
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, December 12, 2000

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 12, 2000.

PRESENT

His Honour I. A. ROETT, B.A., Dip. Ed., (Speaker)
His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J. P., (Deputy Speaker)
Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, Q.C., LL.M. (Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs) (Leader of the House and Acting Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs)
Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.) (Leader of the Opposition)
Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN, K.A., Q.C., LL.B.
Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, Q.C., M.A., M.Sc. (Econ.)
Mr. G. W. PAYNE, LL.B.
Mr. D. CARTER (Chairman of Committees)
Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, B.A., LL.B., (Minister of Labour, Sports and Public Sector Reform)
Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Housing and Lands and Acting Minister of Public Works and Transport)
Hon. H. F. LASHLEY (Minister of Social Transformation)
Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development)
Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN
Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B.
Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS
Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A.
Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc. (Parliamentary Secretary, to the Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs)
Mr. D. T. GILL, B.Sc.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

Hon. A. P. WOOD, B.Sc., M.Sc., M. Phil, J.P. (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)

Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B.Sc. (Minister of Industry and International Business)

Prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, December 5, 2000.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, December 5, 2000, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

PAPERS

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I am commanded to lay the following Bills:

1. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Southern Golf Country Club Ltd.), Order, 2000.
2. Customs Tariff (Amendment) (No. 3) Order, 2000.
3. The Value Added Tax (Refund) (W.I.C.O. Limited) Order, 2000.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I am commanded to lay the following:

Annual Report of the Transport Board for the years 1996 to 1997 and 1997 to 1998.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, the following Bill was read a first time:

The Centennial Honours (Amendment) Bill, 2000.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I beg to second that.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government, I would wish to congratulate you, Sir, on the honour which you recently received in the Independence Awards, the honour of Gold Crown of Merit.

Sir, there is no doubt that your contribution to education in this country has been singularly outstanding. You seem to have devoted your adult post-graduate life to the education of others by the establishment of your institute, the Barbados O'Level Institute, which has filled a void and at the same time captured a niche in the educational landscape of Barbados. I think I speak on the behalf of all Honourable Members when I say that.

I am not a member of any honours committee so I do not know whether this matter was taken into account, but I suspect that the way you have conducted yourself in the Chair as the Honourable Speaker of the House of Assembly since 1994 with dignity, calm and careful understanding of the Rules and above all, with a sense of fairness and fair play to all Honourable Members on Both Sides which has endeared you to all of us, was also considered by the Committee, then I would think that it was most appropriate.

Sir, it is a great feeling to know that one's work and one's contribution has been acknowledged and recognised. I trust that you yourself have felt some sense of satisfaction by the conferment of the honour of Gold Crown of Merit, Sir.

I wish on behalf of those Honourable Members of the House, who are not in their places today whom I am sure would be delighted to be associated with the remarks, Sir, that I have made, to say to you that it is an honour which has been well and richly deserved. I look forward to your building upon that dignity and honour.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to second the motion moved by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. I know it would be invidious of me and I know that you would not allow it if I painted a glowing picture of your contribution and then you would not want that in the record nor would I.

We share a tradition as old scholars of The Combermere School. I know that all of the students past and present, your contemporaries and those who may not have met you yet, would be extremely proud, of your achievement in becoming Speaker of this Honourable House, your achievement at Erdiston Teachers' Training College and your achievement in the establishment of the Barbados 'O' Level Institute. If you look at the back of the school hall, there is a picture there of you as part of the Under 13 Cricket Team and I am certain there were many other achievements which would have marked you for the high office which you now hold and beyond that would have also attracted the support of a wide cross section of Barbadians when the honour was bestowed upon you not the least being me and my own family.

Therefore, I extend to you my very best wishes. I will not comment on your political career. I notice that my colleague on the Other Side did not do that either for reasons best known to him and not to me. Nevertheless, I believe that your constituents, on whose behalf you cannot speak but with whom you know because of my association with that school, I have quite a bit of contact, are extremely pleased that the honour has been bestowed on their sitting parliamentary representative. They would be equally happy whether the honour was bestowed on a sitting or past parliamentary representative because you have already done the things that are necessary to achieve the honour which has been bestowed upon you, and I am sure that there will be many others to come.

11.40. a.m.

I am extremely glad that you are in good enough health that you were able on Independence Day to go and receive the award and also that you are able to continue to contribute both at the level of Speaker of this House and also in the many other aspects of your career which would have attracted the national honour that was bestowed upon you.

You have our congratulations on this Side and we wish you all the very best. Thank you.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to offer my personal congratulations to you on your recent award. As I reflect on it, I came to know you best when I was a student at the University of the West Indies,

Cave Hill and you yourself as a student there happened to be my cricket captain.

I would not want to say that you are the best captain I have ever had but I do recall that in those days we happened to win the Second 11 Trophy for the University of the West Indies under your captaincy in the days when Second 11 cricket was really and truly Second 11 cricket and it was a tough final we had. I think it was against the Police and Mental in those days, both very strong teams.

I want to say that I recall the days playing when I would bowl at one end and we had a very wicked spin bowler by the name of Oakley Brathwaite bowling at the other end. I recall the many times when myself and Oakley Brathwaite had virtually devastated the teams when I would have picked up five for seven and Oakley Brathwaite at the other end might have got three for 20.

I recall how you in those days would come on and change me or Oakley and pick up the other two, two for ten and two for six. At the end of it all when we looked at our bowling averages at the end of the season people wanted to know how you happened to be head of the bowling averages. The truth of the matter is that you always bowled at the tail. Those were the best days that I have had in my life and even now I know that in the region there are lots of people who still ask about your welfare.

Just the other day, Chief Minister Brandt of Montserrat was inquiring about you and I also have something which I treasure. It is a picture of myself and our Prime Minister as well as the Prime Minister Mitchell of Grenada and yourself, a picture that we took at Sherbourne just to say these were some of the people who played on that particular team. It is indeed a real pleasure to be saying a few words on your behalf.

I can say, Sir, that there are a lot of people who have gained position in this country and who are in the public service of this country who are indebted to your 'O' Level Institute. I recall being asked one day to make a judgment call on a young man, a school boy at that time. We wanted to send him out of school because when we looked at his report we saw that he had marks like 16 in Geography, 21 in History, five in Scripture and so on. When we really and truly assessed him we saw that he had 90+ in Maths and in General Science he had another 90+. Nearly all the other marks were way below the average.

In making that judgment call, we said that perhaps the best thing to do was to let him go into fifth form and let him try to do his 'O' Levels in General Science and Mathematics. I can say, Sir, that what that chap did was to get some very good marks at 'O' Level in those subjects. When he left school he went to the 'O' Level Institute and at the 'O' Level Institute what he was trained to do was to get five subjects in all so that he could gain entry to the Barbados Community College. He went the Barbados 'O' Level and he did the

remaining subjects and he got through and he eventually went on to Community College.

That young man did not stop there because at the Community College he did very well in the science section and then he went to Cave Hill and did extremely well at Cave Hill in Science. While I was at law school in Jamaica, I have to tell this House, that very young man was doing medicine. He is now a doctor and I have always said that the step that made it for him was when he took it upon himself after leaving school to go to the 'O' Level Institute to get those subjects so that he could get a higher education at Community College, Cave Hill, and now he is a doctor.

Sir, it is people like those, when I reflect upon your contribution in education, who always come to mind. That 'O' Level Institute has filled a real void in Barbados. It has filled a void in education and it has saved a lot of those who would have fallen through those educational cracks. In that regard, not only those students, but this country in general is indebted to you and to that institution.

I also applaud you, Sir, for the yeoman service which you rendered to Erdiston Teachers' College as a tutor and I do believe that a lot of the teachers too will want on an occasion like this to pay their regards to you for the contribution which you have made to their development.

I would want to finish by saying that I hope and pray that God gives you the very best of health for you to continue to do work not only for yourself and family and for your constituency but for this country as a whole. Thank you.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I too would want to congratulate you on your achievements so far and on the award you would have been given over the past Independence holiday.

I must say, Sir, that I have known you for a number of years, both of us working as teachers in the teaching system. I have known you too to be a good cricketer. I understand that you preferred to bowl at the tail end and you have done very well in your sportsmanship in the cricketing field. I also know, Sir, that you have performed very well in the field of community service, both you and your wife have done exceptionally well in providing community service to the less fortunate of this country. You have also contributed in the field of politics.

It is very important that your award was given mainly for the field of education. I believe, Sir, as the Honourable Member for St. Philip North has spoken that your contribution to the field of education is very commendable. For over 23 years or so you have provided an educational service to the underprivileged of this country especially and that is important. There are a number of people who would

have gone astray had it not been for the 'O' Level Institute. I must salute you on this commendable achievement because I know, Sir, that there are a number of times when a number of students could not pay and the 'O' Level Institute provided scholarships for a number of poor students not only from the St. Michael area but across Barbados and that is very commendable too.

11.50 a.m.

As the Honourable Member for St. Philip said, many of these students went on to University of the West Indies and other institutions in the Caribbean, North America and Europe and have performed very creditably for themselves and the country.

Sir, as a lecturer in English at Erdiston Teacher Training College, there are times that you would have helped a number of students to get their teacher's certificate and that is commendable.

In 1979 when you had just started I was a student and in those days I was fond of the way you were able to mix with the students.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that your contribution to politics will continue for a long time because we know the kind of service that you are currently giving in your constituency and we encourage you to continue. As the Honourable Member for St. Philip North said, we hope your health will continue to be good so that you can provide a long service to the constituency that you represent and to the people of Barbados.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is with much joy that I rise to offer my congratulations to you on the attainment of this high honour. It is a most fitting recognition of the extraordinary contribution which you have made to the development of this nation.

Sir, I am proud as well as humbled that I, who would have been once in a group of students at the Erdiston Teacher Training College where I received my professional teaching at the start of the decade of the 80s, would have had the pleasure and the honour of making your acquaintance in that capacity. It is really, therefore, a humbling experience to be able to serve as your colleague in this Honourable Chamber but also still to have the pleasure to continue that exercise, where I was able to gather from your tremendous wisdom and knowledge in many and various fields.

Mr. Speaker, your contribution to education first of all is one which is well-known, particularly within the teaching profession. Those of us who had the honour and privilege

to serve as teachers in this country recognise the importance of the role of teachers in the development of our nation's future. The work which teachers do on a day-to-day basis in this country often goes unnoticed, often goes without thanks. In fact, teachers only tend to make the news when there is the unfortunate appearance of problems – a complaint by a parent, an unfortunate incident at a school and we can go on and on.

Sir, I would want to salute you first of all for giving a considerable period of your life not just as a teacher in terms of teaching in the classroom and changing Barbadians lives, one life at a time but also in ensuring that the skill which you had developed, particularly the practice of the art of the teaching of English, that was transferred by way of what would, in modern parlance, be a trainer of the trainer's programme. Certainly, as a tutor at Erdiston Teacher Training College you would have the opportunity of extending your fine hand and skill across the many thousands of persons who you would never meet but by way of your having equipped teachers of English with the necessary skills to undertake that important task, we can rest much easier today.

It is indeed ironic, Sir, that someone such as yourself, skilled in the art of language and carrying the title of Speaker that because of the nature of our system we do not get the benefit of experiencing your skill in the craft of language. I know from listening to you as you taught me at Erdiston Teacher Training College of your wit and humour. I know that you are very well read and I know, Sir, that this House would have benefitted tremendously, were you to have the opportunity of speaking from these benches. Sir, all is not lost. This House was able to benefit even the more from your wisdom as you preside in the Chair in this House.

The characteristics of leadership which I saw in you, Sir, in the early 80s as you led the lives of us young, inexperienced teachers, through not only the career of teaching but through the path of life, is reflected very much in the way in which you have conducted the affairs of this Honourable House of Assembly.

It is remarkable that other persons might have been contented to have rested on their laurels, having served with a distinction as a tutor at Erdiston Teachers' College, but not feeling as if you had done enough for the development of this country, you started the Barbados 'O' Level Institute.

I join with my other colleagues in recognising the important contribution which the Barbados 'O' Level Institute has made to education and to social development in Barbados.

At the time when the Barbados 'O' Level Institute was started Barbados was a more unforgiving place than it is

today and we still have a way to go in that regard. Many persons owe you and your colleagues at the Barbados O' Level Institute for a second chance. Barbados was a place in those days where if you had not been a serious student, if you had not been focused, if you had not made your mind up in secondary school to go down the academic path there was no way out for you. You were doomed, notwithstanding, what your natural skills and abilities happened to be. To have had that alternative route towards success for persons, having gone past the age at which they would have been eligible to continue secondary school, to have been able to pursue academic qualifications, was one of the most fundamental achievements, one of the most farsighted achievements in Barbados and that it was undertaken by a private citizen, a person who could otherwise be satisfied with what he had been able to achieve at that time, for that, Sir, many thousands of persons out there are today singing your praises.

Then, Sir, you were not even satisfied with that, you sought to conquer the next milestone, you sought to level the next mountain, recognising that educators change lives one at a time you felt that you needed to increase the numbers and through your work as a parliamentarian, you sought to change the thousands of lives of the people in Barbados. Your splendid work in your constituency is known to all but you, Sir, are not in a position to shout from the places where we shout about our work in our various constituencies.

Sir, I want on your behalf to speak for you and to say what a capable and able Member of Parliament you are. You are a Member of Parliament who is known as a man who gets things done for his constituents. I will not mention the techniques used to achieve that but we all know that in your quiet, diplomatic way, you have been able to achieve more in terms of representing the interest of your colleagues.

It is really from this personal perspective, this perspective that goes back some twenty years where I was able to sit at your feet that I want to congratulate you, where twenty years later, I still sit at your feet and I look forward to twenty years from now being able to speak in some other place, some other forum, on some other happy occasion along with a generation younger than myself, who will be able to speak of the many greater and more fantastic things which you have been able to achieve. I know, Sir, that you are one who is never satisfied to rest on your many and great achievements. It is only left to all of us to wonder what next for you, Mr. Speaker, in what other ingenious way, in what other visionary way, in what other enlighten manner are you going to contribute the community development in this country.

12.00 noon.

Mr. Speaker, I warmly congratulate you on behalf of my family, the people of Christ Church East on the attainment of this high honour and we look forward to greater and better things in the years to come.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations, Sir.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, many have spoken and have said things that I wanted to say but, Mr. Speaker, the difference is that I have the distinction of being your Parliamentary Representative for the last six years. It would certainly be remised if your representative did not say something especially when, as far as I am aware, only good can be said of you.

Mr. Speaker, some people do not know the extent of your contribution to the disadvantaged in this country. The distance that I am from you – incidently, Mr. Speaker, I pass your house very regularly, I very seldom see your car but I do pass.

Asides.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: I am able to say, Mr. Speaker, that from the position that I hold I know the extent that you have contributed to many persons from the geographical area designated St. Michael North. I understand from my colleagues that you have done likewise in their constituencies as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am indebted to you because while you help them, of course it redowns to your generosity, it also assists me. I believe that I can comfortably say, on behalf of not only myself and my family but also the constituency of St. Michael North, without your help, Mr. Speaker, there are many who would not have been able to secure even one certificate. There were many who had the ability but did not have the means to access institutions to better themselves in life, to gain some qualification to earn a living for themselves and their children. When they did not turn to you directly and turned to me, I was able to simply take up the telephone and make a phone call to you directly and ask for your assistance in allowing them entry to your institution, an institutionalised institution. Without hesitation, Mr. Speaker, you always took them into your institution without any costs.

I have not yet met any person whom I referred to you for assistance in relation to being educated at the Barbados 'O' Level Institute who has said that you told them that you could not accommodate them. Even if they came at the eleventh hour, you always without hesitation, ensured that they were able to come into your institution and gain an education. It says a lot about you. Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, your determination is to be commented up on because you stuck with an institution through thick and thin. There were many who came after you, attempted to do what you did and what you are still doing but simply did not have the commitment or stick ability to see it through and to

stay in what you were doing and what you are still doing to ensure that the people of Barbados, young people in particular, are able to benefit by gaining an education which they would otherwise not have been able to gain.

I want, Mr. Speaker, to put on record the extent that I know that you contribute to those disadvantaged persons in this society.

I know that the Honourable Member for St. John mentioned the fact that you were from Combermere School. It is well-known that Combermerians tend to be always fighting for stripes but in this case, Mr. Speaker, we can safely say that you have earned yours and I think that distinguishes you from many of them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end by saying that I am truly pleased about the fact that yet another member of St. Michael North, and my friend and colleague, has been able to render such outstanding service to the community and that his contribution has been recognised by, in my view, the highest body in the land.

I look forward, Mr. Speaker, like the others, to seeing the day when, perhaps, a higher accolade could be bestowed upon you.

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I am indebted to you.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly like to associate myself with many of the comments and sentiments expressed by those who preceded me. I did not have the privilege of being one of your students but in the area in which I grew up, in urban Barbados, there were many students who went to St. Leonard's School. I remember many of them spoke of Ishmael Roett with much reverence and respect, not only in terms of what you contributed in the class room in enhancing their knowledge, but also what you contributed in teaching them about cricket on the cricket field.

I also had the opportunity, being an Empire man myself, to actually every year watch you in the Annual Cricket Derby setting down what would be considered by many to be some balls that were somewhere suspected to be in terms of action.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: I remember many comments across the island about whether or not your action was in keeping in line or whether it was off-lined, "Acktar-like" in terms of your delivery.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Be that as it may, I want to associate myself with the remarks and your contributions made to the development in people in Barbados and particularly to those who were underprivileged. It is not very well-known by many citizens of Barbados.

I was involved with an athletic club in Barbados seeking athletic scholarships for many of the students, who came to us. Many of them came at times not having the academic qualifications to gain entry into universities in the United States. A lot of people do not know this, but the Barbados 'O' Level Institute has always been there providing scholarships for junior athletes who may have left school and may not have the academic qualifications to gain them scholarships into North America. There are many of our athletes who have left for Sydney, who have been to the 'O' Level Institute and were able to, through that institution, get the benefits that allowed them into the United States to study. It is only fitting, Sir, that from one who has contributed so significantly to the development of lives in Barbados and continues to do so, through where you sit today, that you be conferred with such a high and noble honour.
12.10 p.m.

I, on the behalf of my family and constituents, Sir, thank you and wish you all the best.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would also like to associate myself with those remarks.

I also want to say, that it is true, that I was once a student at the Barbados 'O' Level Institute. The subjects that I did were Accounts, Commerce, and Economics.

You will see, Sir, it is not by accident that those are the particular topics I chose, Sir. Not that I am begging, Sir, that after today I get any special privilege, but I would hope that people would recognise that there was some grounding.

I also want to make a point, Sir...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: That is a reflection on the Chair again.

I want to look at it from another side, as I always do. It is rather interesting in a day and age when we have a debate in the country on whether or not uniforms are the things to go with that we will, today, pay tribute to a gentleman, who recognized that the educational process of the country could be developed without a uniform.

It is a very significant point, Sir, because, it followed very quickly after the Barbados Community College, which has been able to develop many minds in this country.

I think, Sir, that someone who happens to be a principal of an institution like the Barbados 'O' Level Institute, should really get involved in a debate to help clarify and support certain issues that are being raised in the general public.

I am quite aware, Sir, that you cannot get involved in this debate here today, but I also think that if you do not get involved, it would be a reflection, Sir, on what is being done in institutes like the Barbados 'O' Level Institute, and also the Barbados Community College.

I also want to say, Sir, that it is very important for Government to recognise that there are other institutions – and this brings to mind places like Mrs. Sybil Leacock's primary school and the Barbados 'O' Level Institute – which have done a lot for Barbadians to which recognition should also be given because those schools have helped to develop the educational process in this country. It is rather amazing to hear Members speaking about the number of scholarships that have been given to the under-privileged. One would have thought, that this Institute at which you are the head, Sir, was somewhere being assisted by Government and that there were sending students to this Institute because there was some compensation package. I think that that is something that we also need to reflect on, Sir.

Sir, I want to congratulate you for the work that you have done in education. I cannot speak of your political process or the other processes that the others have spoken so well about. I also want to mention that it is also significant that at the Barbados 'O' Level Institute, there was a move to make sure that there was a basketball and netball court, something that is not normally done by private schools. I think you should be congratulated for your foresight in this particular matter.

Sir, I do join with the other Members in congratulating you, and I hope that you will continue to serve, to help uplift the people of Barbados, and to make sure that standards can be continued, that you do not necessarily have to be in what we would call the "regular process". I thank you.

Hon. D. T. GILL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to lend my voice to these contributions to your lofty achievements.

Like most of the previous Speakers, your contribution to education is one unmatched. As a single individual, you have heard in years gone by of many men like yourself, who had opened their own schools: the Lynches and the Crawfords. You must surely be among those individuals who have made such sterling contributions.

I am not as fortunate as some of the other Members, particularly those on the Front Bench, who have played, or worked with you, but two of my older siblings did have the opportunity to work with you.

One lectured with you, and the other would have literally rubbed shoulders with you as a school boy and they both attest to your decency and ability to achieve.

If there is one thing, Sir, that I must remember you by is the Summer of 1994, what I called during the "White Heat of the 1994 Election" when you, like myself, opted on the platform for the first time. I remember we all came out one night sitting and talking with you, for over one hour. You told me the number of times that you have walked the turf and at the time of the day you had walked and I said to myself, 'If Roett, my senior can do it, I can also do it'. You also told me not to leave any stone unturned.

Sir, it was at that point that I went into another gear and that would have been around the last two or three weeks, because as you could very well recall, it was a very long and drawn out period. It was a summer, that none of us who participated in it, would ever forget.

We have held joint meetings at the constituency level. Your boundary is partially contiguous with part of the boundary of the constituency which I represent. Sometimes, your constituents come to see me, and mine go to see you. There is a sort of common sharing between our boundaries; the Honourable Member for the West, the Honourable Member for the East.

Sir, the people of the constituency have always spoken very highly of you. Your avuncular, scholastic and sympathetic approach, they have all, Sir, in no uncertain terms, contributed to that genuine amalgam, which has today, elevated you to such a lofty position.

Sir, I can also speak about your ability to get things done. Because of my position as the Chairman of the Urban Development Commission. I know the persistence with which you approach your outlook and your desired achievements.

Sir, such a position could not have been earned easily, and indeed, you are living testimony of what determination and self respect mean in achieving the required high ideals.

Sir, on behalf of my relatives, and my constituents, I would like to wish you all the best, and I would say to you 'well done, thy good and faithful servant'. I thank you.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Sir, I rise go give my personal congratulations to you on having this high honour bestowed upon you, in the Independence Honours List.

Being a former educator of sorts myself, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it would be remiss of me if I did not put on the records, my congratulations to the important work that was done by a major educator in this country.
12.20 p.m.

I myself have not benefitted directly from your ability as a teacher in the same way as Minister Farley and one or two others who were teachers and would have passed through Erdiston Teachers' Training College but what I can say is that some of those students who would have benefitted from your ability as a tutor or a teacher would have graduated and come on to the University of the West Indies and I would have seen, in some of those students, the firm grounding which they would have received, either at Erdiston Teachers' Training College or at the Barbados 'O' Level Institute.

We have a very good example of that, Mr. Speaker, in the Honourable Member for Christ Church East. Most of you here would not know that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East was one of my students and his performance in my course was exemplary. I think he owes the Speaker, something for such a performance at the University of the West Indies.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has impressed me about the way you conduct your business, is the very professional and dignified manner in which you operate. The Barbados 'O' Level Institute, I have been informed, was established some 29 years ago and it is no mean achievement that an institution of that type would have continued for almost three decades. Obviously, it would have gone through swings. There were good times and there would have been bad times but the test of a great leader is to withstand all that is put in his or her path.

The institute, Mr. Speaker, has served all Barbadians. Those would have passed through those doors and certainly the institutions, youth groups and whatever organisation, would have benefited from the Barbados 'O' Level Institute being established.

Aside.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: As the Honourable Member for Christ Church East said, in the early 1970s Barbados was a fairly unforgiving society. One of the things that we in Barbados have been very proud of over the years is the quality and value of our labour force. The Barbados 'O' Level Institute has contributed in no small measure, to enhancing the quality of the workforce in this country.

Could we imagine that those large numbers of students over the years, who would not have gained reasonable qualifications while they were in the secondary school system,

could we imagine that without an institution like the Barbados 'O' Level Institute, what would have happened to the quality of the labour force in this country? We in Barbados have a lot to thank you, Mr. Speaker for, as we certainly recognise the value of the Barbados 'O' Level Institute.

I cannot speak too much about your cricketing exploits as I got here some years after you. I would have to believe what the Honourable Member for St. Philip North said and what the Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. Peter says from time to time about your days at the University of the West Indies in the cricketing arena.

In respect of your performance as a politician, I remember the election of 1994 when the outcome of that election in your constituency had you being the victor by a mere 17 or 20 votes. As a matter of fact, I think a recount was requested and your slender margin of victory was maintained.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at your performance five or so years later and you have been able to turn a slender majority of about 20 votes, to one in excess of 1 000 votes, Mr. Speaker, that says something about yourself as a parliamentary representative. Notwithstanding the good performance of the administration during the last term, it says something about you as a parliamentary representative.

I travel in the constituency of St. Michael Central from time to time and I can see the visible signs of...

Aside.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: ...and vice versa in your case...

I can see the visible signs of an MP who is committed to the development of the constituency. When you speak to the constituents of St. Michael Central, you can see that their representative is committed to the social development of that constituency and building social cohesion in the constituency.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I want to personally congratulate you on behalf of the constituents of St. Philip South for extending to them, an offer for a limited number of scholarships for study at the Barbados 'O' Level Institute. Mr. Speaker, when that offer was made through my political office, I immediately sought to identify those persons who would have just come out of the secondary school system but who otherwise, would have found it extremely difficult to get back into an educational institution for lack of financial resources. Sir, those persons I identified remained eternally grateful to you for that opportunity to get back into an

educational institution to gain some level of qualification in order to improve themselves and the lot of their families.

I want on behalf of myself, my family and certainly the good people of St. Philip South to put on the records our congratulations for the high Honour which has been bestowed on you.

I thank you.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, before you respond to the comments made, I came in a bit late and I would like to add at least two or three words to the contributions made before.

Sir, I met you a couple of years ago. I cannot remember the exact year but over the years that elapsed, I learned a lot about you, your character and the high moral principles which you uphold. Most admirable about our socialisation is the great academic attention which you have. I do not know if it is an endowment from the Divine or if it is just the natural ability to grasp and understand things well, but certainly, you demonstrated to me that you have explored the frontiers of academia and achieved an extremely high level of academic achievement.

Mr. Speaker, what is graceful about you is that you did not hold your achievements and nurture them in a selfish way, just for the enhancement and development of yourself and your family, but you extended your achievements to embrace other persons and used that talent which you have to further strengthen the development of the less fortunate, in the sphere of education as well as in your political career.
12.30 p.m.

A few years ago, when I was not within the same dispensation, I recall approaching you and speaking to you about a number of marginalised, dispossessed individuals from my community who were in dire need of furthering their education and you showed no reservations at the particular time. In fact, you were actually spontaneous in your reply to the request and offered me the opportunity to give those scholarships to a number of young women and men from within my community. I am extremely grateful to you for that and I am sure that the recipients of your generosity in St. Michael East are equally as thankful for the opportunity which you have given to them.

I have also observed you in your political style over the years, very passive and unassuming sometimes, I would like to use the words, 'but very deadly' as a political competitor. Many times I will hear on the streets that you are unlikely to regain your seat, but by the time the election is halfway down, I hear a different song coming from the same voices. So there must be something special about you in the way in which you handle yourself. I do not want to say manoeuvre, but the

graceful way in which you carve your way into success which has been manifested in your political achievements and your generosity to the Barbadian people, especially the poor. I am sure that the members of your constituency and my constituency and the whole of Barbados who have witnessed you over the years will share and concur with the remarks which I have made.

Sir, I do not want to overdo it because many people have already spoken of your great character and the contribution which you have made and I just want to add my voice and concur with those who have already sung praises to you on your achievement and I wish you all the best in the future, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I think it would only be fitting for me to extend my thanks and appreciation for all the very kind, sincere and truthful words that you have said this morning.

I accept the honour bestowed on me by the Government and people of Barbados as an honour which recognises the work of the Barbados 'O' Level Institute. Therefore, I would have to say a few words to you about what the Barbados 'O' Level Institute is, what we attempt to do and, of course, at the same time hope that all of you here as parliamentarians especially the ones on the Front Bench would, therefore, see why the Barbados 'O' Level Institute should be in a better position in terms of receiving some sort of help and aid after 29 years.

In 1971, a group of us including Senator Leroy Trotman, Deighton Maynard, Winsmore Humphrey, Walter Edey, Phil Branch and myself decided to start this institution. Our decision was based not on any profit motive but because we saw the need for this kind of education. We have had friends who attempted to get help and who were charged exorbitant fees at private lessons and we saw that there was a real need for an institution which could cater to school leavers and all those who desire to continue their education. After the first year or two, I was the only one left, well to a lesser extent myself and Winsmore Humphrey and we carried on the mantle of the institute. I am now left alone to suffer all the pains and the pangs of your observations I should say.

The Barbados 'O' Level Institute was established mainly to provide a second chance to our people where in a system it was clear that many of our young people have been told that they must achieve whatever they have to achieve in life by the time they reach age 16. Of course, we do not believe this. In fact, our motto which is 'Education is a Life Long Pursuit' says what we believe in. We, therefore, set about the task of trying not only to provide students with certificates but to build self-esteem the lack of which we saw and still continue to see as a major problem in our system.

I must say that we have been able to help hundreds and hundreds of Barbadians. We have students now, this is not an advertisement, coming from all over the West Indies. We even had one or two students coming from Nigeria and from Ghana. That does not mean, of course, that it has always been rosy. Every year as a private institution we have had a student roll of over 500.

In fact, I would like to say a word on behalf of all the private educational institutions because I believe that they are in dire need of Government aid. I know that there is some Government aid. We have never been fortunate to be the recipient of any aid but I am sure that Honourable Members here especially those on the Front Bench who spoke so eloquently of the work of the Institute and of the role it played would ensure that at the end of terms like this one at Christmas time that I can get some help in paying my staff.

There are some of you here who over the years have worked with me and are still working with me. I believe the existence of this institution after 29 years is due mainly to people like the Honourable Members for St. George North and St. James North and many others. The Honourable Member for St. James South is not presently working with us but has worked with us, but these Honourable Members can tell you that they have had to go without pay many a times at the end of the term.

I do get the impression, and this is not a comment on behalf of any politician, that the attitude displayed by many of my teachers is responsible for the existence of the Barbados 'O' Level Institute for 29 years. One gets the impression that almost every person who comes to the Institute is interested in the welfare of the people that he or she teaches and not the money that is to be gained and very often we end up owing some of these teachers at the end of the term.

Of course, private institutions, especially those like ours where the fees are very, very low and where we have to take care of every possible problem out of the small resources we are able to collect from the students, I believe are providing such worthy service for the country and being recognised also by the Ministry of Education because we are recognised as a school. We have two sessions, one during the day where all the students are under 19 and then we have one in the afternoon.

These private schools and private institutions do require some help and I believe this is something that the Cabinet and the members of Government can have a look at to see how these institutions could be helped because I maintain as our motto says, education is a never ending pursuit. When our school children leave school in this day and age having not achieved certificates, we need to instill in them that it is not only the certificates but very important, it is the development of that self-esteem that will help them to want to go to many of

the other places that we have been providing for them such as skills training, the polytechnic and so on. I believe that if a student leaves school without the necessary self-esteem and commitment to himself he is not going to go to skills training nor is he going to the polytechnic or any place.
12.40 p.m.

We are very fortunate in Barbados to have a very good system of education and to have some very good I would say facilities, but at the same time we need to ensure that our kids make use of what we have and not wait until they are 19 and 20. I think that it has to be done in the foundation stage. We at the 'O' Level Institute are trying to correct many of the wrongs that have been inflicted in a system where the words "dunce and bright" always have played a major part. My students at Erdiston College many a times did laugh and sometimes argued with me when I said that there is no 'dunce' student and every man can learn. That has always been my principle and I have lived to see the day when so many students have come to us and in a year or two years they have five certificates and they go on to Community College. Some go on to university and I must say that graduates of the 'O' Level Institute are now found in every section of our society whether it is in the Government Service or private sector.

The Honourable Member spoke of meeting a former student who now would have graduated as a medical doctor. I know of dentists, nurses and so many teachers and many of these are students who would have left school sometimes with one or no certificates at all. We have tried with them and we have worked with them. We have attempted to help them to see that as our motto says, 'Education Is An Ever-ending Pursuit' and that you could still make it if you continue to try and not to give up. Our problem today seems to be that so many of our young people having got to 16 or 17 give up so easily and I constantly remind them that the average age in Barbados is 67 or 68 years old. So if you give up at 16, you still have to live until you get to 68.

I really thank you most sincerely for the comments you have made and recognising the fact that in our poor state we have still been able to provide so many scholarships to Barbadians. I guarantee you every year that if we have a student roll of 400 that more than 200 of those every year are scholarship people. I do not ever say no. In fact, I have certain friends in some schools who every year would call and tell me about young school leavers. Many of you who are my political colleagues even before I was in Parliament I have never said no to you. I notice now that we have another group who call every year, the Youth Commissioners, and all those other people involved in such areas. This year as a good example we have a police constable who is now in Trinidad doing his legal certificate

who was one of our scholarship winners. He, of course, was part of a scheme where we even went so far as to grant scholarships to policemen without knowing whether they could afford it or not.

Such has been our social commitment and I am very honoured that what has been happening at this institute has been recognised. I am very pleased to accept the honour that has been granted to me really on behalf of all the teachers and staff of the Barbados 'O' Level Institute who I know have committed themselves and given their lives and who sometimes I believe wish that we could reward them at least in some better way for the kind of work that they have been doing over the years.

I thank you most sincerely and I am glad...in fact, I had to look back and see if it was in the obituary section that we were on because you do not often hear these kinds of words. I am assured by the priest that this is not that section, so I have actually heard your words. I thank you so much.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy has stated that he was a student at the "O" Level Institute at some point. So you can imagine the kind of pleasure that I feel when I know that even sitting parliamentarians here with me are people who have benefited from the tuition which is offered. I should also mention in finishing that we have also been very community-minded. Over the years the Barbados 'O' Level Institute has committed itself to the districts around and on Sunday I went and joined them on the bench watching the basketball game. It was really a pleasure to sit there and talk with the guys from the neighbourhood and to hear their comments. I hope as an example and I have always said, and I say these last words, that the school and community must work together. I am always so proud to say that in that general area of the institute when I read so very often about the crimes committed against schools I sometimes wonder if we cannot teach a few schools and educational officials some lessons. I know for a fact that if my building is not closed a night the same boys who play basketball from the districts around will close it and will not break down a door or defile that place in any way. There is a reason why that is so because when we behind the "paling" we can find so many students from Passage Road and the general area whom I have never charged fees and who have been given a second chance to come to the 'O' Level Institute and to continue their education. We have tried in other ways to be involved in the community and I believe that that is the answer to many of the problems some of our schools are experiencing. The school must be involved in the community.
12.50 p.m.

Once again, I thank you for your very kind and sincere words and I promise you that we will continue to do what is best for Barbados and what is best for Barbadians. Thank you.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

ORDER NO. 15 – THE CENTENNIAL HONOURS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2000

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, this is just a short Bill to amend the Centennial Honours Bill which was passed earlier this year. Honourable Members will recall that the Government desires to recognise 100 Barbadians who gave outstanding service or made contributions in the twentieth century.

In order to facilitate that honour which is a special honour which will only go to those persons and be done once and for all, several pieces of legislation had to be created. In drafting the legislation, no provision was made for the post nominals that should appear after a person's name and to which he would have an entitlement like a GCM. It was drawn to the Government's attention that there was a need therefore to amend the principal Act. Clause 2 of the Bill before us is to delete section 7 of the principal Act and replace it by the words which appear in clause 2 which in fact says:

"Every person upon whom the Centennial Honour has been conferred is entitled

4. to have the letters "B.C.H." (Barbadian Centennial Honour) placed after his name on all occasions when the use of letters after a name is customary;
5. to wear as a decoration the prescribed insignia for holders of the Centennial Honour."

That, Sir, is the essence, purpose and intent of this Bill and without more I beg to move that the Bill be read a second time. I think these Honours are to be conferred on January 1st so it is important that we pass this legislation.

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

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

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

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS seconded by Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

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. R. N. GREENIDGE, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Centennial Honour (Amendment) Act, 2000.

SUSPENSION

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.00 p.m. today.

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

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

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Honourable House is resumed.

ORDER NO. 7 – BILL TO AMEND THE
POST OFFICE ACT, CAP. 27A

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, first of all let me say thank you to the Honourable Member for St. Thomas for allowing me to lead the discussion today on this measure which comes before the House at this time.

It has to do with legislation to address some problems which have arisen with reference to the operation of postal workers across Barbados. It attempts to address threats to their well being as they pursue their day-to-day functions. I would like to connect the business of education with any effort to address indiscipline in society because I think that education is one of the principal counters when it comes to addressing deviance and indiscipline in our society and to join with Members in paying compliments to you on receipt of your recent honours. Those of us in St. Michael West who have benefitted from your generosity feel that we are obliged to say thank you.

I would like to say that you are not perhaps likely to be remembered for your cricketing exploits, you would probably not be remembered for your contribution at the political level for if the present trend continues, politicians will be so vilified in this country that we will not be remembered for any good that we have done but I am sure that you will long be remembered for your contribution to education in this country. From our perspective where we oversee immigration matters I have also seen numerous instances where persons from other Caribbean islands have come to Barbados to attend the Barbados 'O' Level Institute so that by extension, therefore, your contribution goes beyond our borders to the wider Caribbean. I would just want to add that to the tributes already paid.

The Bill before us, Mr. Speaker, seeks to amend Section 45 of the Post Office Act. It is an attempt to firm up the legislation with reference to the offences committed against postal workers under that Act.

The proposed amendment seeks to add to the original text the charge of assault, in one instance, and also seeks to firm up the penalties which will be administered by the courts as a result of offences such as obstruction and molestation of postal workers in the original text and now being added the charge of assault against postal workers in pursuit of their lawful duties.

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, with this measure is seeking to give to the courts the capacity to deal in firmer ways with those who commit offences in terms of molesting, obstructing or assaulting postal workers in the pursuit of their lawful daily functions.

The measure also seeks to not only add assault to the charges of molestation and obstruction but seeks to increase the penalties one might have to face if one is convicted of such offences moving the fines from \$100 to \$10 000 and the term of imprisonment from two months to five years or both if convicted for molestation, obstruction or assault against postal workers in pursuit of their lawful duty. This is a serious attempt to address a matter which has become a bother to Barbadian society at this time, in particularly to postal workers.

The measure being brought comes out of an ongoing dialogue with the workers of the postal service in Barbados and the legitimate union representatives out of which was formed some concern about the security of postmen and women and how their well-being is threatened as they proceed about their normal duties from day-to-day and other aspects of security of which the workers would have been concerned about, which would have been brought to the attention of the Ministry and which the Honourable Minister is seeking to address by this measure.

Specifically, it refers to the matter of theft of motor cycles used by persons involved in their delivery. Over the last years figures suggest that during that period of time more than forty-six of these motor cycles would have been lost to theft. Up until this point in the year, reports indicate that five or six would have been stolen. In this regard, therefore, one sees that there is perhaps a trend which has developed where these postal workers are becoming the targets of persons who have their own criminal designs. These motor cycles are being stolen either for resale, being stripped for parts or to be used in other criminal activity.

Arising out of discussions with workers of the postal service the Ministry also committed itself to working very closely with the police to ensure that potential troubled areas are properly patrolled. This has been requested on the part of the workers and one would have to acknowledge that the recent receipt of additional numbers of motor vehicles as well as motor cycles to the police force will, in fact, add greater mobility to members of the police force to aid in conducting operations like these in troublesome areas, not only in urban Barbados but in rural Barbados as well – in the city places like Greenfields and the New Orleans, and in places like Black Rock, Grazettes and Haynesville in St. James, rural areas such as Dash Valley and even in St. Philip like Marchfield and Taitts Hill in St. George. In urban as well as in rural areas this tendency has been identified recently and efforts are ongoing by the Royal Barbados Police Force to ensure that they are prepared to counter this activity.

In terms of security at post offices themselves, it has been requested of Government that something be done about ensuring that there are properly secured areas for the parking of vehicles of postal workers particularly motor cycles. Government is making effort, therefore, to make sure that this is in place at each of the post offices. In fact, at the main post office in Bridgetown, there have been reported instances of persons entering the secured parking area and perpetuating criminal activity.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy might be happy to learn that I have personally given some attention to the post office at St. Lucy and what I find in this particular regard is that there is a secured area which is reserved to be used for this type of purpose but on my last visit there the area was not being used. Whereas Government is making effort to ensure that there are these properly secured areas, we would have to acknowledge that in instances where they already exist, that fullest use is not being made of them and the result is that items like motor cycles are still exposed to those who attempt to give themselves to that type of activity. Postal workers who are victims or subjects of theft, in this regard having their cycles stolen, have had some problems with the speed at which the insurers have been moving to address their situation. Therefore, one would be concerned the length of time it takes for a case to be settled and a payment to be made in a situation where theft has taken place and it has been substantiated that

this is in fact the case. We would therefore be concerned and efforts are ongoing to see if we could engage insurers in the type of dialogue which would help with a speedier address of this type of matter.

2.10 p.m.

Another difficulty which evolves out of the matter of motor cycles being lost through theft is a fact that workers are called upon to replace the cycles for their ongoing daily service. The Customs Act prohibits any form of disposal of a cycle within a period of three years. Some difficulty has been experienced by postal workers in this regard, when the insurance settlements have not been forthcoming when the cycle must be replaced and when one wants to make use of the duty-free concession they cannot do so because the first cycle was stolen before that three-year period had transpired. That has caused some problems and the Ministry is trying to ensure that this is properly addressed. It is with the connotation of the Ministry at this time that, perhaps, one measure that may be pursued is that a fleet of cycles could be obtained and held for use on a temporary basis in instances where postal workers suffer losses of this type.

In wider security issues beyond what relates to cycles being stolen and postal workers who are being placed at a disadvantage in this regard. There is a question of security for all post offices in Barbados for workers to operate within the walls and precincts of the districts' post offices. The Ministry is ensuring that there are security guards placed at each of these post offices. They have made an effort to ensure that electronic surveillance which is very much a part of security arrangements is in place. Instruments have been deployed at post offices. There are eight installed to date at post offices across the island. I would not want to identify any of the post offices at which surveillance cameras are now installed.

In addition to that there is an 'animated' system which is used by about half a dozen of the post offices as well. The Ministry has committed itself to ensuring that, yearly, at least three of the post offices are equipped with this type of electronic surveillance.

Customers, of course, because of their varying situations, have posed problems for delivery persons. Workers complained of having to enter secluded premises with long extended driveways in sparsely populated areas. This exposes them to threat of persons with criminal intent as well as threat posed by things such as dogs.

These are real problems which post workers encounter on a daily basis and which the Ministries are trying to ensure are addressed as far as they can.

Security not only takes on national or local character. There are other aspects of security which are more global in character with which we must, of course, concern ourselves.

Barbados is a member of the Postal Security Action Group, which is a unit of the Universal Postal Union. We have been a member of the Postal Security Action Group since 1997. We are very much concerned about the wider global nature of security. One must acknowledge that the increasing tendency towards drug trafficking, which is a global phenomenon and one which is familiar to us poses a security consideration with reference to the Postal Service of Barbados because of the increasing parcel business. With the projected increase of parcel business, one can easily see how one would have to wrestle with great frequency with the problem of drug trafficking through the parcel post business.

There is a question of legitimate substances which themselves are used legitimately but are obtained through the postal service, exposes postal workers and others to risks and to dangers and are an aspect of security about which we are concerned about as well.

The business of money laundering is not necessarily very new as an issue today but is a very topical issue today. That is another area we have concerned ourselves with especially with the nature of the postal business and, perhaps because greater involvement is given to financial services through post offices.

There is the business of potential corruption of postal workers because of money laundering and drug trafficking. Postal workers themselves become a target and, perhaps, there is the temptation to be involved in a misdeed. These are things which are of concern to us in the Ministry with respect to the matter of security.

Security will take on even greater prominence, Mr. Speaker, when we consider the matter of modernisation of the postal service which at this time is an absolute necessity. If we are going to modernise our postal service out of necessity for its survival and its success, then security takes on an even greater prominence.

Government has benefited in recent years from several studies, three of which I might want to refer to at this time. The proposals coming out of these studies basically suggested that we can establish a modern and viably functioning postal service in Barbados today which clearly defines strategic direction. That is the goal and the objective of the Ministry is to move the postal service from its current state to become the kind of entity which will be viable, modern and which has a clear and strategic direction. So that, what we have is an entity which functions within proper business parameters, which is commercially oriented and derives a profit, without being delinquent in its fulfillment of its universal obligations and its social obligation to the people of Barbados. That study suggests that we can move the entity towards a revenue-

growth path, which, in fact, can be sustained.
2.20 p.m.

That study has identified the need for a dynamic thrust in the area of marketing which is something that the Post Office, itself, has not been guilty of in the past. There is a need for a dynamic thrust in the area of marketing and being proactive in the marketplace—going out, finding, gaining and preserving the business.

The Ministry has, in recent times, moved in this direction through efforts in terms of its recruitment for staff, to be engaged especially for the purposes of improving the market thrust and drive of the postal service.

Proposals coming out of the study also provide for cost savings which is very important. It is very much part and parcel of the efforts to ensure that the postal service is commercially viable and profitable by ensuring that cost efficiencies are successfully pursued.

Normally when persons talk about cost reduction, one of the first options that springs to mind is the business of staff reduction, or retrenchment.

I want to suggest that Government is committed to ensuring that this is not the option which the Ministry is pursuing, with reference to the postal service. We are talking about cost savings without retrenchment. The Minister has given the undertaking, to the workers of the postal service that they will, in fact, be no retrenchment, as a result of efforts to ensure that there are cost savings.

There are those persons in the global marketplace who boast of great gains through cost savings, who boast of success in the area of privatisation, or commercialisation, but they have substantially engaged themselves in the business of retrenchment.

I think Deutsch Post has laid off hundreds of thousands of workers from their postal service. I think Swedish Post has laid off, on privatisation, about one quarter of its staff complement. That is not the intention of government at all.

Trinidad has, substantially, eroded its employee base in an effort to bring about a significant turnaround of fortunes in the Trinidad Postal Service, in alliance with the New Zealand Post. That is not the direction which Barbados is looking to take at this time. We are talking about revenue growth in the context of savings and cost efficiencies, without retrenchment of our postal staff. That is the undertaking which the Minister has given to the postal workers. But surely, the effort is to ensure that the Post Office achieves some measurable quality of improvement;

that it be uplifted from the place where it is operating and bring it to a place where optimum use is made of the assets.

The British consultancy study identified for us some areas which are worthy of positive focus. There are areas which we can optimise, to ensure that there is a general service rendered to this country, by the Barbados Postal Service and it would be absolutely necessary that we have a very trainable staff.

We have a good network of post offices all across this country and that is something that we would need to ensure is put to optimum use and that there is a good public image, if not perhaps of all postal workers, then certainly of the employees who interact with the public out in the fairways of Barbados. That is another asset upon which we can capitalise.

Then importantly, of course, there is the issue of experienced management which the post office has accrued over the years. Of course, there are some deficiencies in the system which have been highlighted – the absence of measurement and appraisal mechanism in relation to traffic volume, performance measurement, productivity, quality of service. The fact that in the past these things have not been properly measured suggests that, that, in itself, has contributed to the failure of the post office to operate anyway near its optimal capacity.

The second report which we want to focus on is the Herbert Niles Report, which basically focuses on human resource development.

The thrust of the Herbert Niles Report says that the Barbados Postal Service, even in the full context, can attain those situations where we had a sustainable management and operations structure for a modernised post office. So we have concurred with the findings of the British consultancy for a clear and sustainable management and operations structure needed within the context of a modernised postal service.

The Minister of Home Affairs has insisted that as part of the efforts to modernise the postal service and to set in place its sustainable management and operational structure, there must be the creation of a clearly set out career path for all grades of employees within a modern postal system in Barbados. This is a very critical attempt to modernise the postal system.

The Niles Report did highlight the fact that we have a staff of about 600 persons in the postal service, but there is a very small number operating at the supervisory management level. The ratio, therefore, indicates where you have a management that is out of sync with the complement of employees. The result is an inability to properly control and supervise the postal service.

The Niles Report also highlighted the fact that there are too limited opportunities for promotion and this has had a debilitating effect on the service over the years, because promotional opportunity had been, largely, absent.

In fact, I am told that a postal clerk and a postman cannot expect to earn a promotion in under 20 or 25 years. You cannot enter the postal service in Barbados and expect to gain promotion as a postman in under 25 years, or as a Postal Clerk, in under 20 years.

This is clearly not acceptable in the 21st Century. It has a debilitating effect on morale. It has a very inhibiting process on proper service.

The Niles Report also suggests that we address that and create the immediacy where we are able to make it possible for a postman or woman, entering at the Grade 2 level to become a postal executive and then go on to become a postal unit manager.

With reference to a postal clerk, a career path is identified which would also lead that person to a position of postal executive (I), and then to a position to postal management within one of the units in the postal service.

In spite of all of that, the postal service boasts of an employee retention rate of about 70 per cent. In fact, there are 70 per cent of workers employed for 10 years or more, in spite of a situation where promotional opportunities were not readily forthcoming.

The report by Mr. Herbert Niles also proposes some changes with respect to the division of labour to which the Ministry of Home Affairs is giving very serious consideration.

The division of responsibility among the assistant divisional directorates would see proper supervision and management given to critical areas of operation: internal audits, security, business development, international affairs, human resource development and management, finance and corporate services. These are very broad, critical areas which need to be properly managed and so that type of division of labour is being contemplated. Certainly, it does not now exist in the present broad-based hierarchy structure.
2.30 p.m.

In fact, Niles also identified some training needs which are very critical. If human resource development is to be given the kind of effort which it deserves, there are areas of training which would become critical and, Mr. Speaker, I would not want to take the time to identify all of these areas.

Certainly, of great importance are the areas of customer relations, the business of marketing as we have already intimated and financial management if we are talking about

making the entity more commercially viable and sustainable. The business of financial management is very important in the context of security and we have been discussing the matter of investigation within the postal service, the business of auditing and revenue protection, increasing the scope of financial services, an entity, which is increasingly responsible for its own finances. The business of auditing and revenue protection becomes even more critical. Supervisory management and of course, computer training will be other very critical areas, within which a modernised postal service would be seeking to operate.

The last report to which I would want to refer is the Benjamin Report which focuses much more so on processes within the postal service. It focuses on the processes by which mail gets from point A to point B, identifies strengths which currently exist but even more largely, it identifies weaknesses which exist in the current system.

There are problems of routing. We all know that changes have taken place in Barbados over time and existing routes now prove burdensome to those who are called upon to service them. There are problems of collection, sorting and delivery and that relates more so to the times at which these important functions are pursued. Then there are problems of the systems themselves, systems which perhaps are outdated and as a result they are time consuming. They are not particularly designed for the new products which they are called upon to accommodate at this time.

And so, Benjamin is suggesting that we take a serious look at these processes as they relate to collection, sorting, delivery and routings. The problem of classification of mail, priority or non-priority, is to be attributed to a certain type of mail, and what kind of urgency is to be attached to those which are classified as priority mail. This is not presently addressed within the system which is currently in operation at the post office. Local mail, for instance, is too often treated the same way as international mail, in spite of the directives which are given.

New housing developments have sprung up all over Barbados. This causes problems with reference to the apparent duplication of numbers, duplication of names with reference to various developments. I think all of us could justify the difficulty we find, if we are not too familiar with the specific location to which we are heading, when we go into these new developments at Kingsland or Husbands. We are not too sure which Husbands it is. We are not sure which part of Kingsland it is and some of us have suffered loss of time and some degree of frustration as a result of that. Those in the postal service must exercise some kind of skill in ensuring that they have very specific knowledge as to where they are going in order to operate.

Some letter boxes are not now as well located as they might be because the demographics have had an impact upon their locations, rendering them perhaps not as useful because of their present location.

Sir, we are basically talking about a broad programme which may be captured in a three-dimensional view or perspective, human resource development which stands at the centre, which is critical. A restructuring of the postal service which we anticipate could cost the Government about \$1.8 million with respect to human resources, development and training.

We are talking about recruitment of an additional number of about 22 or 24 post delivery persons, postmen and postwomen, and planning of the structure to ensure that there is that increased capacity to promotion, a promotional opportunity, training and of course, the upgrading of management within that new structure. Sir, human resources is a critical component. Second, of course, as I intimated, the business of what is called process re-engineering which addresses the business of collections, sorting and delivery.

It is not a satisfactory situation that mail is collected at 8.30 or 9.00 in the morning. It poses problems for the business of urgent delivery. What is being anticipated is that there would be a shift in some of these times, both the process of collection, sorting and delivery. We anticipate a system which will allow collections between 11.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m., which will allow for sorting of priority mail and non-priority mail at different times, the sorting of non-priority mail between 8.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. and sorting of priority items between 2.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. Therefore, this would facilitate preparation for delivery between 6.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. and actual delivery between 9.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m.

In short therefore, what we are talking about is an extended postal day which runs from about 6.00 a.m. in the morning to 8.00 p.m. at night. Wherein, we are talking about adjustment in patterns which have existed for a long time, clearly we might be talking about hours which are antisocial in terms of the culture which we have developed over time in Barbados.

We are talking about an earlier start and a later finish to the postal day to allow for next-day delivery and giving priority to items which render themselves to that type of classification.

These are proposals which have not yet been accepted. These are items which are on the table and under discussion with the postal administration as well as the workers and the workers' representatives. Clearly, the view by Mr. Benjamin is that if we are to render the type of service to the postal system that is required in this modern day, if the

postal service is to be competitive and if it is to respond to customer demand, then shifts like these must be contemplated.

The matter of adjusting the pine line for collection and actual sorting of mail must be addressed to make it more adaptable to customer needs; reliable, whatever the volume of mail traffic; efficient, while at the same time, maintaining its security.

We must address things like measurement. Of course, how can we measure performance, how can we measure productivity, how could we measure product volume, quality of service and cost of the operation? These things must be put in place if the operation is to be streamlined and made commercially viable. Measurement, of course, is the driving force or the key to improvement in any circumstance.

The third dimension of this effort to reform would have to do, of course, with product development and strategic positioning of the post office. This again, refers to making it the commercially viable entity that it can become, by adopting best practices in terms of running a profit-oriented organisation, while at the same time, fulfilling your social obligations in the total scheme of things.

It speaks to the development of new services because that is the demand of the age in which we live. It speaks of perhaps the need to strike up strategic alliances and partnerships with those who can help us to minimise cost, while at the same time, rendering effectively the service we seek to provide and ensuring that the universal service obligation to which the Barbados Postal Service and the Government of Barbados are committed is pursued and not abandoned.

Sir, those types of partnerships are not unfamiliar to us at the time. That is the age in which we live. Barbados has entered into an alliance of course with the Royal Mail, the British Postal Office. That is a bilateral agreement, of course, which is intended to expand, the exchange of mail between Britain and the Barbados Postal Service to improve the service to the public to develop an airmail unit at the airport which the Minister opened some time last year and to use that unit in particular as a hub for mail between Europe, for instance, and the Caribbean.

2.40 p.m.

I was enquiring as to the statistics which were obtained since the setting up of that airmail unit at the airport. If one looks to 1998, the information which I have obtained is that in the calendar year 1998, the number of transit bags of mails which were handled at that facility was 47 498 up until November that year. In comparing this year to last year, they were some 59 356 transit bags which shows an increase of about 20 per cent and that is even without any strenuous effort

on the part of our British partners to make the contribution which is anticipated from them and yet we are showing that 20 per cent increase over just one year so there is that potential there.

Sir, one must not be wary of strategic alliances but one needs to ensure that those alliances are indeed strategic and will work for sure to the benefit of the people of Barbados. We do not anticipate any kind of alliance such as that which exists in Trinidad and Tobago between the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Service and the New Zealand Post where the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Service is very much subject to the New Zealand Post so we do not anticipate that. But certainly, mergers are very common today and we would want to ensure that we form the type of alliance with other postal administrations which could benefit us and such is the effort with respect to the alliances with the British Post Office.

Mergers and alliances will mean that the traditional postal operator will find itself now operating in new areas of non-traditional business and will perhaps find that it is competing against other postal providers of the universal service. That is the context of the times in which we live. There is nothing we can do about that except to respond to it in a way which ensures that the Barbados Postal Service is kept commercially viable and continues to provide the universal service across Barbados to which we have become accustomed.

Of course, one must always be conscious of features which will impact on the efforts of modernisation. The Postal Service of Barbados currently must operate and function within the traditional bureaucratic culture to which we have become accustomed. That is not a culture which is in sync with the dynamic context of the early twenty-first century. I think that with many references across the public service, the same admission would be made that we are operating within a bureaucratic culture which is not in sync with the dynamic of change taking place in the context of the world around us.

Caribbean bureaucracies, you know, Mr. Speaker, and I know, are known for the excesses which they tend to render from time to time but they are also known for their inherent limitations. This is the environment in which the postal service now, like many other parastatal entities operate, and it is a culture from which the postal service must perhaps necessarily extricate itself from by finding ways to be commercially viable while at the same time adhering to whatever strictures there are in place.

For instance, decision-making must be something which must be ready and forthcoming in today's world with the level of competition and with the swiftness of pace of change. The ability to make decisions which are vital and necessary is necessarily a characteristic which must be in place if entities are to be sustained in terms of their viability.

Of course, technology is another feature which will impact on the effort to modernise and that is very much present with us and in studies that we have embraced that has been given very prominent mention as well. Technology would ensure that we have a faster, more reliable service and it will help us to provide for new services, different services and new products. It will also facilitate a better quality of product, increase productivity and of course reduce costs in terms of production.

We must move the postal service in Barbados to a position where it is more technologically enabling and that is part of the thrust. The competition about us suggests that we must do that. Competition has already gone in that direction. Private couriers operating in Barbados are making their presence very much felt to the disadvantage of the Barbados Postal Service. DHL, FedEx and United Parcel Service are very much with us. Every time I move through Sheraton Centre, there is a whole fleet of courier vehicles parked out there. Of course, these are international agents who are operating even right now in the context in which the Barbados Postal Service steeped in traditional bureaucracy must operate in a competitive environment. Certainly, it serves to our disadvantage and I do not think that there is anything the Barbados Postal Service can do at this stage except match that type of resource.

Regionally, there is LIAT Quickpak. We know of the BWIA Express Mail Services and local entities like ABC Couriers. All of these are eating into the market-share traditionally enjoyed by the Barbados Postal Service which is eroding their base and loss of revenue results.

The business of universal service obligation must be sustained. We cannot abandon that. That is a social obligation of Government to its people. It is also a commitment on the part of the Barbados Postal Service to the Universal Postal Union of which it is a member.

Liberalisation has its implications to the extent that these competitors are very much present and eroding the market-share of the Barbados Postal Service. To that extent liberalisation is already with us and certain aspects of the postal market in Barbados have, therefore, been already liberalised out of necessity. The high end aspect of the market has been liberalised. Liberalisation is a thrust globally. It is perhaps given a lot of lip service in certain parts of the world, in Europe in particular but there is a great degree of ambivalence about the business of liberalisation of postal services.

Postal administrators in Europe who speak very loudly in terms of liberalisation have been very reluctant to pursue liberalisation with gay abandon. They have been very reserved in terms of their efforts at liberalising the postal

market. They retained, to a large extent, a monopoly on the letter post and have only actually allowed for minimal entry by private couriers into the letter post market.

The effort, of course, is to protect jobs and revenue from the liberalised competition that we are already facing from the entities I identified earlier. We are resolved to protect jobs and enhance revenue. Therefore, how would we in the face of competition, preserve jobs, increase revenue and face-off competition by limited admission of that competition while providing the universal service to which Barbadians have become accustomed.

Even our Express Mail Service has been severely challenged by the presence of competitors. We operate and offer cheaper prices, as we understand it, 20 per cent less and sometimes 25 per cent cheaper and yet because of our inability to function with the most efficient capacity, we have lost some of our market-share to some of these competitors.

In wider global terms, we have got to operate under the strictures of the general agreement and trading services and I do not know that postal services are excluded. In fact, it is my belief that postal services are very much included. It is a commercial service. Our commercial services are covered in terms of our being parties to those types of agreements. So we trade in postal services. We must allow for liberalisation but I would think that it would serve us very well to follow the trend which obtains globally and tread with caution in terms of any gay abandonment to the process of liberalisation. There are entities operating in our region and their presence has implications for their presence for the Barbados Postal Service if we think of the protocols in association with the Caribbean Single Market Economy. Protocol II has implications for us and how we respond to the presence of other entities right here in Barbados or in the wider Caribbean can impact upon us greatly in a negative way if we are not cautious.
2.50 p.m.

I think the view of the Ministry is that, if we move through legislation towards any type of liberalisation in utilizing our postal market, then there has to be a cautious approach and the business of modernisation must proceed. Otherwise, we will find ourselves in difficulties posed by the principles of most favoured regional and international treaties because of the presence of other entities operating in the Caribbean at this time.

Modernisation is very important in terms of the Ministry's position, more important than the business of liberalisation and it is seen as a necessary thing before the business of liberalisation. It speaks to security, Mr. Speaker. It speaks also to security asset which we have and to the security in the universal service and to job security.

I would want, Mr. Speaker, to conclude this presentation by suggesting that there are some serious but not insurmountable challenges. We have within our consideration at this time the necessary perspectives which can take us to the next level: the business of securing the workers at the postal service and the business of ensuring that there is a proper career path in place to allow for promotion opportunities and movement within the service. These things are very important. Beyond that in the wider scheme of things we must modernise to offset the negative impact of liberalisation to better position ourselves to serve the Barbadian society, to fulfil our international obligations and to ensure that the Postal Service is viable and sustainable in terms of its management structure and the services it provides.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise also to speak on this particular Bill but I want to remind the House that some four years ago in speaking in a debate relating to the same said post office, I said to this House that if we are going to be going into the 21st century we were going to need to change the way in which the postmen were delivering mail. I remember at the time we were discussing a situation where we were given the right to have duty-free cycles and I questioned the wisdom of it in this day and age, Sir, offering a duty-free cycle to a postman. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas reminded me that the proposal was from the union and the postmen at the time. I suggested to Parliament that if we were going to be competitive and up-to-date that what we needed to do is not only to give the right to have a duty-free cycle but also to allow the postmen and postwomen to be able to get a duty-free car.

Mr. Speaker, we must acknowledge that we cannot wait until things happen in this country to think ahead and this is the point that I have been making in this Parliament. We are operating too much on the basis of 'today' and we need to move our debate away from today, Sir, and deal with 'down the road'. If that advice given by me had been accepted and implemented, we would not now have a situation in this country where our mail is being threatened by people and not only the mail, Sir, but the cycles that the postmen and postwomen have to use in this country. They are not sure how protective they are of their property. What is also more regrettable, Sir, is that the cycles which are being stolen do not belong to the Government of Barbados. They belong to the individuals who have to work those cycles. The cycles are their assets, Sir, yet whenever there is a particular problem you can see postmen and postwomen in the newspaper wondering what will happen to the asset of which they have been deprived.

I am saying, Sir, that we have to recognise that this world is quite different and we cannot have postmen and postwomen

walking around any longer with a bag which sometimes contains money orders. We also have to recognise the climatic conditions of the country. The excuse given at the time was that it would not be appropriate to give a postman a car because you have to think about when he is delivering mail.

I am suggesting, Sir, if that is what you are worrying about then we may also have to give them collapsible bicycles where when they get to a particular area they can easily go into the trunk of their car and take out the bicycle and use it and then get back to the car. You know what is rather interesting is that the Honourable Member for St. Michael West, in making the point about the competition that the post office is getting, made a valid point. Our competitors do not use cycles. They use vans, Sir. Our postmen cannot deliver mail in cars but they can very well use vans to deliver mail. A rather interesting point, Sir. It shows that our competitors are up-to-date and they understand the meaning of competition and globalisation and they understand the need to protect their property from the masses. The Government of the day even though they were given the advice four years ago to correct that particular problem the Government failed to act on that particular position. We cannot say, Sir, that the vagabonds are attacking our postmen and postwomen without realising that the information was given four years ago. I do not know if it is because it came from this Side, but I am saying that if we had any negative thoughts about the suggestion that we need to look at it because we cannot compete. We have to realise that we are in the world of globalisation. Our competitors are better positioned to take over from us. Are we going to continue doing things back in the 19th century, Sir, or are we going to get with it and come into the 21st century?

Sir, I know there might be some people who might feel to give a postman a duty-free car is too much for him. I disagree. I am saying, Sir, that you have to give people the tools to work with in order to get an efficient job done. I do not agree with anybody who would suggest in this day and age that because someone is a postman that they must bear all the sun and rain and that they must walk around with mail in their bag unprotected to face what we are now facing in Barbados and they should feel happy to deal with that particular situation. This is a modern world and we have to behave as if we are in a modern world, Sir. The postmen and postwomen must recognise that they are somebody too.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I know you do not like to hear when you talk in this House about the masses. I do not have a problem with it.
3.00 p.m.

The Honourable Member is telling me that we destroyed the masses, yet they honour us for destroying the masses! What nonsense am I hearing?

Mr. Speaker, we have to go back to the drawing board and recognise that we had a situation previously where the postal market was ours. There is no doubt that we hardly had competition four years ago. Every time you look around there is some new agency offering a different service in the postal section.

How are we going to deal with that particular competition? If we continue to use nineteenth century ideas we are going to lose the majority of the postal service that we have been offering in this country. We have to recognise that people have been giving the impression previously that there was no money to be made from this sector but now people like FedEx and all of the other competitors are now proving that once you open an efficient service people will tend to go towards that service instead of waiting on the normal service where sometimes mail posted in Barbados is not delivered within two weeks. This is an interesting point that in spite of the fact that we are only 166 square miles you can post mail in Barbados and sometimes not get it within two weeks. That may be stretching it but that is when we have a serious situation.

There are people now who are offering you a service where you can take the document today and an hour after that document can be delivered somewhere else in Barbados. The question is how many people are going to continue to use the normal postal services when they know that if they have a document they regard as important, there is somewhere else to go. That is the question. How many people are going to continue to work for the post office in Barbados under the conditions that they are working in now and how many people are prepared to leave the post office and go and work elsewhere?

Mr. Speaker, we have good examples to follow. Now we have a situation in this country where people are now prepared to leave the police force to go and be guards for somebody else. This is a serious point for the simple reason that when you are a policeman you have special rights. When you are a guard you do not have any rights. You must remember that, Sir.

I am saying that we are making this amendment which will give the postmen special rights but yet you might find a situation where even though you are giving these special rights and protections, they are still prepared to leave working for the post office and go and deliver mail for someone else.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I agree that with e-mail everything will change again, which means that we also have to be more competitive and recognise that the ways of sending

messages are changing. We have to change too. The question is all going to boil down to the cost and I do not know what will happen in the future. I am not going to predict. The problem belongs to Government to deal with. I am not going to give a solution to this particular problem. What they need to do is to understand and appreciate that they cannot just see the personnel that they have working with them as ordinary workers. They must treat them as service providers and they must be prepared to compensate them and give them the necessary tools to deliver that particular service efficiently. If they do not do that, what we are going to have are a lot of buildings in Barbados and nobody to work in those buildings. The private sector will recognise that there is a particular service that is needed and they will deliver what is needed because Government will be failing to do what they should do and they will make sure they implement what is needed to ensure that that service the public needs is delivered at a lower cost and more efficiently.

A man might say that it takes only 45 cents to deliver a piece of mail. The stamp is 45 cents but it might save someone thousands of dollars if that particular mail is delivered in one hour. So you just cannot look at the cost. The private sector might be offering a \$5 service whereas the post office is only offering a 45 cents service. It is the end result that you have to look at. If a man knows, he is going to deliver that particular service and the public would be prepared to pay that price for that particular service.

We cannot just use the argument that it is only 45 cents to post something in Barbados because not getting the particular mail that was needed to be delivered by a particular time might mean a lot more for the particular person wanting the mail delivered and that person might be prepared to provide more funds to make sure that that particular mail is delivered quickly.

We have a double problem here, Sir, because for years the only medium to deliver mail was through the post office but now we have to recognise that it is not so anymore. We do not have the market share we had before and we cannot continue to believe that we have that market share in which we always had a monopoly. We have to recognise that this is a competitive world and we must be prepared to change the way we are operating and deliver to the masses that service for which they have been paying for many years and do not get.

I do not agree with anybody that we should blame the personnel at the post office either. The blame must fall on the backs of those who make the decisions. I also disagree that a postman should continue to live in fear and every day that he leaves home he is not sure whether he would be returning home with his cycle or he is not sure whether he has to confront someone to protect his property. If that

property was the property of the Government there would have been more preventative measures in place to protect it. We need to make amendments like these but we also need to make other amendments and we also have to make sure that the job of a postman is not regarded as another job but the importance of it is accompanied by the necessary compensation for the particular job and service that is provided.

Right now we behave as though mail is just delivered. It is more than that. It is a service and it must be treated as if that postman is delivering a service that is important for the whole country. Mr. Speaker, I am saying that the Democratic Labour Party will have also to recognise that point that any changes that must come to that sector must be changes to reflect the changes in the world and not only in Barbados. Sometimes in the Caribbean we seem to believe that we are a separate group of people and what happens in the world does not affect us. That is wrong. We cannot continue anymore to operate as if we are a special group outside of the world. Everything we do now must be done in line with what is happening within the world and we must make sure that whenever we do it that we are doing it better than the world. The same way that you can get international agencies coming here and offering services in our postal sector we should have been doing likewise in other countries.

We must not believe that people can only deliver things to us and that we cannot deliver things to other people. If Barbados is to progress we must be prepared to move outside the Caribbean and into the world of competition. This is the problem in the Caribbean, while everybody is moving throughout the world with competition we are still trying to find out how to operate among ourselves in the Caribbean.
3.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this will have to change because if we do not change we will continue to borrow other people's money and we will not be able to service the debt which we have incurred. We must be more efficient and we must be proactive. I find that in the Caribbean it is a worrying factor because we are doing things within the Caribbean that are going to affect the four-year olds and six-year olds of the future. Already they have not yet lift a finger but yet we are borrowing off their heads and this is not right. We need to build a foundation for those people so that when they come of age they will have a foundation to live on instead of having to live with a negative. We must remove the negativity and get more positive if we are going to compete in this world and a good sector to start in is the postal sector. We have to show people that we can change the whole climate within the postal sector to give us a foundation where we can operate not only in Barbados but we are prepared to go to the bigger countries and compete with them also. If we continue to believe that they are just postal workers and do not see them as true professionals we will always find ourselves in a situation

where we will be playing the catching up game.

This world is dynamic and Barbadian politicians must understand that we must move before others move. If we do not do that, we will suffer from the Pat Rousseau's mentality that once it is in Jamaica it is alright, not realising that if we do not move from Jamaica we will destroy ourselves. The Pat Rousseau's mentality is what is killing West Indies cricket now. We have to make sure that the Pat Rousseau's mentality is not now included in our postal services.

Mr. Speaker, I rest my case on this particular matter and I hope that the frontbench will recognise that the postal service of Barbados is not just about delivering mail, that the so-called experts on the frontbench will recognise that the way we operate our postal service will also show us how we can operate our tourism industry.

Sir, I thank you.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a short intervention in the consideration of this Bill. At the start I want to salute the postal workers of Barbados who, over the many years, have contributed to the ability of Barbadians both within our country and around the world to be able to communicate with one another. In fact, at the community level, postal workers have always been an important part of the community and there are situations where you have postal workers who have worked a given route for twenty years and know each and every individual. They perform a number of community services on behalf of the residents of the particular route which they run and they are worthy of our highest consideration and all of the possible protection which we are able to provide for them. It is in that spirit that I support this Bill.

It is clear that because of the nature of their work, because of the knowledge of important matters which pass through their hands, not just people's personal information but also cash and monetary instruments, that have made them a prime target. They face occupational hazards in terms of the threat to life and limb both at the post offices as well as on the beat.

This Bill seeks to strengthen the offence and the penalty for that offence as well for those persons who would run contrary to the norms and values of the society to attack or to steal from these postal workers. We must all in this society join together to protect what has become one of the great institutions in our country. I would, therefore, urge Honourable Members, and I am sure they will, to strongly support this action. We are, indeed, willing to consider any future requests or recommendations from persons in the community who have the interest of these postal workers at heart because Government must consider other recommendations for their protection.

Whilst contributing to this debate, Sir, I want to take the opportunity to address a few of the matters which have been raised so far and which are important to the future of the post office.

It is clear that the competitive threats which a few other Honourable Members alluded to, will be the factor which drives the post office of the future. I want to say that these threats are not new or exclusive to Barbados, that there is much that the post office can learn and must learn from how other countries have approached the particular problem. Technology is really at the end of the day, the major factor that has changed what postal workers did many years ago compared to what they do now. Post offices were set up as state monopolies in the days when they were the only show in town. One aspect which could be an important part of the post office's future relates to the fact that much of the traffic in terms of moving communication around these days is done by e-mail. Letters these days are only for formal legalistic purposes. Indeed, the United States postal service has itself become an Internet service provider which markets itself as progressive. I believe that these kinds of new directions are directions which the Barbados Postal Service must examine as well.

The message which is caught up in the competition which the postal service faces in delivering its services, is a message which should be heard across all aspects of the provision of Government services to this community. The era in which Government workers felt they were doing a favour to the public by providing service is clearly over. Clearly, customers are willing to pay to get good service even if there is a free or cheap alternative, that message is relevant not just to the post office but to the public service generally.

As we embark on a programme of public sector reform, as we seek to change the way that Government does business and how it provides its services, I would want to sound the very clear message that the challenge faced by the postal service is not the only challenge that Government will face, and the staff who obtains a livelihood by working for Government will face.

Mr. Speaker, take some of the largest customers of the postal services, the utility companies. In some places in the world, utility companies no longer post out bills. The meter is read by way of a driver driving by and scanning the electric meter without getting out of the vehicle or the telephone bill is read on the same telephone line on which you get your telephone messages. In terms of your payment, you can be alerted by e-mail on the Internet and payment can be made by credit card.

Mr. Speaker, e-commerce in terms of the way utility services are measured and billed represents another major challenge for large customers of postal services.

The expectations in our society, therefore, are for instant high-quality services, and I would want to use the opportunity in this debate to sound the call for a great focus on efficiency and productivity. The comment must be made that productivity remains in focus more so in hard times than in good times. Even in the current situation of economic buoyancy, even at the present levels of commerce, Sir, if we look at the competitive situation, we have to remember productivity, Sir. I would want to urge that on the postal service.

3.20 p.m.

It clearly is obvious that there remains some work which has to be done where my constituents and other constituents around still have some of their expectations unmet as far as the field of delivery of some local mail. I applaud the efforts of the Honourable Attorney General and his Parliamentary Secretary for the reform efforts that they have made in the postal service to correct this particular problem.

I would want to urge them, Mr. Speaker, that as they seek to make this reform to meet the expectations of my constituents in Christ Church East, and the public of Barbados generally, that they also recognise the need to be innovative. To look at other places where the same problems have been met with very great aggression from a business prospective. I look forward to the day when my Barbados Postal Service will be as secure a provider of traditional mail services - a letter with a stamp in my mailbox, to the day when in the future they will be a secure, confidential, reliable and competitive provider of Email and other electronic services for me because that is the future and the direction in which, Sir, I believe, our men and women should move.

They have the advantage, Sir, as I mentioned in my introduction of an intimate customer knowledge. They know their customers better than anyone. They have distribution channels which can be leveraged. No other entity in Barbados has the network of distribution which the postal service has. No other entity has the sound reputation which the postal service has. They are trust worthy, confidential and of course they have the backing of the Government. That, Sir, is a perfect recipe for positive, successful reform of the commercial service provider by the Government.

I want to wish the Attorney General and his Parliamentary Secretary all the best and congratulate them for the excellent initiative which they have taken in this aspect of public sector reform. I certainly would look forward to all of us being able to see the very positive noticeable benefits from, not only the improvements in delivery of traditional mail but from, the new and innovative services which are being offered by our reform postal services.

I want, Sir, in conclusion, to support this Resolution and to condemn the most vicious and uncaring action on the part of those persons who would seek to deprive our postal worker, those dear gentlemen and ladies, who perform such service whether the sun shines or the rain falls. I want to strongly urge the general public to collaborate with the police and the postal service in an effort to bring the perpetrators of these terrible acts to justice.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the Honourable Members who spoke. I was inclined to introduce this Bill but I have not been well in the last few days, Sir, and I asked the Parliamentary Secretary to do the major speech on this Bill for me but I will like to make a couple points in winding up and in moving that this Bill be read a second time.

On August 31, 2000 we had a meeting with the Ministry officials, a large delegation from the post office workers, Mr. Levere Richards and Mr. Leroy Trotman of the Barbados Workers' Union. The meeting was to look at a number of matters which were of concern to the postal service and to the Ministry. One of matters that we dealt with was special legislation to increase the penalties for assault, obstruction and molestation of postal workers.

We have seen from time to time postal workers who have been assaulted, robbed either of their mail bags or their cycles and it was the request of the union and the postal workers that this legislation that is before the House be brought. This legislation is brought in fulfillment of a request by the postal workers and a commitment by the Ministry.

Other people in the society have special legislation. The Land Surveyors and the police, if you interfere with them, you can be fined or imprisoned severely. We felt that the law in relation to postal workers needed upgrading, Sir, and this Bill does that.

In addition, Sir, we discussed a number of matters, about which I think that I have a duty to tell the House. There were certain areas which were identified as problem areas for postmen. I will not disclose them for security reasons but we agreed that we would give this list to the police and ask them for additional coverage and surveillance of those particular areas, that is being done.

We also agreed, Sir, that on a monthly basis the Commissioner of Police will submit to the Ministry reports of incidents involving attacks against postal workers, that is also being done. The Honourable Member for St. Michael West spoke of the security measures that we have taken, Sir, in terms of the electronic surveillance at post offices and that programme is ongoing and we should be completing that whole new system by next year.

Sir, there was one matter that I would like to throw out for consideration in relation to the security of postal workers. It has been put to me, Sir, that we should paint post office workers' motor cycles in a particular colour. That has been suggested but these fellows who steal vehicles will paint that over in half an hour. Another suggestion has been made that, perhaps, we should look at allowing postal workers to import a special brand of motor cycle. Not the Yamaha or whatever brand that we have in Barbados but a different brand, so that only postal workers would have that brand and if a fellow steals that he would be caught. That is one, Sir, that we are looking at. It did not come from a meeting which we had, it came from a member of the public who wrote me and made the suggestion and I think it is one worthy of consideration. When we meet with the union again after Christmas, I will put that to them and to the postal workers.

3.30 p.m.

In addition to that, Sir, we are exploring a request from the workers to have Government provide an emergency fleet of motor cycles, let us say 12, so that a postman who loses one and is awaiting his insurance money to buy another, will be provided with a substitute cycle. We are currently dealing with that issue. The papers should be going to the Ministry of Finance shortly, Sir.

Sir, there are a number of matters which we are dealing with relating to the enhancement of the security of the postal workers.

I want to make one point very forcefully, Sir, and it is this. Over the years there has been an increase in the services being provided. For example, more and more people now have water-borne facilities in their homes, so they will get bills. More and more people now have telephones.

When I went to St. Thomas in 1985, there were very few telephones. The 438 numbers came because I called for an establishment of an exchange, which was eventually put at Canefield, St. Thomas. Now, all over St. Thomas has telephones. The same thing goes for electricity. So, there has been an accretion of utilities services throughout the island. Added to that is the pace of house construction.

Let me give the example that I gave the Parliamentary Party, because a postman made this representation to the Prime Minister and me, one Saturday, a few years ago, up in Todds Tenantry.

With the additional housing that we have, and all these things, we have not had a commensurate increase in staff, so that, for example, before you had Fort George Heights, the postman who covers the area out by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, that was his beat. Suddenly, all those houses are being built at Fort George Heights and in the year 2000 he, alone, is still covering that beat. It is not fair.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: He still has to cover it. I do not know how many houses there are in Fort George Heights. I do not believe that I have been up there more than once, but there are a large number of houses.

That has not only happened at Fort George Heights, but the problem also exists for the postman working in Baywoods, or Deane's Town, so that the number of postal workers has not kept pace with the types of development and the increase in services throughout Barbados.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael West has explained that we examined this matter in the Ministry of Home Affairs last year and awarded a consultancy to Mr. Glyne Benjamin, former Postmaster General, to study the problem of improving quality of service and enhancing delivery.

He identified that we needed 24 additional postal workers with changes in times of delivery which would immediately see a dramatic improvement in the quality and pace of service.

That is the first thing that we are doing in the Ministry. We are taking action on the Benjamin Report.

Point 1. It is now up to the Ministry of the Civil Service, and the Ministry of Finance to provide us with the 24 persons that Mr. Benjamin has recommended.

Point 2. We are dealing with the Herbert Niles Report. Mr. Niles was the former Postmaster General, who has been elevated to the post of Regional Advisor to the European Universal Postal Union, based in St. Lucia. The consultancy for him was to look at reorganising the structure of the post office. He has recommended a structure which has been put to the workers, their representatives and the committee that has been set up to deal with modernisation of the post office.

His recommendations will cost \$1.8 million, but will bring about dramatic and revolutionary changes in the management of the operations. The country has to be able to afford \$1.8 million to reorganise and restructure the post office.

In my view, it is not too much to ask, because we have to do this modernisation and restructuring with a view to repositioning Barbados' postal services to be competitive if the post office is to continue.

The third study deals with repositioning. It is the British study which the Honourable Member for St. Michael West spoke about. I will not go into that, except to say, that in September, I signed an agreement for a strategic alliance with the British postal service in using Grantley Adams International Airport as a hub for the receipt and distribution of mail from Europe to Barbados, and the rest of the Eastern Caribbean.

We have seen an increase of 12 000 bags this year; from 47 000 to 59 000, for the period to November and, therefore, I wish to say that we believe we have a vision and a perspective for the development of the postal service that will reposition it and make it more competitive.

However, I wish to warn that private investor organisations and other postal services, which are outside of the region, are positioning themselves to take over postal services within the region. The New Zealand post has taken over the Trinidad post and sent home many workers.

There is another Caribbean country that is getting ready to sign and to hand over its postal services to an American private sector company with European interests. I have the agreement which is not yet signed by the Government of that island and I am, therefore, not going to disclose that island in this debate.

I want it clearly understood that that is not going to happen to Barbados, I am going to defend the rights of the Barbadian postal workers and make sure that nobody takes over Barbados' postal service, as long as I am Minister responsible. The other parts of the Caribbean can go and do whatever they want...

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I tell you I have the agreement. It is there waiting to be signed, where another country is willing to enter into an arrangement for a fee to have someone from outside the region to come in and run their postal service.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: You can be sure of that one thing.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy mentioned duty-free cars. That has never been put to me by the postal workers or their representatives, Sir, but since the Honourable Member mentioned it, at the next meeting I will inform them that the representative of St. Lucy is now asking that they be given access to duty-free cars.

Budgetary Proposals, Sir, when it was agreed by the Government and Cable and Wireless that the latter would give up the right to a monopoly instead of having the monopoly for 'X' number of years.

With Cable and Wireless giving up that particular right, I think the public of Barbados would need to know what is the agreement between Government and that particular company. If there is not an agreement why is it that the public of Barbados will now be charged on the length of a phone call instead of having a fixed rate on a monthly basis. I think it should be an obligation of the Government to level with the public of Barbados to let them know that because I do not know of any company that is prepared to give up a 10-year monopoly unless there is something for the company to receive in return. I need to know from the Frontbench of this House what is the agreement between the utility company and the Government of Barbados that has allowed the utility company to give up their monopolistic rights in this particular matter.

Sir, there has been a lot of talk about the Fair Trading Commission and I honestly believe that one of the parties that we will have to watch and should have been controlling is the Government of Barbados. We talked about fair trading and things like that, Sir, but we also have to ask what will be the impact of taxation on certain companies in Barbados because it is all right to tell companies what guidelines they will have to operate under but I feel that the major organisation that needs controlling is the Government of Barbados because it is the Government of Barbados that dictates the increases.

Let me give you an example of what I speak. Let us look at our energy sector. With the stroke of one pen, Sir, the Government of Barbados increased the price of fuel and in increasing the price of fuel everything in Barbados including cement has been affected. So how are we going to control the private sector yet still have no control over that entity that can change the pricing structure in the private sector and also in the public sector at the same time.

I am saying, Sir, that if there is one entity that needs to get involved in the Fair Trading Commission it is the Government of Barbados. That is the one that will impact more so on the lives of Barbadians than any other company.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am saying, Sir, that the Government's taxation policy has automatically impacted on the way the private sector does business and its energy policy will also impact on the way they will do business. The impact does not necessarily mean that it will be the same for each

individual company, Sir. We have to be careful of these situations, Sir, and make sure that we are not on one hand saying that we have to control the private sector but on the other hand the entity that needs controlling is the Government of Barbados. We are not controlling the Government because if there is one entity that impacts on everyone's lives it is the Government of Barbados through its taxation policy whether it be fiscal, monetary or otherwise.

We have to be very careful, Sir, because with the changing of the way business is being done in the world there is no doubt that the private sector in Barbados cannot continue to operate the way it has been operating because as we have said before, now that we have globalisation and trade liberalisation, the private sector of this country must understand that they are not the only players and that there will be players from outside impacting on their businesses.

What we have on the other hand, even though we have free trade, globalisation and trade liberalisation, is that the Government's taxation policy which will not change because instead of it being progressive, it will continue to be regressive in this country. That is why I am saying, Sir, that this Bill might have been needed 10 years ago but I am not sure that we need it now, Sir, because I am telling you that because of what is going on in the world that the private sector in this country must recognise that they are not the only players, that outsiders are playing within the market and that their whole structure is not the structure that was previously there.

With free trade, globalisation and trade liberalisation, the Barbados Telephone Company Limited cannot tell anybody any longer that they can command the telephone services in this world, but Government is sure that whenever it wants taxes that it can come to this Parliament and increase taxes.

The question is, if there are other outside influences impacting on the lives of Barbadians and the private sector, what are we going to do and use to control that entity that will not necessarily be impacted upon in the same way the private sector is being impacted upon and to make sure that efficiency is delivered by that entity. On the one hand we are saying we want fairness and we are only applying the fairness to the private sector without recognising that we also have to apply the same measurements to the public sector in this country.

I am saying that this Fair Trading Commission Bill is needed more for Government now Sir, than anybody else because the private sector is being regularised by outside factors. That is why we need to think seriously about what is happening because we seem not to understand what is going on in the world. Up until April this year, Sir, the Barbados Telephone Company Limited did not have to worry about

outside influences, but as from April many companies in Barbados which never had to worry about the services they were delivering now have to worry about it now because they know that with globalisation the whole structure and protection have changed and they need to change the way they are offering their services and the prices they are charging.

If you are telling me that this Bill is supposed to look after that, I am saying to you, Sir, that 10 years ago this would have meant something, but I am not sure it means anything now, Sir, because competition is going to be so great in Barbados that if one delivers a poor service there is choice where previously there was none. Before, the monopolies in Barbados could do whatever they wanted but the year 2001 will be a different story and we have to recognise that.

We cannot continue to talk about having this type of commission, and this is what really worries me, Mr. Speaker, because we are still behaving as if we in the Caribbean and in Barbados do not have to operate as if we are part of the world. We have to stop fooling ourselves and recognise that we are part of the world and that we cannot come and prepare these documents and they will mean the same thing they would have meant 10 years ago. If you go to Bridgetown now, Sir, and you want a washing machine and you believe that the service that you were getting previously is not the one you want, Sir, you could now go on the Internet and probably buy that same washing machine from Sears with a backup warranty giving you everything you wanted which previously you could not get from Bridgetown. I am saying, Sir, that when the consumers of Barbados needed these protections they did not receive them but now that they do not need them, they are now getting them.

It is clear to me that this could only be doing one thing, Sir, and that is to impact on Barbadians in a negative way because what this is going to be saying, Sir, is that certain bodies in Barbados would be guaranteed the right to have a proper return.
4.00 p.m.

At the same time, it is going to be telling the public of Barbados that they can go and buy and be sure of getting service. In the nineties, they did not have that right, but now in the year 2000 they have that right because they do not have to look to Bridgetown anymore. It is clear to me that if I am to be objective about this I can only come to the conclusion that the Government of Barbados has adopted a document to give the public the impression that they are doing something in their interest and trying to – I congratulate them on this – keep the public within a particular sector in Barbados without realising that the public of Barbados has been educated to such an extent that they know now that they do not necessarily have to rely on the product and service that is being delivered in Barbados.

The public knows that they can use e-commerce, as the Honourable Member likes to talk about, because it is with us. You can now go on the Internet and buy a television. If it lands in Barbados and is not working you can send that television right back out of Barbados at no cost to you under the warranty and get back that television by the next day. Ten years ago when there was no Internet and there was no e-commerce, you could not do that.

To produce a document like this without recognising that the world is not the same world we are operating in and that within one year everything has changed is not to admit that you are up-to-date with what is going on in the world. If the Government of Barbados had done this 10 years ago they would have done a great thing for the consumers of Barbados but we keep fooling ourselves in Barbados that the consumer is only the consumer who can shop in Bridgetown. That is not true. The consumer of Barbados can shop anywhere in the world now and once we accept that point we would recognise that this document might be well intended but not as meaningful as it should have been. I rest my case there, Mr. Speaker.

All I am saying to the Minister is that he has to recognise that this document, just like the Protocol, that we are now talking about, this document is now 10 years too late. We should have been training our people on how to deal with matters like these. Now our people are dealing with the world we are now trying to encourage them to deal with Barbados.

This document is a backward step and cannot be in the interest of the consumer. It has to be in the interest of those people who we claim we want to protect the consumer against, because what we would be doing in documents like these is giving guarantees to those same companies that we are claiming we are protecting the consumer against.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member for St. Lucy used to play cricket he would have to be classified really as a blind 'cow swiper'. I have never heard someone display such a fundamental misunderstanding of what is before this Chamber as was just exhibited by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. It is really fascinating. I travelled with my Ministry the length and breadth of this country holding town hall meetings, meeting with interest groups and nobody in the world besides the Honourable Member for St. Lucy opposed these two Bills. Everybody thought that it was perhaps long overdue. Everybody acknowledged that this was the direction in which any forward-thinking government needed to go. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy wishes to stand alone as a blind 'cow swiper' showing a total misunderstanding of every single thing that these Bills are about.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the people around Barbados, for the benefit of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, this report from the Joint Select Committee has on it the signature of the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. John who signed it agreeing with it. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy would on the Floor of Parliament disagree with his Leader as to the value and worth of the Fair Trading Commission and Utilities Regulation Bills.

The Honourable Member started by saying that the Fair Trading Commission is going to lead to an increase in the water rates. How could you associate the Fair Trading Commission with any automatic increase in rates? The Fair Trading Commission is here to ensure that there is public scrutiny of all the documentation, accounting figures everything in relation to all of the regulating entities or the services to be regulated, then come to a decision after input by the public of Barbados.

That is the whole point. Right now I have a situation where water rates and bus rates are set without the public of Barbados having any say, even telecommunications rates are set without reference to the public of Barbados. You can wake up any day and see in the newspapers that the rates for water have gone up or down, international telecommunications have gone up or down.

When the Fair Trading Commission comes on stream the intention is that all of those entities are not going to be exempt from scrutiny by the Fair Trading Commission. That is the whole point. I was at pains to point this out already in here when I introduced this measure. I went through all of this in detail already. It is unfortunate that I have to do it again. Even the Government institutions have to come under the Fair Trading Commission for scrutiny by the public of Barbados. The focus is not on increasing rates. The object is to move in the direction of increasing efficiency.

The way in which telephone rates for example are charged right now is that you have a rate of return regulations and no incentive whatsoever for efficiency. A simple requirement is that the shareholders must get a certain return on their investments so that any increases are automatically passed on to the consumer. The Fair Trading Commission intends to move in a direction where you move away from that rate of return approach to incentive-type mechanisms for setting rates. It is moving in the direction of things like price gaps, profit sharing where these entities can, if they are efficient, make huge profits. You can make huge profits but you are going to be required to pass a share of these profits back to the consumers in the form of lower prices. That is what the Fair Trading Commission is set up to do. That is the mandate.

The Honourable Member talks about setting up the Fair Trading Commission to increase water rates. That is the level to which he has decided to bring this debate. He discredits his own leader who signed this document saying that this is what should be brought before the people of Barbados. D. J. H. Thompson signed the document recognising the value but he decides he must come and discredit his own leader to be a blind 'cow swiper'.

Mr. Speaker, I really went through this for 2 hours and 15 minutes a couple of months ago in here. I do not know whether the Honourable Member was not here. He could have come and asked me the questions he wanted to raise and I would have told him not to embarrass himself on the Floor of Parliament, but he did not do so. As a member said, it appears as though this is high science and he was really out of his depth.

Mr. Speaker, I really do not intend to speak anymore on this and I wish to move that the Report of the Joint Select Committee on the Fair Trading Commission and Utility Regulations Bills, 2000 be adopted and that the amended Bills appended thereto be the Bills before this Chamber.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I beg to second it.

Mr. SPEAKER: What are you asking for, Sir, the adoption of the Report? We can get it straightened out because it seems as though that is slightly different from what was first proposed as a motion. What I would suggest is that first of all...
4.10 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: The motion before the House is for consideration of the Report of the Fair Trading Commission Bill, 2000 and the Utilities Regulation Bill, 2000.

The question that this Report be adopted was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ORDER NO. 4 – THE FAIR TRADING COMMISSION BILL, 2000

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN seconded by Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in Committee.

Clause 1 was called and passed.

Part 1 – Part VI were called and passed.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: I beg to move that the Schedules 1, 2 and 3 become Schedules to the Bill.

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

On the separate motions of Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN seconded by Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Fair Trading Commission Act, 2000.

ORDER NO. 5 – THE UTILITIES
REGULATION BILL, 2000

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN seconded by Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in Committee.

Clause 1 was called and passed.

Part 1 – Part V were called and passed.

Part VI was called.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, I would like to suggest one amendment to Section 26, subsection 1 on page 14 on the second line, delete the words ‘made under Section 34 of the Fair Trading Commission Act, 2000’.

It will now read:

“where a service provider persists in not complying with an order of the Commission in relation to rates.”

On page 15 Section 26, subsection 8, second line, last word, delete the word ‘the’ and substitute the word ‘and’. It will now read:

“The Commissioner shall be entitled to be heard on any application referred to under subsection 7 and may make an application.”

The second line, Section 26, subsection 1, delete the words ‘made under Section 34 of the Fair Trading Commission Act, 2000’.

It will now read:

“Where a service provider persists in not complying with an order of the Commission in relation to the rates”.

On page 16, Section 28 subsection(1)(a), first line:

The word ‘the’ preceding business should be deleted and ‘its’ inserted. It now reads:

‘the carrying on of the business of the service provider’.

It should read:

‘the carrying on of its business by the service provider’.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: I beg to move that Part VI as amended stand part.

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

Parts VII – IX were called and passed.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: I beg to move that the Schedule 1 become the Schedule to the Bill.

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

On the separate motions of Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN seconded by Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Utilities Regulation Act, 2000.

4.20 p.m.

ORDER NO. 13 – THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO
APPROVE THE VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING
CORPORATION OF LANDSITUATED AT HAMLETS
TENANTRY HINDSBURY ROAD IN THE
PARISH OF ST. MICHAEL

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Resolution before us seeks to vest approximately 14983.2 square metres of lands owned by the Crown inclusive of 655.1 square metres of road at Hamlets Tenantry, Hindsbury Road, St. Michael in the National Housing Corporation for the disposal to the tenants who presently occupy this area.

Mr. Speaker, the parcel of land is part of a larger area containing measurement of 3.2 acres of land which was acquired by the Crown sometime around August, 1972. This land was acquired for the extension of the Hindsbury Girls' School for educational purposes. At the time of the acquisition part of it was tenanted and the tenantry is subdivided into 33 lots ranging from 2.2 square metres to 2.5 square meters inclusive of road.

Mr. Speaker, these tenants presently pay about \$6 per quarter or \$24 annually and it is agreed that when these lots are vested in the National Housing Corporation, the tenants will be able to receive their lots at \$2.50 per square foot. Cabinet has agreed that the residents of Hamlets Tenantry should benefit from the facilities under the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act.

This Resolution, Mr. Speaker, has been examined by the Attorney General and certified for introduction into Parliament.

With these remarks, Mr. Speaker, I beg that this Resolution do now pass and that this land be vested to the National Housing Corporation for disposal to the residents.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I welcome this Resolution to empower the people of Hamlets Tenantry and I am happy to say that the masses of Barbados have a right to own a piece of land in Barbados. At the same time I hope, Sir, that we recognise that we cannot be on one hand trying to empower one sector of people without acknowledging that there are other people who need to be empowered by owning a piece of land in Barbados.

I am hoping, Sir, that the Honourable Minister will make a policy statement acknowledging the rights of all Barbadians to own a piece of land in Barbados. I have said on many occasions, Sir, that it is not fair to believe that only certain people in Barbados should own land and it is not fair not to acknowledge that when a man buys a piece of land and that

piece of land is the only land he owns, that man is entitled to a piece of Barbados also. I will support any measure that entitles Barbadians to own land, but I will not support any measure that says that Government should have a land bank and that they should take from the poor to give to the poor.
4.30 p.m.

I am very, very concerned about this matter, Sir, because as you are aware, land is becoming a scarcity in Barbados and as a Parliament, we must be careful that we are not interfering with the constitutional rights of citizens, by depriving them of having a right to own land in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we have to acknowledge that every man is entitled to ownership in this country, and if we can believe that we are so good that we can come to Parliament and decide who can own land in Barbados...that we can use the Law of Parliament to deprive the citizens of Barbados...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, please. I do not see anything in this Resolution relating to what you are saying.

You started by saying that you support the Resolution and in the remainder of what you are saying, I cannot see the connection between that and the Resolution.

I suggest to you to stick to this Resolution that we have before us, please. This Resolution is about Hamlets Tenantry, St. Michael.

Hon. D. St. E. KELLMAN: That is what I am saying, Sir. Everybody in Hamlets Tenantry has a right to have a piece of the cake in Barbados, that nobody in Hamlets Tenantry should be deprived of their land to give to someone else. That is the point that I am making, Sir.

Hamlets Tenantry, Sir, will consist of landlords and tenants. The landlord has an entitlement to his land, in the same way that the tenant has entitlement to the owning of land.

I am saying, Sir, that we cannot empower the tenant at the expense of the landlord, unless the landlord is capable of giving up that land without the interference of his constitutional rights. Therefore, I am saying, Sir, that both the tenants and the landlord are important.

What I will say is, that I am glad to see this land in Hamlets Tenantry being owned by the Crown. The Crown has an obligation to the less fortunate people of Barbados to provide land for them. That is why I am proud to see the

Crown is selling the land to the people of Hamlets Tenantry and not taking from a poor landlord to give to a poor tenant.

That is the point that I am making, Sir. I thank you for allowing me to speak on this matter.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to support the Resolution which is before the House.

I was very much a part of the St. Michael West constituency and certainly, the issue of bringing persons into positions of power of ownership is to be commended. I want to compliment the Minister of Housing for bringing this to the Chamber today. The privilege of ownership and all that it implies is a significant privilege to be conveyed to persons and I am sure that those who occupy spots in this tenantry would be very much appreciative of this measure.

Recently, we have spoken to a number of them and, for the most part, they are very appreciative of the effort to ensure that they can own this land. I welcome the land being made available to them for the purchase price of \$2.50 per square foot.

I remember speaking to one lady in School Road. Her first response was that she has been paying rent for so long, that she believed that she has already bought the land. She has been there for 42 years. In fact, when you multiply the monthly payments by 42 years, she has not, in fact, come close to purchasing the spot. Of course, I duly pointed out to her that she is paying \$3 per month.

We welcome this for Hamlets Tenantry, Hindsbury Road. Some of these persons have been living on lands for a very long time, some for 40 years. Some lands were passed down from family member to family member, going back 70 years.

I believe that this is a significant measure and I am sure that they would want me, on their behalf when the measure is passed, to express to this Parliament their appreciation.

I am concerned that in one or two instances there were vacant spots. One particularly comes to mind and in fact, a person who has not traditionally resided in the area has had the privilege of purchasing that spot and is now in the process of constructing a two-storied dwelling of some significant size.

I do not know the purchase price which was paid for that spot, Mr. Speaker and I do not have a problem with people of other ethnic backgrounds, but certainly, we would not want to see a situation where some of these vacant lots are being sold to outsiders to the area before those persons who have been residents there for 50, 60, and 70 years.

There is a serious drainage problem which I would like to give some exposure to and which, I believe, should be addressed. In fact, it is an open drain which runs from the back of the Hindsbury Primary School, through Hamlets Gap, through School Road, School Gap, and into Greenidge Road.

Two weeks ago, when we had some heavy downpour this open drainage, which passes through persons' yards and crosses School Road, actually emptied out and became part of the flooding situation at Headleys Land.

We are talking about an open drain, not properly constructed which simply carries water through persons' properties and across the road, and empties out into the upper basin in Headleys Land area. That is the problem.

This land was originally bought for the construction of the new Hindsbury School and I would want to call attention to the conditions of that school. It is in an environment where it does not suffer from vandalism and we are extremely happy about that.

The asbestos around the school is not what one would desire for a primary school in the early 21st Century in Barbados.
4.40 p.m.

I believe a look needs to be taken at what can be done to enhance the school facility. The playing field available to these primary level children, again, is not what would be desirable for that level of child at this level of their development and that also needs to be looked at.

There are two roads which form part of this tenantry, Taylor's Gap and School Gap as the Honourable Minister mentioned in his presentation. It would be remiss of me if I did not mention, once again that these are roads which come off Hindsbury Main Road and lead into the Bank Hall area and which perhaps, not the most careful of drivers use as diversion when there is congestion in the traffic along Hindsbury Road.

There have been instances where a couple of these primary level school children have been struck by passing motor vehicles. In some cases the drivers were not exercising care. Some of them have been public service vehicles, some private motor vehicles making their way through School Road, through Greenidge Road, through Taylor Gap to avoid the traffic on Hindsbury Road.

When one contemplates that Hindsbury Road is one for major construction and repair, I fear what might happen. I have asked before and I am asking again that consideration be given to placing what we call, 'sleeping policemen' in the area of Prescod Bottom at the back of the school to help to address that situation.

I am also asking that consideration be given to making some of these roads one-way for flow of traffic. That does exist in the immediate roads which lead to the school but beyond that in School Road, in Greenidge Road and in Taylor's Gap, this does not obtain. These are very narrow roads. There are multiple numbers of these roads and I would think that the flow of traffic in one direction, could be legislated for some of these roads to reduce the danger which is posed to residents as well as the school children, in particular.

On School Road, there is a spectacle of a shelter for the homeless and that has attracted my attention over the years, even before I was a member of this Honourable House. I think in recent times, it has attracted the attention and the angry interest of the Minister of Social Transformation because of the deplorable state of the building, the ugly, unsightly appearance of the building considering the type of service which is offered through that shelter. I think that something needs to be done with reference to that shelter.

I would want to emphasise the importance of the privilege of land ownership in the St. Michael area and to commend the Honourable Minister again for bringing this measure. I would also like to invite the Honourable Minister of Housing to the area of the St. Leonard's Boys' School where it is my belief that a similar situation exists where a large property would have been acquired for the development of the St. Leonard's School. It is not all used and some could be made available for the tenants who now occupy these lands and pay rents to Government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George North.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that it is the Government's policy to encourage all tenants, especially those who live on Government lands now, to buy their properties. During the next year, we will be bringing most of the Resolutions, including one relating to Thomas Gap of which the Honourable Member for St. Michael West spoke. We will be also looking at Parish Land in St. George and we have mentioned the land at Carpenters Trust but we will be bringing a number of Resolutions in the next year to facilitate all those tenants who now live on Crown lands.

I want to make the point too, that it is the policy of the Government that persons who have lived on Government lands for more than 20 or 30 years and especially if they are over 65 years old that the Crown usually conveys the land for these people without cost. Sir, those persons who are above

the age of 65 always get help from the Government. This is a policy of the Barbados Labour Party way back to the 1980s where persons who live on tenantry lands belonging to the Crown, got their conveyances free of cost.

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move 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.

ORDER NO. 4 – TO RESUME DEBATE ON THE FAIR TRADING COMMISSION BILL, 2000

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

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable House is in Committee.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, this is just a slight amendment that has to be done. In Section 4, subsection (5)(c) we have to insert the words at the end of subsection (c) after the word, competition,

“which the Commission has jurisdiction to administer”
Sir, so that it now reads,

“(c) in any laws relating to consumer protection and fair competition which the Commission has jurisdiction to administer.”

The question that Part II as amended was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee as amended and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.
4.50 p.m.

On the motion of Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Fair Trading Commission Act, 2000.

ORDER NO. 14 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE
THE LEASE TO THE NATION CORPORATION
OF A PARCEL OF LAND SITUATE
AT PRESCOD BOULEVARD IN THE
PARISH OF ST. MICHAEL FOR
THE PURPOSE OF ERECTING
A BOND AND FOR THE
PROVISION OF CAR
PARK FACILITIES

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, this Resolution before this House seeks permission to lease 1 403 square metres of land at Prescod Boulevard to the Nation Publishing Company.

Mr. Speaker, by letter dated August 15, 1998 the Nation Publishing Company requested permission to lease or purchase 1 403 square metres or approximately 15 103 square feet of land at that site for the extension of the car park and the construction of a bond to store newsprint. This lot is situated on the northern boundary of another Government-owned lot which comprised 1 894 square metres or approximately 20 400 square feet which lies between the premises of the Nation Publishing Company and Prescod Boulevard.

Mr. Speaker, we carried out an investigation and it was revealed that the Nation Publishing Company is doing very well and that the staff there have acquired a number of vehicles and that the vehicles are now overflowing the present facilities. Therefore, it was agreed that we would accommodate the company with a lease. The conditions of the lease state that the lease shall be granted for an unexpired portion of the existing 25 years. I must say that the company already has another lease for another portion of Government land which is going concurrent with this one and the lease will commence immediately.

The rent shall be at a current rate of \$18 000 per annum and is subject to be reviewed.

The Chief Town Planner has approved this lease. The Chief Surveyor has marked out the plot for the lease. The Cabinet has agreed to the lease. The Attorney General has also certified this lease to be in keeping with Government policy and with those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I find it rather strange that a company in this day and age would write offering Government to buy land and Government will prefer to go and offer them a lease instead.

The reason I am saying this, Sir, is that one or two years ago another company that is not as local as this company came to this Parliament and got some land in the same area at a ridiculously low price and I would like know how come ...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Alright fellows, please, order, order. Order please, do it orderly, please.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Do it orderly, please, please.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that I find it rather strange that a company that owns so much land in Barbados can come to this Parliament and get this Parliament to agree to sell them land but a company that is very much Barbadian-owned cannot come to this Parliament and get the Government of Barbados to sell them land and they will have to settle for a lease instead of an outright sale.

I find it rather strange, Sir, when the land is in the same location as the other, and the company, as said by the Minister, offered to buy the land but they have been refused the right to buy that land but another company can get the right to buy land all across Barbados and can buy some of the same land in the same location.

I do not think it is right and I think that this particular Resolution should not be adopted and should be sent back to the Ministry of Housing and Lands and it should be demanded of the Ministry of Housing and Lands that this company which is very much Barbadian and is very much a good citizen of Barbados should have the same rights as the other company.

I think it is unfair and I challenged the Government Ministers on the Front Bench and also the Back Bench members not to approve this Resolution but to send it back to the Ministry of Housing and Lands so that this company can buy the land outright. The same way another company can get the land at such a low price, this company should be entitled to buy this land also.

I thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief on this issue because my learned friend on the Other Side, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, seems to have forgotten that it was his party which was in Government who did the first piece of leasing of land on the Boulevard, a 99-year lease.

I would like him to deny to this Parliament that it was his Government that allowed a fast food company a 99-year

lease on the same Prescod Boulevard. Therefore, he should not stand up in this Parliament and try to condemn this Side of the House for situations in which all we are doing is making good on the mistakes that they have made.

Sir, the Nation Publishing Company has asked the Government for a lease of the land. I am familiar with the Nation situation and I think that they are asking for this lease based on the expansion of the company and the movement within the car park. It is necessary for the Nation to have that piece of land because at the present moment it is a problem to exit and enter the Nation Publishing Company, so I see nothing wrong with the lease at this time with the possibility of purchase at a later date.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy makes the statement that I do not know what I am talking about but I would like him to go back and research who leased the first piece of land on Prescod Boulevard and to whom.

Thank you, Sir.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the Nation Publishing Company already has a lease in existence. They have another parcel of land which they leased since 1981 and this is another piece that we have agreed to lease to them.

Of course, the lease does not mean that the company would be disadvantaged in any way because the company would be able to erect their car park. In fact, the Chief Town Planner has made it quite clear that they would be no building on the land. I believe that maybe in another couple of years we may very well consider a purchase but at this time the Government thought a lease would be best.

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

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of order. Sir, out of an abundance of caution I wish to declare an interest as I am, for the time being, a shareholder of the Nation Corporation. 5.00 p.m.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, I am not going to vote in this matter. In fact, I will go out of the Chamber.

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

ORDER NO. 17 – TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE LEASE TO THE
TRUSTEES OF THE BARBADOS CANCER
SOCIETY OF THE PARCEL OF LAND
SITUATE AT HENRY'S LANE IN THE
PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL FOR
THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING
SCREENING CLINICS, WEL-
FARE SERVICES AND
ADMINISTRATIVE
OFFICES

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Resolution before this House seeks permission for leasing of the property known as Dungift situated at Henry's Lane, St. Michael to the Barbados Cancer Society. The Society requests this property which is situated at Henry's Lane because sometime around 1998 the lease to the property which they occupied along River Road was not renewed. This property which is situated to the west of the Barbados Diocese Trust was vacant. It was visited by the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the Chief Town Planner, officials of the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Health and was found to be very suitable to carry out the programme which the Cancer Society is currently undertaking.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, the Cancer Society is providing a number of outreach programmes to a number of persons who are affected by cancer and they plan to have a new radiology service at this time. This will help those persons who have to travel between the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the new site at Henry's Lane.

Dungift is a very suitable property and it is in excellent shape. We believe that this will be the right thing to do. We have looked at the rental arrangement and sale. The Commissioner of Land Tax has valued this property at \$2 500 per month in its present condition. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that this site was used previously by the Diocesan Trustees up to a year ago, but we thought that it would be good to lease it to the Cancer Society.

Mr. President, Cabinet has agreed that we would lease this to the Cancer Society for 25 years in the first instance with an option to renew for a further period and the society would pay a nominal rent of \$100 per annum. The Cancer Society will be responsible for the repairs and maintenance of the property as well as the payment of utilities and insurance.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General has certified this Resolution to be in order for the introduction to Parliament and I beg, Mr. Speaker, that Members agree to approve this Resolution.

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the lease to the Barbados Cancer Society but I would hope, Sir, that when the Cancer Support Services have also to get a lease that the same treatment meted out to the Cancer Society will be meted out to the Cancer Support Services. There is a belief in this country that the two organisations do not do the same thing and one is accorded different privileges to the other.

In supporting this measure, Sir, I would like to have an undertaking from the Minister of Housing that the same privileges will be accorded to the Cancer Support Services when they do apply for a lease.

I thank you, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 10 – TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A
RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE COMPUL-
SORY ACQUISITION BY THE CROWN OF
THE PARCELS OF LAND SITUATE AT
BRIDGE COT IN THE PARISH OF
ST. GEORGE FOR THE PURPOSE
OF ROAD IMPROVEMENT

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, this Resolution before this House is asking Cabinet to acquire 350.9 square metres of land at Bridge Cot, St. George for road improvement. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, this is my constituency and the proposed road leads to a new development at Cottage and Groves.

Mr. Speaker, when Cottage and Groves was bought some years ago, it was discovered that only a cart road was the entrance to the development which is about less than five feet wide.

Aside.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I know all the cart roads in St. George. We would have to do this sort of thing from time to time because throughout the rural areas there are a number of tracks that lead to developments. In order for us to provide proper roads for the residents of these various districts, we would have to do the same thing. We have done it at Woodland, St. George several years ago. We have done it at Drax Hall and we are going to come to this Parliament within the next month or two with a number of acquisitions for improvement of roads in the Bridgetown area. These will be for roads in Black Rock Road, Country Road and Tweedside Road. There is a lot of improvement that we have to do and from time to time, Mr. Speaker, we will have to come to Parliament to acquire land

compulsorily. There are many cases where we have entered into an agreement with people through private treaty arrangement. In many cases where people do not have proper title to the land, Government will have to come to Parliament to give proper title. This acquisition, Mr. Speaker, is one where we are acquiring from two owners, Sargeant and Tull at Bridge Cot, St. George, a small portion of road just for road improvement.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I welcome this compulsory acquisition in Bridge Cot in the parish of St. George which happens to be in the constituency of St. George North. This Parliament is supposed to be about fairness and I would like to know, Sir, if all of the compulsory acquisitions are only going to be in St. George North or whether this Parliament will have some fairness.
5.10 p.m.

We have a particular problem in this Parliament and I have given this Parliament what I thought was a useful suggestion and that is that whatever we do there be a fair allocation but it appears that we are not adopting that strategy and that St. George is not St. George. If you are in St. George it matters whether you are in the North or in the South. I do not think that that is fair because as a Parliament we must be the ones to project and allocate according to fairness but I am not seeing this allocation and fairness when I am discussing issues.

I am not sure who will provide the road and I need to know from the Minister whether the National Housing Corporation will be allocating money to provide for this road or whether the Minister will be applying to the Public Works Ministry to get a road onto this particular property. That is a question that I need answered.

We also have to recognise that in allocating lots in this particular area that we just do not give people land and then when they look outside they are too close to their neighbours. It is okay to empower a man but you must give him enough land that he can develop. One of my greatest fears, Sir, is that we are rushing to give people land but we are not thinking into the future and we are going to allocate 2500 square feet of land to people and there will be no room for future development.

We will also have another serious problem. The Minister acknowledged that in order to get lots in his constituency it is important to put a road in. I would like the Minister to say that this is his policy that wherever he, the Honourable Member for St. George North, plans to allocate lots that he will make sure first, Sir, that there is a road to the

particular lots that he is providing for the people. If not, Sir, what we are going to find is that we will allocate lots and the lot sizes are such that the people cannot develop the lots but they claim that they have land and whenever they apply to Town and Country Planning they do not have enough land to build on those lots if they have to remove the present houses. I warn you, Sir.

This is especially important – I know that this debate is about St. George – to those MPs who represent constituencies in the St. Michael area I would say: be careful what you are accepting and make sure that your constituents have all the necessary amenities and that they just do not have a piece of land where they cannot get the other amenities. Thank you.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would want to support this measure for an acquisition and concur with the sentiments of the Member for the Other Side who last spoke except on the issue of fairness. I want to challenge the Honourable Minister of Housing and Member for St. George North, not on the issue of fairness, but on the issue of awareness. I would want to remind the Honourable Member that the business of land acquisition in St. Michael area is of critical importance and I would want to bring to the attention of the Honourable Member for St. George that it is my view that we should move with haste whenever the opportunity presents itself to acquire land especially in the St. Michael area for housing development for areas which traditionally have not been given significant levels of opportunity to enjoy housing development to the same extent that some of the urban areas have.

There is a very large tract of land at Strathclyde which I believe the Ministry of Housing should move speedily and establish a timetable for acquisition for development of housing.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot speak for your constituents but I am sure you are privileged to have some housing development on Bush Hall Main Road but it is a very small constrained area. I believe in St. Michael where there are large tracts of land available Government has the obligation to move with haste towards acquisition and I recommend again to the Minister of Housing that we move with haste to do some sort of acquisition for the Strathclyde property so that we might develop housing for the St. Michael constituency. Thank you.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, in talking about fairness we have acquired land in almost all the constituencies and we have plans to acquire lands for road improvement and recreation. We have acquired land in the St. Michael Central area for hard courts, road improvements and for housing. There is a new development going on in the Bush Hall area.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, a small one.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: It should contain more than 14 or 15 houses but we will continue to acquire land. In the Strathclyde area the old Washington building that the Member is speaking about we have surveyed that land but the legal formality takes some time. I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in the case of Bridge Cot this acquisition started a long time ago and I believe the road has been completed. It takes long to get to Parliament.

Once there is an agreement, Government can enter but if there is no agreement then we have to do the compulsory acquisition. We are doing acquisitions. In Redmans Village there is a need for a small area for vendors which we will do and Government is committed to vending. We have acquired in the last two years a site for vending in the Christ Church area where a new facility has been set up.

Not every acquisition comes to Parliament. Some are done by private treaty and we usually go through the Ministry once it is approved by Cabinet and the work is agreed. There are lots of road improvements that are done by private treaty and some which we are currently doing. Only recently in St. Michael East we completed an acquisition that started over five years ago. We are continuing acquisitions and I want to assure all members that we are trying to be as fair as possible and we will continue to provide service for the members.

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

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, that concludes Government's business for the day. As I can foresee it, these matters that were done today should occupy the Senate's attention tomorrow and the House will resume on Friday for the last Sitting of this year at which time we will have to do a supplementary and perhaps one other matter that is on the Order Paper so that it should be a short Sitting on Friday to conclude our work for the year.

I therefore beg to move that the House do adjourn until Friday, December 15, 2000 at 11 o'clock in the morning.

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

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.
5.20 p.m.

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