

THE
House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 - 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Friday, December 18, 1998

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11:30 a.m. on Friday, December 18, 1998.

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.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE, K.A., Q.C., M.A., LL.B.
Mr. B. M. TAITT, B.A. (Hons.), M.P.A., LL.B. (Hons.)

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

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

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN, K.A., 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.), L.E.C. (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)

Mr. D. CARTER (Chairman of Committees)

Mr. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., (Acting Minister of Labour, Community Development and Sports)

Mr. J. M. EDGHILL

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

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY

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

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

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Minutes of Tuesday, 8th December and 15th December 1998.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, the Minutes have been circulated and I move that the Minutes be approved.

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.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is my duty-today to table the Constitution Review Commission Report in this Honourable House. This report, Sir, is the outcome of years of excessive, indeed exhaustive consultation involving individuals and organisations that were truly representative of all stakeholders in our society.

These consultations, Mr. Speaker, Sir, took place nationwide and with the Barbadian diaspora in other countries. The Commissioners went to unprecedented

lengths to seek the counsel of the Barbadian people. Indeed few initiatives in this country have drawn on so wide a spectrum of opinion. The Chairman, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West and the Commissioners are deserving of our nation's gratitude and with your lead I take the privilege of saluting them individually and placing the Government's gratitude on record in this Honourable House.

Ms. Norma Forde, Sir John Stanley Goddard, Ms. Melanie Newton, Mr. Oliver Jackman, Mr. Daryll Jordan, Mr. Maurice King, Mr. Ivan Lynton, Mr. Wendell McClean, The Rev. Leonard Rock and of course the Chair of the Commission, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, Sir Henry Forde.

Mr. Speaker, one of the key recommendations of the Commission is the Republican Constitution, one of which our Head of State will be the President of the Republic instead of the Governor General as is now the case. The Cabinet will, of course meet in due course to consider this and all other proposals in the report. It could well be that as we move to the new millennium the Barbadian people may be looking forward to the process that will translate into reality their stated aspirations for Barbados transition to the sovereign republic within the Commonwealth and in the wider community of nations. The report of the Constitution Review Commission provides the blueprint for that process.

I beg to table the Report, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to give notice of the following:

1. The International Development Association (Membership of Barbados) Bill, 1998.
2. The Health Services (Amendment) Bill, 1998.
3. A Resolution to approve the guarantee by Government of the payment of the principal and interest of a loan of \$30 million European Currency Units, from the European Investment Bank to the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the International Development Association (Membership of Barbados) Bill, 1998 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: I beg to move, Sir, that the Health Services (Amendment) Bill, 1998 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.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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 remainder of this day's Sitting.

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 5 - THE ESTATE DUTY (WAIVER) BILL, 1998

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Bill as its objects and reasons sets out would provide a waiver from the payment of any estate duty of succession, duty payable in respect of the estate of a person whose death occurred on or before the 31 st March, 1981.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that this was indeed stated in the 1998 Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals. The Bill is a very brief one, simply two sections, subsection (2) of section 2 pointing out that this would not operate to affect or validate an estate duty or succession duty made before the commencement of the Act. I do not think that this is something which should excite people extraordinarily. This is one of those consequential and I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to make just a few comments on the significance of this Bill. As you know income tax and estate duty was introduced into Barbados back in the 1890s, and the Barbados Labour Party Government of the period 1976-1981 decided to abolish succession and estate duty. It was particularly onerous on the new middle class which was evolving and particularly on widows who often found that the only asset left after the decease of their husbands was the dwelling - the matrimonial home and invariably 40 per cent of this then went by way of taxation. 11.40a.m.

We took a deliberate decision then in the interest of assisting the lower income earners as well as the lower and upper middle class in that respect and it has led to the

creation of, and an expansion of their property position and their wealth position.

Now, although we had abolished the tax from about the 1970s-80s, the position was that people who had died prior to that date, their estates were still attracting estate duty and therefore as the amount dwindled it made no sense in collecting this tax.

It has put Barbados into two positions. Domestically, on the local scene it means that we can have a widening middle class with some property and some wealth and that is the background of sustaining, really, a community in the long run as people move through a society that is much more cohesive.

The second thing it has done for Barbados and one which is not emphasized enough is that people who died while domiciled in Barbados are not now subject to what is called inheritance taxes. Therefore, it is another plug in promoting Barbados as a place for retirees who can establish a domicile here, still pay income tax as residents and domicile provided they do not bring into Barbados other than capital, they will not be in an unfavourable tax position and simultaneously allow people to benefit from Barbados as a low tax regime.

I believe, therefore, that this legislation is necessary. Sometimes it is often said, and I have heard it said, that Government increased taxes but the Labour Party has an outstanding record of reducing taxes when it is necessary in order to help cement the society much further. This certainly does do that. When I see the number of people in the age group 50, 60 and even some younger who are now able to own their homes, they are in no danger of losing 40 per cent of that net value to the revenue on the death of their partners, I am happy to think that we are giving people a stake in this country.

This is one of the bits of legislation that has achieved those objectives and has helped to carry out the philosophy of this party which is so very vital to creating a cohesive property-owning democracy in which wealth is distributed, not only for a few who could have afforded it, it did not matter whether we had this in place or not, but for as many as possible so that they have a stake in this country. So I have great pleasure in seconding this bit of the legislation.

The question that the Bill be read a second time 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, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

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 Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Estate Duty (Waiver) Act, 1998.

ORDER NO. 8 - INSURANCE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISION) (NO. 2) BILL, 1998

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, this Bill seeks to amend the Exempt Insurance Act and indeed the Insurance Act, 1996, No. 32 to provide for an extension of the period specified in those Acts in respect of which an exempt insurance company may become registered as an insurer.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that we earlier brought to Parliament the Insurance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 1998 and approval of that legislation was based on the proposition that separate and parallel systems governing the domestic and offshore insurance industry should be replaced by a single system of regulation taxation and it therefore provides for convergence of those systems.

Honourable Members, particularly those who practice in the field of offshore financial services, will be aware that there are substantial and ongoing negotiations with the Government of Canada in respect of various requirements sought by the Government of Canada, particularly Revenue Canada, in respect of exempt insurance companies.

The negotiations are not yet complete, Sir. In fact, just last month the Barbados delegation met with the Canadian delegation in Canada to try and reduce the areas of outstanding contention. It is hoped early in the new year that those negotiations would resume.

The law originally provided for the relevant period ending at December 31, 1998, but in order to facilitate the continuation of negotiations, the Government is seeking the House's approval for an amendment to the existing legislation to extend that date to December 31, 1999. That really is the essence and purpose of this legislation, just to provide additional time for the respective Governments to, hopefully, complete their negotiations.

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

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, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.
11.50a.m.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 2 were called and passed.

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 Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Insurance (Miscellaneous Provision) (No. 2) Act, 1998.

ORDER NO. 7 - THE INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) (NO. 4) BILL, 1998.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, as the Objects and Reasons set out here, this Bill will amend the Income Tax Act to exempt the Hotel Equity Investment Fund. It will also provide for deductions in respect of expenses incurred by companies in obtaining raises to issues to commercial papers and also expenses incurred in listing shares on the Securities Exchange of Barbados. Further, it will provide businesses that contribute to the Hotel's Equity Investment Fund to receive a tax deduction of 120 per cent of the amount invested and for Life Insurance Companies to receive a tax credit of 48 percent of the amount invested in that fund.

It would also make provision for depreciation allowance for manufactures and make provisions for reverse tax credit for individuals earning less than \$13 000 a year and make minor changes to certain provision respecting the Retirement Savings Plan.

In respect of the reversed tax credit, if I can be a little more help to the House, this is another matter which consequential upon the Financial Statements and Budgetary Proposals of 1998, where provision was made for the introduction of a reversed tax credit for people who would

have been characterised as the, so-to-speak, 'working poor'. We are talking about those who earn less than \$ 13 000 a year and who would not have benefitted from the introduction of a series of measures since 1995, which were aimed at reducing the tax burden on persons earning more than \$30 000, who are to benefit by receiving a refund of \$500 per annum. It is estimated that this will cost the Treasury \$10 million.

Mr. Speaker, those who are described as the 'working poor', I do not particularly like this description but it is part of the jargon used when you fall into certain categories in Barbados, like agricultural workers, persons who work on the industrial estates, people who are domestic helpers, persons who are employed at the minimum wage, shop assistants and several others. It is estimated that approximately 20 000 of these people are earning in Barbados less than \$ 13 000 per year. The reversed tax credit, therefore, Mr. Speaker, is seen as a more permanent system of relief to this sector of our population following on from the grant of \$350 which was given to 14 000 minimum wage earners in 1997, as you will recall, as a consequence of the introduction of the Value Added Tax (VAT).

It is proposed that the process for submitting the return will be much simplified with a new user friendly form being introduced and the establishment of a special unit within the Inland Revenue Department to deal with its administration. Arrangements have been put in place, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the new form is available by the end of this year. 12.00 noon

In respect of the Amendment itself, any employed individual who is resident in Barbados and who earns less than \$13 000 annually but not more than \$1 084 monthly where such a person would apply to the Commissioner of Inland Revenue on the form to which I have referred and that form would of course be approved by the Commissioner, the application needs to be made within two years of the income year in which the earnings were paid, that person would be entitled to a credit of \$500. Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us be clear on this, the credit is not meant to apply to self-employed persons, directors of companies that are controlled by five or less persons, beneficiaries of a trust or an estate within the meaning of section 40 or in respect of earnings payable to the estate of a deceased person.

I am being reminded by the Honourable Attorney General that this matter was much discussed and debated during the budget debate.

In respect of minor changes to certain provisions to the Retirement Savings Plan, section 24F of the Income Tax (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 1998- 30 reads as follows:

"In calculating the assessable income of a person for income year 1998 and subsequent income years, there shall be deducted from the income of that person

- (a) an amount that would, but for this subsection, form part of the assessable income of that person;
- (b) the amounts contributed by that person to a registered retirement savings plan by deductions from emoluments or otherwise,

in that income year, subject to the limitations imposed by subsections (2) and (3).

The wording that I have just read, Sir, would suggest that two separate amounts can be deducted and we are proposing that section 24F of the Act be amended by combining paragraphs (a) and (b) that I have just read since only one amount may be deducted and not two as would seem to be suggested because of the way it is framed here in the second paragraph:

"In calculating the assessable income of a person for income year 1998 and subsequent income years, there shall be deducted from the income of that person an amount that would, but for this subsection, form part of the assessable income of that person; the amounts contributed by that person to a registered retirement savings plan by deduction from emoluments or otherwise, in that income year, subject to the limitations imposed by subsections (2) and (3)."

In respect of section 241(2) that section reads as follows:

"Notwithstanding subsection (1), where a person sells the dwelling-house referred to in paragraph (1) within 5 years of the date of withdrawal of contributions, and acquires another house within 6 months of the sale of the first house, the amount of the contributions withdrawn shall not be included in computing the income of that person unless the second house is disposed of within five years of the withdrawal the contributions."

The amendment here, Sir, is that the word "the" in the last line be replaced with the word "of" so that the last line would then read the "withdrawal of contributions".

If I could draw the attention of the House to section 64(d) which reads:

- "Amounts in respect of a registered retirement plan, as
- (i) a return or refund of contributions, plan; or (ii)
- benefits received out of or under that plan".

The amendment proposed is that the words "or refund" be deleted since the Income Tax Act Cap. 73 refers only to "return of contributions" and not a refund. The word "plan"

should also be deleted so that 64(d)(i) should then be "a return of contributions".

I now turn to the amendment in respect of provision for a depreciation allowance for manufacturers. Mr. Speaker, Sir, an analysis of the manufacturing sector reveals that the manufacturing sector has over the years made a significant contribution to the development of Barbados, I do not think that anybody can disagree with that. It continues to be an important sector of the economy of Barbados despite suggestions to the contrary made by some people. It is one of the most important sectors for the employment of women, a consideration that is even more important when we recognise that unemployment in Barbados among men has fallen by seven per cent but for women it is by 17 per cent. Even so within this manufacturing sector, certainly the ladies who sit in this House have constantly made the point in the past and will continue to make it that we are seeing dramatic changes in that sector which is bringing about a situation where women are being replaced by men and the industrial estates are a good example of this.

Twenty to thirty years ago the industrial estates in Barbados were, I would say, dominated by the garment industry and we have seen that come full circle and now it is dominated by the new technology industries, particularly informatics which is a special thrust for Barbados.

When the industrial estates were dominated, Sir, by the garment industry more women than men were employed on those estates. As global changes took place many of the garment industries moved to other jurisdictions where lower wages and less - how shall I put it, Sir, without being derogatory - less conditions of service and work were available. We discovered that a more highly educated workforce in Barbados would have to look to other markets and particularly certain niche markets which would offer the kind of salaries which would be demanded by people who had a secondary and a tertiary education such as we have in Barbados.

So the garment industry shifted. What then came to our jurisdiction because of the high quality education that we have are these technologists but the men are tending to dominate in this area whereas earlier women dominated the garment industry. Eighty-five percent of the manufacturing sector consist of a range of firms which are locally owned of various sizes and they mainly serve the local and the CARICOM market. We must not underestimate the CARICOM market. It is a very important market for us not only in manufacturing but in tourism as well.

The 1998 Financial Statement of Expenditure and Budgetary Proposes contain a proposal for assistance to be provided for the manufacturing sector by way of the provision of a depreciation allowance. This is in addition to certain concessions which have been provided almost as soon as this Administration came to office in the last quarter of 1994.

The amendment proposed here would provide for a depreciation allowance equal to 150 per cent of the cost of the capital expenditure in new machinery and the plant purchased for the manufacturing sector.

This incentive is seen as one method by which the manufacturing sector we hope can retool and refit itself with the latest technology. The amendment to be found at clause vi:

"In the case of new machinery or plant purchased for the manufacturing sector ... such percentage of the capital expenditure on that machinery or plant as is just and reasonable as representing the wear and tear in the income year on that machinery and plant, less any amount received by that person as a rehabilitation grant."

shall be deducted.

The above shall not apply where the total depreciable amount is equal to 150 per cent of the capital.

Now, deductions from corporation tax. Again this is a consequential of the last budgetary proposals where provisions were made for the regulation of commercial paper. At present, the Financial Intermediaries Act makes no provision for the regulation of commercial paper issued by companies. It is proposed that the Security Exchange of Barbados will regulate commercial paper using the following conditions:

"All companies desiring to issue commercial paper must be rated by a reputable agency. The maximum life of the paper must be 365 days. All companies issuing paper must be listed on the Stock Exchange of Barbados and only domestic paper can be traded on the Stock Exchange of Barbados."

You will also notice, Sir,, that it was not intended that an undue burden will be placed on the companies but some measure of protection also had to be provided. It was proposed that the expenses incurred in obtaining a rating be deducted for corporation tax purposes so that the amendment here would provide that with regard to amounts expended by persons in that income year for the purpose of attaining and arranging to issue commercial paper on the Securities Exchange of Barbados then the commercial paper must mature in no more than 365 days.

It would also provide that where a company has in an income year listed its shares on the Security Exchange of Barbados then in calculating the accessible income of that company for that income year there shall be deducted an amount equal to 120 per cent of any cost incurred in that income year by the company enlisting its shares on the stock exchange.

The amendment is further meant to provide that the benefit described above will only be granted on the certificate of the General Manager of the Securities Exchange of Barbados to the company claiming the benefit and incurring those costs in listing its shares on the Securities Exchange of Barbados.

The amendment in respect of the Hotel Equity Investment Fund is very important, Sir. In the 1998 budgetary proposals it was proposed that a hotel equity investment fund be created and indeed work allied to this is being undertaken in the Ministry of Tourism at this time as we speak.

The aim here of this fund would be to provide equity in long-term financing to cover the refurbishment and expansion programmes. The purpose of the fund is to raise a pool of private sector capital for investment in various projects in the productive tourism sector.

The funds raised would speak to the apparent need especially by the small and medium size hotel sector for equity. I do not think that Barbadians sufficiently recognise or understand that the average hotel size in Barbados is just barely over 40 rooms so when we speak of small and medium sized hotels here, I trust that Honourable Members would have an idea of the range that the Fund is meant to assist.

It should be noted that it is not intended that the fund would compete with traditional providers for long-term senior debt financing or working capital. 12.15p.m.

The exemption of the Hotel Equity Investment Fund from tax and from withholding tax on dividends paid could provide for businesses that contribute to the Hotel Equity Investment Fund to receive a tax deduction of 120 per cent of the amount invested up to a maximum of \$1 million. It is also to provide for life insurance companies to receive a tax credit of 48 per cent of the amount invested in the Hotel Equity Investment Fund. Tax credit shall not exceed \$480 000 per year. The Amendment provides that where a person withdraws any amount of the investment made, as stated above within five years of the making of the investment, the amount so withdrawn should be brought back for them to be charged tax for the year in which the withdrawal was made.

The Amendment is also meant to provide that the amount of any unused credit subject to Provision K could be used;

- (a) To reduce the tax payable by any subsidiary within the corporate group, or

- (b) Shall be carried for a period of nine years, but no capital funds should be allowed.

This section is not meant to apply to premium tax, Sir.

In all the circumstances, Sir, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

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

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

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 - 12, inclusive were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, 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. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as The Income Tax (Amendment) (No. 4) Act, 1998.

ORDER NO. 6 - THE INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) (NO. 3) BILL, 1998

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, you will recall the last occasion that we were here, we had a debate in respect of mutual funds and this, in a matter of speaking, is a consequential amendment of the Income Tax Act. I would beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

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

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

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

Clauses 7-9, inclusive were called and passed.

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 Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as The Income Tax (Amendment) (No. 3) Act, 1998. 12.25 p.m.

ORDER NO. 10 - THE HEALTH SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BELL, 1998

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, the Bill before the Chamber is intended to provide the legislative framework to carry out the plan for the alternative care of the elderly which was announced in Parliament earlier this year. Essentially, it arises out of a policy paper put to Cabinet and accepted by the Cabinet and then announced in the Estimates by the Right Honourable Prime Minister which will allow for the Government to enter into relationships with private nursing homes in Barbados to help to provide residential care for our elderly citizens.

For some time the waiting list at the Geriatric Hospital has stood at about 750 people. In addition, there are large numbers of people who are still trying to get into geriatric care. It is projected that on the current trend by the year 2005 that Barbados will have in excess of 31 000 people who are over the age of 65.

The approach being adopted is to enter into arrangement with nursing homes that those persons who are in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the elderly who are literally abandoned there, will be given space in the public geriatric services and that there will be a screening process to determine whether the elderly persons go into public service or into private geriatric care.

One of the difficulties which was presented in respect of the execution of this policy is the fact, and I think it would be widely accepted on both sides of the House, that a lot of the private institutions have no regulations. There have been up to now no legislative framework to regulate the operations of private nursing homes in Barbados.

In fact, there have been criticisms in the Press in relation to the terms under which some of the private nursing homes operate. A decision had to be taken therefore that we would develop the legislative framework which will allow all nursing homes to be up to a standard that the public would find acceptable and which any Barbadian would wish to go

into. To put this in place we have established an inspection and supervisory committee that will be constituted to inspect any nursing home or private hospital and monitor the quality of care of patients and to report to the Chief Medical Officer any breaches of the regulations which exist.

The Advisory and Inspection Committee will comprise a Nutrition Officer, a Public Health Inspector, a Public Health Nurse, a Drug Inspector and a Senior Environmental Engineer. The Inspection Committee will also have the authority to co-opt a Fire Officer and any other person who the Chief Medical Officer thinks in her discretion would be necessary to advance the work of the committee and to guarantee the quality of care.

The Regulations are not here today, but just to give the House a notion of what it is we are amending, the legislation to accommodate - and what the Regulations will do will seek to give a framework to ensure that there is proper and comprehensive control of the sector, that proper care for inpatients or residential services for the elderly is provided, that proper nursing standards are maintained, that standards are at the level comparable to the public service because in any of the private institutions it is widely known that persons who are not trained and who have no exposure to training or care of the elderly, or who do not understand their particular needs or vulnerability just work in these homes and therefore we are seeking to ensure that all persons who work in the homes will have a certain basic level of training.

We have to ensure that the rights of clients are protected. There has been in the past, maybe six years ago if my memory serves me correctly, a report that one Nursing Home was even serving dog food to patients or meat that had been sold by the supermarkets as dog food. Clearly these are things which we cannot allow to continue. I think that all sides of the House will agree that if Government is to have this kind of relationship with the private sector that we need to be sure that standards for care are in place and that the House and the public can be satisfied that this framework exists.

The Regulations will seek to ensure that the social, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of patients are met in so far as legislation is able to do that by making provision for certain basic amenities.

The Homes will be divided into three broad categories. The Regulations speak to homes for the elderly or Senior Citizens' Homes in defined Nursing Homes and it will also make provision for the regulation of Hospitals or Nursing Homes which deliver babies. It will provide for renewal of licences.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Sir. I agreed with Government to have this Bill expeditiously

dealt with but I must raise a point of order. I believe the Minister knows what I am going to raise which is that it cannot be right for us to engage in a debate on Regulations which we have not seen. I have no problem just empowering the Minister to make Regulations but if we are going to trespass into a debate on the content of those Regulations it is not fair.

We are going to go along with you but we have had too many of these instances. Let us forget the public relations and get the Bill passed as it is. We will cooperate but do not go into the subject of those Regulations if we do not have copies of the Regulations on this Side.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I take the point that the Honourable Member is making. I was only seeking to set a framework, not to provoke a debate on Regulations which are not before the House.

I therefore ask that the Bill be read a second time.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael East.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the leadership on this Side that we would not want to interrupt the passage of this piece of legislation.

Clearly, Sir, it would have been polite if we had been given the entire regulation because I do not think that there is any significant divide on both Sides of the House. Sir, we recognise that in Barbados there is a major problem with the facilitating of the elderly folks in this country.

We, Sir, recognise that over the years, great burden has been placed on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and to some extent the burden has been placed on the existing nursing homes. I have certainly visited several of them and would also like to express my concern. I have also been instrumental in assisting a couple of them to get off the ground and to set up facilities that were in the opinion of the professional people to be of a good enough standard to satisfy the needs of the elderly in the country.

Sir, I think it is important to note that the Government itself has failed to a large extent to utilise the infrastructure within the Government system in the sense that we have set up institutions and we have given them a high degree of dignity where we, in the Democratic Labour Party removed the stigma attached to these institutions. It really is an area that I have to complain to the House that I have been extremely disappointed with the performance of the Government in this regard and in particular over the last four years.

Sir, this area of health service is an area that we hold very dear to our hearts. On this Side of the House we recognise that the elderly in Barbados have played a significant role in nation building. They have, to some extent, been the heroes of our modern day development and the only decent gesture on our part would be to make sure that there are given a comfortable environment to live in the latter days of their lives.

Sir, we have seen in Barbados, a situation where the institutions that were established to provide this kind of health care has so deteriorated that it is almost disbelief state of the institutions that we are talking about. I am talking about the Geriatric Hospitals that are available in St. Michael, St. Philip and other parts of Barbados.

Sir, the facilities are in dire need of repairs. The supplies that are necessary to facilitate the comfort of these patients are sadly lacking. Recently we had the spectacle of the laundry at one of the main institutions being completely out of service where they have not trained additional personnel in the boiler room *etcetera* and we had the spectacle where all of the laundry was piled up for days and there was no one there to complete the process of laundering of sheets and other materials *etcetera*.

Sir, you must appreciate that if we, in 1998, are seeking to improve our standards and regulations for private companies that we have to set the example and make sure that the existing institutions which are under the control of the Government are properly managed, properly maintained and functioning in the interest of the elderly of this country. I cannot say that I am satisfied. In fact, I would say that I am totally dissatisfied with the performance of the Ministry in this regard. The Minister comes at the eleventh hour with a piece of legislation minus regulations ...

Asides.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: The main point that I want to make, and I understand the spirit in which we are debating this, is that we really must not be setting regulations and placing the private sector under the strictures of the heavy hand of Government and the authorities and whatever when we ourselves are setting a bad example by not paying management attention to the existing institutions.

I, Sir, would want to see the entire standard lifted in this country. I really hope that this would in some way send a message to all of the homes that people matter to us. We would not want to have a situation, as the Minister outlined in her presentation where substandard meals and substandard conditions are provided for the elderly of this country. This is not acceptable. If you have a nursing home, it has to be of a standard that would be comparable to any part of this world. I have seen, Sir, homes all over this world

of the highest class where emphasis is placed on cleanliness, on proper facilities and those persons who are incontinent always provided with the incontinent pads and so on ...

Asides.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: Incontinent pads.

Asides.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: I said incontinent pads. I used to sell them. It is just a pad that you have to put on the bed.

Not, Sir, to be engage in a spectacle where we are creating impressions about what the Government is doing and what the Government is not doing. In reality, Sir, you can go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and you can see the elderly on trolleys. Many of the nurses complain that they really should not be in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. They are treated, Sir, with total contempt.

Asides.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: These are not the kind of conditions ...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please wind up.

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: Yes, Sir, I will wind up but I just want to emphasize the point that this is not a situation for any gimmickry where we are seeking to come into the House of Assembly creating an impression that we are doing something for the elderly of the country when in reality nothing of the sort has taken place in the country. It is an area of clear neglect and it is not an issue that can just be simply treated by saying that we are going to pass regulations. We have to be realistic and understand that a Government that is now seeking to implement regulations is a Government that has failed the people in the delivery of this type of health care.

It is important that if we are going to be passing this kind of legislation, let us set the standard ourselves. On that I will co-operate and allow the legislation to flow. 12.45 p.m.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will be very brief. I welcome the amendments to the Health Services Act to provide for the licensing, management, operation, control and inspection of private hospitals, nursing homes, senior citizens' homes and maternity homes. I do so because I believe that we have to establish across the board general standards in areas of this social and economic activity affecting the care of people who are in such institutions.

In my constituency I have a large number of these homes which I visit from time to time and have visited over my 27 odd years in Parliament and I have seen varying standards from time to time. I have seen a tremendous effort, particularly on behalf of the ladies who have run these institutions, and they are mostly run by women, who have been in nursing for a very long time who are qualified nurses who have retired or who have made a business out of this area of activity.

I have seen them in Hart's Gap. I have seen them in Rockley. I have seen them in Bonnetts and I have seen them even beyond my own constituency in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Christ Church South in Dover and by and large despite the absence of legislation people have tried very hard to set a high standard of care.

I think therefore that the decision of the Government as announced in the Budget to assist with tax and incentives in order to encourage development of what I call a social sector industry is very much to be commended. We have overseas Barbadians who have made outstanding contributions to these developments. From my own constituency from Medford's Land in Dayrells Road, the Archer family, for instance, Keith Archer, the brother of Rawle Archer who did so well at the Food and Agricultural Organisation, he and his wife manage two or three of the largest nursing homes in Washington. They are consulted regularly not only in the United States but in Latin America and elsewhere about the management of these homes. So Barbadians have the capability and the capacity to do so and, in fact, in the past year and a half or two years, I have been talking to him and his wife to interest them in bringing part of that expertise back here to Barbados.

My own view is that as people live longer and they lack the ability, the resources that they had in their youth, their earning capacity is restricted and their income becomes restrictive, more and more people will go to nursing homes, particularly as we are no longer seeing the responsibility of the extended family for people who have retired.

In this regard, Sir, I think this House cannot help but pay outstanding tribute to the Soroptimists Club which has set a lead for the country to follow, where they have used charitable resources for establishing retirement homes that have nursing care attached to them.

I am not surprised that I am speaking of a subject of this nature because my adopted mother who if she were alive today would be 108 years old, the late Madame Ifill, was a pioneer in this field and I have come up in a position where in that type of atmosphere these facilities were provided, in many instances not only for charges to people. We need much more of that charitable spirit and this is the sort of subject that does not call for partisan division at this time.

I believe that we have sought to upgrade over the years, both parties.

I recall the Honourable Member spoke about the state of the Geriatric Hospital but that has been upgraded from what many of us would know when we were children. Like the one in Oistins, those were real alms houses and people went there and you would really regret the nursing care and I do not think that it is really fair to characterise what we have now as in any way disgraceful. I believe that we have upgraded the care tremendously in these homes and I believe that a lot of money has gone into them.

I would like to see us do more but we must also put in people a spirit of responsibility. Politics is often practised in this country not as trying to instil in the citizens a citizen's duty but rather to tell citizens that everything is the politician's fault. People must understand that they too have a responsibility for the care of their aged families. That is important.

In an aging population they must understand that those who have worked so hard for many years and have gone before should be able now to look back on the younger people in the communities for assistance. I regret very much, in fact, I am appalled when I see people dumping old people at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I do not believe that that calls for any censure of Ministers on either Side of the House. I believe it calls for censure of a community that is getting to the stage that people cannot carry their own responsibility. I would like to hear the politicians instead of beginning to eat each other in this way try to preach to people that the responsibility lays where they are breaking the society down.

I do not know of any politicians who cause people to go out and do that. There is something wrong with people if they do not have the self worth and dignity, particularly in an independent Barbados to realise that they have that duty. Very often the politicians become the whipping boy of the press and everybody, for every ill in the society whether it be a robbery that takes place, people on dope, people left in alms houses without proper care, when in truth and in fact it is the people who are failing who ought to be told by us that they have a responsibility to set the standards in this country. I am never going to be campaigning in any election - I have campaigned in 6 others - on the basis that I am attacking people for the failing of a community when there are those few people in the community who do not understand their duty.

If it is one of the things that we must emphasize, and I hope the new Constitution would emphasise it, is the duty of the citizens to have respect for themselves and respect for each other and to maintain standards and do not believe that only the politician is here to do that too.

The politicians have tried. Various Ministers of Health and various governments have put the resources available there but what is the point of dropping your grandmother or your grandfather at the hospital and never looking back and cluttering up the wards? That does not help the Honourable Member for St. Michael East anymore than it helps the Honourable Member for St. James South. I do not believe that either of them is responsible for that initial decision. It is the decision we must criticise because it puts pressure on the resources and it leaves the standards to fall. Somehow the Press do not understand that either because the Press is not playing that role of educating the society to maintain standards because everybody else makes a whipping boy of the politician. You do not hear them with anybody else other than those of us who are sacrificing our time and our energies in trying to give the lead in the country.

I do not believe that everything is right at all of our institutions but I believe that successive Ministers of Health and we have two of them in here who are no longer Ministers of Health, the Honourable Member for the City and the Honourable Member for St. Michael West who have both in their time sought to improve the standards just as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South is doing. In fact, three. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East I believe held the portfolio before.

Asides.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: Oh, well. He aspires to it anyway, Sir.

Sir, I want to say, that I use the occasion to appeal to our citizens to have a greater sense of feeling of community and appreciation of the aged and to do everything to assist the administration in maintaining the highest standards both in the private nursing care as well as in public nursing care.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.00 o'clock in the afternoon.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that.

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 2.00 o'clock in the afternoon was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly. 12.55 p.m.

RESUMPTION Mr.

SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, 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. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS the Bill was read a third time and passed and so cited.

ORDER NO. 10-RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GUARANTEE BY GOVERNMENT OF THE PAYMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST OF A LOAN OF \$30 000 000 EUROPEAN CURRENCY UNITS FROM THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK TO THE BARBADOS LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY LIMITED

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, in begging to move that this Resolution would pass, I make a few observations. The Barbados Light and Power Company Limited is undertaking a project to further expand and reinforce its power generating capacity in Barbados. This is a reflection of a number of things not the least of which is increased business being done in almost every sector of the economy of this island.

The estimated total cost of the project is some 77 million ECUs which is approximately BD\$170 million. This expansion project is financed to the extent of 15.7 million ECUs which is approximately BD\$35 million, by funds of the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited itself and by loans from commercial banks, suppliers credit of an amount of 31.3 million ECUs which is approximately BD\$70 million and also by a loan of 30 million ECUs, approximately BD\$65 million from the resources of the European Investment Bank.

This sort of loan from the European Investment Bank is not new to this Honourable House. It is not the first time.

It is being provided in accordance with the provisions of the second protocol of the fourth ACP EU Convention of LOME which was signed at Mauritius on 4th of November 1995, in fact signed by myself. The loan from the European Investment Bank is to be repaid in 22 semi-annual installments commencing 52 months after the signature. The rate of interest should be the greater of either 3 per cent per annum or the average of the standard interest rates applicable at the date of issue of the disbursement notice to comparable loans made by the European Investment Bank reduced by an annual interest subsidy from the European Investment Bank, the amount of the interest rate subsidy being the difference between 3 per cent and the market rate for the ECU at the time of signature of the agreement. And that really is as much as there is to be said in support of this.

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

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

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

ORDER NO. 3 - THE GUARANTEE OF LOANS (COMPANIES) BILL, 1998

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a Bill which in its objects and reasons make provision for the guarantee by the Government of Barbados of loans granted by lending agencies to companies in which the Government of Barbados holds at least 50 per cent of the offering share capital or indeed is the sole shareholder. It is only natural in the circumstances that the Government really being the majority shareholder in the company would wish to be in a position, certainly in respect of some companies providing stock up or share capital and that the Government would wish to be able to guarantee loans in an amount of at least, 50 per cent of the average share capital.

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

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am taken by surprise. I thought from discussions with the Honourable Member for St. Peter that this Bill was going to be withdrawn. This is what he told me about two weeks ago and that is why we have not indicated it because he said there were some concerns he had about the Bill as it was originally put forward. That is what he said and I have not seen any further amendment, so I assume that...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I have not seen that one either. So I am speaking based on the one which ...

Hon. Miss B.A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, in all of the circumstances, I have no reason to doubt the sequence of events which the Leader of the Opposition is describing to the House and now I am hearing that in fact a new Bill has been circulated, certainly not to me. In all of these circumstances, Sir, I think that we had better discontinue this matter for further consideration because it may well be withdrawn if there is a new Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: If that be the will of the House, then so be it. 2.15p.m.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, if we might be permitted at this stage, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, and his having time to peruse the Bill that was circulated dated December 8, 1998, to resume consideration of this Bill. I had begged for it to be read a second time. If I might be permitted, Mr. Speaker, to point out to the House that in the later version what we have is a new Clause 5 which quite properly deals with the application of sums borrowed and guaranteed to ensure that any sums borrowed or guaranteed under the authority of this Act should be appropriated to the purposes for which they are borrowed and guaranteed. It would be in respect of the sum that would be borrowed or guaranteed.

What was formerly subsection (6) of 6 in an earlier version is now a separate Clause 7 which is requiring the payment of sums guaranteed by the Government under the authority of the Act and for the payment of all interest and all charges on those sums to be charged upon and to be payable out of the Consolidated Fund which are both safety measures and entirely appropriate in all of the circumstances.

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

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

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I have some concerns about this Bill. As I said, our preparation was based on the original Bill which did not require the approval of Parliament for each guarantee that was going to be made. It has been adjusted and now the new Bill does say that the guarantee is subject to this Act and the Government may, with the approval of Parliament and in such manner and on such terms as subject to such conditions as may be agreed between it and a lending agency so that covers the first concern that we had because, first of all, legislation like this is desirable. We are not opposing it.

I will go as far as to say that, to my mind, the Government should have gone a step further and provided blanket legislation to cover situations where it offers loans to

companies that are not controlled by Government as well as statutory corporations because most statutory corporations have borrowing powers, but not all of them. Some of the older legislation, the statutory corporations do not have borrowing powers and we searched the Laws of Barbados very carefully to see, for example, what would authorise Government to do a guarantee like the one we did today in relation to the Light & Power and I forgot to raise it then. There is no law that I know of which really empowers the Government to give a guarantee in respect of a private company like Light & Power. Therefore, I think urgent attention should be paid to tightening up this area of law, the area of guarantees by Government.

Furthermore, I think it is very important that Parliament has a handle on the amount of guarantees that Government gives to lending agencies which lend to private companies, guarantees in respect of loans made to Government controlled companies, and guarantees in respect of loans made to statutory corporations because even though in the Estimates we can get a pretty good picture of Government's financial position in respect to loans and so on, there is no clear indication of Government's obligations under various guarantees.

I think it is very important that we bring legislation to the House to tidy up all aspects of Government's arrangements with respect to the guaranteeing of loans. We do not oppose Government guaranteeing loans for private companies in circumstances where what they are doing meets national objectives and public utility companies undertaking major physical expansion or restructuring should be afforded the opportunity where Government thinks it is desirable of having Government offer a guarantee to assist it with the financing.

We do not oppose Government granting guarantees to private companies. I believe that this legislation will afford Government the opportunity to offer guarantees to a variety of companies, the Barbados Agricultural Marketing Corporation (B AMC) which is to carry out sugar production which is a private company. There are companies like Land Reclaimers which is a private company in which Government has a controlling interest. There are companies like Hotels and Resorts Limited, the GEMS Project in which Government has a majority interest. Then there are also companies in which Government has a minority interest who would not fall under the definition of this legislation which says that 'control' means Government or the body corporate controlled by the Government as the case may be, that holds a number of shares in the company carrying voting rights that is sufficient to elect a majority of the Directors of the company. 2.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if you would permit me to refer to the original draft because my own view is that the original draft

is much tighter. I think that it is a better description than the one which is in the new draft report. Under the original one, even though that has been withdrawn, I am only drawing it to the attention of the House to assist the House. It says:

"Control means the Government or the body corporate as the case may:

- (a) exercises or is entitled to exercise control directly or indirectly over the affairs of the company or body corporate.
- (b) is entitled to appoint a majority of the directors of the Board of Directors of the company or body corporate.
- (c) holds at least 50% of the ordinary share capital of the company or body corporate as the case may be."

You will find that where Government has the majority shareholding in a company, invariably all three of these criteria will coincide, but this is, to my mind, a better definition of the expression 'control' for the purposes of this Act than the one which is in the newer version.

Let me make our position clear because we recently, Mr. Speaker, Sir, had to comment publicly on the issue of debentures to support investments in the GEMS Project. This legislation is coming to the House now because it is going to obviously be an important piece of legislation to permit Government to offer a guarantee in respect of the borrowings of the Hotels and Resorts Limited or whatever company it is that would be doing the borrowing to undertake the GEMS Project.

This legislation makes it quite clear, and this is why the latest draft is preferable in this respect, that the purposes for which the money is borrowed, that the money must be applied to those purposes. This is the new Clause 5. That therefore means that it would entitle any Member of this House to comment on the purposes for which the money is being borrowed. When, therefore, we criticise the GEMS Project and say that in our view Barbadians should be cautious in investing in the debenture issue in respect of the GEMS Project, it is because we believe that the purposes to which these funds are going to be put need further explanations and examination. I still feel that way.

Another Member of this House who is aligned to neither major Party, through his Party's column was very critical of us in the Democratic Labour Party for the position that we took and said that it was irresponsible for us ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Did you say another Member of this House?

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yes, who is not a Member of the two major political parties. Did you want some clarification?

Mr. SPEAKER: No. Just proceed.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: He said that it was irresponsible for us to say that the public should not invest in the debenture series because the money is always guaranteed and it has a good rate of return.

It is also important from the point of view of the kinds of purposes to which the money is being put for the taxpayers and investors to essentially send a signal to the Government that there are concerns about the GEMS Project as presently conceived. That was the purpose, and I maintain that that continues to be the purpose of our concerns that the public of Barbados investing in these debentures should either get further explanations about what is happening with the GEMS project before making the investment. If they do not get further explanation, then they should not invest because at the end of the day it is going to come out of their pockets one way as investors and then if there are taxpayers in Barbados, they are going to end up paying through their noses to clean up the mess which is developing in relation to the GEMS Project. It is a major problem and we feel very, very strongly about it.

As far as we can understand at this stage, Mr. Speaker, the Government has never explained the reason for its purchase of Blue Waters Hotel and Andrea on Sea. These are two Barbadian properties that were not in financial difficulties. I always thought that the whole purpose of the GEMS Project was essentially designed to save the hotel properties which were facing financial difficulties and which all of us in here felt, even though every now and then we had to make certain comments about the particular properties. I, nevertheless, feel that they were properties which were deserving of being saved by and large because at the end of the day, the Barbados Development Bank had made the investment in them.

What about Blue Waters Hotel? What about Andrea on Sea? I want to know if the Minister of Finance can explain why Eastry House, with five acres of land, far from the seas and not even near the south coast, a so-called hotel which has not operated for many years and is now a collection of dilapidated ruins, has now come under the GEMS Project. The purpose, as I understood it, of the GEMS Project was to use the resources which were being made available to save the south coast hotel, the small hotels owned by Barbadians which were in need of an injection of capital, to restructure the ownership of them and to give the existing hotel owners some limited participation in the

project. Then eventually, this thing has got out of hand, you bring in a Canadian partner and the whole scope of the project goes from saving these hotels, restructuring them and maybe recapitalising them, rebuilding and so on, into a situation where eventually this GEMS Project or Hotels and Resorts Limited will be controlling over 1 000 hotel rooms in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is only part of it. The reason why taxpayers have to be concerned is that this project is a Government project, it has been given certain privileges, unique privileges which do not apply in the rest of the tourism sector.

I hope the Honourable Member for St. Thomas would confirm or explain whether there is any justification which is being offered for the issue of work permits to non-Barbadians without the position being advertised as is customary in the rest of the tourism sector in Barbados.

I would like the Minister of Finance, under who this project falls, to explain whether the officials of Hotels and Resorts Limited, one of whom is a consultant to him on privatisation, whether those officials informed him whether they were any Barbadians who were qualified, available or interested in taking up any of those posts in the GEMS Project. If somebody is qualified as a Barbadian, it does not matter to me who they are. I know that they are very well qualified people who may have family connections to Members of Parliament but that is not what I am getting at because they are Barbadians. That is not the issue. The issue is the non-Barbadians who have been brought in under this project which the debentures are supposed to be guaranteeing...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: They are being guaranteed by Government under this new legislation. Whether those positions were advertised and whether there were not, were not Barbadians qualified to take those positions as well? A little later on we may have to deal with the Barbadians who have been taken on in jobs in Hotels and Resorts Limited who do not have the qualifications or the experience, who have not worked in the hotel sector before but who have been employed in those institutions on other criteria. Mr. Speaker, Sir, that therefore would exonerate those persons who had the qualification.

I am saying there are some employed in the GEMS Project who had never worked in the hotel sector, who do not have management qualifications and who are only working there because they are in-laws of certain key decision makers.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Oh, yes, key decision makers.

I will give the Honourable Member for Christ Church South the information.

Asides.

2.35 p.m.

Nobody in this House. I am talking about other people who are being given jobs without the qualifications in that GEMS project. So we have many concerns and that is why not a cent of mine and I am not recommending that the hard-earned money of the taxpayers of Barbados or investors from Barbados be used to prop up an enterprise which has been developed in such secrecy and which at the end of the day if not carefully managed will end up in the hands of non-Barbadians and a non-Barbadian company whose fortunes are already on the decline and whose share value has declined and whose Chief Executive Officer has retired, resigned or been fired under suspicious circumstances. All of this is part of the saga of the GEMS project to date.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are very concerned. Do you know that there are items like menus being printed in Canada under the GEMS project for restaurants operated by this same project at exorbitant prices and those same menus are just printed on a card that could be done on any colour printer by children at Erdiston Primary School? We are paying thousands of dollars simply because we are in an arrangement with a non-Barbadian company which is supposed to be a part of Government paying for all of these things.

I want an investigation launched into the kitchen equipment purchased at the Savannah Hotel for the restaurant there, about three or four grills again at exorbitant prices on the advice of the Canadian partner with Government in this project. Millions of dollars have been wasted already in this GEMS project without proper accountability under a shroud of secrecy and very bad decisions have been made which at the end of the day will affect those who invest and the taxpayers of Barbados who are going to be guaranteeing the large sums of money that are going to be required to make this project successful.

I have to call on the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, who is not in his seat, to take full responsibility because whenever we asked about this project he gave this House the assurance constantly that the GEMS project was all above board and that the decisions which were being made were perfectly legitimate. But there is more to this, Mr. Speaker.

When you establish a corporation like Hotels and Resorts Limited and put under its control 1 000 rooms the

majority of which are going to be on the South Coast you are going to end up running all of the other small hotels in the South Coast out of business. I said this already because the South Coast hotel product has developed in a totally different way from what has been happening on the West Coast. The kind of risks that can be charged even sometimes the wage costs in relation to South Coast hotels are different.

What the Government is doing is rolling the wicket from now for the GEMS project to have control of over 1 000 rooms, the majority of which are going to be on the South Coast of Barbados and then a lot of the other smaller hotels on the South Coast will be run into the ground because they will not be able to compete effectively. So we are constantly going to be going through this cycle of trying to get resources to capitalise properly and develop the indigenous hotels on the South Coast of Barbados and that is going to become more and more difficult because of the impact of the development of this GEMS project.

My own view, Mr. Speaker, Sir, based on what I have heard from the people who operate the GEMS project is that eventually it will control 1 000 hotel rooms owned by the Government of Barbados handed over to a non-Barbadian company which would decide whether any eventual profit will be shown by the local company or whether that profit would be shown by the Canadian company at the end of the day.

These hotels, as I have said, are going to be competing with other small locally owned hotels in Barbados. Those hotels are going to have to run for cover without an alternative institution being in place to provide the kind of financing which they need because the Barbados Development Bank has been closed down and the institutions which presently exist are not going to cater to the kind of structure, the kind of business plan which a small hotel on the South Coast of Barbados would bring before them.

They are going to be competing with a large corporation which can afford initial losses, undermine their profitability in the expectation of eventually acquiring the rest of those hotels too. This is what I am predicting from here and I cannot understand why the Honourable Member for St. Peter would be accepting advice which is going to be so detrimental at the end of the day to the development of the tourism sector in Barbados.

We have no problem with the concept of guaranteeing loans for companies in which Government has the majority shareholding or control or whatever but we are saying that the purposes for which the money is going to be spent are very important. With respect to the GEMS project I have grave concerns about offering a guarantee to a project which has the potential to do so much harm which has been shrouded in so much secrecy and which all of the practices

undertaken so far are entirely questionable and need a full investigation by independent and impartial Barbadians who want to get to the bottom of it.

No one knows which Canadian corporation at the end of the day is really going into the partnership with the Government or what the ownership -structure of it is going to be; that is my understanding. As I said, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the chief executive of the company with which the Government is going to be doing business has resigned or been fired in circumstances which no one explains and which the Chief Executive Officer of Hotels and Resorts Limited said that he did not even ask why the gentleman is no longer with the company.

The share price of the Canadian company in Canada is falling and he assures Barbadians that there is nothing to worry about. So the company itself, a private sector company, is facing a major crisis in its management, a major financial crisis in going into an enterprise with the Government of Barbados and the Chief Executive Officer here tells us that it is nothing for us to worry about and lamely says in the newspaper, although I cannot quote from the Report, that we did not ask for an explanation as to why the Chief Executive Officer has demitted office or whatever.

So we will be guaranteeing a loan here at the end of the day encouraging Barbadians to go out there, put money ...

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: On a point of order. I think that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is in fact speaking to a matter that is not before the House. We are not guaranteeing any loan. This is a piece of legislation which is providing the power for the Government, generally speaking, to guarantee the loan granted to lending agencies which are well defined here, meaning international financial organisations, banks, insurance companies and so on, to companies in which the Government is either a majority or the sole shareholder.

There is no specification here. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition is speaking as though - to quote him just now - we are guaranteeing a loan to somebody. That is not the case here.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I agree with the Honourable Member for the City but I will say this. For the past four weeks I have been reading advertisements in the newspaper that a company known as Hotels and Resorts Limited has been postponing a debenture issue which is supposed to be guaranteed by the Government of Barbados and which the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter himself said to this Chamber would have been one of the first acts that the Government would take after this new legislation was passed. So Tam saying it is exclusively that, because I also made the point that it would permit the Government to guarantee loans made to the Barbados

Agricultural Management Company, loans made to Land Reclaimers Limited, and I will say this, Sir, to digress for a minute. All of these companies which Government has incorporated under the Companies Act instead of going the route of statutory corporations have a very sad record of reporting to Government on their operations.

There is a company called Land Reclaimers Limited and I served the Ministry of Finance from 1992 to 1994 and prior to that there were other Ministers of Finance and that company never gave any report of its operations for the entire time. I do not even know if since it was established it ever gave the Minister of Finance or the Government of Barbados any report on its operation.

I am sending a warning to the Honourable Member for the City that we must be careful even in this regard that we require from the private companies the same level of attention, or even better, to reporting and accountability that we would get from statutory corporations or government departments. That is very important. In fact, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas is reading the report of the Constitution Review Commission and I notice that in that Report ... sorry I do not want to anticipate it. I am just saying this because it is relevant to the word 'control' which was used in the legislation.

They were recommending that the Auditor General have automatic power to conduct audits in companies which conform to the bold definition of 'control' under the original Bill that had been circulated. I saw that in there, the exact same word. We are not dealing with that now, Sir. What we are dealing with is the fact that the potential exists when this legislation is passed for the Government to guarantee a debenture issue in respect of a company which so far has taken several bad and inconsistent decisions for a project which is ill-conceived and not in the interest of Barbadians. That is my view.

My concern would be that the legislation should be tightened up and I want to appeal to the Attorney General of Barbados that where the Government gives a guarantee that in the legislation there is a requirement that the companies provide its financial statements before and on a regular and timely basis as a matter of law because under this legislation Government can make the guarantee available without having carried out any due diligence. The House may have to agree to a guarantee without any knowledge of the operation of the entity. It is true we do it in relation to statutory corporations but at least they are required by law to file financial statements and eventually do, and are under the oversight of the Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee.

These private companies are subject to the very loose provisions of the Companies Act and whatever other relevant legislation there is in relation to their financial operations. 2.50 p.m.

Parliament needs to have regular reporting from private companies owned by the Government in the same way that we required statutory corporations and other Government departments to make them available. I will go further and say that the law should stipulate that where a guarantee is going to be offered that the Minister of Finance should certify as a matter of law that due diligence has been carried out on the operation of the company and that he believes, not on the basis of assertions in this Chamber but a certificate, that at the end of the day that corporation's operations would be able to sustain the level of borrowing and would continue to benefit the taxpayers by way of profits and so on from its existence. If not, we are going to have problems.

We are not against guarantees but the next time, acting under this Act, the Government comes to the House, they are going to be coming with a Resolution to guarantee the loan to a private company in which the majority of shares are owned by Government or the Government exercises control. But when they come to the House, the Members in this Chamber are not going to have the benefit of the kind of information on the operations of this Government owned company that we have in relation to statutory corporations or even in relation to a Government department. If it was a public utility like Barbados Light & Power Company, I can go home now and pick up the Annual Report of Barbados Light & Power Company Limited and can make an assessment as to whether this loan, which we guaranteed today is valid or not. I hope the Honourable Member for St. Thomas and Attorney-General understand the point that is being made, that I can go home tonight and pick up the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited Annual Report and make a determination whether the guarantee we gave today is a good guarantee and worthwhile because we have the Financial Report. I can pick up an Annual Report of the Barbados Tourism Investment Corporation (BTIC), Barbados Development Investment Corporation (BDIC)...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Well, yes, a public company like Cave Shepherd & Company but I have not seen an Annual Report for the B AMC set up under my watch in 1993. I have never seen one. I do not know what the financial condition of the B AMC is right now but we may be requiring shortly to guarantee some kind of loan or debenture in respect of the BAMC, likewise, the GEMS Project. I really do not know, and the Honourable Members on both sides of the Chamber would like to know, what is the current status of the project. The next time we come here, all we are going to be told is the same thing that we were told in relation to Barbados Light & Power Company that...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Does anybody have a copy of that Resolution that we did this morning?

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I only want to get it in the record because I think it is very important. All you will see at the end of the day is a Resolution which ask for the concurrence of the House of Assembly to be guaranteed by Government of a loan made by an international financial institution to Barbados Light & Power Company Limited, that is all that you will have available to you the next time a matter like this is brought to House. We were not given the Annual Report for Barbados Light & Power Company today and we have to be serious about this.

I do not blame the Government because as I said, it is fortunate that there was a company, the Barbados Light & Power Company. We were not told what legislation authorises the guarantee today either. I have some doubts about that - the Barbados Light & Power Company guarantee. I do not know what law permits it. I looked in the Constitution. We have looked in an Act which related to Barbados Light & Power Company - I cannot remember the name of it. We have looked in a whole series of different pieces of legislation and I have not yet been able to locate legislation which empowers Government to guarantee loans made to private companies in which it does not have a controlling interest.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that there are very strong grounds on the basis of accountability, on the basis of financial prudence and on the basis of making sensible decisions about the future of the tourism sector in Barbados which would compel us to raise concerns about this piece of legislation. We have already raised the concerns that we have about the structure of the legislation which I think can be dealt with but beyond that, I think that provisions should be made.

Now is the time for us to make provision for a list of all the guarantees given by Government and the status of those loans to be published annually, for legislation to require companies in which Government has given guarantees that their financial reports and financial statements and whatever be made to Parliament annually until that loan or whatever is retired. With respect to Government owned private companies or private companies in which Government has a controlling interest, that there be provisions brought as soon as possible to ensure that the financial reports of those corporations are made available as long as guarantees are outstanding.

All of the concerns which we have raised about the GEMS Project, which is a project which would potentially benefit from a guarantee given by Government, I hope the Government would take those concerns on board and before that debenture series is issued will provide a full account to the public of Barbados on the direction that project is taking.

Thank you.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think the Opposition will find support on this Side of this House for anything which speaks to accountability in the circumstances and anything which speaks to transparency. I could not agree more that in the case of a number of new companies, and quite a few have been formed, where the Government is either the majority shareholder or indeed the sole shareholder, it is very important that we are in a position to monitor what is going on.

In the case of statutory corporations and Government departments, what they do is subject to great scrutiny. For years people have complained, for instance, why should it be the business of the Cabinet, the minutes of statutory corporations. How else can the Cabinet keep account and monitor what is going on? How else? All of the Government's capital projects must find themselves before the Government Planning and Priority Committee which is an Executive Committee of the Cabinet of Barbados. Not so in the case of these limited liability companies where the Government has the majority or the total shareholding. It is entirely right, proper and appropriate that in the very near future some mechanism must be put in place which allows the Government and indeed this Parliament to be able to monitor what is going on. So, there will be no argument on this Side of the House against what the Leader of the Opposition is proposing.

We are moving so swiftly, Mr. Speaker, Sir. We are going to find in the early 21st Century new ways of doing business and the role of Government is changing with a certain amount of speed. Again, I say, it is important that we must not allow ourselves to be so overtaken by the speed with which the private sector wants us to move, the speed with which even the Government itself is driving certain areas of development, not the least of which is tourism. It must not be that it gets to a place where we will find ourselves repenting at leisure.

I would like to be able to give the assurance to the Leader of the Opposition that these matters will at a very soon date be occupying the attention of the Attorney General.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS the House resolved itself into Committee. Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair. 3.00p.m.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 - 9 inclusive, were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, 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. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Guarantee of Loans (Companies) Act, 1998.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable House will now revert to the item "Papers".

PAPERS

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I am much obliged to Your Honour for accommodating the Government in this respect for the recommitting of the item "Papers". I beg to lay the following:

1. The Parliament (Administration) (Salaries) (No. 2) Order, 1998.
2. The International Business Companies (Rate of Tax) Order, 1998.
3. The Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (No. 22) Order, 1998.
4. The Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (No. 23) Order, 1998.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

The Annual Report of the Sanitation Service Authority for the years 1994/95, 1995/96, 1996/97 and 1997/98.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of the following:-

1. Resolution to approve the guarantee by the Government of the payment of the principal sum of \$37 million to be borrowed by the Hotels and Resorts Limited and of the payment of the

sum of \$36 million to be borrowed by the company for the issuing of bonds.

2. Resolution to approve the grant of the sum of \$4 799 551 from the Consolidated Fund and place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 1998/99 as shown in the Supplementary Estimates, 1998/99, No. 5.

REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEES

* Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay the Report of the Select Committee on the Ownership of land Interests in Barbados by Non-Nationals including CARICOM Nationals. This Report has been signed by six members of the Committee. Mr. D. St. E. Kellman, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, does not support the Report with respect to Recommendation No. 10.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, although he has not signed the Report has indicated that he is in favour of the contents of the Report. It is just aiat he could not get here today in time. All the other members have signed the Report.

I beg to move, Sir, that on the laying of the Report that Your Honour command that it be printed.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Report having been laid is so ordered to be printed.

ORDER NO. 13 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GUARANTEE OF THE PRINCIPAL SUM OF \$37 MILLION TO BE BORROWED BY THE HOTELS AND RESORTS LIMITED AND OF THE PAYMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL SUM OF \$36 MILLION TO BE BORROWED BY THE COMPANY FOR THE ISSUING OF BONDS

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, this is a Resolution to approve the guarantee by the Government for the payment of certain sums to be borrowed by the Hotels and Resorts Limited for the purpose of the issuing of bonds.

The terms and conditions of the bond issue, Mr. Speaker, should reflect current market conditions for the offering of $7\frac{3}{4}$ per cent over 10 years as far as I am advised. In all of the circumstances, bearing in mind although one might not reflect on matters which have recently passed the House, and bearing in mind the matter that we have just come to closure on, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I beg to second that, Sir.
3.10p.m.

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

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It is only because I am in a charitable mood that I am not going to be long because I listen very carefully to what the Honourable Member for the City said. We have just passed a piece of legislation which would have given Government power to do this. Of course, it has to go elsewhere before that power actually exist so I am not against that but I make the representation again. I thought the Honourable Member for the City agreed that in bringing these Resolutions, it is critical that information be given about the companies. The Honourable Member for the City may not have that information, in fact, I suspect that nobody on that Side has that information, that it resides only in the head of the Honourable Member for St. Peter and that is after hours dissemination. When it comes to the GEMS Project, because it seems as though that is an old boys' network operating these things, \$37 million ...

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I do not think this is necessary. I have given assurances to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition particularly in the absence of the Right Honourable Prime Minister from his seat at this time. I do not think that this is fair. The Minutes of the Board of Directors of Hotels & Resorts Limited do come to the Cabinet from time to time. I do not think that it is fair to talk about an old boys' network. I could not be party to that. On the basis of gender, I could not be a party to that and if it were so, I could not be a party to anything of that kind.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Do you want me to say old boys and girls?

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, the concern I have is very clear. The Honourable Member for the City said she shared my concern. The fact that the Honourable Member for St. Peter is not here, I am not going to push it. The reason why I am not pushing it is that I can almost lay my life on the line today when I say that not one Member on that Side would be able to get up in here and explain why the Chief Executive Officer of the company with which HRL is going into a partnership, resigned, was fired or retired. They cannot explain how this \$37 million when it comes into the hand of HRL, the GEMS Project is going to be spent. They cannot explain the actions of the Chief Executive Officer and the employment practices, despite all the Board Minutes. I am certain that the Board Minutes did not disclose the familiar relationship between some of the people who have been employed by the Chief Executive Officer at the GEMS Project. The Board Minutes obviously have not explained that, because if the Honourable Member for the City was alert and there were in the Board Minutes, I am certain that on the basis of what she told this Chamber, she would have objected.

The Board Minutes obviously have not disclosed that this company has employed a large number of people who have been able to get work permits without going through the procedures which other hotels in the tourism sector have had to go through to get work permits.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Check it, because I know that you do not know either. This is the problem that we have in here that the only person who knows is not in his Chair. I cannot account for that because I am to do the people's business. This is \$37 million that we are guaranteeing. It is a blank cheque and I know that it is going to come back to haunt the people of this country that a \$37 million blank cheque for a Government that cannot even pay back civil servants \$59 million now, is willing to put \$37 million in the hands of people who have taken very questionable decision in relation to the tourism sector.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition is overstating the case. He well knows that this is not a case of the Government putting this money in the hands of HRL, the Government is guaranteeing. Please, the point has been made already, the point has been laboured. I am sorry that the substantive Minister is not now in his seat but this happens from time to time and you have to go on with Government.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I agree with everything the Honourable Member has said because the Government is not putting money in the hand of HRL but without this guarantee no self respecting financial institution would lend HRL \$37 million, that is the problem. Whereas in 1994 when we were dealing with the sugar industry, the private commercial banks in Barbados had enough faith in the BAMC as a private company that without a Government guarantee they were willing to lend that company millions of dollars. We did not have to come in here for a Government guarantee.

In 1998, we are dealing with a project that is so suspect, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in my view and which can do so much harm to the tourism sector and in which the Government is getting into bed with people that they know nothing about and the Chief Executive Officer is not willing to answer any questions about. Therefore, we now have a situation where that private company cannot borrow \$37 million on the basis of its finances, it cannot borrow \$37 million either with one of the highest powered Board of Directors ever appointed in Barbados to a private company. It cannot borrow \$37 million based on the assets it has available to it. What it has to get is a Government guarantee and that should cause Members of this Chamber to ask serious questions. Why is it that if the GEMS Project is such

a good project, that as a private company, the Government has to offer a guarantee for \$37 million.

I know why you would guarantee a loan to Barbados Light & Power or the Barbados Telephone Company because a lot of their outlay, it will take them decades to retire the capital input that is being made. I agree with the Honourable Member for the City that the Government is not taking up \$37 million and giving to Hotels Resorts Limited but I can tell you this, if the project fails, the Government of Barbados is going to have to look for more than \$37 million and we will be back in here with a supplementary or during the Estimates looking for millions upon millions of dollars which would have been spent as a monument to the echo and 'cronyism' of certain individuals in Barbados. That is what this GEMS Project is about.

I agree with the Honourable Member for the City and I see it entirely in her terms but I am saying that I am uncomfortable having to agree with Government to give a guarantee to a company and I do not have anything before me.

I have Parliamentary Questions on the Order Paper, Mr. Speaker, Sir, asking about the level of remuneration paid to people in HRL. I asked those questions months ago. I am now being asked to agree to a \$37 million guarantee and I cannot tell you, Sir, whether the salary of the Chief Executive Officer is in line with salaries of other Chief Executive Officers in the hotel sector. I cannot tell you about the benefits being paid to him. I cannot tell you of the employment practices of the institution. I cannot tell you how the money is going to be used. I cannot explain why they bought Eastry House. I cannot explain why they bought Andrea on Sea. I cannot explain to anybody, if I have to explain it, in my constituency this evening when I leave here, why I agree to a \$37 million guarantee to HRL. The only thing I would be able to say to them and it would be true, is that HRL could not attract a loan of \$37 million without a Government \$37 million guarantee. It is the first Government owned company in the history of Barbados that private banking institutions refuse to have sufficient confidence in, to lend them \$37 million without having a Government guarantee in place and that is why you have to bring a law today, then go beyond the law and the same day that you brought the law, bring a Resolution. I do not know how you will explain that. The Honourable Member for the City is in the same position as I am. I commiserate with Members on that Side because they cannot answer any questions today about the GEMS project. Questions have been on the Order Paper that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter refuses to answer. The media has asked questions about it. Almost every newspaper columnist and even some members of the Board of Directors are asking questions About a project which they are involved in. They know nothing about the reason for the decline in the share prices of the Canadian company. They know nothing about the project. 3.20p.m.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is on that basis that we are flying by night. I do not remember what the pilots call that. We are being led by faith in the Honourable Member for the City and I hope the Honourable Member for the City is not going to stake either her reputation or her life on being able to answer any questions that we pose in here about this project called the GEMS project. What I do know is that I will caution Barbadians.

I also want to say something else to the Honourable Attorney General. The legislation which we passed in here made it very clear that the purpose for which the guarantee is given must be adhered to. This Resolution that I am reading here and I am reading from the top to the bottom and it says nothing about the purposes to which this money is being put. I suggest that Honourable Members postpone further consideration and redraft this Resolution so that the House knows the purpose to which this money is being put. This is very fishy business, Mr. Speaker.

The legislation was just amended to include a clause that you must adhere to the purposes for which the money is being borrowed and look what this Resolution says:

"WHEREAS Hotels and Resorts Limited (hereinafter called the "Company") is authorised to borrow money for the purpose of conducting its business and to pledge its assets as security for the money so borrowed; and the company deems it necessary to borrow money from financial institutions of an amount not exceeding \$37000000..."

That is the closest that this Resolution comes to describing what the purpose of the loan is.

I would really urge on the Government that this Resolution if it is to be effective has to conform to the legislation which has just been passed in here and it must specify the purposes for which the money is being borrowed by the company. This cannot satisfy any test of scrutiny, Mr. Speaker, Sir, by a modern House of Assembly in 1998 in relation to establishing the purposes for which the money is being borrowed. This is fishy business. I repeat that because I am very concerned about it.

I hope that Members on that Side would not allow the new legislation to hoodwink them into a situation where we come in here in a very cavalier manner and pass resolutions to offer guarantee to private companies owned by Government to borrow large sums of money and the purposes for which that money is borrowed are not clearly set out in either an addendum or set out otherwise.

"The proceeds of the loan are to be used to improve the Company's capacity to provide loans for hotel development."

How do I know that that falls within the by-laws of Hotels and Resorts Limited? I do not have the by-laws of the company before me so we may very well be agreeing to a Resolution to permit the company to undertake some activity which it is not permitted to undertake. So I believe that this is a matter which needs greater clarity and it would be with the utmost reservation that I would give any support to this Resolution today because as I say the Resolution does not stipulate the purpose for which the money is being borrowed nor does it clearly set out, nor has the Minister been able to clearly set out, the status of the company, Hotels and Resorts Limited which is borrowing the money.

This is a blank cheque and fishy business.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition feels that he is on a wicket of some kind and he has delivered himself of all kinds of large and exaggerated statements. The Leader of the Opposition is advised to look at the Resolution before the House.

"WHEREAS Hotels and Resorts Limited ... is authorised to borrow money for the purpose of conducting its business and to pledge its assets as security for the money so borrowed, and the company deems it necessary to borrow money from financial institutions of an amount not exceeding \$37 000 000 ..."

"AND WHEREAS the Company is authorised ..."

There is nothing fishy about this. It is authorised by law.

"... to issue debentures or bonds on such terms and conditions as the Board of Directors determines; and the Company deems it necessary to issue at par bonds to the value of \$36 000 000 with a rate of interest of 7.75% redeemable at par on December 31st, 2008;

AND WHEREAS by virtue of section 3(1) of the Guarantee of Loans (Companies) Act, 1998 it is provided that the Government may with the approval of Parliament and in such manner and on such terms and subject to such conditions ..."

It goes on and on.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition is speaking as though successive Administrations and an administration in which he himself was the Minister of Finance has not so guaranteed loans in the past without benefit of the legislation just recently passed in this Honourable Chamber.

The Leader of the Opposition was a member of an administration that not only guaranteed large sums of money as large or larger than this in the past but gave Letters of Comfort.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. There is, as I said at the beginning of my presentation on the previous Bill, in existence in Barbados a provision in the statute establishing most of the statutory corporations which permits them to borrow and permits the Government to offer a guarantee in respect of their borrowing. This is new ground that we are going into. This is a private company controlled by Government which is seeking a guarantee under a new piece of legislation and it is that legislation that I have taken my cue from. That legislation says "any sums borrowed and guaranteed under the authority of this Act shall be applied and are hereby appropriated to the purposes for which they are borrowed or guaranteed". That is the new section 5 of a Bill that we just passed called the Guarantee of Loans (Companies) Act, 1998. All I am asking the Honourable Member is to tell me how this Resolution conforms with this new legislation.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, this new legislation is not specifically for this company. The Government should be complimented on the fact that it has brought such legislation which will now be applicable in all limited liability companies in the present and future where the Government is a majority or sole shareholder.

It is not as though this piece of legislation was brought here specifically for this company to do what it has to do. I do not understand the self-righteous attitude being adopted by the Leader of the Opposition when he was part of an administration that further than giving guarantees used to give something called a Letter of Comfort which was not worth the paper it was written on and we have now got past that stage.

This Administration came to office in September of 1994, if you will recall, and found well in excess of \$37 million in unfinished business left by that Side when it was the Government in the eight years before 1994.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Is that nonsense? Mr. Speaker, Sir, \$37 million in projects. Unpaid bills, Mr. Speaker, Sir. We spent the first two years of this Administration mopping up and paying off in excess of \$37 million, so I do not understand this self righteousness that unless everything is down in writing that business cannot be done.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. I was only following the Honourable Member's lead. She said she wanted accountability. I did not know that was self-righteousness now, Sir. Anyway I am not dealing with that. The \$37 million that we voted for in this Chamber, the first supplementary that was brought by this Government

included debts in relation to the B ADMC that went back to the time when the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter was Chairman, debts in C ARIC ARGO that went back to the time when the Barbados Labour Party was in office. Debts in about five different corporations which went back as much as 15 years.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay. Honourable Members let us not get back into all of this. Just let us proceed with what is before us.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us face facts. The reality is that without the legislation just passed, administrations in the past did business in a manner that was less than transparent. The Leader of the Opposition stood up in here and used the word "fishy" at least five times in the course of his second last intervention.

There is nothing fishy about it as far as I am concerned. I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as a Minister of Tourism I am glad for every single hotel room that can be brought back into the room stock of Barbados at a certain level. I have made the point already I think in here.

Imagine in advance of the winter season of 1998-99 we are already, last month, in November, turning back business because we do not have a larger number of 'B' and 'C' category rooms. In the winter before, the winter of 1997-98 we were not turning back that kind of business until January. Three months in advance we are turning back business. I am glad that rather than these rooms which were languishing in dereliction on the South Coast of Barbados we now have the Savannah Hotel and Time Out at the Gap.

The Association of Caribbean States met here last week. We had many Foreign Ministers and other Ministers, indeed the Prime Minister from the Netherlands Antilles, and the Government was able to put up people at the Savannah and at the Gap.

Earlier this week I was at a function at the Savannah and wherever I can, I try to give business to those hotels. You can see with your two eyes the beautiful work that has been done. You can see with your two eyes the total transformation at Andrea on the Sea and everybody knows that Dover Convention Centre which has an occupancy rate of less than 18 per cent, a marvellous beach front property is now meant to be incorporated in all of that to help uplift the St. Lawrence Gap and the South Coast room stock in general.

I will support anything that will bring more rooms to us. We have more business than we have rooms and the same thing goes for an earlier piece of legislation in here today to do with the Hotel Equity Investment Fund to help other small

hotels which are not part of the GEMS project to be brought up to a level in Barbados where we can offer them to people who want to come to Barbados.

I have nothing but support to give to it and I cannot accept all of this talk about something is fishy. 3.35 p.m.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: What is fishy?

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: You heard that Aside, Mr. Speaker? I have never said any such thing to anybody.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Either in here or outside of in here have I ever said other than positive things because I want the rooms and the more hotel rooms that the GEMS Project can bring on for me to have access to this winter, the better it is. The 76 rooms that are now into Phase 2 at the Savannah, I wish I had them last week.

It really is absolutely not correct for the Leader of the Opposition to be making statements of this kind. He should be glad that we have got to a place in the way in which we do business in Barbados that such a piece of legislation as we just passed has finally passed this House. It is entirely possible that if that Side were over here that that piece of legislation would not be passed in this House. I hear the Honourable Leader of the Opposition with a litany now. He is going to give you a whole list of things going back to when the Right Honourable Prime Minister was this and was that.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Why did he stop short? Why he did not deal with CARSICOT and the St. Joseph Hospital? Even as *ge* speak the taxpayers now have to be spending money to shore up the back of Sherbourne Conference Centre. How much of our programme had to be delayed because we took what we hoped was a matured attitude that this is only one Barbados and the unfinished projects that was left by the Democratic Labour Party Administration, once they were in national interest, that we had to bring those matters to resolution.

It is ridiculous that somebody should be getting up in here now just to grandstand because they see people in the Press box and make large and unfounded statements.

Rt. Hon. L. E. S ANDEFORD: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I would not like the Honourable Member or

anybody else to mislead the House. I believe we should be seeking to enlighten the House and thereby enlighten the public. The point that the Honourable Member ended on I expected to be the point that she should be making all the while. All Governments leave unfinished business and Government is a continuing operation. The Barbados Labour Party Government left unfinished business. The Democratic Labour Party Government left unfinished business and the Conservative Governments, before the Barbados Labour Party assumed responsibility for the Government, left unfinished business. I do not believe that this is an issue on which we should be making a point. If the Honourable Member for St. John says that something was fishy, I assume that he means ...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Well, I better not assume what he means but one interpretation is that fish will be served in the cafeterias of these hospitals and it must be fishy, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is not fitting that a distinguished Member of this Honourable Chamber and a former Right Honourable Prime Minister would want now to become the class clown. This is a very serious matter.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: We cannot admit of levity because the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South left the civil servants, having taken the 8 per cent from their salaries and that is still an outstanding matter that we have to settle. When I say that in excess of \$37 million in projects and unfinished business left...

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: On a point of order. The Honourable Member obviously has not taken the point that is being made. All Governments leave unfinished business, when the Democratic Labour Party came to office in 1961, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was unfinished business.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Yes, it was unfinished business and succeeding administrations have had to deal with unfinished business. What is the point, she seems to be in Class One.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: The point is this, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South had the distinction of being the only Right Honourable

Prime Minister in the history of Barbados who took 8 per cent from civil servants without their consent...

Asides.

Hon. Miss B.A. MILLER: ...with no intention of paying it back. Mr. Speaker, Sir, that was a debt well in excess of \$37 million.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I rise on a point of order. This debate is not about the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South and the Honourable Member should stick to the matter in hand. The Honourable Member should not mislead the house in this direction. There was an 8 per cent cut that was agreed upon after forms were distributed to public officers and those forms were returned and the vast majority of the public officers said they were in favour of the 8 per cent cut.

Mr. Speaker, I have to set this record straight. There was an 8 per cent cut which I said would last for eighteen months, that is what this House agreed and at the end of the eighteen months period, the level of salaries were restored to the level before the 8 per cent cut. In addition to that, we called for the repayment of those deductions made during the 18-month period.

Asides.

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

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I was accused loudly on the Floor of this House of thievery.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you had sat down ...

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Yes, and I rose again, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I was speaking and I did not hear or see the Honourable Member on her feet.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I am sorry, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I was about to make the point. Honourable Members, let us get back to this Resolution. I will not allow anymore digressions from the Resolution before the House. Please, I think we have gone far enough. Let us get back to the Resolution, please.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I rise on a point of order, Sir. Mr. Speaker, you said you did not hear the word thievery?

Mr. SPEAKER: I did not hear anything.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Sir, you did not hear it? If you did not hear it, it cannot be on the record.

Mr. SPEAKER: I stated earlier, that when you sat down, I was addressing the House. As far as I know nobody was on their feet so nothing that was said could be on the record. I take it that it was an Aside that was stated, so let us proceed with the Resolution, please.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I close on this, the Attorney General and Honourable Member for St. Thomas is wishful of making a recommendation for an Amendment.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, out of an abundance of caution, I wish to declare a very very remote interest. Sir, in order to make this more explicit, I recommend to the House and so move that at the end of Recycle No. 1, we delete the semicolon. I have shown this to the Leader of the Opposition who agrees and we include the following words: "for the purpose of carrying out its business in accordance with its Articles of Incorporation and By-laws". Delete the semicolon at the end of the first 'Recycle' and carry on with these words: "for the purpose of carrying out its business in accordance with its Articles of incorporation and By-laws". 3:45 p.m.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution, as amended, do now pass.

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

ORDER NO. 9 - REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1998

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, this amendment to the Representation of the People Act, in December 1997, well a year ago, an amendment was passed to this Act, at section 34, which made provision for election offices to vote in accordance with paragraph 3 of Rule 30 of the Election Rules.

The amendment to Rule 30 of the Rules for the conduct of House of Assembly elections, at paragraph 3, further made provision for election officers to cast their ballots at the time and place specified by notice to this effect, published by the Supervisor of Elections in the Official Gazette and in both daily newspapers circulated in Barbados.

At that time the opinion was offered that while the amended section 34 (2) of the Act makes provision for election officers to vote in accordance with paragraph 3 of

Election Rule 30. Paragraph 3 of Election Rule 30 in turn makes provision for election officers to cast their ballot at the time and place specified by notice to that effect published by the Supervisor of Elections in the *Official Gazette* and in the daily newspapers. But, Mr. Speaker, neither section 34 of the Act nor Election Rule 30 purports to change or give power to anyone to change the date of polling day on which election officers are entitled to vote. This clearly was not the original intention because in the Objects and Reasons of the original amendment it was clearly stated that the amendment to the Representation of the People Act, Cap. 12, was to facilitate voting by election officials prior to polling day.

The amendment, therefore, as it now stands, does not make provision for election officials to vote prior to polling day and so the need for the amendment as recommended which will give the Governor-General the authority to appoint a polling day for election officials.

Amendment to section 7 of Rule 30: At section 7 of the Rules as amended in December 1997 reference is made to electoral district. In section 2 of Cap. 12, reference is made to constituency and polling district but not electoral district. The opinion is held, Sir, by the legal advisor to the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, that the words "electoral district" may be interpreted to mean "constituency" but in order to avoid any misinterpretation the words "electoral district" should be amended to read "constituency". "Electoral district" must not be interpreted to mean "polling district" because that would necessitate the provision of another 288 ballot boxes which cannot be produced at short notice.

The amendment, Sir, reflects the fact that a number of election officers will be employed as Presiding Officers and Polling Clerks within the polling stations at which they will cast their votes while the Supervisor of Elections, the Deputy Supervisor of Elections and the Returning Officers are all free to cast their ballots at any time during the normal polling day and may, indeed, prefer to do so.

I think that all Honourable Members in this House are perfectly aware because on polling day so often we ourselves from time to time have had to transport our own polling agents from one polling district to another in order that they may vote, if it turns out that we were not able to put in as a polling agent in a particular polling district a person who resided in and therefore voted in that polling district. It does call for a certain amount of dislocation because once one polling agent in the station has to go somewhere else to vote, you yourself or your agent has to take the place of that person.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: It does not cover agents? I have the file in front of me. It should cover all as well.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg your pardon, Sir. I may be misleading the House on that. I do not know why I was of the opinion that it covered all polling agents. It is covering only the Government officers who man the polls.

At section 7 of the Rules as amended in December 1977, reference, as I said, was made to polling districts and so on. Let me move on.

A provision similar to the one for Foreign Service electors it is felt, Mr. Speaker, should be made in the regulations so that those election officers who require the special provision to cast their ballot prior to polling day, may apply to the Supervisor of Elections to exercise their right under the new special provisions, in the same manner as the Foreign Service electors now do in respect of Regulation 10(1), (2) and (3) of the Representation of the People (Registration of Electors) Regulations, 1990.

For all of this to be effected, a provision should be made in the Regulations for a Form 14 which will be entitled "Application to be Treated as an "election officer" and Form 3 should be amended to include "Election Officer".

The amendment described above would further simplify the procedure to facilitate voting by election officials prior to polling day. My understanding therefore, Sir, is this is something that you have to apply for. It does not automatically apply in that there may be an occasion where such an official is actually supervising or working in the polling station where he or she normally would cast a vote but that would be, I suggest, a fairly rare coincidence in a place like Barbados. So, that is the substance of the amendment before the House.

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

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that, Sir.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I think that from my own discussions with members and people across the political spectrum there has been some concern that all of those persons who participate in elections as official or unofficial officers, meaning governmental or non-governmental, those who represent the candidates as well as those who represent the total electoral machinery, that there was a concern that they should be able or that arrangements should be made that they can vote in the polling station where they are located rather than having to make some arrangement though, not cumbersome, but an inconvenient method through the Presiding Officer. 3.55 p.m.

As I understand it, Sir, these arrangements here make provisions only for the Government officials but not for those persons who represent the candidate. Elections, to be fair and free should take into account the convenience, both of the candidates as well as the official machinery. I am really wondering if we should go with half of the procedures here without going the full way and ensuring that those persons who are appointed by candidates should also be facilitated through legislation. Maybe the Government has an explanation for this.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, I was trying to understand the import of this piece of legislation. I am now being made to understand that it means that election officers, not the polling agents but the other officers will be required to vote, if they so indicated, on a day other than the general election.

I have been in this business long enough to know that this is going to work some prejudice. I know that polling service officers for instance, overseas who have been voting in the missions overseas and the presiding officer is the head of the mission, that is the Ambassador or the High Commissioner or the Consul General. One's vote is deposited and there is no secrecy so that the head of mission is aware of who the foreign service officer of the mission overseas has voted for. The result has been that a number of those officers have refused to vote because they do not want to have their business known by any head of a mission.

I am afraid, Sir, that this is opening up the same kind of difficulty. It does not tell me enough. If, for instance, a polling clerk in a district in my constituency is going to vote for me and he or she marks that ballot, who do you give the ballot to? I want to know that. I know with the foreign service officer what they do is that the count...

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: I have been to the count for many years but when I used to go to the count they used to open up an envelope and open up these one or two votes for people to see before they are put in a box to be counted. I am not happy that these election officers will be exposed to that kind of thing. If that is the case, Sir, I have difficulty in supporting it.

I do also have one or two other observations because we want these elections to be fair and reasonable. I have known police officers who have lived in my constituency who were put to work somewhere far in the country on election day because the people who are assigning them ...

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: It is nothing to do with the Electoral Office, these are the bosses in the Police Force who figure

that if they are put at this very point, they are not going to bother, especially in the days when they did not have motor cars, to go all the way to the constituency to vote. I know of specific cases.

If we are going to address these things, I believe that we should address them in a way that would minimise the deprivation of all these electoral officers, policemen and everybody who is involved, the deprivation of their right to vote because there are several ways of doing the same thing.

I want to know also, Sir, because I am a little concerned for other reasons. Why can't polling clerks be selected to work in a polling station in which they live and are registered to vote?

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Do not tell me it is impossible. This is a country with a bunch of educated people. You mean to tell me that a constituency has 12 polling boxes and in a polling district, that you cannot find a single person of sufficient intelligence to be a polling clerk for the district in which he or she lives and is registered. Is that what they are telling me, Sir, that there are polling districts in Barbados where you cannot get somebody with basic common sense...

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: ... with two or three 'O' levels, or without them, who cannot sit down in a polling station on polling day and mark off the people who come in but they have to get in a car and go somewhere else. This is not some little country in this hemisphere where people cannot read and where we cannot understand. I do not know about the Supervisor of Elections, that may be a special category but certainly people like presiding officers or polling clerks, there should be in every polling district in Barbados hordes of young and intelligent people who can carry out the role of polling clerk and therefore remove the necessity of moving people from one place to the other. I am concerned about it, Sir. Just like I am concerned about the way in which the votes are cast with these people. I do not like it, Sir. I understand what the Government is trying to do in addressing this problem. I am just wondering whether it has done it the right way.

We have constituencies of small numbers and I have seen elections in this country where people have won by one vote. I have seen elections where people have won by seven votes. I have seen where people won by 14 votes. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary if we are to preserve the integrity of our election system and where small numbers like those can make a difference one way or the other that we do not leave too much of this to chance. I hear the explanation but I am not totally convinced by it. Maybe it is something that I

missed because it was only about ten seconds before I got up to speak that I understood for the first time that what is happening is that these people will probably be voting on a day other than voting day and that is what provoked me to get up, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: The other thing, very quickly, is nothing that is in the proposed legislation but the supervision of the system. When we have all across Barbados, as I heard the Deputy Prime Minister say, over 280 polling districts, you do not know how many will be brought into play. What is going to be happening with the integrity, safety and security of all this when you have different days.

Since the legislation is passed I cannot quarrel with it and say that I was not aware of it and I accept that but I am concerned about the security of all this and if at this stage there is anything that can be done, I hope that my concerns will be taken into consideration.

I am grateful to you, Sir.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to give the assurance to the Honourable Member for St. George South, and it has been pointed out and I know I said this at the beginning, that last year, just a year ago in December we amended this Act to allow election officers to cast their ballot at the time and place specified by notice, published by the Supervisor and so on and advertised in both daily newspapers. There is nothing secret about that.

All that we are seeking here now is to allow them to do it prior to the polling day and not on the polling day itself. I do not think that there is any difficulty in respect of the secrecy of the vote. Their ballots are going to be sealed and I cannot think of any reason why anybody should know how they vote. There was no difficulty when this was brought before the House last year in terms of the secrecy of the ballot being maintained.

They are casting the vote in the ballot box itself.

It is a sealed ballot, that is what I know. In all the years that I been in there, they are sealed ballots and they are added at the count. They are sealed and I have seen election after election that the envelope is unsealed and added to the count. There is no reason why somebody should know who voted and look at the ballot and so on and so forth. I do not think that that is going to be a problem. Barbados for too long now has had the best reputation in the world in respect of free and fair elections and I do not think that this Barbados Labour Party which brought the franchise to the broad mass of people in Barbados and has over the years upheld the

fairness and the freeness of the electoral process would do anything that would in any way compromise us. 4.05 p.m.

I would like to give the Honourable Member and indeed, all Honourable Members of this Honourable House and all members of the public, certainly the voting public, the assurance that this can only enhance the prospect and not derogate from it in any way. I would like very much to recommend it to Honourable Members.

As much as the Honourable Member for St. George South is making the point that in a place like Barbados we should be able to find a polling clerk in every district who lives in that district. It is not always possible. It is not every and anybody who can be eligible to be a polling clerk. It is a very selective process as far as I am aware but I am also aware that the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, certainly the Chief Electoral Officer does everything in his power to try if possible for that to happen. It is not possible in every single case.

I do not know off the top of my head how many polling districts there are in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, there is a counter argument to that. There are some who hold the view that it would be better if the Government polling agent in the polling station were not a person registered and known within the polling district. So it is a matter on which diverging and divergent opinions are held but this will do nothing to hurt the process but rather help it on.

The draft regulations have been put in my hand, Sir, and at the First Schedule we see the Form 3 which is an existing form which will be amended to admit an election officer and then there is Form 14 which is a copy of the application by an election officer to vote in a constituency. Bear in mind, Sir, that if an election officer feels or has reservations such as those entertained by the Honourable Member for St. George South he does not have to. There is nothing mandatory about this. This is something you do by choice.

If you trust the system and you say it is more convenient for me to carry out the business of the day, if I can do this well, then you apply to do it. If you have reservations and you want to go to your polling district and cast your vote on that day you are entitled to do so. There is nothing which is forcing anybody to do anything here. It is an option which is available to polling agents and other Government polling officers who over the years have made representation to the Electoral and Boundaries Commission that this was something desirable. This is a recommendation indeed coming from the Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

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

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

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, Mr. Chairman reported the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

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

ORDER NO. 13 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GRANTING OF THE SUM OF \$4799551 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 1998-99

On the motion of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair. 4.15 p^m.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO GRANT THE SUM OF \$4,799,551 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 1998/99 AS SHOWN IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 5

HEAD 36 - MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, the request for supplementary provision before the House is from the Environmental Department of the Ministry of Health and Environment. It is for \$0.5 million and it is

intended to launch the "Beautify Barbados 2000" project. We do not anticipate that it will carry the project beyond the financial year but the sum being requested at this stage is to launch the project which will be a major millennium project of environment called "Beautify Barbados 2000".

When I became Minister of Environment, I was concerned about the fact that Barbados as a small country and as a tourism based destination had several miles of highway which had absolutely no plants or beautiful colouring around them. I felt very strongly that a project should be developed which would beautify the country's highways generally across Barbados and that it would move from the highways into the avenues. As part of this project, I discovered that Barbados had some 700 wild flowering plants and that two species are endemic to Barbados or native to Barbados - the Agave and the Farley Hill Fern.

The project will start on the ABC Highway and will run the entire length of the highway which will become beautifully landscaped. We will use all of the Government's lands along the ABC Highway and we will ask private householders to let us beautify just the portion of their lands which are immediately adjoining the highways. We will be using primarily local flowers and plants rather than imported flowers and plants because many of the local and indigenous flowers and plants are in fact drought tolerant and therefore are very well suited to being put down along the highway. Not only because they are flowering or will be beautiful but because they tend, by and large to be hardy and not need a lot of constant watering and attention.

We intend to use for watering the plants, that we will in fact put down, grey water from the South Coast Sewerage Project because we know that Barbados is a water stressed country, it is now one of the ten most water stressed countries in the world. In fact, we have been looking at recycling water and alternative uses for water and it has been determined that this grey water which is in fact nutrient rich is suitable for irrigation and that is the water that we are going to be using.

We anticipate that this new type of landscaping by using local and indigenous shrubbery is going to generate a different type of landscape product and environment in Barbados. Not only will it beautify the highways but it will create a market for the use of these local plants and allow people to understand how local plants that we tend to dismiss as bush and useless can be utilised to beautify and become a valuable flowering plant or flowering shrub rather than just discarded.

This project will become one of the major employers in Barbados as we move up to the year 2000. We anticipate that the ABC Highway will be completed in 1999 and then

we will branch out from there and move to the Darcy Scott Roundabout to Highway 1C, that is up through Half Acres, Spring Hall, Hope Road and Seaview. Going East through Christ Church and Alexander and down to Boscobelle. We will move from the Everton Weekes Roundabout up through Jackson, Hopewell, Bridgefield and Welchman Hall to the area which will be designated as a national park in the new physical development plan. We will move from the Airport to the national park area, again to be designated, via Six Roads and go up through Lowthers, St. Patricks, Woodbourne and Heritage Park.

It is intended that we will promote landscaping and beautification within communities and that communities and those residential districts in close proximity of the highway will be encouraged to come out. Youth groups, community groups, NGOs such as the National Trust, the Future Centre Trust, the Environmental Association and so on will be encouraged to come out and give their support and be part of the process of the planting of these trees and shrubs.

Once this project spreads beyond the highways to the communities of Barbados, the visual landscape of Barbados is going to be dramatically transformed and by the year 2000 we anticipate that we will have a greener more beautiful Barbados and that the public education component of this programme will serve to make people more civic minded and more conscious of the fact that we do need to keep our surroundings beautiful and that we have a responsibility to maintain the space around us.

It is anticipated that the project will be carried, not only by the Government but that the private sector will be allowed to fund certain sections of the highways and they will be allowed signage which we will determine the size to give them credit for their component of the project. They will be given certain tax credits and benefits for the expenditure and their involvement in the project.

The first phase of the project will include 70.2 kilometers of highway and requires 237,296 plants. There will be a joint committee of NGOs, the private sector and Government agencies to help to mobilise this effort. The project will start in January. This project, as I indicated, Sir, will be one of the major millennium projects of the Ministry of Health and Environment, specifically the Environment Division and it is going to become a major employer, it is going to transform the landscape of Barbados. I wish to take this opportunity to urge all parliamentarians to get their communities and their constituencies involved in the "Beautify Barbados 2000" project which is going to be a wonderful project for us at a community level and at a national level.

I beg to move, Sir, that Head 36 stand part.

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

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: Sir, I just want to make some short observations on this one because I am very much in favour of the beautification of Barbados. We tried this many years ago starting at the Airport with the former Member for St. James. At that time they tried to use the Oleander trees but it was very difficult for them to survive in the context of what took place on that airport road. 4.25 p.m.

I would make an appeal in the beautification and that is that the land that the Government owns itself on the Highway should always be kept in proper condition. Along Highway 7 the Government owns quite a bit of land and it is not in proper condition. I trust now that special attention will be paid to there as well as to other lands that the Government owns in the Oistins area particularly that area that is next to the Foundation School. The Foundation School area is in very bad condition. It is now known that the Government owns that land so I would hope that as part of the beautification programme that all of the Government owned lands, particularly those in my constituency and in other Members' constituencies be looked after. Thank you.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I beg to move that Head 36 stand part, Sir.

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

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

HEAD 16 - MINISTRY OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 16 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 30 - ATTORNEY GENERAL

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The Addendum is very full, Sir. I beg to move that Head 30 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 35 - MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TOURISM AND INTER- NATIONAL TRANSPORT

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg to move that Head 35 stand part, Sir.

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

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

HEAD 42 - MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS, TRANSPORT AND HOUSING

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I beg to move that Head 42 stand part, Sir.

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

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

HEAD 50 - POST OFFICE

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I beg to move that Head 50 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 and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: We will now recommit Government Notices.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I am much obliged for the recommitting of the item "Government Notices." I beg to give notice of the following:-

Resolution to approve the borrowing of the sum of US\$2 840 492 from NSG Exports Limited for the purchase of vehicles and equipment for the Sanitation Service Authority.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order No. 15.

ORDER NO. 15 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE BORROWING OF THE SUM OF US\$2 840 492 FROM NSG EXPORTS LIMITED FOR THE PURCHASE OF VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT FOR THE SANITATION SERVICE AUTHORITY

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, as I think it is known to all Barbadians, the vehicle fleet of the Sanitation

Service Authority is showing definite signs of wear and tear and a need for replenishing the fleet with new vehicles. The Government has therefore agreed to assist the Sanitation Service Authority in getting a fleet of new vehicles and this is being facilitated by a loan agreement with a company called NSG Exports Limited.

The terms of the agreement are in the Addendum. NSG Limited is a London-based financial institution, similar to, but not the same, as the Crown Agents. They are going to facilitate the procurement and financing of these new vehicles.

The Government is seeking to borrow US\$2 840 492. Interest rate payable on the loan will be 5.57 per cent per annum and initial deposit will be paid by Government of US\$501264. The loan will be extinguished over a repayment schedule of 10 semi annual instalments starting 6 months after shipment of the equipment.

This Resolution is being brought in accordance with the provisions of the Special Loans Act, Cap. 105.

I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass. Hon.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say a few words on this. In the context of the environment of Barbados nothing could be more important than this. In the context of the public health of Barbados nothing can be more important than this. I give credit to the Minister of Health and the Environment and to her staff, particularly those in the Sanitation Service Authority that this matter is before the House today. 4.35 p.m.

We have had all kinds of predictions as to what the effects of El Nino would have been and it was predicted that this would have been a year of drought for Barbados. Indeed, the predictions have been all wrong and we have had unseasonal rains in Barbados and particularly at this time of the year we are having seasonal rains. It is very important, in the public's health and in the interest of the tourism industry because the season officially started on December 15, that a lot of the bush which has now overgrown on the highways and the byways of Barbados be cleared away.

I would like to use the opportunity too to appeal to Barbadians as we always do at Christmas, a special appeal, to take particular interest to clean up their back yard and front yard. If each household did its own back yard and front yard like used to be the case when I was a child, it would make life easier for the Sanitation Service Authority because at the end of the day there is just so much that they can do. There is a great deal to be done.

Mr. Speaker, in my own constituency, it is a terrible thing that people will come from a distance to dump large items. I see refrigerators. I see old stoves. I see old motor cars. I am speaking now particularly of the corner of the 6th Avenue, the New Orleans. This is for the benefit of other people that I see in here - the Sanitation Services officials. It is a terrible thing. It is not garbage left by the people of the City of Bridgetown but brought in by other people. Business houses in Bridgetown dumping, well knowing that they are putting the public health of residents at risk.

In earlier times, Mr. Speaker, we used to have, particularly to accommodate very narrow streets and alleys and gaps, particularly in the City of Bridgetown and the Greater St. Michael area, and there are parts of rural Barbados as well and urban Barbados where there has always been a need for a smaller sanitation vehicle. The big trucks, it is just physically impossible for them to negotiate some of the narrow streets and tenantry roads of Barbados.

I hope that I would have the reassurance of the Minister that some of the vehicles which are going to be ordered as a part of this package which is before us would indeed be the small vehicles. Fifteen years ago they used to be called the 'Ant'. Of course, they have all died now but however they are called nowadays, I hope that this is a part of the package because if it is not so, you are going to continue to have a problem where people who live in gaps and alleys and tenantry roads which are too narrow to take the larger vehicles would continue to stockpile their garbage at the bottom of the gaps in the City of Bridgetown, sometimes that means on heavily trafficked streets and highways like Mason Hall Street.

I very much would like to have that reassurance on the Floor of the House, Sir.

I am obliged.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I am advised that with this additional and new equipment the efficiency of the Sanitation Service Authority will be seen transparently to improve, Sir. I will only put in a plug for my own constituency in Shop Hill and Bridge Field. These areas from time to time are left without collection for as long as a week and people have been patient. I have also been patient because one understands this position but there will be no excuse in the future, Sir.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I detect...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, what is all this toilet talk that I am hearing about.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I just wish to make a few comments here not on the purchase of vehicles or the improvement in the collection methods and the schedules of the Sanitation Services Authority. These are taken for granted but I would wish to make an appeal that we seek to improve the service in all of its aspects and that we should re-commit ourselves to the objective of a goal of keeping Barbados, all parts of it, Sir, not only around 6th Avenue or wherever or for each one of us to get up and make a special appeal, but all of Barbados, Sir.

I have detected that there is a growing level of uncleanness in most parts of Barbados and nationally we should make an effort to improve our surroundings, first of all for the health and the amenity of the people of Barbados and then also, Sir, for those who visit with us from time to time. In particular, Sir, I notice that the places where there is a heavy volume of traffic, pedestrian and vehicular as in our city and the built up areas, that particularly on weekends, Saturday afternoon and Sunday mornings, the City in particular looks very, very untidy and there are bits of paper everywhere and we do not retain our reputation ...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: We cannot for long retain our reputation as being one of the cities of the world that is the cleanest. I think it is not beyond us nationally, to restore or try to establish a level of cleanliness that we have not had before.

As far as the dumping of different kinds of refuse and garbage is concerned, I am wondering, I am not sure what is the cause for it but I am just wondering whether it is purely the laxity of Barbadians and others in discarding that refuse and garbage wherever is convenient for them or if it is that it is not well-known how this garbage and refuse can be easily disposed of. What do you do if you have a refrigerator or a stove that is no longer serviceable? You have it replaced. You have this old stove there. Is it indeed affordable to have it discarded or are there open rules and arrangements whereby the Sanitation Service Authority or the appropriate body would come and collect it and relieve you of that particular item? I just raise these questions because I believe like other areas of our national life the question of cleanliness and refuse and garbage disposal is not really a matter for partisan discussion unless there is partisanship in the administration. 4.45 p.m.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am truly pleased that on this last Sitting before we recess for Christmas that I am able to bring this proposal before this Chamber.

The SSA provides a collection service and a disposal service for about 80 000 households in Barbados. We generate now in the vicinity of 500 pounds of refuse per year per person. Over time we have found that the fleet of the SSA has deteriorated. There are in a fleet perhaps some 45 or so vehicles, 43 refuse compactors, some of which are 10 to 19 years old. Twenty-one of these 43 vehicles are over 10 years old when the life of refuse vehicle is really only seven years old. These vehicles do work extremely hard and the life of a vehicle is about seven years. Over time we have not maintained the kind of fleet or bought the kind of replacement to keep the fleet on the road.

We have found ourselves now where people are complaining about the quality of their collection service but the reality is that many of the vehicles are ancient. We are patching together. We are cannibalising. We are doing all kinds of creative maintenance but with a fleet of this age which is breaking down and has gone long beyond its useful life and the life assured by the manufacturers, we have come to the stage where it is critical that a new fleet is purchased.

We seek today to get \$7 million for the purchase of a new fleet. As part of the programme we are going to put public education in place. There will be training for drivers and for mechanics. We are going to be ensuring that there is an adequate supply of spares and parts for these vehicles. We are going to be ensuring that the workshop that maintains them, and I met informally with the drivers and some of the mechanics and they were asking whether they could take control of the workshop themselves. We have to make sure that the maintenance of these vehicles is properly done.

Government has traditionally put up new buildings, bought equipment and machinery, purchased vehicles, and I am calling now for the maintenance of the plant and the equipment and the maintenance of these vehicles. If we vest this kind of money in a new fleet it is necessary therefore that we also go the additional step of the way and make sure that we have spares and parts and that the training of persons is put in place and that the services of these vehicles will guarantee their quality and their life.

Last year we purchased five new compactor vehicles but we still found ourselves, given the age of the fleet, not being able to keep up. To guarantee Barbadians service will require a minimum of 36 vehicles on the road every day.

The fleet has reached the stage where some days in recent times we were guaranteeing only 18 or 22 on the road. It meant that we could not adequately service the island and therefore we have determined that we really need the new fleet.

As part of the protection of the fleet we have already started the experiment on some vehicles. We have a computerised monitoring system that traps the vehicles, that

traps what happens to a vehicle, that traps how the vehicle is driven, the nature of the problem, mechanical and otherwise occurring with it, and we expect that this system which will be installed on the new fleet will help us to manage it. It will help us to deliver better service. We will enhance our record keeping. We will have a better grasp of the operational status of all of the vehicles. We will be better able to monitor parts and spares and record the details of the repair and maintenance of these vehicles. We will be able since we will have additional vehicles or spare vehicles to do the kind of preventive maintenance scheduling and programming which allows us to take vehicles off the road, ensure that all is well with them, do a preventive maintenance programme or carry out other repairs that are necessary to vehicles without compromising the quality of the service we have delivered to the public.

Since we have come to office we have tried to ensure that by taming 'Mount Stinkeroo', by giving the SSA new vehicles, by putting new equipment up at Mangrove, new tractors and "traxcavators" and compactors, by putting a shredder there and by purchasing other equipment that the Sanitation Service Authority would be able to operate at a level that would guarantee our social and economic development and protect our social and economic landscape.

The reality is that the Sanitation Service Authority is one of the first lines of defence in the public health of Barbados. It guarantees not only the health and well being of every single citizen but it guarantees the continuation of our tourism product which is the major revenue earner.

I want to join with the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South who has spoken in terms of the behaviour of the citizens. We cannot bring this measure to the House today, Sir, unless we also make the point that the individual has a responsibility to act in such a way that he does not endanger his own health. Far too frequently, I see the truck go out on its regular collection day and the minute it has passed and gone on to another district somebody will come out with new plastic bags and drop them down at the side of the road well knowing that the truck will not be back for another week because their collection service is a once weekly service or well knowing that the truck will not be back for another three or four days if they have a twice weekly collection service.

One walks along Broad Street, any road in Barbados where one drives behind whether it is public service vehicles, Government owned vehicles or private motor cars, you can see people throwing Kentucky boxes, Chefette boxes, cups, nuts, ackees, dead dogs, all kinds of things out of motor vehicles. Clearly we cannot provide a service where we walk behind every single Barbadian to pick up their Kentucky boxes. There must be some sense of national responsibility. 4.55 p.m.

There are those who trim their lawns and dump the trimmings on the empty lots even though if they pack them up in plastic bag, the SSA will take them away. In relation to the bulky waste collection of which the Honourable Member spoke, if these persons call the Sanitation Service Authority, they will come and pick them up in the appropriate open back vehicle. Persons also put out garbage that cannot go into compactor vehicles - big pieces of metal which would destroy a compactor vehicle and these things end up left alongside the side of the road rather than being carted away.

So that while we are fulfilling our part of the responsibility to bring the legislation before Parliament and to get the financial resources, there is a responsibility on the individual citizen to conduct himself in such a way that the problem of garbage collection is not exacerbated and that by his own behaviour, he does not encourage the harbouring or the breeding of rodents or mosquitoes. Very frequently these containers, whether they are cups that are dumped on empty lots or elsewhere, collect water and breed mosquitoes and then people will complain about the incidents of dengue in the country. We have a responsibility at the individual level to address these problems.

I believe that this week, Sir, the Sanitation Service Authority has charted a new path in its life. We had for the first time last Sunday the first ever award ceremony that the SSA held recognising the contributions that workers have made to the authority over the years. Two days ago there was a ground breaking ceremony for the construction of a new site, a new office and recreational facility at the southern depot at Wildey. A site has been identified for a new depot in the City and the northern depot is going to be moved to Vaucluse to adjoin the composting facility and transfer station as part of a waste management complex which will be situated at Vaucluse.

With the bringing of this measure before the Parliament today, Sir, we embark on a new direction for the Sanitation Service Authority. Because the vehicles now have to be ordered, it will take some months before they reach Barbados and I will urge the public in the interim, to be patient with us in relation to their collection services but to act responsibly in relation to their waste disposal practices.

With this, Sir, I commend the measure to the House and ask that the Resolution do now pass.

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

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

ORDER NO. 4 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE VESTING IN THE BARBADOS TOURISM INVESTMENT (PROPERTIES) INCORPORATED OF LAND AT BAY STREET AND FORT WILLOUGHBY, ST. MICHAEL

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the parcels of land described in this Resolution at the First, Second and the Third Schedule have all passed the House previously. This is a Resolution really to approve the vesting of these parcels so described in the Schedules in the Barbados[^] Tourism Investment (Properties) Incorporated. This is one of the spin-off companies of the Barbados Tourism Investment Corporation. This is a limited liability company which would have vested in it, over time, more and more of the Government's properties in urban Barbados, in suburban Barbados and indeed in rural Barbados for the purpose of development and investment.

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

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

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House be adjourned until Tuesday, January 12, 1999, at 11.00 o'clock in the morning.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on moving the adjournment, I would like to take the opportunity as we always do at this time of the year to say to you, Sir, and your family best wishes over the Christmas Season and we wish for you all that is good and well in the New Year 1999.

I would like on behalf of the Government to offer Seasons Greetings and best wishes for 1999 to all Honourable Members of this House. I would like to say, as we are at the end of a calendar year, Sir, to the Clerk of this Parliament and the other Clerks at the Table and to staff of this Parliament, I would like to offer our sincere gratitude for a year of really very dedicated and hard work. I am not in a position at this time, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to say how many pieces of legislation has passed this Chamber or how many...

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: The Attorney General is advising me that many, many pieces of legislation have passed. I am not in a position to say how many occasions the House met during 1998. I do know that in 1997 we met 44 times.

Honourable Members have worked hard and we have worked well. I do not think that the Barbadian public can complain, they certainly get their money's worth out of the work of Parliament. The business of the Government has gone forward with a certain despatch and the Clerks and the other staff of Parliament play a very large role in facilitating that process.

I would also wish to offer the appreciation of the Honourable the House of Assembly to those who look after our security while we are in session, who look after this building whether we are in session or not. I would like to say words of appreciation too to the Reporters who do not always have an easy passage with us. Sometimes we get a little overwrought on the Floor of the House and many people are speaking at the same time but somehow they manage to extrapolate from all of the chaos and confusion that occasionally reign. I would like too to register on this occasion our appreciation for the service rendered to us by those who cater to us throughout the year.

I would also like to offer a special word of thanks, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to those who occupy the Press box from time to time and who are, in my judgement, Sir, indeed part and parcel of the democratic parliamentary process because it is they who interpret and report and publish for the benefit of the Barbadian public the proceedings of this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to one and all I would wish a happy Christmas and every good wish for what in Barbadian terms we like to describe as a Prosperous New Year.

Thank you, Sir.
5.05p.m.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the Resolution moved by the Honourable Member for the City. In the spirit of the season and the traditions of this House I want to extend my gratitude to the Clerks, the staff

of Parliament and all of the other officials who have assisted us during the course of this calendar year in discharging our obligations.

I also want to pay a special tribute to all of the staff of the Management Commission but in particular on this occasion to our hard working constituency assistants. I make a special appeal on their behalf that they get the funds which are due to them quickly and that they can finally enjoy the rewards of the position which they hold.

I want to wish all Members of the House a very Merry Christmas, including you, Mr. Speaker, and in particular to caution Members not to be too ambitious in their new year resolutions and to temper their ambitions with a desire to work hard on behalf of the people, no matter what position they hold and to go into the New Year with a level of sincerity to the people's cause which they justly deserve.

With those few words, Sir, I wish everybody a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous 1999. Thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members on behalf of myself and the other Presiding Officers, I would like to wish you all the best for the season and to thank you for a year of cooperation.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to the Clerk of Parliament, the Deputy Clerks and all the staff of Parliament who have always worked beyond the call of duty. I wish you all the best for Christmas and the coming New Year. Thank you.

The question that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, January 12, 1999 at 11.00 o'clock in the morning was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly. 5.10p.m.