s. So suppose I was not aboard early in the 1990s, you mean as we come toward the end of the 1990s you do not wish me to join you? You do not wish me to say that we want the just society?

Let me start off by saying, Sir, what the Honourable Member for St. George South wishes me to say. I am joining him 'and all well-meaning people, as I have been doing for the last 20 years, in fighting for the dispossessed and the vulnerable groups in this society but I am making this point. The people in the constituencies who have real poverty are those who have little or no income coming in, not even the \$170.

Let me give you an example of one category. There is a particular type of woman who lives in a constituency who was married to a low level civil servant. He retired and was getting a pension. The two of them, she on her own old age pension and he on his pension from the Government were able to maintain a modest living in a house that is partly wall and partly bo&rd. They were meeting their telephone bill, the light bill and food. They might go without food once a week but that is okay because as you get older apparently you do not have to eat every day. But then the husband dies.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Apparently as you get older, as the Honourable Member for St. George South has been discovering, you do not have to because if you deal with the welfare services as run by my friend sitting in the front there by himself we would get to that but I do not wish to deal with that.

I am saying, Sir, that when that woman's husband dies, the whole situation in her life changes. There is nothing to capture her. She falls between the

cracks because the income which was coming from her husband's pension is suddenly cut off and there is nothing that interferes with her pension upward, so whereas they were living together on a modest income, suddenly...

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: You can see it. Go through any constituency and you will see the house starts a state of degradation and her quality of life is reduced considerably in a relatively short time.

Mr. Chairman, that is one of the areas where the poverty is not identified in any of the reports that are written, but those people begin on a course of poverty that when seven or eight years after the husband has died, these people are in a fundamental state of poverty.

If you are going to do poverty alleviation, there are policies relating to that kind of hardship which need to be formulated and implemented. We need to have some system by which persons who are receiving pension or receiving assistance from the State can have an increase in that assistance where it is obvious that the loss of a partner or the loss of the basis of their income that there has to be some kind of supplement.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: If it is in the NDP Manifesto, bully for them, but I wish somebody to do it. I do not want to hear whose manifesto it is.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I think the Honourable Member is suggesting that if the NDP has good ideas he had better keep bringing them in the House so that he can get them implemented.

Sir, there is another point that has to be made. I believe that the welfare services in this country were designed to assist people who need assistance and we cannot discuss poverty alleviation seriously in this country when I can read in the newspapers on a given morning that two 90 year-olds have their water disconnected. It cannot make sense.

If you have lived to be 90 years old in this country and live in your own house you are saving the State large quantities of money. You have saved the State by remaining in your household and not being a responsibility of the State. That in itself is a saving to the State and ought to be recognised.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The Resolution is about alleviation of poverty. The Chairman and I are having a wonderful

time because he has a member of his constituency that has a household with 20 persons none of whom is working.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Getting welfare? They are poverty stricken on two counts. They are poverty stricken at the level of their own perception of self and they are poverty stricken at the level of not having a sufficient income to enjoy the basic necessities of life. If you examine what we give in Barbados it may be all that we can afford. It would be much better for there to be two persons in a household like that who are working than all the welfare in the world because in Barbados you cannot give anybody any welfare to speak of. Mr. Chairman everybody knows, anybody who is a parliamentary representative that is doing a good job knows that he or she has to pay some water bills every month or pay some other bills every month, let no one have any doubt about that whatsoever. If you are representing people and you care about them and you have compassion you have to take up \$15 and pay the water bill sometimes, you have to pay the light bill sometimes and you have to pay the telephone bill sometimes but you have to make sure you do not pay it for the same person every time. 4.25 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I will deal with the dead. When those persons die, a problem arises if they do not have any immediate family and what has to happen is that some arrangement has to be found very fast to avoid them becoming part of a system which nobody who has any concept of human dignity wishes to see happen to anybody. They do not wish to become a candidate for Potter's Field.

Again, the parliamentary representative or somebody has to come to the rescue but what do you find, Sir. I am not going to say that VAT should be taken off all funerals, I am not going to get into that but I am saying that they ought to be some system by which it can be waived in circumstances where it is clear that in order to give somebody a decent Christian burial some arrangement has to be made. On presentation of proper information there ought to be at least the capacity to waive the VAT.

Mr. Chairman, these are very serious issues. If we are going to discuss alleviation of poverty, we have to get down to the nitty-gritty and stop trying to give the impression that a Daniel has come to judgement and suddenly for the first time in Barbados poverty is being faced head on, that is simply not valid.

Mr. Chairman, the systems that have been set up in this country were designed to bring relief to the poor and the marginalised. The systems have not worked in

some instances and they have not been corrected, instead what is happening is that we are paralleling the systems and all that will lead to in the final analysis is a waste of the precious resources which we have.

I will have a lot more to say about that as time goes by, Sir.

Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: I have been in this political game for nearly 30 years now and I have experience of the various institutions that we have had in Barbados to deal with the situation raised by the Honourable Member. I would like to contribute to this debate because I believe, Sir, that many of the speeches that are made in this area are genuine but they do have an element of grandstanding.

I have not met anybody who has been around in Barbados for the last 30 years that would fail to recognise the tremendous change and improvement in the living conditions that have gone on in Barbados. We 'as parliamentarians have a special duty to perform which all of us are ignoring. This House should have select committees looking into the areas of legislation and the areas of policies which are to be effected. I do not think that any political party in Barbados that we have today can fail to understand the need for a minimum level of living, below which no person in Barbados should fall. We should have that.

Honourable Members should recall when I was a plank of the Barbados Labour Party in 1971 that... I want to point out that this concept of poverty alleviation which we have now is only a modern word that is being used to deal with a situation which in the last part of this century even developed countries have not been able to ensure that their citizens are not affected.

Sir, I was only recently reading the efforts in Europe because many people are not recognising that the European Economic Community at the present moment has a level of unemployment which statistically is very similar to the level of unemployment in developing countries. Many of them have 10%, 11% and 12% unemployment and they themselves too have invented to a large extent the word poverty alleviation so as to deal with a situation in which all of the safety nets that they have are still not catching people and people are living at a standard of living which is not desirable that they should have.

My understanding of it is that with all of the elaborate studies that have been undertaken in those countries with all of their social science and research and with all of the mechanisms that they have, it has been discovered that the greatest measure of poverty alleviation is to put people in employment and that is why the Labour Party made jobs its priority in the last election and that is why we feel much

better today because we were able to drop the unemployment rate from 25% to less than 14%. If you talk about poverty alleviation, this Party has a proud record because it can say that it has attacked the basic and fundamental...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because he is quite aware that the reason why the unemployment figures are the way they are is because they are using National Insurance statistics where taximen and ZR drivers who were previously self-employed are now recognised as being employed and also that they have set up a deliberate policy where they have sent people back to school to move them from being unemployed.

Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: Sir, I want to deal with the question of adequate wages. There is a lot of dispute around the world now because this question of employment as I say before is a matter now of a world wide phenomenon and because it is important to Europe. As a matter of fact within a month's time I believe there is going to be a conference in the European Community on the methodology that should be adopted for employment generation. The United States is a unique place in many respects because the United States right now has its lowest level of unemployment in the last 30 years.

Sir, what I want to point out to you is that the effort of the Government in this area is multi-faceted. Attempts have been made in its poverty alleviation programme to use many of the organisations which in fact in our society mitigate to a large extent the problems that Honourable Members have spoken about. We have been using the churches, we have been using the other NGOs in the society and that is the essential element of the programme of poverty alleviation which is new because the Government is bringing to the table a recognition of the fact that the attack on poverty in this society has to be dealt with not only by state machinery but also by all and sundry and all institutions in the community. That is why I rose in this debate to point out that the facts and circumstances outlined by Honourable Members over there, that all of us as constituency representatives have to deal with these matters. I think it would be unfair for us not to place on the record the tremendous effort that is being made through the new areas of activity which has been brought into being by the Government in its attempt to have a holistic approach, a private sector approach, while at the same time recognising that the governmental institutional framework needs to be looked at. 4.35 p.m.

All of us are not satisfied with the method of delivery of welfare as we pass it in this House of Assembly. We have some problems in our area.

As Members of Parliament we sometimes have to act as the appeal court against the decision of the particular individuals in the Civil Service who have to make the decision. We have to write a letter saying that we have received complaints that this case has not been dealt with in a manner which we expected that it should have been dealt with. Will you please explain to us the reasons for the decision. So that what I am saying is, Sir, that I really hope that at some time in the near future this House will have the courage to take a decision that we have an all-party committee by way of a select committee to review all of the existing machinery that we have with a view to improving the legislation.

The question of minimum wages is again a very debatable matter in many countries in the world. I know that one thing is clear that it has been experienced by all countries that one should have a wage on an hourly basis so as to encourage what they call labour market flexibility. That is, once you have a minimum hourly wage it opens the opportunity for service providers to market themselves to a number of households.

Now we are talking basically of a community like Barbados in respect of household workers or workers within the curtilage of a household because we have weeders and we have those people who come and do work for you and so forth. There is always a debate as to whether if you fix your minimum wage at such a level that you would discourage people from hiring people even at that rate and you tend to encourage people to hire the marginal people that the Honourable Member talks about, the people whose bargaining power is greatly reduced by the fact that they do not have immigration permission. Many societies have that. But the minimum wage to be arrived at has to be after a complete examination of all the pros and the cons.

I do not know what Honourable Members are talking about. Maybe my constituency is different but I know, certainly on the south coast that it is very, very difficult to employ people at less than \$5 per hour. That is for sure. I do not know what the Honourable Member's experience is but maybe they say that my constituency is a constituency that is on the coastal belt with a lot of hotel trade. There is a lot of independent activity of fishing and selling fish and things of that kind and therefore it may be hard. Certainly my own view is that the Government should have an in-depth examination of all of these matters.

We know that previously because of the fact that a certain category of worker, namely the domestic and shop assistant were not unionised, for a long period of time Barbados had a tradition of having minimum wage for certain categories of workers. People forget that. Since the early 50's we had legislation with tripartite committee stipulating what the minimum wage should be.

Sir, I do not want the impression to be given that this Government was not on top of the modern trend in dealing with this matter of poverty alleviation and that interim measures were put in place in order to have a holistic and a combined attack on poverty.

There is nothing of course you can do for people whom alcohol or drugs take hold except try and rehabilitate them. That is all you can do with them. But with respect to able bodied people who really want to work or want an opportunity to pull themselves out of poverty the best way to deal with them is to make macro-economic policy as my honourable friend on that side would say which are conducive to employment generation. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Chairman, I somehow find it extremely difficult to understand why this administration would be on top of matters pertaining to poverty in Barbados because as far as I am aware there has been no study done to understand the nature of poverty in Barbados. Nobody can tell me what are the real characteristics of poverty in Barbados. Nobody can tell me what is the difference of poverty across the urban and rural districts. Nobody can tell me what are the characteristics of a male who is suffering as a result of poverty in Barbados. Nobody can tell me what are the characteristics of a female. Nobody can tell me what are the characteristics of an old age pensioner who suffers as a result of poverty and I am therefore saying that no one in this Chamber can argue that there has been a study identifying the nature of poverty as it exists in Barbados. As a result it is extremely difficult for us to be suggesting that there is a policy approach that can take care of poverty matters in Barbados in 1997.

The first requirement is for the Government to understand that the question of poverty cannot be located simply in political terms but has several other dimensions that may be economic and especially social in nature and that for us to be able to deal with these issues we definitely need to understand them and not to see it as just a pursuit in political expediency.

As far as I am aware, from the conceptualisation of a VAT in Barbados there was recognition that VAT would have caused the vulnerable groups in Barbados to be under severe pressure and from the time the 15% rate was determined there was provision for a \$22 million poverty alleviation fund. As far as I can gather that fund has not been utilised at all in the way that it was conceptualised to be utilised.

In fact as we look at this proposal we are recognising that \$6 million has been allocated to a subprogram and that there is a major exclusion of pensioners getting a grant of \$350 for the year and that has to be a significant oversight on the part of Government because if you are saying to

me that workers who earn \$170 a week or less are entitled to a grant of \$350 to assist them, then the pensioners should have access to this grant as well. I do not see how you can exclude the most vulnerable group from getting a grant of \$350 per year. Since we have recognised from its inception, or its conception that that would have been damaging to certain vulnerable groups of which the pensioners are indeed the most vulnerable in the society. So, I am saying that if \$350 per year allocated for about 17 000 people would result in only \$6 million for Government and even if there are 20 000 pensioners in Barbados that we can offer a similar grant to the old aged pensioners the same way in which we are offering those workers who earn less than \$170 per week. So, I cannot understand why the pensioners would have been excluded from the grant being provided by Government. 4.45 p.m.

We need to look at this whole question of poverty. Even if we have not studied it, which we have not done in detail, there are certain broad indications which we can possibly use. There are just over 75 000 households in Barbados and we know that about 40 percent of the households live in wooden structures in Barbados and we know that of those 30 000 households that 50 percent of the households live in houses which are over 20 years old. So therefore we are aware that even by identification of the household as it relates to where that household lives, or what kind of house the household lives in that there must be about 20 000 such householders who should, in fact, be entitled, just on the mere fact of the quality of the house, which they presently live in, to certain grants.

I say that to say this, that it would have been better to target the household than to target the individual. Therefore, in the same way in which we are using a piece meal approach by identifying the minimum wage as the bench mark for which we are going to give the individual a grant of \$350 per year, we could have used some other broad indicator to give households in Barbados a grant which will be readily more appropriate to address the needs discussed by some individuals which they identified early in the debate. I do not need to labour the point that it would be better to target the household than it would be to target the individual to deal with this whole question of poverty alleviation.

But what is more important for me is that there has to be justification and every reason why an old aged pensioner should have been entitled to the grant. I cannot see the reason for the exclusion and it cannot be the question of a financial constraint. They are the most vulnerable group in Barbados. They are the most vulnerable in any country. If we are talking about the impact of VAT on people who do not have, you have to give the old aged pensioners first call on any funds which are available.

We are well aware and it has been admitted that there will be an excess of \$107 million as a result of VAT in this fiscal year. I know, for sure that there will be more than \$107 million in excess of VAT for this year. I will take the official position, but I am well aware that the VAT proceeds for this fiscal year will exceed \$107 million as projected. In fact, already, for the first nine months of the fiscal year, the Government has exceeded its target for the entire year. So for the nine-month period of this fiscal year, the collection of VAT has exceeded what was targeted for the year. So, you can well expect that in the months of December where spending is at its highest in Barbados and where there is tourism at its highest, the Christmas Season where there will be bonuses, where there will be the payment of the public sector wage by Christmas as expected, so as to boost the finances of the individual, as well as the business community, you can anticipate that that unexpected event to provide public sector workers with their increases would in fact cause further increases in consumption and will cause further increases in the VAT collection that Government might not have anticipated at the beginning of the fiscal year.

The other thing is that around March of next year, we know that there will be a boost to tourism as a result of the English cricket tour. One can easily factor that in as well to the increase in consumption. So, I am saying to you that for the fiscal year 1997-1998 that there will be a "mob-ot-ton" of money collected by this administration from VAT. I mean, it is easy to predict, so it cannot be a question of finance and I cannot understand and I will repeat, to time immemorial, why in fact, we have not given consideration to the old aged pensioners for a grant. I cannot understand it and I will never be able to understand it. They should have been the first group considered for any such a grant. The question of the gap between the \$13 000 and plus the \$170 per week is only \$8 850 per year, so that leaves a gap of almost \$4 000 between the \$13 000. As I said that could have been addressed. Perhaps if we had gone the other route to households which is extremely difficult and I will admit, it is extremely difficult to target households in Barbados for several reasons. The same way in which it will be extremely difficult to have a special developments area (SDA) housing, as it was suggested some time earlier in these Chambers. I mean you would in fact be setting up a serious opportunity for discrimination, if you identified a particular area as a SDA, because the concessions granted for that area cannot be justified on the basis of anything.

How do you go from a special area in St. Michael and not one in St. Lucy, so that would not make sense either. But we must recognise here, and this is* the most important point, that poverty is not homogeneous across groups. The poverty which people will experience in an age cohort of 20 to 30 is not the same that they will experience between 50 and 60 and certainly will not be the same

that you experience after retirement. I am therefore saying that we need to do a lot more to understand this thing called poverty and that addressing the needs of a poverty-stricken pensioner, or an old aged person have more to do with addressing the mind of the individual than transferring resources by way of finance to that individual.

You cannot address a poverty stricken old aged pensioner in the same way that you address an individual who is between 30 and 40. One has to do with introducing measures that would sustain this poverty effort, would be long term, and one has to do with utilising the mind of an individual who has lived a useful life in terms of contribution to the economic affairs and who now needs to settle down and enjoy the fruits of the labour.

So that we have in fact, a serious matter which I can well respect the Government's approach. It can be translated into a political matter quite easily, because anything you do can be seen as a poverty programme. It can be something agricultural. It can be something even in tourism, as far fetch as it may appear. It can be something in education, in health, in the environment, it can be something anywhere, it could be a legal matter, it can be anything, it can pass as a poverty programme. I must congratulate the Government for shifting ground and moving away from the question of employment and unemployment, to one of poverty which is now like a basin. You can throw everything in. It is a sink. Everything is now a poverty issue in Barbados.

So, I can understand that. I can understand the politics of poverty but what I cannot understand is how you can approach a matter that you do not understand. How you can approach a matter that you have not given sufficient resources to and this thing about St. John being the poorest parish was done out of ignorance by some set of consultants in Barbados who put together some foolish survey, tacked it onto the labour survey and came up with this heroic conclusion that St. John is the poorest parish in Barbados. But, it was expedient again, because it allowed for attack on the Leader of the Opposition. It allowed for justification of the substantial efforts being made in St. Peter because you can then say that St. Thomas represented by a Prime Minister was neglected and St. John represented by a Prime Minister was neglected, but certainly St. Peter will not be. Therefore that was the so-called justification being given and to target St. John to demonstrate that this member was a previous Minister of Finance who failed to deliver any goods to that particular parish. I am saying that we need to give this thing a lot more thought. We need to understand that poverty has several dimensions - social dimensions, political and even legal dimensions. We have to address the issue in a holistic way and a very varied approach and attack this thing called poverty. 4.55 p.m.

It has been from the time I started reading Budget speeches that I understood that all governments saw full employment as an objective, all governments saw the growth of the economy as an objective, all governments have seen stable prices as an objective in the economy, stable balance of payments from 1961 right through, every Budget speech.

So there is no lack of understanding across political parties that poverty has been an issue and will continue to be an issue. I do not care who it is in charge of this country, it will remain an issue. The question is that we cannot address it unless we really understand it and that is where the effort should be in this early stage. We should be seeking to get consultants, seeking to hire people who can truly give us an assessment.

While we may cry Jamaica and Trinidad down on the basis of recent economic performance, what we cannot cry down in those two countries is that they have very good statistical people and systems in place to measure poverty which is extremely well measured in Jamaica and that we have a situation where Barbados pretends to be more advanced economically than these two countries but that these countries are able to conduct all forms of surveys, in Jamaica across urban and rural Jamaica, to get a good feeling to estimate poverty in that country.

We are a long way from it. I am saying that we need to go to where they are in terms of appreciating what you are encountering and perhaps then we will be better placed to put measures in place to effect change.

His Honour R. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, when I heard the previous speaker, the Member for St. Michael North West, talking about the characteristics of poverty, I was appalled. That Member represents a constituency that I spent a considerable amount of time in during the last by-elections, and the constituency is quite similar to the one that I represent and the one the Member for St. Michael West represents. They all have what is known as pockets of poverty and if the Member for St. Michael North West wants characteristics I can tell him what it is all about. He knows them.

He walked about that constituency and he cried and talked to those people about the conditions they live in, houses that you would not imagine someone lives in, the conditions of the road. He knows that there is an area in that same constituency that a lady was about to have a baby and the ambulance could not go in because of the condition of the road and that baby was born on the road. He knows that.

Mr. Chairman, he knows about the level of unemployment in the area. He knows about the level of crime in the area. He knows about the drug problem in the area. So all these things are problems of poverty.

I also heard the member talking about giving back to the pensioners a grant but from the outset of the VAT the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister gave an increase to the pensioners on their pensions.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: The Honourable Member is misleading the House because what the Honourable Member is not saying is that when the Prime Minister gave that increase to the pensioners he did not know that he was robbing them of over \$107 million. He was not aware that he was taking so much. So the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is correct in asking for an additional amount of money because they paid higher than they were told that they were going to pay.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Chairman, the point is not being taken that the welfare programme that accompanied the VAT, the proceeds came out of the VAT. The grant which the persons under \$170 a week will get came out of the proceeds of VAT. The pensioners were paid prior, in January. The welfare programme is a response to the hardship that VAT would have caused and therefore you cannot associate the two policies.

His Honour R. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, I will continue. As I said, the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister up front gave this grant to people to offset what increase they had to pay for their light bills and when they went to the supermarket for essentials. As the Member for St. George says, Sir, the welfare recipients got \$13 more on their pensions.

Mr. Chairman, I am happy to see that we have found that there has been an increase from 11 428 to 16 471 who will be receiving this grant. My main problem with this is that I expect that in order to find who will get these cheques we will have to take it from the National Insurance Department. My problem is that there are many employed in this country who do not pay in the contribution to the National Insurance Department. There are people right now who prior to VAT were not receiving sick benefits because of the non-payment of National Insurance Contributions to the department.

I am asking, if these employers are not paying in the contribution how would the Welfare Department or the people who are going to be dispensing the proceeds be able to pay out the money because if no contribution is being taken on their behalf how will the Government department know who to pay the cheques to.

There are also people out there who work and no national insurance is taken out on their behalf so the employer can say that he does not have to pay because he did not take it out. Those same people might come and say that they are working for \$170 or \$160 and they heard

from the Government that they are entitled to a refund by cheque. That is the problem that will be created. These are things that we have to look at.

Sir, I am totally in agreement with this supplementary before the House and I support it. 5.05 p.m.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I am quite grateful to the Honourable Member that has just spoken. He has enlightened this House that the measures taken by Government have not gone far enough. He has admitted that there are a lot of people out there who are working and who are not on the records and they would be deprived of that benefit because of this policy.

I want to say, Sir, we must understand that if we are serious about tackling the effect of poverty in this country, and that is a term I wish that somebody would explain to me because I believe that is a mind judgment. Poverty to someone and poverty to the individual that we regard as a poverty case is quite a different matter.

Sometimes we see someone living in a house that needs repairs and we must be very careful as politicians how we go about calling people poverty cases because there is something in Barbados called pride. We have to stop identifying people and saying that body is poor because let me say this. A man might have a house that might be leaking but at least he has a house and a home. There are a lot of people who do not and who cannot afford, and we do not regard them as poverty cases. It is clear to me that they might be poverty cases too.

I want to say that if Government is serious about alleviating 'poverty, I am going to give them a way they can do it. In 1961 when the Democratic Labour Party came to power, they realised that there were a lot of poor people in this country and they decided on a two-pronged approach. I honestly believe that this has been the most effective approach in the country so far, that is, they went about to educate the people and also to put their parents to work. I am saying that the Government through VAT has enough money that as from tomorrow they can implement a crash programme to put people to work. It does not necessarily have to be debushing, but it could be a programme to enhance the tourism project.

I am saying, Sir, that if tourism is our main foreign exchange earner, that we do not necessarily only have to debush, but we can debush the country and also add people in the service industry at the cost of the Government to enhance the product that we are delivering. There is enough money in the Government coffers to do that and I will not take any excuse from anybody that unemployment should only be reduced by tampering with National Insurance figures and sending people back to school. It is time to

put the people back to work and Government has the money to do it and they should do it. It is nonsense about you are going to get over \$100 million in VAT and you are prepared to give it to Tom, Dick and Harry. I want the poor people in this country who are suffering and who people believe are liming on the streets because they feel like, that is a farce. Those people need work.

I heard the Honourable Minister of Health today reminding the Honourable Member and Minister from St. Michael North about the people liming in Grazettes. I am saying I want a crash programme to look after those people and the people in all the other constituencies. The Government has the money and let it be said that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy called for it and demand it. It must happen in this country that the taxpayers happen to be the parents of those same children and they are entitled to a benefit from the Treasury of this country.

I am saying, Mr. Chairman, that I want no excuse because the same way it could be done in 1961 we in the Democratic Labour Party honestly believe it could be done in the 1990s, and we will tell the Government how we want it done. There are people that believe that St. Lucy has a right to be overgrown in bushes. I am saying it does not. It is part of the tourism plant and it needs to be debushed. Those people who are looking for jobs to debush in parts of St. Lucy, they should get jobs.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: The problem with that aside, Sir, is that there are some Ministers who when they should be touring St. Lucy to realise that the roads are very bad they are not. But we will also call for some money in his Ministry, and I am saying this is another way to alleviate poverty, to give the Honourable Minister, or whoever happens to be the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, more money so he can do all the roads in St. Lucy and employ people. There is enough money in the Treasury to do it. There is no excuse in this day and age where we can have tourism and the roads within the country area are in the state they are in.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am not talking about St. Andrew and I have no offence for the Honourable Member looking after his constituency but I am saying that if he is my friend he should look after my constituency too. I am saying that from the tourism end, we can employ people. From the debushing end in the Ministry of Transport & Works he can look after that.

Sir, I am not accepting the excuse that the Home Help people who look after the poor people in this country that they should only be given three days per week when

we have millions of dollars sitting in the Treasury of Barbados and poor people cannot get full employment.

I am saying we have the money now, employ the people because you cannot argue that they are not doing a good job and that they are not looking after the poor people in this country. If we want to alleviate poverty, we first have to look after the people who have needs. The priority of this Government seems to be on the wrong footing. They are more interested in people building ports, doing this and doing that and poor people suffering on the blocks cannot get what they want.

I am saying today, Sir, that the poor people in this country, their foreparents have worked hard and they deserve a piece of the cake. If other parliamentarians over there do not agree with me, I would like them to stand up and say it now. That is why I support the Honourable Member for Christ Church South when he said that the only way to alleviate poverty in this country is by giving full employment. Those are words of wisdom. When he got up I said to the Honourable Member here that we are going to get a statesman speech, and he has lived up to my words, but all the other Honourable Members, before they follow the channel they do not want to walk the good road.

I am saying, Sir, it is time that the priorities of this Government be right. You know why this Government cannot be right? Any Government of this country that does not start with a programme in St. Lucy will always fail because anytime you do not look after your head, your whole body will rot and that is exactly what is happening with that Government over there.

Thank you.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Chairman, I just rise to clear up one point which was made earlier by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central. I know that some of us are given to speaking in hyperboles and superlatives and so on but, certainly, there is no proof, scientific or otherwise, that there are these scores of domestics who receive less than \$100 per week, at least, not at the Ministry of Labour. The complaints do not reveal this.

I would believe though that there are a handful of employers out there who may very well be abusing the system but at the same time I do not think it is fair for us to come into this Assembly and give the impression that there are these scores of domestics out there who are receiving less than \$100 per week.

Aside.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Members in here have been asking for proof of this and proof of that. Where

is the proof of it? This is my question. The point I am making is that certainly at the Ministry of Labour we do not have any proof of it.

The other point which he made, Sir, is that the \$170 minimum wage is low. I want to say that this \$170 as a minimum wage for the shop assistants was not set by Government alone. It was set by the Wages Council and that is the Shops Wages Council. That is comprised of union representatives, employers' representatives and Government representatives. So to give the impression that Government set a low minimum wage is not really correct. This came from the Wages Council proper.

I have seen that file, Mr. Chairman, of the Wages Council on the minimum wage and certainly looking at that file I can safely say that not on a single occasion during the eight years when the Opposition was in office did they even glance or look at that file, so there was no minimum wage set for the eight years that they were in office. I looked at it and they did not even glance at that file.

This year we have increased the minimum wage and have put it at \$170. We turned around, this is what we are doing now, and we used that \$170 as a yardstick. That is the measuring point. We say that anyone that falls below this will get the grant of \$350 a year. Even though it is just the minimum wage for the shop assistants, we use that as a general minimum wage and say that anyone that falls below that we will give them the \$350 a year. On top of all that we are making this grant to those people who are not getting the minimum wage. I sat here when the Honourable Prime Minister delivered the Budget and I can say that I saw the astonishment and the shock of the faces of members of the Opposition because they did not expect that the Prime Minister would have gone that far, they did not expect that he would have gone that far. All the criticism that we are having now, they were shocked, they were virtually stunned when he announced that these people who get less than the minimum wage would get \$350. 5.15 p.m.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make that single point. It is true that almost every single Government would from time to time want to see and would make the point too that they would want to see a blanket minimum wage rather than just have a minimum wage for shop assistants, which is the point that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central has made. I do believe that there is a defect in the law in that respect that we just have this one shop wages council on our Statute books.

Indeed when the Minimum Wages Regulations went before Cabinet almost every single member of Cabinet in unison said the same thing that what we actually want is

not just a single shop wages council minimum wage, we wanted one for everybody. I would say that even now at the Ministry of Labour that we are looking at the logistics and the possibilities of having the Shop Wages Council become a general wages council because it is something which they have asked me to do, to look at the possibilities of putting that in place and we are doing it because like the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, we believe that that is the way to go and that they should be more general minimum wages.

I just wanted to make that point.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North must not feel pressured if someone is suggesting that there are people working for less than \$100 a week. The point that has to be made is this. Several employers did this especially during the structural adjustment period, that to qualify for NIS you need to work a minimum of 20 hours per week. In order to get around the system a number of employers brought young women in for four hours a day for five days and they work only 20 hours per week and they did not have to pay NIS. The thing about that is that you could be working for 25 hours which qualifies you and your income could still be much less than \$100. Why this per week has to be explained is because we are thinking about an eight-hour day or forty hours per week but several people have in fact been working less than forty hours per week. It happens regularly in the tourism sector during the slow summer season and it has happened several times.

What needs to be asked is whether those people who have been manipulated by employers and continued to work for less than 20 hours to beat the system and earn much less than \$100 per week whether those people too in some way can qualify for the grant before us. I have no answer to what is really a question for the Government. Should the person who is working for 20 hours and who does not qualify and does not pay NIS and who still goes to work on mornings and pays bus fare and who has to buy lunch and who has to do all of this without earning that level of income, should he or she be entitled to this grant. I would like an answer to that, I honestly do not have the answer.

On the question of the Member for St. Michael West Central, what the Member for St. Michael West Central said in relation to St. Michael North West had more to do with fact that there was a recent by-election and we had a number of members on the Other Side canvassing the area and would have come into full contact with pockets of poverty in the area but that does not translate into an understanding of poverty across Barbados, it simply means that you observed while canvassing areas of poverty. Neither does it give character to the type of poverty that we have in Barbados, no one understands it because it

has not been studied and so to use St. Michael North West and the example of canvassing as an indication that he has clearly all the answers and understanding of poverty is simply to misunderstand and reduce this debate to a level that hurts me, I must admit.

The other thing is that in that area especially in the housing schemes where there is obvious over population you have to look at that as a serious matter. On average in a household in Barbados, there are 3.2 persons per household in Barbados. In those areas you have up to 12 people and sometimes in excess of 12 people living in a government unit in the Farm Housing Area. You had practices of people extending even without permission and building at the back to get more space and that kind of thing, so you cannot tell me that because of by-election and canvassing that you have a perfect handle on what this issue is all about and then seek to suggest that I should know because I represent the constituency where this matter was put on the agenda by the Prime Minister of Barbados and has now become the focal point of policy for this Administration.

Prior to the by-election, there was no mention at all in this country of poverty alleviation.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: No, there was no mention at all about any poverty it was never considered to be a major factor, a stated factor by the Administration but after December 1996 there was a discovery that there was excessive poverty in that area. What I am saying to you is that it cannot be said that anyone really fully understands this matter because if we thought we had done so before then we would have put even greater measures in place to alleviate the so-called poverty across Barbados.

My thing is that I would really like to know what is the justification for the programmes beyond the quite laudable objective of uplifting the masses of people or improving the standards of living of people who are underprivileged and deprived. That is a laudable objective but I would like to know the philosophical underpinnings of the poverty alleviation programme because we have not had an opportunity to debate this matter in these Chambers at all. We have not had an opportunity to discuss what this whole matter means. We have not had an opportunity to see where we need to focus in terms of policy. We have really not had an opportunity, as legislators, to be part of a process that has now become so important in Barbados. That should have been the purpose of these Chambers. These Chambers should not be resigned to some flippant comment about poverty and that I need to know it. I should be able to come here and be part of a process that informs the wider Barbados of the need for a policy framework to

alleviate poverty. That, as far as I gather is my major task for being an elected member of the House of Assembly. But I cannot understand it. 5.25 p.m.

I did not recognise that my only task is whether or not I have provided or assisted in providing a street light somewhere in my constituency and that I should resign myself to that level of participation of politics in Barbados. Indeed, if I have to, then I have to reconsider why I am here because if that is the case, why should people not in these Chambers be able to boast of having fulfilled promises which they have made in the by-election. So I do not need to be in the House of Assembly then to fulfil any promises. I do not need to be in the House of Assembly to do these kinds of things to uplift the masses of people in Barbados. Why am I in the House of Assembly? Why am I a member of these Chambers if in fact it has been stated that you do not need to understand or even begin to shape this concept which is so important as a member of this House. We definitely need to come to grips with why we are here and until we do so it appears to me that we are going to be consistently encountering issues of this type when we go out there in the field, we recognise a problem and we throw money at the problem. That cannot be the best way to alleviate poverty in Barbados. It cannot be seen as the only way and there is absolute need for us to really come to grips with what we are discussing here today.

I say we definitely need to go further. We need to identify who are the poor. How do we measure poverty? Is poverty something to do with income? In fact if you really did a detailed study of poverty it has little to do with income and more to do with consumption. The thing about it is that in an understanding of poverty your income stream can change over time but your consumption stream hardly changes as an individual. You hardly eat more rice as a result of getting more income. You hardly consume more electricity as a result of increased income. The issue then has to be measured according to a more stable indicator which is consumption.

The other thing is that we need to understand clearly a basket of food is really a nutritional thing across high income groups. Does it mean that because you are a high income earner that your nutritional requirements are less than a low income earner? It does not mean that. Because you earn \$100 000 in income do you have less nutritional value or more than a person who holds \$10 000 in income? It does not mean that so it is not simply about income. It is not simply about the transfer of a resource from government to an individual who is deemed to be underprivileged. It cannot be seen that way if not we are going to be missing the boat.

I am saying to you that this thing has so many different facets, so many different areas of poverty that

we need to examine, that if it is such that it is so critical to Barbadians which we all must accept in these Chambers, there is no way that any sensible politician could even move away from this question of poverty. There is no way any opposition party can deny the importance of a programme to alleviate poverty. It will not make sense to even hide from this issue of poverty and since you cannot hide from it as a party, since you cannot hide from it as an individual, as a human being, it means that it is best placed on the agenda of the House so that we can have a full discussion on this issue.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has 2 minutes.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: It is too important. It is very, very important. The other reason why it is important and why income cannot be used as a gauge is because children do not earn income but children can be poor and children are poor so you cannot use income as a measure of poverty. A child has nutritional requirements which one may estimate as 80% of that of a male. A female has nutritional requirements which may be 75% of that of a male, what I am saying to you is that income cannot be used as a gauge for measuring poverty. It* does not make sense. Consumption is the only meaningful way to go. Children are poor. Children do not earn income, I repeat, but children can still be poor and they are poor and you cannot address their needs by way of giving them a transfer income. Children do not work. Children cannot be alleviated by the transfer of a grant of \$350 per year. It cannot be done, so that is why I am saying to the Chamber that we need definitely to understand what the issue is all about before we begin to use these kinds of measures in the expectation that we are doing something to truly alleviate poverty. It cannot be. We are wasting time if we do not understand that this issue has many dimensions as well as a very long-term stream up ahead. It cannot be solved by next year nor the next year but it can only be addressed appropriately if we fully understand this thing called poverty. I thank you.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: Mr. Chairman, on the issue of poverty alleviation, Sir, I want to say that I support any measure to provide funds for the poor. I am therefore, Sir, very concerned when the poor senses that justice is not being done in the allocation of resources to alleviate poverty.

As we move into the 21st Century I believe that we have to concentrate in a dynamic way on social issues. I believe that in a society such as ours, a society in which we strive for equal opportunity that it must always appear as if equal opportunity is being offered. 5.35 p.m.

Sir, political polarisation in Barbados has caused this country much stress over the years. It goes so far as to the point where this stress also permeates political parties themselves when the representatives of the various constituencies themselves think that the utmost sense of fair play and justice is not being carefully managed and controlled.

Sir, this is my main preoccupation as we go into the 21st century. We can provide all the resources that we want but if people get the impression that only those who have the easiest access to the sources of power can be the greatest beneficiaries of these resources, then disquiet in society, while remaining dormant, could manifest itself in various ways. I am therefore appealing, Sir, for us to concentrate on maintaining balance in this democratic country. We have to accept the principle that a government in power should by right have power to distribute resources, to the extent where we believe that when you are in opposition that your constituencies cannot expect to be the beneficiaries of resources which are the product of the public purse. I believe that that perception has to fade as we move into the 21st century. It has to fade if we expect to build a fair and just society.

It cannot be fair, Sir, that a constituency represented by an Opposition Member, should be in the position where the constituents feel that they are not entitled to things such as jobs, house spots and housing units and so forth, simply because they are represented by Opposition Members. I believe, as we move into the 21st century we have, as political parties... I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church South talking about joint committees and I believe joint committees could look at these issues. I believe, Sir, when it comes to jobs, we should not have a situation where a Minister should be in a position to employ, in some cases all people from his or her constituency.

I heard a story just this weekend that somebody from St. Lucy was asking for a job at a certain institution. The person was told "you cannot expect to get a job in this place, you are in the wrong constituency. You cannot expect to get a job there so you are wasting your time." It is not fair. I do not see any back benchers in their seats right now, but I am sure that the back benchers also have the same feelings. They believe that because they are back benchers that their constituents should have clear access to these resources, jobs, house spots, housing units. They believe so, they have said so in the House, Sir. Most of them have said so in the House and those who have not said so in the House have said so privately. You know that, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: So that all I am calling for, Sir, is a cease fire. I am asking that we put down

our arms, I am speaking on behalf of the back benchers, and we understand that there must be a fair distribution of resources, whether you are on the back bench or whether you are in the Opposition.

I know that sometimes those who have the excess weight the scales a little bit in their favour... Listen to me very carefully, Sir. I know that sometimes those who have the excess weight the scales a little bit in their favour...

Aside.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: I am not talking about that. They are good shopkeepers. But not to the extent where the scale goes down so heavy that the average person might see the scale go down on one side very heavily. So we are saying that we need to have a sense of balance when it comes to distribution of jobs, housing units, house spots and so forth, because these issues impact on poverty alleviation. So, if we are going to talk about poverty alleviation, these matters have to be seriously addressed, otherwise you will find that one area will be doing well and the other area will be really poor.

These are the issues that we have to discuss. So there is no sense in looking at figures and all of these kinds of things. We need to look at the issues of social justice as it relates to matters of poverty alleviation, otherwise, you will still have pockets of poverty and it was simply because of matters beyond the control of these poor people. I do not believe that we should endorse a system which puts poor people at a disadvantage because of where they happen to live. It is not fair.

Aside.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: We can sit down and pontificate about everything that is happening around the world and on the major issues that confront us and we want to hide from them and not deal with them. But we have to find a way of dealing with them. I am not expecting perfection in a quite imperfect world, Sir, but I am asking that we make the effort to address these issues and I speak on behalf of all those in this House who do not have their hands on the resources, those who are not in control of the resources that are so necessary to assist with poverty alleviation. 5.45 p.m.

I do support measures to alleviate poverty but I wish to reiterate my concern that the mechanisms to ensure that this attack on poverty is all pervasive are put in place. If those in power do not want to put them in place I believe that they will have to be continually bombarded whoever they are to address this matter so that all Barbadians can sense that there is a real attack on poverty and that justice

and fair play will ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Chairman, I would like to complete part of what I was saying in relation to this concept of poverty and to move to another point.

I think it is fair to say that the whole approach to poverty has something to do with the perception which the government of the day has of the people who happen to fall into the category that can be described as poverty stricken. This is an area which helped me to understand how the present government views the citizens of this country who happen to fall on hard times, who are part of the marginalised.

Mr. Chairman, because of her condition, I have a relative who is in the Geriatric Hospital for the last 2 years or so. She is a constituent of the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central. I have been going to the Geriatric Hospital practically every Sunday and I have been able to observe the attitude of the Government as articulated in the policies which I perceive not so much as a political person but as someone who is observing the institution.

An examination of the more recent history of that institution would show that the Democratic Labour Party fuelled by its fundamental philosophy, was able to transform that institution at Beckles Road from a place which had reached the depths of degradation where...

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: In Beckles Road, in St. Michael South as you go on Bay Street and you make a left turn before the Esplanade, the constituency of the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Michael South who is familiar with the institution.

The Honourable Member indeed had no difficulty as Chairman of the Cabinet in recognising the inherent need to change entirely the concept of providing for those on the margin who had to be institutionalised. As Chairman of the Cabinet when it became obvious that during the regime that had preceded our regime they had allowed that system which itself had shown some little improvement when Dr. Caddie had taken the responsibility for Health in the country - I think it would be fair to say that Dr. Caddie started the reform of the institution that used to JDC called almshouses - this institution had reached a certain point. Then under one of the regimes, and the Honourable Member for St. Andrew would know which one, it reached the point where the floors on the top had been so worm-eaten and destroyed that the then Minister of Health, Keith Simmons, was able to say to the Cabinet that there are reports that - the people on the top floor are all elderly -

urine from the top was dripping into the food when it was being served on the bottom floor of that institution.

I cannot think of anything that is more symptomatic of poverty in a community than that condition which was a fact; and the government of the day made the decision that it must be rectified instantly and some money was allocated for the restructuring of the Geriatric Hospital. Soon thereafter, the Honourable Member became the Chairman of the Cabinet and when we attempted to restructure the Geriatric Hospital we discovered that the entire system had to be redesigned. One of the things I am very proud of is the fact that my colleagues assisted me. We agreed that we would make a paradigm shift in the way the people of this country were cared for at the level of indigence. We made that decision and we produced a new institution, as it were.

Included in that institution, and this is the major point I want to make, we built an institution at Deckles Road that was the best of its kind anywhere in the western hemisphere. We said that those people who had made a major contribution to this country had every right to expect that if their last days were to be spent in an institution that it should be an institution of quality of which all of us could be proud. We started bringing people from all over the world to see what we were doing there.

We changed the pattern of training so that by the time I left the Ministry of Health all the people who worked at the Geriatric Hospital were trained.

Aside.

Mr. D. M. TAITT: I wish he would follow suit from where you are so that the people of this country would get relief from the madness that is going on in the Ministry of Transport and Works.

Anyhow, Sir, the institution is one that even members of the Barbados Labour Party reluctantly conceded before they became the government that it was a thing to behold. For the last 3 years, as you go there, if you go now and when we are finished anyone can drive up there and see, the windows are dropping off. Degradation has started again at that institution.

The thing that concerns me is that this government says it has a new attitude to poverty alleviation. We started to build a recreational centre for the people who are in the Geriatric Hospital that would have allowed them the opportunity to hear the police band sometimes, to hear the village choirs sometimes, to come into a communal area to enjoy camaraderie with each other, male and female, that they could play games. The cost cannot be described as expensive. Indeed, on a good day under the present

Minister of Transport and Works more than 4 times that cost is thrown away per day.

This government that is giving the impression to all and sundry that it has now found a new and different way to deal with poverty, spitefully has refused to allow...

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The Honourable Member is completely out of order. He cannot accuse the Government of spite.

Mr. D. M. TAITT: I withdraw "spitefully". Incomprehensively, they have not allowed the recreation centre to be completed. It appears that a decision has been made by someone who could only be operating from a position that is not acceptable to normal civilised persons; it appears that they have decided that because the recreational centre was started during the time of the Democratic Labour Party that they will not complete it. They have put it in the same category as the back of Sherbourne. I do not want to touch on the Eye Care Centre although any country that was concerned about poverty would recognise that the poor are the most vulnerable when it comes to care of the eyes in a country like Barbados where then* is no capacity for anybody to learn to be an ophthalmologist in their own region. One has to go outside of this region in order to become a full ophthalmologist and the Barbados Labour Party Government has refused to allow the people who can be trained in this country to become ophthalmologists on their own soil, but that is a separate issue that we will discuss. 5.55 p.m.

I am now discussing, Sir, the Geriatric Hospital and the whole concept and approach to gerontology in this country. You cannot tell me that you are interested in poverty alleviation and you have done nothing in the three years you have been there to show that you can regard the elderly in other than a handout mentality. All you have for the elderly is to create a fund for \$10 million, get the political people on your side to submit names and hand out \$350 and then tell them: "I have done something to alleviate poverty."

I am saying that this \$350 is just short of an insult. Mr. Chairman, \$350 is useless in the context of giving people some kind of dignity, some kind of feeling that they were worthwhile when they worked in this country. You have to do things that will allow the elderly in this country to feel that their contribution was worthwhile and is appreciated.

Aside.

Mr. D. M. TAITT: Left to me I would tell them do not take it. My constituents have been taught to love themselves and no \$350 can catch them. You do not

sit there and tell me to tell my constituents do not take it. Many of them will not get a chance to take it anyhow because, Mr. Chairman, you can check the list and you will find, if you want to play that, that there would not be many constituents of St. Michael West because when goodies are being handed out the Government deliberately, without malice...

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: There were no elderly in St. Michael West who would have lost jobs. There were no retired in St. Michael West who would have been cut.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Let me say from the Floor that to the extent that I caused them any pain, I apologise. I have no problem at all. To the extent that in saving the Barbados dollar I inflicted any pain on even one individual in this country, I would humbly apologise. But I am sure that the children of that individual and the children's children will forever be grateful for whatever it is we did to help them save the dollar so that Barbados can look with the kind of dignity it now does, at itself and its progeny.

This country is strong and the Honourable Members over there and the Prime Minister can strut about the world beating their chests about how well they are doing because we may have inflicted a little pain on some people. We have never resiled from that.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Chairman, let me read for the Honourable Members over there what the Inter-American Development Bank said about the period they wish to rail against me about. I quote at 2.5 of the Inter-American Development Bank Investment Sector Reform Programme:

"The authorities responded to this crisis in the latter part of 1991 by adopting a comprehensive adjustment programme that was supported by a standby arrangement with the IMF.

The initial stabilisation phase of that programme was designed to stem the reserve drain without recourse to currency devaluation. This required drastic cuts in aggregate demand which were affected primarily by harsh fiscal measures supported by tight monetary policies and a general wage price freeze. The stabilisation programme was a success."

I repeat, Sir:

"The stabilisation programme was a success in that by 1993 the fiscal deficit was virtually

eliminated, international reserves substantially increased, and inflation was reduced to practically nil."

For that, Sir, if I caused you any pain, or any of your brothers or sisters, your mother or grandmother I apologise, but I am pleased to have been part of this and to save the dollar for all times. I have no problem with that. I am proud to have saved the dollar. I apologise for any pain which was inflicted. There is no problem with that.

If Tom Adams...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: At this point I would like to let you know that you have two minutes.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Thank you, Sir. If Tom Adams had compassion we would never have got into the trouble in 1991 because in 1981 when he went to the international agencies he would not have come back trying to win the government in 1981 and causing the inflation which was the beginning of the problems we found when we came into office in 1986. The record is clear.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church South can tell anybody that between 1985 and 1986 tourism in this country took a bigger nosedive. He was almost as responsible for devastating tourism as the Honourable Member for the City is today.

Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member is grossly misleading the House. When I became Minister of Tourism, the number of long-stay visitors to Barbados was 212 000. When I left being Minister of Tourism, it was 369 000 people.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Point made. Would the Honourable Member wind up, please?

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I am winding up, Sir. I do not wish to get into a row with the Honourable Member because the Honourable Member was presiding when the Prime Minister of the day wrote to the Director saying that he was worse than a hurricane. He was the presiding officer when the Prime Minister of the day wrote a letter in his personal hand saying that the Chief of Tourism was worse than a hurricane. I do not need to go further than that.

I will finish by saying that they cannot talk about the alleviation of poverty unless it is their real genuine desire to lift the entire group of the marginalised and the disadvantaged in this country to a new plane and to stop playing Mottley politics with the people, putting \$350 in their hands and telling them: "You have been a good boy or you have been a good girl." I think it is time you

stop playing those kinds of politics. It will not work for the people in St. Michael West.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Your time is up. The Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I want to speak on this Head. I am indeed astonished that a member of this House can, in 1997, bring a document from the IMF to quote in this Chamber. I believe that IMF documents should never be...

Aside.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: IMF, IDE all are the same.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: On a point of order, Sir. Your Prime Minister said that it was a success. That was written by your Prime Minister. We must understand. What was read in this House was said by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: That is your point of order? That is not a point of order. Please sit.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: I am on my feet.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: But that is no point of order.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: That was said by the Right Honourable Prime Minister who acknowledged that the reform was a success, and it is necessary to say it...

Aside.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Will the member please sit?
6.05 p.m.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have Standing Orders in here. The House cannot come to be a place where anybody can get up and say what they like.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: Mr. Chairman, I am not anybody, I am the representative of St. Michael East.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: That is true, that is true.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: I am offended when a member attempts to mislead this House by attempting to say that that document had anything to do with the IMF. That document had everything to do with the Prime Minister of Barbados who said in that document that the programme was a success.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael East were ordered expunged from the records! by Mr. CHAIRMAN.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. George North started to speak and raised a question about the paternity of this document and I do not wish there to be any doubt about the *bonafide* of this document. This is not a bastard, Sir, this is a genuine document of the Inter-American Development Bank, operation No. 900/OC-DA approved on November 15, 1995 and it is called "Barbados Investment Sector Reform Programme". I am reading from page 3 of the actual document.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Are you making it a document?

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I am just quoting from it.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I was simply making the point when I was interrupted that the Democratic Labour Party still use the IMF documents and their methodology as their bible. This is the difference between this side and that. I am saying that one of the first things that this Government did was to dismiss the IMF philosophy. You cannot come in 1997 to tell me that you are quoting the IMF to say that IMF say that we were doing well and that we should do well. I am saying that it is foolishness.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I read an IDB document. I expect him to say that it's the same thing, Sir, because that is the level of his understanding of the thing but I know that you know different, Sir, that the IMF and the IDB are not the same thing. In his head, they may be the same but I read from an IDB document and he must not say that I read from an IMF document.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, all I said was that the IDB and the IMF philosophy are basically the same thing and in all of their documents they set out to balance the economy. They do not care about...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this house because if we go on with the impression that the IMF and the IDB is the same thing it means that we are still in the IMF hand.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I am not saying that we are in the IMF hand I am simply saying that the philosophy of the Democratic Labour Party is still based on IDB and IMF philosophy. I am simply saying that and therefore the member for St. Michael West can continue to quote from those documents to prove the point that they were right when they cut the people's salaries in 1991. That is all I am saying.

I am simply saying that in 1994 that that administration could not put \$2 million in a poverty alleviation fund, they could not do it because they had no money so therefore you have to congratulate the Government for providing funds for poverty alleviation, that is all I am saying. Do not come in here and quote the IMF document.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He is saying that we should congratulate the Government for making the poor people pay 15% and collecting more money than was necessary and now giving them back \$10 million and you want us to congratulate the Government. You must be mad.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I am saying that speech of the Honourable Member for St. Michael West was based primarily on a health problem.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: On a point of order. I do not think, Sir, that there should be any misunderstanding about where Barbados is now and where it has positioned itself and all of this talk about whether it is an IMF document or an IDB document or whatever kind of document is perhaps beside the point. It would appear as if we did not listen to the financial statement and budgetary proposal of the Prime Minister delivered not so long ago this year and if we listened, perhaps we did not understand. On page 7, Sir, the Prime Minister said "In the early 1990, speaking from the benches of the Opposition, I called for and supported measures to reform and restructure the Barbados economy. I then supported trade reform, financial reform and liberalisation, the Prices and Incomes Protocol, privatization, public sector reform, measures to make increased productivity and enhance competitiveness without a devaluation. Part of the initiative to re-position Barbados in the new international economy in the last part of the 20th century and emerging 21st century".

That is what we are saying, Sir, so the point is that side has now agreed that the measures introduced were for the development of Barbados and the re-positioning of Barbados. We should put those kinds of arguments behind us and recognise that they were right.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I want to push on by saying, Sir, that the present administration does not support the policies that were enunciated by the IMF and we do not support the type of methodology that was used by the IDB to arrive at a deficit figure which they did in 1990. 6.15 p.m.

Furthermore I was surprised when I heard a former Minister of Health start to say that poverty is still at the Geriatric Hospital. We have a hospital in this country that I have visited on many occasions that dispenses some of

the best service within the Caribbean. The conditions are good so you cannot make a poverty speech by using any example of the Geriatric Hospital. I thought the member would have talked about conditions existing within his constituency. I thought he would talk about the sugar workers who have worked all their lives and yet...

Mr. B. M. TAITT: It is the sugar workers who are in the Geriatric Hospital who are being ill-treated because psychologically you do not consider them to be part of this society. That is the point I am making.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: That is your point of order.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: You cannot use the argument that people in the Geriatric Hospital live under poor conditions. I am saying to you that the health service of Barbados has always been good, whether it was under you or under this administration. You cannot use the argument that poverty exists within the Geriatric Hospital. I am saying that these funds that we are voting here today are earmarked...

Mr. B. M. TAITT: If the Honourable Member would give way, Sir. My argument...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: What is your point of order?

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The Honourable Member has given way, Sir. I am not on a point of order. I was not arguing that poverty exists in the Geriatric Hospital. I was dealing with the philosophy of the Government that it allows the Geriatric Hospital which is where people who come out of the poverty stricken areas of the rest of the country go for their final days, the Government's attitude is symptomatic of how they feel about those things.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, the argument that the Honourable Member is using is very false because people across Barbados have asked us on many occasions to allow their families to move out of poor, conditions to go into the Geriatric Hospital and I am saying to him that he cannot use that argument to prove that the conditions at the hospital are still poor. It is not so. I am saying, Mr. Chairman, that we must be concerned about persons who are between the ages of 50 and 65, those persons who are not working, those are the persons that we need to consider. Those persons in my constituency in St. George South and across rural Barbados who cannot find work and yet do not have an income. I think this is what we have to be concerned about.

I must say that the Government has been looking at this particular income group. In my constituency, for example, we still have conditions where people still have to walk through tracks and so on which are now

being addressed. Throughout Barbados, Mr. Chairman, road works are being carried on.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. That is not true, not in St. Lucy. The Member is misleading the House.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I am saying that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy does not know his constituency because I go through St. Lucy and I see roads being done. Throughout Barbados, in every constituency, roads are being repaired.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order, Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading the House and I challenge him to tell me any tenantry road in St. Lucy that is being constructed.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I want to push on. I am saying, Sir, that poor conditions existed in this country and they are now being addressed and whether or not...

Aside.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Throughout St. Michael South roads are being done and repaired too.

When a government can bring a resolution here to provide \$350 for persons working for \$170 you must applaud that government. We did not cut salaries. We are improving people's conditions by giving them extra salary. So you have to understand that. Those workers who have to pay the 15% VAT are now able to draw additional money.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the poor conditions which exist in the countryside must be addressed and I am calling on the Minister to look at conditions. Of course I believe in next year's budget and the following year we should be able to address some of these problems because it is not going to be a one-off situation.

We cannot solve the problem in one or two years. In my constituency alone there are about 20 bad roads and in the whole of St. George about 40. So we have poor conditions which need to be addressed because poverty exists, not necessarily in roads but in housing as well. I believe that we see poverty in housing and I am aware that all Members of Parliament were given the opportunity to get some of the homes in their constituencies repaired.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two minutes.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: There are a number of old people who live under poor conditions that need to be

addressed. Sometimes you go into a district, Mr. Chairman, and are appalled to see the conditions that people live under. I believe that we should not be happy today to know that these conditions exist, but they are being addressed by this Government, not only in the constituencies of members of the Government but throughout Barbados houses are being repaired. I believe the Minister of Labour should be speaking on this as well.

I believe, Sir, that there are a number of mothers who have children and do not have an income. I believe we should be looking at that and I thought that members would address this condition because, as Members of Parliament, we know that sometimes we have to pull our pockets to help feed mothers and their children on weekends and this has to be addressed. I would want to see a situation where a mother's allowance be given to all mothers who have no income and have children. We have situations like this still existing in Barbados. We are not calling for a welfare state but until these people...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: At this point I would ask the Honourable Member to wind up.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I believe something has to be done for them.

His Honour R. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to make one or two other points in this debate. Now, I heard the member for St. Michael West in his presentation making snide remarks about \$350 being paid as a one-off to people who earn under \$170 per week but I want to say to that member that the Right Honourable Prime Minister brought to this Chamber a piece of legislation which I would term a revolutionary piece of legislation in the form of poverty alleviation. Under that piece of legislation, Mr. Chairman, a lot of people in this country would be able to benefit from the measure. I am privy to certain things, Sir, where I know,... 6.25 p.m.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order. The Honourable Member, Sir, I do not want to misquote him. The Honourable Member seems to have said that the Prime Minister brought a piece of legislation to deal with this? There is no legislation.

Aside.

His Honour R. D. MARSHALL: In his Budgetary proposal, Sir, the Right Honourable Prime Minister, brought this Poverty Alleviation Programme. Now, as I said, there are many people who will benefit under this programme. I have heard people talking about the \$350 being paid to people to catch votes, Mr. Chairman. The Programme is based, Sir, on helping the less fortunate people¹¹.

Sir, I know, that the poor people of this country will benefit under this programme. The Member for St. Michael West was talking about poor people. The Programme is geared toward those people who are old, some who cannot help themselves and who are living under dilapidated conditions. Also, I know that under that Programme, Sir, that a house will be given to those people. I do not mean, Sir, a house, like you say, under the National Assistance Board where when you die, that somebody else is moved into that house.

Asides.

His Honour R. D. MARSHALL: I am talking about a programme where that house could be given to that person. In certain situations, Sir, where there are larger families, Sir, a two-bedroom house will be given to that person. So I just want to bring to the attention of the Member for St. Michael West that the Programme is based on helping the old people also.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir. Did I just hear that when the programme that the Honourable Member just spoke about comes on board, a large number of people will be waiting with bated breath to get these houses. I am sure I heard him say that, and I want to confirm that that is Government's policy that they are going to give people houses and if it is a large family, they will get a two-bedroom house. That is what the Honourable Member just said. He is not a Minister, but I want to get the details when you get up to respond.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, this Head provided ample opportunity for Honourable Members to speak with some considerable force about the problems of poverty alleviation and I applaud all Honourable Members who attributed to the debate.

The Programme, as I indicated, Sir, for the payment of the \$350 ought to be in place by this weekend, whenever is the 15th. We are advised that the cheques will start going out, Sir, from this weekend.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central spoke earlier in the debate and he asked whether the \$350 is a one-off payment, or whether there will be periodic payments. Sir, during the Budgetary debate in his reply, the Prime Minister indicated that this matter will be kept under review and whether other payments are made depends upon Government's ability to meet the kind of expenditure on a regular basis. I would like to assure the House that on behalf of the substantive Minister of

Finance, that this matter and the other very important matter raised by the Member for St. Michael South Central that is, what we will do about those people who fall between \$170 a week and \$289 a week, that matter will also engage the attention of the Government. I will make sure that tomorrow I bring it to the Prime Minister's attention and remind him of it. It was raised earlier, Sir, but holding papers as I am today, I am not in a position to give a definitive answer to that matter, Sir.

Sir, I wish it to be understood that the Government is at a variance with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West in his allegation that there has been a shift in Government's priorities from creation of employment to alleviation of poverty. That is absolutely untrue, Sir. The Government has not in anyway de-emphasised the creation of employment. In fact, the Government's programmes are all designed to ensure continued employment on a sustainable basis and further reductions in the level of unemployment. That in three years this Government has been able to reduce the level of unemployment by 10 percent, from 24 percent under the Democratic Labour Party to 14 percent is a matter about which we have great pride.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West made a good academic point. Not purely academic, I appreciate the point he made. That is that it is necessary to have studies about poverty to determine the content and the extent of poverty and indeed what are the essential elements in the concept of poverty alleviation. I understand that, Sir.

I understand that in Jamaica, as he said, Sir, studies are ongoing. But if we wait to conduct studies about poor people, and the relief of poverty there will be a continuity of that poverty, perhaps interminably. The Government has adopted a different approach to this matter, Sir. We recognise, on the basis of empirical evidence that in Barbados there exists pockets of poverty, even abject poverty in some cases, and that one does not need a study to go into those areas and immediately seek to bring relief to the situation and that is what we are determined to do, Sir.

But at the same time, to approach the matter on the basis of urgent action, does not derogate from the Government's ability to study the problem over time. So that you can do two things at the same time in relation to this matter which we consider urgent, Sir. I was reminded as I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West speak, and I take his point about the need for studies, but I say we cannot study all the time. We are all familiar that, those of us who understand the Governmental process, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West does, this country has in every Ministry all kinds of studies about the same thing, 2 and 3 times, catching dust,

never implemented. We did not want this situation to attend the matter of poverty alleviation and I was reminded of 2 programmes by the Democratic Labour Party. The question of free secondary education and school meals was not subjected to any study. The opening of CBC was not subjected to any study. The then Prime Minister said there would be free secondary education by such and such a date and school meals by such and such a date, we will have a television station in 1963; and it was done. 6.35 p.m.

I am not saying that that is necessarily the best method of proceeding granted that for most governmental action there should be some informed basis, some analysis of the problem before the decision is taken. What we are doing now does not rule out the possibility of study. I agree with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West that there are several facets, angles, elements in this matter of poverty alleviation and the fact that we are attacking some of the obvious physical things at this time does not mean that there are not other matters, for example, some might have a legal content which needs to be examined by government. That will come.

What the Government is however doing is not as it were swiping like blind Elder but we are trying to engage the country in a consultative process on this business of poverty alleviation. Some weeks ago in Christ Church South - you were present at the meeting - there was a meeting on poverty alleviation. It was the week before the Annual Conference which was the 18th October. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central was present. There was a meeting in contemporary jargon, a townhall meeting and members of the Democratic Labour Party in Parliament went to that meeting to participate in a discussion on poverty alleviation.

On Sunday evening in my constituency at Sharon there was a large gathering from St. Thomas and outside of St. Thomas discussing poverty alleviation. Prior to that, Sir, on Sunday, October 19, there was a meeting again at Sharon on poverty alleviation. That meeting was sponsored by persons in the Ministry of Economic Affairs who go out on weekends and hold these meetings with the public to discuss poverty alleviation.

In that way, we are trying to get feedback as to some of the critical and essential elements of poverty alleviation so that the public has an opportunity.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I think Honourable Members might know of the programme I am talking about because it was given publicity and members were given a date when the officers...

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: If Honourable Members on the Other Side really tell me that they are not aware and have had no correspondence about official organised meetings to deal with poverty alleviation I would treat those expressions with amazement and I will investigate that tomorrow because I saw a list go to every constituency on various dates. I remember it came to mind on October 19 and I could not be there because we were having the Annual Conference the same Sunday. I will make sure that the situation is put right because we are trying to involve the whole community and we would expect Members of Parliament, where it is possible, to be there at these meetings to help guide the nation and hear what is going on. There was no consultation as to whether the dates would agree. I was told on October 19 and I said that I cannot be there as I would be at the Annual Conference. Other people went.

I think we have an opportunity as a Parliament to be involved. I will make sure tomorrow that I check to make sure that everybody is involved. We will have an opportunity to make meaningful contributions to those officials and technocrats who are working with the implementation of the poverty alleviation programme.

All that has happened is that in addition to the other welfare services which Governments have provided over the years this Government has decided to take \$10 million this year for the first year. It will certainly be no less next year and the year after. To start with a \$10 million fund and get into the heart of poverty in Barbados and try and do as much as possible in the shortest possible time for the relief of problems suffered by the poor.

For the first time Government has earmarked in addition to its usual contribution to welfarism a separate fund of meaningful proportions to deal with some of the worst and most urgent problems.

Mr. Chairman, I do not want to get involved again with the problems of 1991 or 1994. I wish to put on record for the nth time a personal view of those problems. The Honourable Member for St. Michael West said that he apologise for any pain that was inflicted on persons in Barbados.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, in 1989 we were told how well this country was doing, breaking records, batting like Sobers, and by January 1991, we were beginning to see problems such... as led to the introduction of the Budget on April 2, 1991, 4 months after the election. All of a sudden a big shower of rain came down and the wicket started playing old mass. Those problems which

so much pain I wish to go on record as saying were self-induced by a government that wanted to retain power at all costs and not commit political suicide.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. He is giving the impression that 2 years is shorter than 1. He is saying that in 1989 we said that it was never so good and it took 2 years to find out it was bad but he did not tell the House that in 1990 he said the same thing and that by 1991... 6.45 p.m.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Proceed.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 19 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 39 - MINISTRY OF LABOUR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SPORTS

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 39 stand part.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the SPEAKER, the passing of one Money Resolution in Committee of Supply and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of the Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by the Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE the Resolution was read a first and second time and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 10 - SEVERANCE PAYMENTS (VALIDATION OF FUND CONTRIBUTION PAYMENTS) BILL, 1997

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to members of the Opposition for agreeing to do this Bill this evening. It is a short piece of legislation just tidying up an omission that was found in the Severance Payments legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the origin of this legislation goes back to the Budgetary Proposals presented by the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South on April 2,

1991 dealing with social security. The Honourable Member at page 13 of the document said, among other things:

"In the meantime, steps have to be taken immediately to restore the Severance Payments Scheme to financial viability.

I therefore propose to -

- (a) grant a moratorium of two years to the Fund on the payment of interest and principal due in respect of the \$10 million loan from the Consolidated Fund; and
- (b) increase the rate of contributions payable by employers from 0.25 per cent to 1.00 per cent with effect from April 1, 1991."

Mr. Speaker, on June 2 this year the Director of National Insurance drew to the attention of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance that the necessary amendment to the Severance Payments Act had never been made to give full effect to the proposals of the Right Honourable Member.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The Regulations were done but the Act itself was not amended. Let me give you the reference - S.I. 1991. No. 152, but the Act itself required amendment and that had never been done.

The Fund received payments based on the proposal that was made. This Bill is only to make assurance doubly sure and to validate the collection of those contributions that were paid between 1991 and now. That is all this Bill is about.

The Bill says, and this is the essential part of it:

"The contributions referred to in sub-sections (1) and (2) shall be deemed to have been lawfully and validly paid and received."

That tidies up that problem.

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

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: I beg to second that, Sir.

On the motion of the Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by the Hon. G. W. PAYNE, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable Chamber is in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of the Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by the Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of the Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS seconded by the Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the

Severance Payments (Validation of Fund Contribution Payments) Bill, 1997.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House be adjourned to Tuesday, November 25, 1997, at 11 o'clock in the morning.

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

The question that the House be adjourned to Tuesday, November 25, 1997 at 11 o'clock in the morning was put and resolved in the affirmative without division. 6.55 p.m.

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