

THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1999 - 2004

Thursday, March 16, 2000

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER:

This sitting is resumed.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Sir, I rise to make my contribution on the second reading of the Appropriation Bill. First of all, I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs for his excellent handling of this Barbados economy and for what was a very focused and very enlightened approach to the debate of this Bill.

Unfortunately, I cannot pour the same praises on the Honourable Member for St. John because instead of taking a leaf from the Right Honourable Prime Minister, he spent his time in a rambling expedition touching on this and falling down over that. It leaves me to believe that his plans for his post political career would include that of being a writer of fiction and that he is already in practice for that future profession.

We were treated - if you could call it that, Sir - to a display with respect to a document which purported to represent arrangements concerning Barbados Sugar Industry Ltd. (BSIL), Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust (BACT) and the Barbados Agricultural Management Company (BAMC) which was along the lines of the now infamous alledged secret deal arrangement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), proof of which is yet to see the light of day.

Sir, I take my comfort more from non-fiction writers. When I read, I tend to read more of the non-fiction. One such non-fictional approach was taken by Standard and Powers in their Sovereign Rating Service Report on Barbados for 1999. In short, what they were reporting related primarily to the status of Barbados' international credit rating. In that credit rating Barbados was given the highest rating that would normally be achieved by emerging economies. In fact, the rating which we have received for an island of our size is the same of that which has been achieved by larger countries such as China.

In terms of Barbados' domestic currency rating, we were given an A- for the long term and an A2 for short term foreign currency rating. In fact, it is a triple A for the long term local currency and an A- and an A1 and A2 for the foreign currency.

I want to call this Parliament' attention to the comments which have been associated with that particular rating. That rating as was indicated is not based on an approach of a writer of fiction. That is based on research. It is based on fact. It can stand the scrutiny of all and sundry. That Report was not

written by people with vested interest unlike the Honourable Member for St. John whose only vested interest is to try to regain lost ground. I trust that at the end of the day that he would recognise that any ground that he has lost has been ground of his own undigging.

Sir, the Report by Standard and Powers indicated that the Barbados ratings reflect - and I will make this a document of the House - a tradition of prudent economic management. It represents, as I indicated, our shift toward a service economy by way of a shift from dependence on sectors which are based on commodity prices. They indicated that our debt service is well below that of comfortable countries. Barbados has been able to keep its hand out of the lions' mouth by prudent management of its international debt. This means that because of our low levels of debt service, we are still able to ride out bad economic times because the major portion of our foreign exchange earning is not siphoned out by way of large international debt service. That is an extremely important point to note.

Sir, in terms of the outlook, this internationally creditable agency reported an expectation that Barbados' economy will continue to grow. In short, they were glowing in the terms which they used to describe the management of this country' economy and I would have to side with them rather than with the Honourable Member for St. John in making an assessment of the performance of this Government in general and an assessment of the performance of the Right Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

The quality of our economic management was listed as being better than that of other countries in the larger region. Sir, the standards of governance, transparency and public accountability were also lauded. If one were to believe the Honourable Member for St. John, Sir, one would believe based on his presentation yesterday that none of that in fact existed.

Sir, I could go on about the general attributes and the positive approach by this Government but I want to respond to a number of matters which were raised by the Honourable Member for St. John. I am so sorry, Sir, that he is not in his seat at this point in time.

The Honourable Member for St. John sought to make an assessment and castigated the performance of Honourable Members on the front bench particularly in relation to the Ministry of International Business and also several other ministries. The Honourable Member sought to give the impression that we are doing nothing. That we are coasting along and that nothing is happening.

The Honourable Member for St. John and Leader of the Opposition, established a standard of performance whereby he said nothing new was happening. That no legislation falls under the Ministries and so on. This, Sir, is coming from the Leader of the Opposition who in his five years as a Minister was a dismal failure. The Leader of the Opposition in five years did not introduce one single piece of legislation in the House of Assembly. The Minutes of the proceedings of the House of Assembly will not note attached to the Honourable Member for St. John, introduction of major innovative piece of legislation.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN:

On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. If the Honourable Member were to go back to the Income Tax (Amendment) and the Tax Reforms surely the Honourable Member would have recognised that it would have been the Honourable Member for St. John who would have

piloted those measures to this House.

Asides

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN:

Tax reform is not major! Now I understand the problem on the front bench.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy does not know the difference between major and minor. We are not speaking about tinkering. We are speaking about an Honourable Member who presupposes that he is in a position to stand in judgement on matters of performance when in his turn at the wheel he did not even drive into crash. He remained in park. He did not get out of the parking lot.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy talks about amending income tax legislation. The Honourable Member for St. John had the opportunity to bring a new direction to tax reform namely the Value Added Tax (VAT) system. Three years he sat on it. No action. The Honourable Member for St. John had the opportunity to introduce the Financial Institutions Act to reform the way how financial institutions are administered. He remained in the car park, in park. The Honourable Member for St. John had the opportunity to introduce a new Insurance Act to give effect to the policy for convergence between the domestic and the international insurance sectors. He remained in park. So it rings a little hollow. He sounds like a person who does not have a driver's licence and is making pronouncements about the traffic rules, the speed limit on various roads and road safety. Not qualified to speak.

2:10 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. R.R. FARLEY:

The Honourable Member, you will recall, also had responsibility as he indicated for what was established then as an International Business and Financial Services Unit, boasting that he established the unit with four persons and purported to suggest that since that time nothing has happened.

The establishment of that site would also have been a reflection of the Honourable Member's vision for the international business and financial services sector. He saw it as being no better and going no further than being a nickel-and-dime unit, lost away in the Ministry of Finance, where, if he could not bring attention to major matters as I mentioned earlier he certainly could not get around to bringing action to that.

It was this administration that sought to bring international business and financial services, loosely referred to as the offshore sector, to prominent focus when we assumed Government in 1994. Were it left to the Honourable Member for St. John, it would still be a tiny financial services unit lost away in a Ministry led by a Minister who knew nothing of innovation and charting a new course.

Sir, what about performance? The sector has performed creditably under the prevailing circumstances.

It is clear, Sir, and we all know that the sector has lain under a cloud of uncertainty, based on a number of international initiatives. Notwithstanding that, the sector has been able to show some growth when measured in terms of the number of companies registered, but the Central Bank in its review of the economy for 1999 noted, and I quote:

“Despite a fall in the rate of growth of new registrants in international business and financial services sector activity in the sector rose over the 1998 figure.”

The Honourable Member for St. John had indicated publicly that he was withdrawing from active practice of law, that he was going to become a full time politician. It is clear, Sir, that he has so withdrawn from himself being a practitioner within the international business and financial services sector he has lost all touch. In fact, Sir, the only technical term that I heard him use in relation to the sector, if you can call it a technical term, he has now lost his vocabulary, he is speaking of it as gobbledegook. His own words, Sir, I do not know if the Hansard Reporters will be able to capture the appropriate spelling but that is what the member for St. John has been reduced to gobbledegook, not to intelligent articulation of the issues, the challenges and direction for the sector.

Sir, the reality is that a number of firms in the sector which are already here have been into expansion with traditional alliances into a number of initiatives, particularly with the firms in the markets that they serve so that while there has been a rate of growth which has been smaller than the last couple years - and there has been growth - there has been more business being done in the sector. Sir, let us look at the figures.

The number of international business companies now stand at 3 399, the total foreign sales corporations at some 2 857, societies with restricted liability - 97 and the list goes on. The Honourable Member for St. John would also have wanted to suggest that this administration has done nothing to trigger the growth in the sector. The figures indicate that the real take-off in this sector only occurred in 1996 which is a reflection of the impetus which would have been given to the sector, the shot in the arm, by this administration coming into office in 1994.

Now, Sir, when we examine what drives growth in the offshore sector we recognise that there are people in the international markets, particularly in OECD countries, who are looking to rationalise international health planning, who are looking to reduce their operating costs, who are looking to exploit new trade and other opportunities internationally. If members understand the cloud that surrounds this sector internationally, not just Barbados, and the nature of that, then they would begin to understand the very great forces against which we fight.

The international community, Sir, has urged us to diversify, to move from manufacturing and from agriculture into the provision of services. Having sought to do that, and having done it successfully, there is now a theology arising out of the soul of the industrialised countries which says now that they have a concern about the mobility of capital internationally, the movement of money.

They say now that they have a legitimate concern in the State's case about money laundering and international criminal activity and the last confirmed admission, of course, is their inability to administer their own taxation laws to collect taxes in their own countries. The danger is that they have sought to associate international financial centres with all the evils which afflict them in their countries.

So rather than fixing their tax collection system, they have sought to do something else. Rather than recognising that the largest destinations for money laundering are in the industrialised countries themselves involving onshore banks and citizens of those countries, they have sought to portray international business centres internationally as being the culprits in this particular matter.

So the challenge arises out of the actions of the OECD which is a group of 29 mainly industrialised countries, the United States of America, Canada, much of Europe, including the United Kingdom. It arises out of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) which, in its legitimate drive to stamp out money laundering and other international evils, is seeking to broaden its scope in such a way as to impact negatively.

It arises, Sir, from actions by individual countries, the latest of which is the United States of America which has indicated that it will seek to broaden its existing programme against money laundering by seeking first of all to identify countries as tax havens, which is part of the OECD effort. If the countries are unfortunately blacklisted, then in the case of the United States, for example, they would want to establish such rigorous reporting criteria involving any casual transaction with those locations and the establishment of any business, not just necessarily offshore business in those locations, as would obviously cause persons in those markets to think twice and to hesitate concerning the establishment of business in these jurisdictions.

We, of course, have not been idle in the face of those threats. The Government of Barbados from the first time it became aware of the threats, in the first instance of the OECD Report, has over the last few weeks in terms of the Financial Action Task Force engaged a team of professionals in the sector as well as public officers to respond and deal with the issues.

2:20 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. R.R. FARLEY:

In fact, I am at liberty to indicate to this Honourable Chamber that as a result of efforts of the Barbados team that there is a much better understanding and appreciation by the OECD for the nature of

the offshore sector in Barbados. They have not made their pronouncements as yet so I cannot make any pronouncements myself but to say to you that much of the ignorance which informed their perceptions that Barbados is a tax haven, in their estimation, has been cleared up and that we are continuing to work very closely with the OECD and other international groups to ensure that we are not so labelled.

I want to remind Honourable Members that from the inception of this sector, and this sector would have arisen out of actions of a former Barbados Labour Party administration, that we had made a very clear policy decision that Barbados was not to be a tax haven. We made a very clear policy decision that we would not go after quantity, we would go after quality international investors. We made the very clear decision that we would not include in our legislation matters which would encourage money laundering and other criminal activity. Barbados unlike other jurisdictions does not have provisions for numbered accounts, it does not so harness the competent tax authorities of Barbados that they cannot fulfill Barbados' obligations under international tax exchange agreements. In short, Sir, the policy of Barbados has always been to steer clear of those actions which would have us listed as a tax haven.

Unfortunately, Sir, the international press has not been kind. The international press, whether it be the Globe or Mail, whether it has been New York Times or other publications in the United States, have given examples of other jurisdictions - Caribbean, Europe, the Pacific in which there is questionable activity and gave us specific examples, but just in a one-liner mentioned quite casually that there are also offshore centres in Barbados and so on and so on, giving the impression without making the accusation directly, but giving the impression, incorrectly so, that Barbados is one of the countries which are involved in unsavoury activity. In fact, in this regard, Sir, I would want to congratulate the Honourable Attorney General's office, as a representative in the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, which has developed much of the framework to ensure that in our thrust to attract international business to Barbados we are able to identify persons who are questionable and prevent their insertion into the business fabric of Barbados. We continue, Sir, to press on in that particular task.

Sir, speaking a bit more about the response of the Ministry of International Business to these particular threats, I am sure that other Honourable Members would speak more fully on this matter. Sir, the Ministry has proceeded along a course not based merely on its own guidance....

Asides.

Hon R. R. FARLEY:

I am pleased to see the Honourable Member for St. John is now in his seat now that I have gone off the lashes into the other matters.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has proceeded along the lines of making a certain response to these challenges which face us not based on its own guidance alone but by way of ensuring that there is a mechanism in place for public and private sector cooperation in a sector which, at the end of the day, Sir, is one run by the private sector for the private sector. The Government is only a facilitator. The Government itself is not a service provider or an investor in the sector.

Sir, for persons to suggest, especially persons in the private sector, to suggest that there are no plans for the sector, that there is no vision for the sector is to chance an indictment on the private sector itself because the strategic plan of the Ministry of International Business and more particularly of the

International Business and Financial Services division was developed by the same private sector led committee.

Sir, I will not call any names on this occasion but just to say to you that the composition of this Advisory Committee on International Business which, as I have said, Sir, have developed the strategic plan over the next fifteen years or so for the sector which has a marketing and promotions subcommittee which identifies the promotions that we should do and the markets that we should tackle. It has, Sir, a legislative and administrative subcommittee which identifies the new legislation that should pass, what administrative procedures we should put in place. It has as well, Sir, a subcommittee that looks at issue within trade negotiations, which country we should pursue for treaties and the like.

This Committee, Sir, includes as its Chairman an eminent Attorney-at-Law. The Deputy Chairman is a partner in one of the foremost international accounting firm - he is their tax partner, Sir and his job is to work with the sector in international tax matters. Another representative of the firm is a person who functions now as a consultant in the offshore sector but who was a partner in yet another accounting firm, a managing partner of another accountant firm, the offshore banking manager of a major Canadian bank, a tax partner with yet another accounting firm. All the big accounting firms are represented, Sir. There is another Attorney-at-Law, a representative of the international business association of Barbados representing offshore investors themselves in international business, a representative of the Barbados Exempt Managers Association and we can go on and on, Sir. That is the calibre of persons who would have worked on developing Barbados' response not only to the OECD threat but identify the specific action which we would take, Sir, into the future to ensure our growth.

Sir, I look forward to the debate on the Head of Industry and International Business where I would be able to go into all of the details of the specific actions which we have taken already and which we propose to take in the face of these threats.

Sir, I want to identify one last issue before I close. We recognise as well, Sir, that a counterpart to the improvement in the international environment, which we abide with, would be the need to bring all of Barbados on board. Barbados has not yet fully made the transition to making itself a full service driven economy. The Government alone cannot do it, but each and every private individual, business and Government department must so improve their efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of service to develop a sense of urgency and to develop a focus, as to lend us a hand in the particular regard. One of the first actions of the recently established National Commission on competitiveness will be to take a look at all of the government departments which impact on the success of our international business efforts, there are the Corporate Registry and other sections in my Minister, there are the Immigration Department, Customs and other in finance at the Attorney General's office, to ensure that we have a single well focussed, well oiled machinery in place.

Sir, I recognise your signal that my time is up. I just want to say that the sector, notwithstanding the clouds of uncertainty which have been generated by international threats as I have outlined have responded well under the circumstances. The Government is aware and ready and all arms of Government both in this Ministry and across the board are very much committed to making this sector achieve its fullest potential. I will expand more fully, Sir, on the performance of this particular sector, as indicated, when we come to debate the Head.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:30 p.m.

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Hon. Miss B.A. MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my voice to this debate and I would wish to start on much the same subject where the last Honourable Member left off.

It is quite correct what the Honourable Member said, that in an earlier administration - and I was a part of that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, - we took a deliberate decision in respect of services. Barbados was among the first countries in the Eastern Caribbean to treat tourism in a developmental manner, so to speak. But what are now described as the financial offshore services, Sir, I remember when in the teeth of much opposition in this Chamber in an earlier administration, much opposition from the now Opposition which was the then Opposition as well, that we were going to bring all of the worst aspects of offshore financial business to this country.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B.A. MILLER:

Do not tell me do not go into it. I am not speaking to you, of course, Mr. Speaker, but the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is sotto voce saying, "do not go into that", because he does not want to be reminded that his Party stood in bitter opposition - and we were going to bring the gamblers and the Mafia was going to come here, and Barbados was going to be reduced to bodies floating in the Careenage, oh, the language was very colourful in here. We took that very deliberate decision and put wheels in motion. Not a great deal happened in the eight years that we were in Opposition between 1986 and 1994. We found ourselves as in so many other sectors, coming back into Government, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to put some fire under the sector, so to speak.

The sector, as the Honourable Member who last spoke pointed out, is very much under attack. This is a sector where the private and public sectors have got to be more cooperative and more collaborative in seeking to answer the attack that is coming to us from the developed countries. It is that same small group of developed countries who like to arrogate to themselves the right to say how we must govern our affairs. The same select group that you will find in the security council of the United States, Sir, the same select group that you will find in the so-called Green Room Conference in the World Trade Organisation, the OECD, there are everywhere, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and this is an area where - certainly in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, in the Ministry of Finance, in the Ministry of International Business, in the Ministry of Agriculture, in the Ministry of Tourism, any of the services, and all of the services - we have to look to monitoring and defending ourselves against the onslaught of the industrially advanced countries.

I wish to speak particularly to the OECD today because in this area, this is where the attack is. We have sought in Barbados to diversify around the old agricultural commodities and around the small industrial sector that we have in manufacturing into this area. We have invested heavily through our educational legislation system, in fact, through all of our social sectors, we have invested heavily so that we have a work force, Mr. Speaker, Sir, which is easily re-deployed and we have been able to make some inroads in this sector.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I would go so far to say that it is fair judgment to say that we have become competitive. If we had not in these islands - and Barbados in particular - become competitive, the OECD countries would not now be looking to force back onshore to the developed countries the business which we now entertain of sure up. The OECD published a report which spoke among other things to harmful tax practices. We woke up one morning literally in Barbados to discover that the OECD had again arrogated to itself, without any authority legal or otherwise, to assign Mexico to monitor harmful tax practices led by money laundering in Barbados. Now, that was offensive to begin with. Mexico, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is a country which is now at No.55 on the list of corrupt countries. It shares that 55th position, with Ghana, the Philippines and Senegal. Fifty-five may sound a long way down the list, but do you know what 55 means, Sir, that on a scale of one to ten, they are 3.3, Barbados does not stand in that distance so it is offensive to us that we would wake up and hear that Mexico has been assigned the task to monitor Barbados.

The OECD countries, Mr. Speaker, Sir, are giving lip service to comment that they are not looking to hurt developing countries like ours but in truth and in fact if you look at their action, and it is by their action rather than by their words that they are known, you will see that we are literally under attack. At the beginning of this year, we heard that, it is an amazing thing, the United States helped to trigger a banana dispute just over a year ago, protecting certain Central American banana producers, whose labour practices are so despicable, they do not match up to anything that we can even imagine in a place like Barbados but they brought their case - the World Trade Organisation we remember at all times was a world-based organisation - and they got their judgment. I saw things happen in that connection that I did not think could be happening at this stage of our development, where in an appeal, the appeal tribunal would be chaired by an American, who would then fine against our banana producing interest in the Caribbean even more harshly than the original judgment against them.

When we are calling for fairness and freedom and not only free trade, but fair trade and transparency, these points have to be made. They do not like it when I make these points but this is reality, some

people are shocked when they hear it but that is what happened. The Americans never thought, of course, Sir, that the boot will very soon be on the other foot and in respect of foreign sales cooperation, they found themselves now on the other side of the fence with countries like Barbados and St. Croix and a few others in the Caribbean. The attack then was coming from Europe and thereby hangs a large tale. All of this has happened in this year 2000 already. Two weeks after that, the onslaught then came in the United States against the offshore banks and the heads roll were rained down on Antigua and Barbuda in particular, on Dominica and even Grenada.

2:40 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. Miss B.A. MILLER:

A few weeks later, we are still in the year 2000 and we haven't finished the first quarter yet. Only a couple of weeks ago I was in Washington and top page news in Master Times, two attacks, shelter loopholes, four of the most powerful insurance companies have found shelter in Bermuda; and legislators in Congress and in the Senate are jumping up and down and carrying on, shouting at the top of their voices, legislation must be brought to close it. So they are giving lipservice one way but their actions speak differently. A lot of talk about money laundering. We are not fools. We recognise that it is in our interest to have a clean domicile, and we are very jealous of the clean domicile that we have developed. We say 'no' perhaps more often than we say 'yes'. We are very selective. It is like the fledgling shipping registry that we have, very, very selective. There's no distinction between 'no-tax' regimes and 'low tax regimes'. Everybody gets lumped together. You hear about these tax havens in the Caribbean. I read it all the time in international journals, like XY Barbados A B and C, no distinction whatsoever and this is hurting us. This is important business for us. So when I say that this sector is under attack, I hope that Honourable Members begin to have some understanding of where the fighting is. The truth is Mr. Speaker, at base it is not about money laundering. As the Honourable Member who just spoke pointed out, money laundering was invented in the developing countries, perfected in the developing countries, and like so many other things, exported in to some developing countries. But it is not really about money laundering, because the same strictures they want to apply to us, we are not hearing that they are getting applied in the Island Man and in the Channel Islands and in so many other locations that we can mention. It is not so much about money laundering. It is that they want to drive that whole offshore business sector back on shore. It represents billions of dollars lost to them. It represents millions of dollars lost to us as well and it is getting to a point where they want to dictate to us what our local tax policies must be like.

I was shocked to hear the Americans for the first time using the word 'sovereignty', talking about attacks on their sovereignty but when the word 'sovereignty' falls out of our mouths you hear that these are little tin pot developing countries now come to independence and are full of themselves about sovereignty but now I am hearing that word fall out of the mouths of the Americans. This sector, Mr.

Speaker, Sir, is under severe attack and rather than the private sector in this island, and other islands in this region attacking the Government, they should be looking to see how best they can collaborate with the Government to answer this attack and fight back for our market share, because as I have said, we have become competitive. There's a market share out there that is ours. There is more market share that we can get and we have to get out there and defend it, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, in June of this year, we hear that once a certain meeting is held, we believe in the last week of June, a list of tax havens

is going to be published.

Now again this is the ADCDs doing as they like.

Many countries are nervous that they are going to find themselves on the list, some are even more nervous that they will find themselves high up on the list, but I would be watching with great interest to see if and how distinction is made between no tax and low tax regime, Barbados being a low tax regime. I would be looking with great interest to see which countries are going to be at the top of the list. Mr. Speaker, we have important fight on our hands to make sure Barbados doesn't find itself on that list. There are other areas too, Mr. Speaker, in which we have decided that there is a niche for Barbados, and no sooner it seems that no sooner we have made that decision, like in the case we just described that we are under attack. Some morning I get up, Mr. Speaker, and wonder what would there be left for small developing economies like ours. If it is going to be decreed by the OECD and other major developed countries that we are not to have this and we are not to carve out a little niche or the other. If at the same time we can account a way in which the WTOs rulings will force us, together with the rest of the world, a lot of what is traditional to us ceases to be preferential. The treatment that we get ceases to be concessionary, ceases to be preferential, you have to wonder what is left for us. We cannot just roll over. We have to get out there and fight back. We have to fight back at all levels.

This fight, Mr. Speaker, is sometimes a very costly undertaking. We have to look to lobby Government at the highest level. We have to look to lobby, particularly in the United States, which is the hemisphere in which we find ourselves, we have to do what we can to repair what is not a good relationship, Mr. Speaker, Sir, between the Governments in these islands in CARICOM and the leadership of the Black Progressive Caucus in the United States. We have to look for allies wherever we can find them; In the private sector as well, because a lot of this business itself is private sector-driven. We have to look to make alliances where it is in our interest to do so and to clone friendships, create allies in that sector as well. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this little island, 166 miles is our entire services product. In the case of tourism which of course is the leading service for us, the whole of Barbados is our serving product, but it is as well in respect of the offshore financial services. I would like to move on to make another point in this connection. It is very important, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that the island of Barbados should be showcasing itself as domicile, as a destination to which people would wish to come, not only for leisure but also for business as well.

2:50 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

That is why the tourism development programme is so important to us. The programme such as it is now, will bear development in the years to come. Certainly, in this first phase, the redevelopment of Bridgetown as the capital city will be the city to which people will come to do business and to which people will come to shop and for leisure purposes.

The Cabinet met this morning and a couple of hours ago I drove down Bay Street coming from Government Headquarters here. In a window just across the street from the London Bourne Towers - you like the sound of that, Mr. Speaker, the London Bourne Towers - which is now inhabited - I looked on that side but I looked on the other side as well - I saw at least 100 tourists disporting themselves on the beach there.

There is a saying that Bridgetown is perhaps the only capital city in the world with a major good white sand clear watered recreational beach on both sides. There is Brighton/Brandons on one side and Bay Street/Browns Beach on the other side. The Bridgetown redevelopment plan is very important in helping to showcase Barbados in this way. So is the Speightstown redevelopment and St. Lawrence Gap redevelopment, the sooner we can get to it.

Asides

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy is suggesting that I should mention Crab Town. That can come in a phase II.

As I have said, Mr. Speaker, the whole of Barbados is our product and we have to prepare ourselves for the fight of our market share in all of these areas. That is why, Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade we have already established an electronic trade information centre with the support of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Secretariat. It is physically located in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building at No. 1 Culloden Road. We want it to be known and we are taking steps to let it be known that this is available and accessible to the private sector as well as to the public sector. People are welcome to come and have access to this electronic trade information centre. We are hoping that in the financial year that is coming - and these Estimates will reflect that - that we will be able to very quickly begin to expand this centre.

Mr. Speaker, there is widespread ignorance - I am using the word 'ignorance' in its proper context, lack of knowledge and a lack of understanding of where Barbados is and the implications of the negotiations although I speak at every opportunity that avails itself here and abroad on these matters. The Right Honourable Prime Minister whenever the opportunity is given to him, he speaks to the negotiations that are going on in respect of our relationship with the European Union and what we are seeking to achieve within the Free Trade Areas of the Americas.

The Prime Minister started off his presentation yesterday morning by alerting Barbadians to the fact that the CARICOM heads of Governments had the day before signed on to the last two of the nine Protocols by which we are amending the Treaty of Chaguanamas so that Barbados can better reposition itself for accessing this new globalized economy of the early 21st Century. There is still a dismal lack of knowledge and understanding out there of the implications of all of these things and where Barbados is. The man and the woman in the street have to understand what the implications are at a personal level.

In this regard, I am determined that in this coming financial year we must step up our programme for public information. To date, we had two seminars on positioning Barbados in the multilateral trading system and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreement on agriculture and Barbados' obligations under that agreement. Indeed, that latter one, the Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South and myself participated in that at the Sherbourne Centre two to three weeks ago. It was very well attended by mostly people from both the public and private sector. It is important that we spread that net wider so that those who write to the newspapers, those who write in journals, those who call in on the call-in-programmes and those who are involved one way or another in public dialogue can be better informed.

We are planning to schedule three more seminars during the course of this year to lift the educational efforts. There have been three radio programmes on liberalisation and globalisation. Liberalisation and globalisation are words people are using very loosely. They are using them interchangeably but there are two distinctive things. They are related but different and we need to make people understand that.

Barbadians are some of the most highly educated people in the world. I like to say sometimes that they are the most highly educated people in the world. As far as our political education goes, I do not think that there is any other country that can top us on that. We need to make Barbadians understand what the commitments are that Barbados is faced with in respect to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

We are planning six other radio and television programmes over the course of the next year. We have prepared a brochure on Barbados and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), that has been circulated to the public but I believe that it has not been circulated widely enough. We are planning more brochures to be produced and put into circulation during the course of the coming financial year.

There used to be a time when we had an information kiosk in Independence Square. We do not have it anymore. I would like to appeal to the Honourable Attorney General - who tells me that he is hearing me - into whose portfolio information now falls and everything else for a return of not only one but several such kiosks around Barbados, not only in Bridgetown but we should have one in Speightstown as well. They could quite easily fit into the function of the public libraries of Barbados. Certainly, we should have one in Bridgetown that is easily accessible to all. Independence Square was an excellent location

for it where people could go and pick up brochures and other publications full of information which the public needs to know.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to say that I do not think that this is an area for partisanship. I think that at this stage, this is an area for a closing of ranks among political parties, the social partnership, the public and the private sector and civil society as well in Barbados in this fight. When we were not threatened in this way, I suppose you could have tolerated a lot of what we are seeing now.

3:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. Miss B.A. MILLER:

This sector is so much under attack on a daily basis, and this is only the tip of the iceberg, because, as I said, Mr. Speaker, it represents billions of dollars. Do not let us fool ourselves. The Americans are in an election mode and for the next several months the attack is going to strengthen so that we need all hands to the pump, so to speak. This is not a time now to be fighting among ourselves and to be harping in criticism among ourselves. This is a time that we need to be going to the defence of this sector.

I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

Mr. Speaker....

Mr. SPEAKER:

You are giving away, Sir?

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

Yes, I will give away.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member for St. Michael East.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to make this intervention. I am even more honoured that the Minister has given way to me to make this contribution. I want to make a shift from the esoteric presentations which were made and I will try to make some contact with a people's presentation, an explanation of my observations of the provisions in the Estimates and also an examination of the sociological and political interpretation of the Estimates that are before us today.

To some extent, I want to examine the kind of momentous opportunity which these Estimates have given to us to examine and reflect, also to look at the planning projections within the Estimates, not just in relation to the figures, but in relation to what we witnessed yesterday in terms of the interpretations and the slants that were put on the Estimates, also to examine Government's performance between 1999 and 2000, and to look at the future of the Government's plans for 2000- 2001.

In other words, Sir, I want to put the Government under a microscopic view and look at the wider dimensions of the administration of Government and the performance within the last year to see if as a consequence of the explanations and the discourse of the Honourable Prime Minister and representative of St. Peter we can lay claims and confirm that the ship is travelling in friendly waters to its destination.

Certainly, as we reflect, because in this analysis we must make a comparative analysis of this administration's performance, in order to determine if previous administrations held the locus standi to lay the charges against the present Government, or if because of their credibility and their lack of action and a clear chart for the future it led to their demise on January 20, 1999.

Therefore, I want to make the point that our predecessors, as a consequence of their failure to manage the economy prior to the last two elections, clearly they do not have the legal footing to lay some of the charges that were made yesterday.

I want to make this point up front, Mr. Speaker, that I unreservedly and without fear endorse the provisions and the size of these Estimates because I strongly believe that because of the vision and prudence of the Prime Minister, he is extremely clear on the national capacity to control the Estimates of over \$2 billion.

Now, it also speak - and that is why I talk about just not the arithmetic of it, the dollars and cents aspect of the Estimates, but when we listened to what occurred yesterday in these Chambers and we begin to reflect, that is why I am talking about reflection, we ask ourselves how can a former administration who respected the capacity of the people and knew the situation of the State prior to the

coming of this Government into office, in an atmosphere where there was hopelessness, people living in distress, structural disorder in the economy as a consequence of many people being laid off from the labour force, what legitimacy that former Government holds in making charges on the trust and capability of this Government?

Certainly, if they had credibility, we would not be witnessing today the kind of mirroring of a censorship which occurred on the occasion of that election. That is why I made the point very early that the Estimates is not exclusively about arithmetic. It is also about the politics. You saw it manifesting itself clearly yesterday in here when a deliberate attack was made on the Minister of Labour, not to charge him about his performance during the last year or two, but with a wider objective to impress upon the minds that are unsuspecting that one party, or the Opposition, is pro labour and the Government is anti labour. This is a simple theory that is being used.

I believe I would be guilty of not defending the thousands of people who rallied behind this political party over the last few years if I allow such charges to stand because if you were aware of the political history, and you had abandoned the theatric and faced the realities, then you would never have made those charges against a political party who pulled the masses of people out of the political, social and economic turbulence of the 1930s and formed the first black working-class self Government in the history of Barbados.

Not only that, the party also was responsible, Mr. Speaker, for the setting up of the first official labour institution in the form of the Barbados Workers' Union. I want to make these points because the records of prosperity must be very clear. If you make certain charges against a party and it stand without a counter position, then young men of the future, those born and unborn, are likely to read those records and not be aware of the dynamics of the history of the first half of the 20th century, and even part of the second half of the 20th century, and go along with the view that one party was the party of the people of Barbados and the other party was not.

3:10 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

It would be most unfortunate after a political party came to the masses of people on more than one occasion and, as a consequence of the wisdom of the people, because it is an indictment on the people, that political party was returned to power because they believed that the programmes which were

offered and the trust which they demonstrated was enough to attract their support and it manifested itself in the ballot box. We sat in here yesterday and we saw what some persons who are not in Parliament would describe as theatrics. We saw a representative of this Parliament taking a document and flaunting it before Parliament and this is not the first time the paradigm remains static.

We have heard about so many documents from this representative and whenever the credibility of the person who brought the document in front of the people's face and this Parliament's face is examined, the document is invalid and is a total misrepresentation of the message he attempts to convey. This is the representative for the constituency of St. John.

He is my friend but man is made up of more than one quality and there are cordial qualities in persons and you can respect their cordiality. There is also sometimes a latent aspect of the person's personality but it is no longer latent, if somebody is so consistent in doing something like that over and over again and has learned nothing as a consequence of doing it and he is the only man of intelligence that makes the same mistake over and over again and learns nothing from his mistakes, every time he does it, the simplicity of it is easily identified,

I do not know if it is because sometimes people conjure in their minds a mental construct not subject to objectivity and sometimes a man believes that because he can fool himself he can fool every other person around him. Not having an objective approach to things, he continues to do the same thing over and over again.

I would just like as a neophyte to the political dialogue of the House of Assembly to suggest to my friend and representative of St. John to cease from functioning in this manner in the future because that behaviour was responsible for his censorship in the election of 1994. The element of trust was fundamental to the leadership of the political party because we are aware that two persons can say the same thing and the language sounds equally as sincere, but there is an anti-phase. If there is a consistency that when you say something you never honour it and when you say something it is proven not to be true, sooner or later the element of trust would become a victim of that judgment and I am hoping that in the future he would not be subject to that.

However, cognisant of the ethos of the socio-economic programme which cost the Government this money after bringing the country out of a long grinding pain under the Democratic Labour Party, I believe that in the shift today from placing the emphasis on statistics to trying to demonstrate to you a comparative analysis of the Government's performance over the last two years, especially in relation to the social services, you will recognise that there is consistency in the Government's programme.

Let me explain what I mean by that. With a national budget within the constraints of \$2 billion, Government has estimated that it can allocate...

Aside.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

I heard the aside, Sir. I have to respond. Sir, it says something when you compare me with other persons on the other side because if they had made the effort which I made in moving from being a member of more than one or even two political parties then they would know up front before the

elections that it is useless going to the people of Barbados.

Because of the confidence which the people in that constituency hold in me, I was able to leave one party and go to the other and still went to the people of Barbados and received a resounding vote from the people of St. Michael East. That is enough. What it means is that I am still a man of the people and they know that I am consistent and I am consistent in everything that I say. I believe that there are those who can only go one place. That is the difference.

The aside is a deliberate attempt in order to ease the pressure which the Honourable Member is receiving, but let me make the point. In 1999, and that is what I am talking about, the Party being consistent, especially in relation to the marginalised, the dispossessed in this society, those who cannot afford to provide services for themselves. This Party has remained faithful to its historic mission. We have always been in the forefront of putting social items on the national agenda while recognising the importance of attracting investors to the State and having the affluent among us. We recognise the importance of also having the social mechanisms in place so that ordinary people can still enjoy the benefits of the society. That is why it is not a stereotype debate.

The Ministry of Health in 1999-2000 received \$194 568 789 to carry out the affairs of the Ministry of Health. The Prime Minister this year made available to that Ministry \$176 395 045, just a small marginal difference.

3:20 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000.

Continuation of Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

The Ministry of Social Transformation is a Ministry led by a Minister who has the natural ability and compassion that is required to administrate a Ministry of this type, not only because of his experiences working at a community level but because of his personal experiences. There is an elite core in this country, an academic elite core who believe that they are the only ones suitable to represent the people's interest in this Parliament. The Democratic Labour Party Government which was rejected was top heavy with that type of character.

Asides.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

There is only one more here and I hope I am around the next elections so that we could rid the entire electorate of this political type.

Asides.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

The elite believe they can master formal English better than anyone else but when you see a chipmunk attempt to defend the elite this is where the problem comes. We always have that type of worm. They come out of the woodwork, Mr. Speaker. The educated elite does not stand up to defend themselves but a chipmunk from somewhere will come out of the woodwork like a worm to defend the cause of the elitist type in the society.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Are you referring to an Honourable Member?

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Sir, I am generalising about the behaviour of a certain type in this society. I listen to them over the last few months in this country running north, south, east and west pontificating on matters of the family structure, flaunting themselves on the television, talking about nuclear families in a Caribbean setting. They have never read the works of Edith Clarke, Melville Herskovits or none of these people but all of a sudden they are sociologists and they know how to solve the deviance in the society by telling working-class black single parents that they are inferior in a nuclear type of structure where a mother and a father in wedlock live in the household with their children, but that the matriarchal family, the one parent family where the grandmother or mother is around must play a secondary role in the society. These are the people who masquerade as the intelligent pundits from the Opposition side trying to mislead the people about how much great solutions they have to resolving the deviance in the society, that they can pull the family structure together and that if every black man marries a black woman and every white woman a white man then the problems of the society will be solved.

Asides.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Are you a magician? The problem is more complex than that. The Ministry of Social Transformation has at its disposal \$66 million. Last year it had \$59 million and we have worked miracles in that Ministry with the money which was available to us. In that Ministry we have set up a number of programmes and we are on our way to introducing more innovative mechanisms in the Ministry to ensure that we assist in bringing back a level of equilibrium to the social environment to reduce the deviance which we have in the society by using units like the community centres. The Minister will elaborate more on these things when he speaks.

We are now going to be converting those centres into Resource Centres. The Resource Centre is not going to be an empty room where people just go and play tennis and keep dances. There is going to be a better structure in place. The infrastructure and the personnel will be put in place to ensure that the programmes have a creditable output at the end when the young men and young women go within those walls. What we intend to do is to make sure that all of these centres are well equipped with computers. You have heard the Prime Minister made the point....I did not want to touch on some of these areas because I know the Minister will speak in these areas as well and I believe the Attorney General will have something to say about these areas but we are going to have proper programmes to put in place. It makes me think something again about this special type that I spoke about because Franc Fanon also spoke in the Wretched of the Earth about the same type, a strange academic type in this society who do not invent anything, who demonstrate no creativity, isolate themselves from the very people from which they sprung and therefore leave a vacuum.

Asides.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

A parasitic type who leave a vacuum in the society for those persons who are not so wise to dominate. If that type had returned to the village from whence they came and demonstrated respect for their brothers and sisters in the society then you would not have the kind of disorder in the society which we have today. Consequently, we have put a programme in place in order to resolve those problems. We have put a mentorship programme where an individual who will replace that middle class elite, who escape as a consequence of exploiting the taxpayers money and abuse it by having free secondary education and sometimes moving into the professional class and believe that they are symbols or paragons of virtues...

Asides.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Who the hat fit can wear it. They always stop on the outside rather than interacting in the community, telling people about all these different models and modules that can be used in order to resolve social conflict and to rescue the country from crime which their Government and their charge caused this country to be in.

Asides.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Listen, we were not around when Cain killed Abel. We were not ruling or we did not crucify Christ on the cross. Murder was around long before the Barbados Labour Party. They have used a conservative technique which is used by the Conservative Republican Party in the United States of America and talked about crime and violence because they know that tomorrow morning as long as you open the newspapers, especially if they have an agent working with the press, that from the Magistrates Court there will be a feature on some young man or young woman who is guilty of a misdemeanor and they blow it out of proportion as though the man committed the greatest felony under the sun. That is what we have to deal with.

The mentorship programme is one of the elements that will be used in order to fill the vacuum that that group which has not paid its debt to society has created. There will be advisors working in the community, there will be persons with the required characteristics that the young can respect them as advisors, they can ask them questions and they can go and get advice from the mentors within individual community centres.

3:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

But that is not all, there is going to be a decentralisation of the major phase of the Ministry as well so that workers from individual departments will be brought into the community setting to deal with the social problems that will occur or are already occurring among the people within communities. It is a very extensive programme and counselling will also be an aspect of it.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member has two minutes to conclude.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Thank you, Sir.

In addition to that, I think I have to leave some room for the Minister in relation to social transformation. The programme is so extensive that 19 people can speak on the programme and it will not be totally exhausted.

In the Attorney General's office, we have seen a number of progressive approaches to resolving the problem which was emerging in the society as a conflict of having to send so many people to prison for simple matters like maintenance money. In some cases we have had cases like people charged for stealing an apple or a tin of milk from Julie'N or anything like that having to go to prison. What we are going to be looking at in the future is community service rather than the incarceration approach or putting everybody into prison for every small matter and then criminalizing the entire society. When they have to come back into the world of work and ask for a job and give a police certificate of charter and as a result of stealing a tin of milk early in their boyhood, there are employers without conscience who will come to the conclusion, once a criminal, always a criminal and we are trying to put things in place to change that kind of psychology.

In addition to that even the ex-inmate, when released from the prison, we have a provision to accommodate and assist him in the whole reintegration process so that he can get back into the society.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you have been more than tolerant and you also know that I do not get

involved in the Board Room type of cultural presentation. I speak from my heart and I want you to know, Sir, that I believe what I have said today would have the support of all Honourable men and my support remains firm and unequivocal for the Estimates 2000-2001.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to get involved in this debate. As you know, this is supposed to be a discussion on the revenue and expenditure of Government. It is true, Mr. Speaker, that politics of inclusion dictated that the Prime Minister found himself in a situation where he went out and looked for all groups of people and he found himself getting a group of people where he looked for the leaders.

The Prime Minister in his wisdom thought that when he found those leaders that he would have been able to bring to this Parliament one large group of people with different voices. I would like to tell the Prime Minister that he has failed, because the people whom he thought would have been looking after the interest of the masses of people in this country have now diluted their opinions and they are not sounding like the conservatives in this country. As I said, Sir, the revenue and expenditure of this country is more important to this debate and I shall deal with those matters.

Mr. Speaker, one would have listened over the last two days to the pronouncement from the Minister of Finance and one would have heard some admissions from the Honourable Member for St. Michael East and the Honourable Member for St. Peter one would have recognised that both admitted that sometime last year, the economy of the country, especially the cash flow of the country was in trouble and that they took particular measures.

In admitting that, they did not recognise the fact, Sir, that if the trade union movement last year did not cause a strike at the Port in this country that this country would have spent money but this country would have had a situation where the Prime Minister, quite wisely, in March last year, in order to repay a debt in December, even though he had a lot of foreign reserves, went to the Trinidad market and borrow \$150 million. Let us examine that, Sir. The reserves are good, but yet still a Prime Minister would go on a Trinidadian market to borrow \$150 million to put down and to cause an expenditure to the economy when everything is well.

I am saying, Sir, there is no person in the private sector bold enough to go to the Board of Directors with an argument like that and still save their job, unless they would have given the necessary explanation. I am saying that this Parliament was shocked last year when the Prime Minister went to Trinidad and borrowed that \$150 million without giving a proper explanation. He said it was like an insurance policy.

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said in advance of the borrowing that we knew that the Hilton and Sandy Lane were going to be out of action. I believe he said it in 1998. I believe it was as early as the Budget of 1998 and since there would have been an anticipated loss of foreign reserves because of the closure of those two hotels, it was a counsel of prudence to go to the market and get US\$75 million to sure up the reserves in case of difficulty. That is all it was.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely grateful to Honourable Member for St. Thomas. He said the US\$75

million were borrowed to sure up the reserves. He never said it was borrowed to sure up the revenue. I am telling this House that the US\$150 million was used more as a revenue matter than it was used as a foreign reserve matter and I will tell you why.

If we did not have that US\$150 million, the Government would not have been able to go and draw down on the so-called reserves, and they say reserves, they do not mean foreign exchange reserves. The foreign exchange was not foreign exchange reserves. It was a special deposit of \$200 million.

If that money which was borrowed for capital expenditure was not there, the Government would have been in a serious financial bind and that money was borrowed to look after a debt that was supposed to be repaid by the end of December 1999, but instead of using that money, the Government used the money as current expenditure when in true in fact it was borrowed for capital expenditure. Anybody would tell you in the financial sector in this country that capital expenditure cannot be used for revenue expenditure.

3:40 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN

When they say reserves they do not mean foreign exchange reserves. It was a special deposit of \$200 million. If that money which was borrowed for capital expenditure was not there the Government would have been in a financial bind. That money was supposed to be repaid by the end of December 1999 but instead of using that money the Government used the money as current expenditure when in truth and fact it was borrowed for capital expenditure. Anybody would tell you in the financial sector of this country that capital expenditure cannot be used for revenue expenditure.

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

That again is a distortion. I explained in here in December, and as recently as yesterday, that when there was a problem with tax flow and the ways and means was going up. We used funds existing in the special deposit to deal with that not the foreign money that was borrowed.

Mr. D. St.E KELLMAN:

That is exactly what I was saying. That money was used and it was borrowed for capital expenditure project but it was used for revenue expenditure, Sir. Whereas the reverse should have happened that money that was borrowed for revenue expenditure you can easily use for capital expenditure. That is the same problem the sugar industry found itself in the early 1980's. I can tell you about these matters.

The sugar industry used short-term borrowings to finance capital expenditure. The reverse has happened with Government where they used long-term borrowings to finance their short-term borrowings. It does not work that way. It is because they had that money, they were able to take capital expenditure, money used for capital expenditure to solve their current account problems. It was widely said in this Parliament yesterday. I sat and I listened and I made note because I knew that once they had to explain the printing of money they would have to explain how the \$200 million in the special deposit was made up.

What you have, Sir, is a Government that jam-busting the whole country. In this country the only people that get on the highways are the rich but the poor masses find themselves on the side roads like people coming out of St. Philip, St. George, St. Joseph cannot get on the highway and you have to be in Parliament every day to get a look in the same market that was built for them but the rich and famous can get on the highway and block the highway. I must admit the only body on that side that seems to understand the problems of the masses is the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central because at least when he gets on the jam-busting he knows how to hold up traffic and let the masses come through. I take my hat off to him. He knows how to treat people, but we now have changed the way we use the road and we have now taken it and using the economy the same way. Once too few get everything and everybody else must wait until they get their share and then they must get a 'look-in'.

The ZRs have the same problem and that is why I expect the Honourable Member for St. Michael East to get up and speak about protecting the interest of the Z's. It is the Z's and the vendors that he came to fame on and now he has forgotten the people who send him to Parliament. The people in the housing area who will be inflicted with higher rents. I expected the Honourable Member for St. Michael East to speak on his behalf. The water rates and the high bus fares when the Fair Trading Commission comes into vogue. I would have expected the Member for St. Michael East to get up and tell the Government to at least ease the people on the jam-busting as it relates to poor people and to let the rich in this country equally understand that poor people have built this country and they have a right to live in this country too. What is happening is that the rich is now jam-busting through the economy, through the traffic system in this country and everybody else will have to stop and look.

Mr. Speaker, you would believe that up to 1999 this Government has been able to rake in \$1 473 141 000 in additional income. The revenue increased by that, Sir. The rich and famous in this country can tell you how much of that was their share.

Up to 1994 people in Barbados were not waiting to get food out of paper bags but now the economy is doing well and the people have to resort to Government agencies to get food from paper bags and they tell me that this economy is well, that the masses of this country should be happy to see people coming and planning to see people planning to spend \$10 million on a resort and at the same time they are planning to spend \$10 million on investment. They put a proposal to Government to close off the roads as it relates to Highway 1 that goes through Gibbs from Road view. You must make a diversion, you must go by the telephone company, then cross and then come back down to Pastry House Road. Sir, can you tell me that my people in this country must feel happy to live under those conditions? Sir, after they witness what happened at Port Charles? After they witnessed what happened at Six Mens' Great House where the Government was able to give back the road that belongs to the rich people in this country? Can you tell me that I must sit ideally and listen to these issues and keep quiet, Sir? Not in this country.

The voices of the masses must be heard and when the economy can grow like this and the masses cannot tell people how much they are gaining, I am saying that something is wrong, My Lord.

We have a situation, Sir, where we have something called constitutional amendments coming here talking about a republic. We are selling so many bananas already. If this is going to happen in this country can you imagine when you relate the bananas to the republic what will happen? You will have a

situation in this country where the masses of people in this country are being murdered daily by the rights in this country. Can you imagine what will happen in a banana republic? This is a serious matter and must be treated so.

The thing that hurt, Sir, is that I thought that I had support from at least one member in this Honourable House and that was the Member from St. Michael East. I honestly thought that I had support from him on issues like these and I waited to hear him discuss matters like these today, but yet still all of a sudden he is the most logical conservative you want.

I expected that when the workers in this country gave up so much to the country that the Government would have had the common decency to pay them interest on the eight per cent they took from them. They told this country how disgraceful and how wicked the Democratic Labour Party was when they took \$16 million from the workers in a eight per cent pay cut. They went all over Barbados and said the Democratic Labour Party should be dumped, how you should do this and that to the Democratic Labour Party. I am saying, Sir, that the Democratic Labour Party cut the civil servants salary by eight per cent, amounting to \$16 million. I apologise to the civil servants for that, but it was at a time when the Barbados economy was in trouble and I say to the civil servants that you should be at least proud of yourselves to know that you did something in the interest of the country.

I thought, Sir, that when the Barbados Labour Party criticised the Democratic Labour Party the way they did, that at least they would have recognised that the civil servants of this country made an investment in this country that was able to give this country an additional \$1.1 billion in revenue.

3:50 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN:

That the Government who claims to be a progressive Government but in truth and in fact happens to be a regressive Government should have said to the civil servants that they understood their plight and they will not only give them back their eight per cent up-front but they will pay them interest for the eight years or the six years for the simple reason that any time a man puts money on a deposit, he is entitled to interest on his deposit. Instead of giving the civil servants what they were entitled to, they are now telling them to stand back they will get it in three tranches.

At the same time, there was a three-way relationship in which the private sector, the Government and the workers in this country went to bed together and had a marriage. The private sector in this country and I using their statistics alone - not my statistics - from the Economic Review, December 1999 on page 9, - to pay corporation taxes you have to be making money - in 1994, the private sector only paid \$68.3 million in corporation taxes. You will be shocked to understand and to hear that by 1999 those

honourable gentlemen, as the Honourable Member for Christ Church East would call them, were able to move from \$68.3 million to \$166.9 million, they were able to pay that in taxes. While the workers wages and salaries were being cut, the private sector in this country was amassing large profits. You could tell me that that is fairness, Sir.

What is even more regrettable about the whole situation is that up to 1994 when the Democratic Labour Party was in Government, the workers in this country through their trade union movement were able to demand 46.3 percent of the current expenditure of Government but by 1999 that was reduced to 41 per cent. When you do a tabulation of that, it shows that the workers if they were getting their fair share of the economy of Barbados would have received over \$181 million more. When you divide that \$181 million by 60, it meant that the Barbados Labour Party Government cut the civil servants wages in this country without telling them by three times the amount the Democratic Labour Party did. The Democratic Labour Party Government took \$60 million from the public servants and told them but the Barbados Labour Party Government took \$181 million from them without telling them.

If you doubt me, the statistics are right here on page 9 of the Economic Review, if you want an explanation as to how they are arrived at. I will give the Honourable Member for St. Philip South some education in these matters, so do not get up, sit down. For the simple reason ...

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I did not say that it was illegal to cut a man's wages without legislation but I support the Honourable Member for Christ Church because it was done illegally with the aid of 'selloutsab'. Let me tell you something. The trade union movement in this country must watch itself because the only Government that can destroy the trade union movement is the trade union movement itself. They are doing some wicked things to themselves and then they are coming cap in hand begging Government to aid them out.

The trade union movement in this country is supposed to get its revenue through subscriptions from the workers but the workers now are distancing themselves so far from the trade union movement that they now have to come and beg Government. The same people that they are supposed to be negotiating with should come and bail them out, that is why a couple weeks ago we had to support a subvention or whatever you want to call it for the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL). Sooner or later, nearly every trade union movement in this country will be coming to Parliament begging.

Yesterday, I listened to the Honourable Member for St. Peter and I heard him said something that was rather interesting. He said that we regard certain sectors in this country as the non-trading sector but those sectors should not be regarded as non-trading sectors because they are a combination of traded and non-traded.

I agree with the Prime Minister, but if that is true, why it is that we keep disallowing McDonalds from coming to Barbados then. If they are a combination of non-traded and traded, why is this so? The same way that they told me that they wanted the Sandals Hotel from Jamaica to come here because of their advertising budget, then it is logical that if they want a situation where they are looking after the advertising budget, the best advertising budget to look after should be the McDonalds budget because

McDonalds is worldwide.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Yes I thank you. I am going to tell you why they objected to it. They are objecting to McDonalds coming here by saying that McDonalds do not allow their workers be unionised while the same people that they are arguing for, and have received a \$10 000 cheque from, have more part-time workers than permanent workers. So I cannot understand that argument.

I can understand the argument from the gentleman from the Other Place and I support his view on this because he is grounded right. He is in the right family. He did not object to the fact that McDonalds was coming to Barbados and he was right in doing so because he knows the enemy well. I do not care how many constitutions they passed to get me out they will not be able to stop the voice of the man of the masses, so they can pump as much election campaign as they like, I will continue to speak and when I see injustices in this country, I will fight it.

I want to support the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East on this matter because Cheffette Restaurants cannot continue to remain in Barbados and to live off the backs of the taxpayers in this country. They must go outside of Barbados and help bring in foreign exchange to support their habits. Do not expect any quarter from me because I will continue to attack them as long as they remain in Barbados and try to destroy black businesses in this country because they must understand that I understand them well. They feel that they must capitalise the whole market and destroy my black brothers and sisters in this country by holding the whole market. I will say more on this matter at a higher level soon. So they can do what they like.

I am saying that people must recognise that we must leave something for the masses in this country. The farmers in Barbados will be faced with the same problem because some wise group who was able to encourage Government to close down their abattoir by saying they were going to build one. They said it would have cost about \$28 million but it actually ended up costing about \$1.4 or \$2.8 million. Which one is it? Anyhow whether it cost \$1.4 million or \$2.8 million, that is no problem because one could be in US dollars and one could be in Barbados dollars.

They knew that free trade was coming to Barbados and that the Ministry of Trade will have to free up licences and so on, so they went on the belief that all they had to do was to build an abattoir, get Government to close down theirs, open theirs and then close it down, keep the cold storage and import meat. It was as simple as that and Government fell for it.

However, the vendors out there cannot get Government to go and open the market so that they can sell their goods and make a living in this country but the same group that closed down the vegetable place in Welches was able to get Government to come and do the same thing all over again. The masses do not have a voice to these honourable people but the 'too few' in this country can come up with any proposal and Cabinet will meet 'wizzy wizzy', quick so, shut down everything to accommodate them, create Cabinet meetings and emergency meetings to listen to people who do not have the interest of the masses of the people in this country at heart.

The same people could come and take money from outside to buy up all the land in Barbados so that the masses of people sooner or later would not be able to get a house spot in this country. On top of that, they go and they buy up every single piece of beach land in this country and you cannot even get a sea bath in this country any more. The people of St. Lucy do not have that problem because they can bathe at Fryer's Well. I am in control of that and Fryer's Well will never be privatised and it will never be blocked. What I would like Government to do is to put some roads in St. Lucy so that the Ombudsman would not have to ask them to put a road at Friars Well.

The next matter I want to deal with is the Airport but before I get to the Airport let me get to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH). A couple months ago, when the Honourable Member for St. James South was Minister of Health, every thing that she did was leaked to the Press and she got real lashes. Now there is a man who claimed to be a guru in this country who is increasing the fees at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) by a million dollars and not one soul would mention that.

4:00 p.m.

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Continuation of Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Increasing the fees at Sanitation Services by 3.6 per cent and there is no mention of it. I would like to know why the fees at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital would be increasing by \$1 million and the fees to the Sanitation Services will be increasing by 3.6 per cent, it is all in the Estimates, Sir, and the service is deteriorating.

I would like to know from Government what plan it has for making sure that the maintenance work on the wards at the QEH will be carried out. If there was one big error that was committed, it is when they closed the St. Joseph Hospital. If they had the St. Joseph Hospital at least they would be able to remove a ward and put it there and refurbish that particular ward and then shift to suit.

Now they have closed down the St. Joseph Hospital without even thinking about the consequences of

what would happen.

When the Honourable Member for St. Michael North came to this Parliament to get \$80 million - I remember this well - for the Airport expansion, I said that \$80 million on the expansion of the Airport could build a new one, in St. Lucy of course. When you look at it, Sir, there are islands in the Caribbean which are spending \$120 million to build a new airport. Think about it! The total cost of the expansion work at the Airport would cost more than \$120 million. We would have had a new airport in the North and anything that happened there at least we would have had a standby, then we would have been able to do whatever we want to do up there. I am saying that this Government has failed because the important things that it should have done, it has not.

The naval base, everybody in Barbados knows that there is a natural relationship between the American tourist and the naval base. It was a relationship that has been built up over the years but yet this Government can have \$1.4 billion up to 1999 and they would not even recognise that if they are serious about the American market they need to get something that relates to the American tourist and the only two things in this country that relate to the American tourist is the naval base and North Point Hotel.

What people do not understand is that the soldiers had families and they multiplied and, in fact, they had relatives and we failed to capitalise on that but there are other countries within the Caribbean and beyond the Caribbean that had old naval bases which they turned into tourism projects that are now making a lot of money and the old soldiers and naval people are coming to visit where they once lived.

In Barbados ...

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member has two minutes to conclude.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, you know something? I am supposed to sit on every committee in this House. I am supposed to be the constitutional person in this House because of our numbers and I cannot continue to get only 30 minutes. I will have to boycott all the committees because there are no privileges for sitting on all.

Sir, we must realise in this country that we need to maximise what we have. The amount of money spent on revenue expenditure in this country is regrettable because that additional revenue should have been spent on capital expenditure.

Sir, you would have recognised that even though Sandy Lane and the Hilton were closed that the up-market tourist to Barbados were still able to come in large numbers. Do you know why, Sir? The same Royal Westmoreland project that the Barbados Labour Party criticised because those people were able to move into the villas, and that is the point the Barbados Labour Party would not admit, but it was Royal Westmoreland that saved the tourism industry this year when Sandy Lane, Hilton and Welcome Inn went out.

I am saying that all the foolish talk criticising Royal Westmoreland, it did not take up one single

beach in this country. Bajans do not have a problem with Royal Westmoreland because the same way a man could build a house and put a gate at his house it is the same way with Westmoreland. Why do you want to go there if you want to go for a sea bath?

Anytime they challenge me and tell me that I should not go on a beach that is where I have a problem. If you have your house with a gate I do not have a problem. I do not have to be at you. But people fool people. Royal Westmoreland was able to save Barbados this year.

I would like to know from the Attorney General if he is having any problems with projects like Royal Westmoreland that reside near to the beach. Thank you very much.

Mr. D. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to support the Bill before the House and I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister for the production of such a Bill and I would like to congratulate his Ministry for helping him to produce such an important Bill.

Yesterday, when I sat in this House and the Leader of the Opposition started his presentation, being a new person in this House, I was waiting for alternative views but, apparently, the Leader was swiping left, right and centre with the hope of getting some sympathy from the people of this country. He was playing one-day cricket.

I am glad that I am a part of this administration and I am glad to see the reserves are so strong, well over \$650 million. Only today a member was making the point that last year the financial position was in a bad state and I heard the Prime Minister say openly that the reason why he borrowed the money on the open market was to cushion things in case things had gone badly in this country.

It shows that he had perception and I am glad that we have such a Prime Minister to keep this country going well. The Prime Minister also made remarks about the trade liberalisation and the possibility that such a thing could occur again. He intends also to borrow money in the very near future to make sure he can keep things on a level keel, just in case we have problems in this country.

This administration was fortunate enough to bring unemployment from the high of 26 per cent to below 10 per cent and the majority of the people now they are out to work are experiencing a better life in Barbados. It is a fact that over the last seven years our economy growth was improving year after year. This is the first time in the history of Barbados that the growth rate of the economy materialised this way over a seven-year period.

There is no doubt in my mind that it will continue to grow because in Barbados today I know that construction is going very strong and the Prime Minister only last year took steps to make sure that things did not get overheated but from his projection it is felt that with the construction over the next five years things will go smoothly. I know that tourism had a slight downfall last year but I am one of those people who believe that it tends to do with the hotel sector. I believe that we all were scared about the Y2K bug. I myself did not travel because I was scared that something would go wrong.

I am quite sure in this country that once we have got bad winters up North tourism will pick back up and I am quite sure that things will go smoothly in relation to tourism and the other sectors. It is good

planing by the tourism sector and I am quite sure the Minister responsible for tourism would make sure that things go on an even keel. It is looking up again and I live in the South of the country and I can say that in the South Coast all the hotels seem to be operating at an 85 per cent to a 90 per cent occupancy and that is very good for the South Coast. I am quite sure that when the other hotels come on stream we will continue to do well in this country.

I must make mention, certainly, to the Minister of Housing in relation to what was going on there and I am happy to say that over the last few months the Minister was able to build some starter houses in Gall Hill but I know that over Barbados in general he has built many houses. I would like to congratulate the Minister first of all for getting the land banks and getting these starter houses going ...

4:10 p.m.

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Continuation of Mr. D. CARTER:

... but as Member of Parliament for Christ Church East Central, I am a little worry that every Thursday between 11 o'clock and one o'clock, I have to go to the Ministry of Housing in relation to getting loans for constituents. I only heard yesterday that the National Insurance is going to make \$10 million available to help the housing project. I sincerely hope that when this money comes through that the money would be divided, if not equally, among all the constituents so that all those people who have been waiting over a three year period could at least get loans for houses, land and other thing.

I said that the Minister is trying his best and we reiterated yesterday that he is trying his best to make sure that the ordinary people of this country will get loans and get some place where they can call a home or shelter.

In relation to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, I have a document here in front of me which was sent only a few days ago where a lady by the name of Grace Carter won a competition in Church Hill for having the biggest pot hole. Let me congratulate the Minister first because I would say that only three weeks ago I wrote the Minister a letter in regard of old people's home in my constituency and he immediately said that he had \$0.5 million left in the budget and he made sure that he sent his

technical people to the area and I can say now that two more people in my constituency in St. Davids and Lodge Road will get their homes fix before the end of the financial year. I am grateful for that but it is a little distressing and I feel a little hurt that there is a competition like this.

In my area I have written five or six years ago asking for help in the Church Hill area and help in the Lodge Road area and I have not seen anything coming forward. I would like to say to the Minister in this new financial year that he has at least some \$60 million for his Ministry and I believe that he is an honest and upright man and I believe that this is one occasion where he must now look at the backbenchers and divide the money - if not equally - but make sure that all the constituents get their fair share and certainly I am hoping that I would get my fair share.

In Barbados I know that there is a problem with the roads and the Prime Minister has made available over \$400 million where the Minister of Transport and Works will deliver but I am a little worried. I was told that the money given to the Ministry of Transport will only do the main roads and the minor roads will have to wait on the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

I spoke about the Ministry of Agriculture before but I am a little worry that the Ministry of Social Transformation does not go further, it would appear to me, than St. Michael area. I would like the Ministry of Social Transformation in the new financial year to make sure that the money is lengthen out a bit more to the Christ Church area and certainly all over Barbados. I must say, Minister, that you are doing a very good job. You are a man who look after ordinary people but I am saying on this occasion that for the new financial year you must make sure that that money goes as far as Christ Church.

My constituency is divided between two areas, the middle class and the old plantation people. It is a fact of life that all those people who work so hard in this country in the plantations now that they have reached the age of 60 70 and 80, they are unable to repair their homes. It is only natural that we the Government, a caring Government should make sure that we do all the right things in this country to make sure they are happy. I can say that if the Ministry of Social Transformation and the Ministry of Rural Development do the right things we will make sure that we the backbenchers and certainly the people in Christ Church area would be happy in dealing with these matters.

Yesterday I was very hurt when the Honourable Member for St. John made a swipe and referred to the Sports Council. I, as Chairman of the Sports Council, would obviously have to carry blame for anything that is done. Certainly, I should also be the credited for anything that is done properly. Yesterday the Honourable Member for St. John made reference to the entertainment programme that we carry on every year whereby a certain company seems to be getting all the jobs.

This morning I did a little investigation and realised that the same company that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about was employed by the National Sports Council since 1985. I, as a Parliamentarian, when I got there realised that that company was doing a good job. I believe that if a Government is doing a good job when a new Government gets into power or gets into office they should carry on that programme. I did exactly that. From 1985 I saw that company was doing a good job at the Sports Council and I carried on. To my surprise yesterday, it was touted by the Leader of the Opposition that there was conflict of interest at the Sports Council and we were giving them all the jobs. That is not so. I can tell you that two years ago when the Director of Sports became the boss he immediately resigned his post as Chairman of that entity. We at the Board, decided wholeheartedly, in

a democratic way that that company was doing a good job and we continued in that same vein. I would say to the Leader of the Opposition that I am big enough to make further investigations and if the people at large think that there is some impropriety going on there, I would obviously try to do the right things and make sure that under the democratic process it is put to tender and, may the best team win.

Mr. Speaker, again, in my constituency I would like to say that in the Gall Hill area in the very near future we are going to bring on stream an entity that really took this administration some three to four years to make a reality. For the last ten or fifteen years we were trying to make the people of Gall Hill and the surrounding areas feel like citizens of Barbados.

4:20 p.m.

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Continuation of Mr. D. CARTER:

I remember very well, back in 1994, the Present Attorney General and the then Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. Peter went to Gall Hill and made a proud statement and they said then at the opening of the Constituency office that they will do everything in their power to assist me in getting two things in the Gall Hill area, firstly an entertainment centre and secondly a playing area for people where they can continue their football.

Let me explain something in relation to the playing field. In the period 1976/1981, they started a housing programme in the Gall Hill area and the playing field that was in existence then, was taken away or was utilised for building and the people of that area somehow decided that the Government was not fond of the people of Gall Hill and the surrounding area but the Government of the day thought that housing would have been a better thing.

I am glad to report that certainly during the last year the Prime Minister made a \$½ million available where we at least purchase a parcel of land at Cane Vale and in the very near future we will purchase an adjoining piece to make the playing field at Cane Vale into a mini stadium.

In relation to the complex at Gall Hill, I would like to say that in 1996 when I approached the Prime Minister and told him what he said at the opening of my constituency office, he said to me that we have got to be more innovative and we are not just going to put up a dancing house, but come with something new. I returned to him and I told about the small business. I am glad to report that today, we have a building there where we would have 11 small businesses and certainly at the top we will have an area

where we can use for social activities.

I was informed by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural that within the next three weeks that building should be opened. I am looking forward to all the young people and old people who have businesses in that area to develop themselves in a very meaningful way. It is a good thing that in an area like that, we have the opportunity where people could have their own businesses.

I sincerely hope they could look after the facility. I sincerely hope they do all the right things and I will make sure in my own way, certainly with help from the other Christ Church MPs that we put that building into very good uses. It is a lot of money spent, some \$1.7 million and I believe that anytime a Government spends that sort of money on a building, we should utilise that building to the best uses.

Last of all, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to report that in the same Gall Hill area, the present Member for St. Thomas makes available a little entity in Gall Hill where the boys on the block, who were doing things which were not nice in the area, were able to use a weight lifting gymnasium in the area to their best advantage. I must say that since the gymnasium was placed there, there is a decrease of the boys on the block. I sincerely hope that they would use all these various entities, the sporting facilities at Cane Vale, certainly the weight lifting gymnasium and certainly the old Club Randall. I believe with three entities like these, the people in the areas, Gall Hill, Water Street and surrounding areas would have facilities whereby they would be able to use their energies in a different direction.

Mr. Speaker, I can only say that I had help from all the Ministers. They were all kind to me over the years. There are times when you may have to say things which may touch people near to the bones but I sincerely hope you would continue to help the backbenchers and continue to help me.

I thank you.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your kind consideration. I really had not intended to speak in this debate at this time for the sole reason that because of the massive economic development taking place in Barbados primarily in the construction and the consequential dust, my throat is suffering terribly from that particular development. But I felt constrained nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, to say a few words.

I want to begin by commending the very Honourable Prime Minister for the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure presented to this Honourable Chamber yesterday. The Estimates show that the economy of this country is in very good hands. They show that there is no need whatsoever for any panic. They show that there is no possibility whatsoever that we will return to those days of the early 1990s when 20-30 thousand people marched against the Government when the massive numbers of civil servants were forced to have their salaries cut. It shows that we have passed those days and there is no likelihood certainly in the foreseeable future that we will ever revert, in fact, to similar conditions.

So good and convincing was the presentation that the Honourable Member for St. John and Leader of the Opposition saw it possible not to speak at all about the Estimates. If he did, I think he may have mentioned them about two or three minutes in passing, but said nothing whatsoever about them in any great detail and he said instead that he would launch what I would call a broad- side. Honourable Members on this side, particularly those of us who find ourselves on the frontbench, when things are

said about us, Mr. Speaker, it is but right that we should respond. I am sure that others on this side as well, as happened earlier with the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, and I will continue in that vein for sometime to come for the balance of the evening.

The Honourable Member for St. John said a large number of things. One of the things that he said is that the Ministry for which I have responsibility is responsible for only one thing which is the Fair Trading Commission. We have nothing else at all to do in the Ministry according to the Honourable Member for St. John, so he does not recognise the importance of the small business sector. He has no regard for the small business sector. He would even wish to ignore that last year, votes in this Parliament were for the most revolutionary piece of legislation ever brought here in relation to the small business sector in this country, granting a large number of concessions never before granted to a small business sector, a large number of concessions to increase areas of activity in the small business sector, but he does not consider the Ministry has any responsibility at all in relation to the small business sector but that suits him. Because an Act is not speaking to Royal Westmoreland or to the giveaways, as happened at the Bridgetown Port with cruise terminals, he does not see that it is doing anything at all for the small business sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, very shortly provisions will be taken to the Cabinet for the establishment of an innovation fund to assist primarily the boys on the block. The Honourable Member for St. John is not going to see anything wrong with that either, or when the Ministry of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development takes to Cabinet and Parliament very shortly, legislation in relation to bankruptcy and insolvency to protect the lives of small business people. The Honourable Member for St. John is not going to see anything worthwhile in that because as far as he is concerned we have one thing to do, nothing but one.

4:30 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

The Honourable Member does not see the importance of standards. He will come in here and propose to pontificate in relation to free trade, whether it be the free trade in the CARICOM single market or the free trade of the Americas, or any other trading block, but will fail to see the importance of standards and the prominent role that standards will play in the context of free trade and international trade. He cannot see the importance of that because there is only one thing to do. He cannot see the importance of science and technology which encompasses information technology to propel Barbados into the future. He cannot see the importance of that. The Ministry has one thing to do. Electronic commerce, our responsibility for the entire co-operative movement of Barbados, including the credit union movement.

He sees no importance at all to that. I said all of that Mr. Speaker, not to go on the defensive in any way, but to expose a person who would wish to portray himself as a leader of the future and highlighting the fact that he does not know what are the unimportant and the important things in the economy of a country. That is why I said all of that. This Ministry, Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development can even be said to be one of the life bloods of this society, an integral part of the life blood of this country. I said this to expose the incompetence of someone who would wish to portray himself as a future and not knowing what is important and what is not important in the context of the affairs of a country. Then he mentioned the Fair Trading Commission. I make bold to say, yes, the Fair Trading Commission is a very, very involved matter. In fact, I make further bold to say as has been said by others, that so involved it is, that it may well be, perhaps ought to be the subject matter of an entire and separate ministerial portfolio in itself. It is such a complicated and involved procedure to set up a Fair Trading Commission. He even had the gall to say even in relation to that they there was no progress being made, no work being done. Even recently, in fact, a few minutes ago, I overheard a comment that I do not do nothing. That is what I heard. There is no work being done. That is what I heard.

Let me begin first of all saying that no work is being done but only last week Thursday the Cabinet of Barbados approved, Parliament having approved the Small Business Development Act towards the end of last year. Last Thursday the Cabinet approved both the Fair Trading Commission Act and the Utilities Regulation Act, two integral parts of the Fair Trading Commission. That is what I want to report. He also asked, as he would want to do, about the policy position of a Fair Trading Commission. Now here is a man, a leader of a political party and does not understand what a Fair Trading Commission is supposed to do. There are some that exist around the world, even in the region and he's asking for me to explain to him what is the underlying philosophy of

a Fair Trading Commission, but I will do it. We are here to educate and we are here to do that. If he doesn't know we admire that he says for once, that he doesn't know, and he will be educated.

A Fair Trading Commission is supposed to open up the markets and to guard against any undue concentration of economic power in the hands of a few. It is really in other words to promote competition and promote rivalry in the market, or to put it more simply, to create an environment of free and fair competition where every legitimate business operator in Barbados will be entitled to an equal opportunity to participate in the Barbadian economy. That is what it is all about. It is to create

free and fair competition, that allows every legitimate

business operator an equal opportunity to participate in the economy of Barbados. Fair competition legislation will outlaw that seeks to inhibit businesses having that equal opportunity to participate in the Barbadian economy. So things like abuse of dominant position, not the fact of a dominant position, but the abuse of the dominant position by any business will be outlawed. Things like price selling and price fixing, double ticketing, all those unfair trading practices, will be outlawed so that every legitimate business in Barbados will have full opportunity to participate and function in the Barbadian economy.

Now, the benefits that accrue from competition are obvious. When you have increased competition you have increased efficiency. That is a natural consequence of competition. You have more lower prices, more choices, better products, more opportunities. All these things result and flow from the

creating of a competitive environment for the Barbadian business men.

For the Honourable Member for St. John who would not know these things, that is what is referred to as economy-wise regulation, or what the New Zealanders call 'light-handed'. He wouldn't know that but we will tell him these things. We will tell him, but on the other hand, where you have certain industries, usually utility companies, that tend to be by their very nature monopolistic you have to resort to the more conventional type regulations, where you have a regulator to govern how they should and should not behave, that those who deal with the utility companies, that their rights are not trampled upon. So that is the very broad policy objectives of the establishment of a Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

The Honourable Member says he is explaining to me. I would like to hear what the Government's Fair Competition policy was. That is what I asked. He may not know th, but I am a member of the CARICOM Advisory Committee on the drafting of Fair Competition Bills so he does not need to explain that for my benefit. He needs to tell this House what is his policy of fair competition. When the law comes we will know what the law is. Tell us your policy, who you're going to liberate through your policy. That's what you have to deal with.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if what I have just said does not make that abundantly clear to the Honourable Member, then there is no other way at all, there is no other way at all that I can put it, simply none. It is clear, transparent and as simple as the matter can ever be put, and I really cannot go any further, but there are others who will want to hear. There are none so deaf as those who cannot hear and I cannot make them.

I will remain on public utilities for a moment. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know that they cost of utilities in this country and perhaps in any other country is a vital part and very often a very high percentage of the operational costs of any business entity and therefore when monopolies are regulated, as they will be by the fair Trading Commission and the cost, particularly the utilities are bought under control it will be easy to recognise how Barbados will be thereby positioning itself in the business world as an area which is ripe for investment, not only by the locals, but also by the international community as well. The Commission is going to ensure that Barbados in effect repositions itself as a competitive entity worldwide.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said earlier, the establishment of a Fair Trading Commission is a very complicated matter and I really am not prepared to take any knocks at all for the work done so far and to apologise to anybody, certainly not the Honourable Leader of the Opposition because he has no moral authority to tell anybody that they should be doing work, none. I remember he had the VAT Legislation in his Ministry as Minister of Finance since 1992 an office and never brought one clause of it to this Parliament.

4:40 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

I well remember in the Ministry of International Transport that a letter had been written by one Alfred Clarke to him imploring him to use his good office to urge on the establishment of an aircraft mortgage registry and he denounce it since 1992 and he demitted office without driving a stroke to the mortgage registry while businesses bypass Barbados. In fact, it was yours truly again who brought that Bill to Parliament. He cannot come in here, telling me anything about not doing any work.

Asides

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

Setting up a Fair Trading Commission (FTC) is not like getting on a plane with a male friend and heading up to Ireland to watch a test match. It is not as simple as that.

Asides.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

Let me say too that the date January 1, 2000, which the Honourable Member always refers to as the date to implement this Fair Trading Commission (FTC) was a date established by the Prime Minister not by me. Having said that, the Prime Minister and I and this entire Cabinet was always in sync that January 1, 2000 would have been the ideal time to set it up but it quickly became recognised that that date was not realistic. Therefore, when I took the case to the Honourable Prime Minister toward the end of last year and explained all that we have done, it was easy to accept that January 1, 2000, was simply not on.

What I did in January this year was to meet with the Press in the context of a press conference and I explain to them the amount of work involved and what had been done. Then I committed myself to ensuring that legislation in relation to the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) Act itself and the Utility

Regulations Act as well would definitely be going to Cabinet and thereafter brought to Parliament before the April, 1, 2000. I have kept my word to the people of Barbados.

Last Thursday, Cabinet approved the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) and the Utilities Regulations Act. They are going to be laid in Parliament any day now, certainly before we arrive at the end of the Estimates. Just to show you what I am talking about when I speak about the setting up of a commission being complicated. We have as a Ministry to draft or to ensure the drafting of at least eight pieces of legislation. We have the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) Act, the Utilities Regulations Act, the Consumer Protection Act, the Trade Competition Act and another Act likely to be called the Consumer Guarantee Act and then three other sets of regulations each under the Utilities Regulations Act, Consumer Protection Act and Trade Competition Act.

You do not wish a Fair Trading Commission (FTC) into existence. There is a lot of elbow grease involved and a lot of research to be done. Precisely, because of that from early days the Ministry set up a project implementation unit within the Ministry and a special advisory broad-based committee involving representatives from all the sectors of Barbados such as the University, the Small Business Association, the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados (CTUSAB), the Chamber of Commerce and the Barbados Manufacturers Association to ensure it got top priority as a major project. This broad-based committee has today since it was launched held something like over twenty meetings during last year.

Asides.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

The Ministry also decided that they had to see what was happening in the international community. We had a number of international consultations and a number of study tours. Our legal consultant visited New Zealand, Australia, England and Jamaica to ensure that we were in touch and in sync with what was happening in the international community in relation to the establishment of the Fair Trading Commission.

Having consulted internationally, we still have to recognise in the words of the late Wendell McClean that we still had to tailor our legislation in such a way as to meet our specific local requirements. It was because of that, that we decided also that we had to have a national consultation which we did an entire day last year to hear the views of Barbadians in relation to the establishment of the Fair Trading Commission (FTC).

The Ministry has done a tremendous amount of work. The Ministry has had to revamp entirely the current legislation that governs utilities regulations in Barbados called the Utilities Act which is a 1955 Act that I am even hard-pressed to find was ever amended. It is not to say that we had a whole series of amendments that we can now get into a process of consolidating to come up with a new Act. We are starting from scratch. We are embodying in our new legislation a totally different philosophy from what we had before.

I am trying my best and I hope that the Honourable Member for St. John understands what I said and does not repeat what was said yesterday. I really hope so. It is a totally different new approach and philosophy. For example, the current legislation only speaks about the setting of rates. There is no

reference to setting or monitoring of standards. That is going to go into the new legislation.

Asides.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

Yes, the quality of service. The current approach taken to setting rates is guided wholly and solely by a principle of what is called a rate of return. The utility company is guaranteed a certain rate of return for the benefit of the investor. There are no incentives whatsoever for the utility company to be fishing in their operations. We are moving away from that. We are going to have incentives compatible type regulatory mechanisms whether it be price caps or profit sharing. Personally, I prefer profit sharing than price caps but that is a matter that can be trashed out. We are moving toward that type of situation so there is a whole new ball game.

We have to recognise a new commercial world. We have to enclose provisions in relation to confidentiality of information. We have to preserve the integrity of the commission so we have to impose a duty for commissioners to disclose their interest. All these things we have to sit down and formulate. We have to ensure the commission is accountable and transparent. We have to put proceedings in place to ensure that the long process that you have to embark on before at hearings and the length of hearings is withered away so that hearings will now be speedier and less costly, so that the consumer does not find themselves paying increased cost because of increased length of hearings which incur certain cost on the utilities and ultimately to the taxpayers of Barbados. All of these are things that the Ministry is doing.

I really do not wish to expose the Honourable Member for St. John because I do not believe that it is decent to really reveal something that is said to you in the corridors or at the dinner table so I really would not say. I know that what he said yesterday was not coming from his heart when he sought to criticise this Ministry on the grounds that we were not doing any work. I know that. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that he knows that the establishment of a Fair Trading Commission (FTC)

I went to a conference in London last year in relation to utilities regulations. When I was up there, I spoke about Barbados' plans and thoughts. I mention that we were looking to get a Fair Trading Commission (FTC) set up by January 1, 2000 - this was June 1999 and I was asked which horse we were galloping on. No one felt that I could have been serious because this was felt to be a two to three-year exercise. Even in Jamaica, they just did a Fair Trading Commission (FTC) Act dealing with consumer protection and competition matters. They did not do the utilities regulations side of it and it took them several drafts and a few years to get it right.

4:50 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

They did not do the utility registration side of it the way we are doing it. It took them several drafts to get it right and a few years. We have come, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from January 1999 to March 2000. If the Honourable Member wishes to hang me because initially it was said that it would be done by January and instead of January 1 it is March, well he can take that technicality.

I prefer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be judged by the people of Barbados who in short time will come to see the benefits of this piece of legislation. Over the next few months the Ministry is going to be engaged in an exercise of what we call sensitising the public to the contents of the two Bills. As that is happening, work is going to continue in relation to the consumer protection legislation and what would likely be termed the Consumer Guarantees Act.

A bit more work has to be done in relation to the Fair Competition legislation, to finetune some details of it before we can seek to get that brought into law. There is a lot of work that will keep the Ministry's calendar full but, and I want to repeat, that this Ministry and Government do not consider themselves to be the repository of all knowledge and if, therefore, during the course of the sensitising of the public or otherwise any valid points are made that merit any serious look at the present contents of the Bills and any desired changes, the Ministry will certainly take it on board and will make any reasonable amendment.

I, myself, will continue to look at it and if there is anything that needs changing it will be changed but the fact is that subject to that rider, and far from not doing anything, I stand ready and willing at the conclusion of these Estimates, after the Bills are laid, to debate them right away but, as usual, the Opposition will not be ready. They are never ready. They come in here and talk about who work and who does not work but they are never ready.

I remember only recently, and it was a very disappointing performance on this side in relation to this matter too, and very disappointing to me when we wanted to debate the Constitution Report. I did not really take too kindly to how it went down, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the fact of the matter is that the Opposition had a report in their possession from at least December 1998 and when it was indicated that we were ready to debate it, some 15 months later, the Opposition was still not ready. I think it was really a very disappointing performance even in accommodating them. That is my own personal view.

I just made that point to say that while I will stand ready to face the music, I stand ready at the conclusion of these Estimates debate to debate the Bills. I am sure, that the Opposition, as usual, will not be ready because they are never ready.

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

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this sitting be now suspended until 515 p.m.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

I beg to second that.

The question that the sitting be suspended until 5:15 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the sitting accordingly.

4:55 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

This sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some 5½ years ago, with approximately one quarter, 25 per cent of the Barbados workforce out of work, the Barbados Labour Party was brave enough to resolve to meet the challenge of widespread unemployment head on. The party adopted what at that time was a very catchy slogan, but a truly profound slogan saying that "Job No. 1 was jobs".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am extremely delighted to see that the continuous Household Sample Survey recently put unemployment in Barbados at 9.8 per cent. Since unemployment statistics were kept 25 years ago, this is the first time that this country has actually recorded single digits.

The Honourable Member for St. John yesterday did not challenge those figures. He did not mention the whole question of the reduction of the level of unemployment in Barbados although I have heard, quite understandably so, some of our detractors beginning to question these statistics. One thing which they cannot deny is the fact that over the last 5½ years there has been a gradual decline in unemployment in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I want to fashion my remarks, and perhaps to deviate a bit from the way in which the debate has been going although, to be quite honest, I had come to the House with one method of

approach and I have changed it. I want to fashion my contribution in terms of the part played by the Vocational Training Board in all of this, the whole question of the reduction of the level of unemployment in Barbados.

The Vocational Training Board continues to fulfil its role as one of the primary architects in this Government's quest for full employment and the contribution of that institution should not be marginalised. That is why this evening I propose to say something about that institution. It continues, Sir, to equip young Barbadians with very marketable skills. I am speaking, Sir, of young Barbadians who might otherwise have been unemployed if they did not have access to training at the Barbados Vocational Training Board.

When we realised, Mr. Speaker, a few years ago that the demand for construction workers was actually beginning to outstrip the supply, we sat down and decided that the Training Board had to rise to the occasion. It had to turn out youngsters with those skills which the construction industry was demanding.

At the end of this financial year, Mr. Speaker, we would have turned out and trained approximately 600 young people for construction alone.

5:20 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE:

This has nothing to do with the other areas of training. These were people who were prepared specifically to take advantage of the construction boom. It was a conscious effort and a conscious decision which we took. I have to say that I know that when those youngsters work on live projects like the one at Eden Lodge and the Annex at Erdiston that there are construction firms which literally poach them. As you turn them out they are there on the site for them and they gobble them up. They grab them, they seem to be hungry for them, Mr. Speaker, because they are doing extremely good work.

As I said, we are endowing them with very good skills. We have had from the very firms excellent reports about our young trainees. Not only that, Sir, requests continue to come into the Training Board for more and more of those youngsters. These are people, as I said, Sir, who when they hit the ground they hit the ground running. The training is that good.

I am convinced that the Vocational Training Board has been one of the linchpins in bringing unemployment in Barbados down. I am very convinced about that. It is a real and a compelling

argument that the Training Board is an essential cog in the wheel in the fight against unemployment.

Mr. Speaker, I say all of this in spite of the fact that at the Vocational Training Board we are still fighting a real battle against the stigma which at one stage threatened to cripple the very existence of the Training Board.

When you and I were at school, Mr. Speaker, our parents would make statements such as, "I send you to school to get certificates." There used to be at that time, Sir, a real misconception about that type of vocational handwork. They always stressed the whole thing of getting your certificates.

I have to say, Sir, that that thinking even today has not completely evaporated. It is even there, Sir, at the level of some teachers in certain schools where they believe that every smart child is supposed to do English literature, French and History. The societal stigma is still there that the dumb children are the ones who go to vocational classes. Rarely do you hear those teachers say that every single job is an important job.

There is the image of the fellow with grease under his finger nails and the dirty overalls on his back and I believe, Sir, that some people might even be so naive as to say that if they used to put on a collar and tie to do mechanic work they would be acceptable.

I do believe, Sir, that that old fashioned attitude will soon disappear altogether. I am happy to say that a lot of the young people are becoming more assertive about what they want to do. The biggest factor driving change in that area now is the youngsters themselves, not their parents and grandparents. The whole change of attitude is coming from the youngsters.

They see a lot of their friends making good money in mechanic shops and on construction sites and they realise that they could make a comfortable living by getting in these areas. There are fellows now who have their eyes set on becoming contractors and foremen down the road so they begin by saying, let me first get into masonry, let me get into carpentry, in the hope that tomorrow I would be a foreman for a contractor. Whereas in the past you would hardly find fellows with three or four CXC's or GCE's opting for vocational training it is happening now. We are finding them. Mr. Speaker, I asked for a small breakdown of a sample of 230, about 70 of them had CXC's, that shows a change of attitude.

Mr. Speaker, I was trying to find out exactly where these trainees are today and I picked some names at random and asked them to check and see where these people were. These are people who have left the Barbados Vocational Training Board. Two are self employed in the garment industry. One is a building contractor at a large furniture business. There is a chap who worked on the Eden Lodge Project and is now a supervisor at a project where a large hotel is being refurbished. Another chap is a supervisor at a water heating business. A chap is a manager at a fast food place. One chap is in medicine at a pharmaceutical company in the USA. Another chap is a supervisor at a very large company in this island and one chap is actually self employed owning bob cats and truck. Another chap is a foreman, three more are self-employed, one owns a workshop, one owns a joinery shop and another one is a building contractor.

5:30 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

I am saying that to show you exactly where these people are ending up. I am saying that the National Training Board has made a significant contribution in putting a dent in unemployment.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

You can see from the quality of people that I am telling you that they are turning out up there that it has done extremely well.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

I only took a sample. Mr. Speaker, all of us are concerned about the boys on the block. I think it was only about two days ago I was reading in one of the local newspapers where Major Hugh Barker said that he favoured a kind of paramilitary approach in tackling unemployment. He actually said that we have to use coercive measures to get the able bodied men off the block because he thought that it was one of the main reasons for crime in this country. He even remarked about the old maxim of the devil finding work for idle hands was still ringing true. That problem of the youngsters on the block, that too is being tackled by the National Training Board. We have to save those young men and we have to make them part of our work culture. We want them to be part of the work force. We do not want them, Sir, to be part of what I refer to as the 'underground economy'.

We have already started, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the Barbados Vocational Training Board to meet that problem of the fellows on the block head on. We have actually begun, Sir, to physically send supervisors of the National Training Board to talk to those fellows on the block. We believe, Sir, that

the direct approach will work. Those fellows, Sir, may not read the newspapers, those fellows may not watch the television but I am sure that they will speak to you on a one-to-one basis.

I was very pleased to see that the Commission for National Reconciliation also itself spoke about going out there to meet these fellows on a one-to-one. As I have said, we have taken that approach at the Barbados Vocational Training Board for some time now.

I must say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have made a very interesting observation which may surprise you. A lot of those fellows, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not seem to be concerned any longer with those traditional areas of masonry and carpentry. They still want to be broad shouldered, manly, robust and masculine and they want to maintain that macho image. I do not think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we can blame them for that. The point is that we cannot close our eyes to their wishes and we cannot close our eyes to the position which they have taken in this respect. We have seen a challenge at the National Training Board and the challenge is to provide a menu which is broad enough and wide enough to enable them to find something within it for them to do and still be manly and macho.

So, Sir, we have extended our programmes to include things like bobcat, backhoe and heavy duty licences. We have extended our programmes because these are some of the things that we think the fellows will cream to. We did this with those fellows on the block specifically in

mind. We believe that those programmes are virtually tailor made for those young people. They know, Sir, and we know too, Mr. Speaker, that once you have a heavy duty licence for the bobcat, backhoe and so on that you will get a job fairly easily. A lot of jobs in Barbados naturally say now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a licence is necessary and we have taken that into consideration. In fact, Sir, many of these young fellows may not even have the wherewithal to pay for the license and so the National Training Board is taking them right through that process and doing all of that for them and finding the resources because we want to make them as marketable as possible.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

That is exactly why. As I have said, things like the backhoe operator, the bobcat operator, the tractor operations and maintenance, machine fitter and then the usual programmes of plumbing, steel bending, motor mechanics and so on. We hope that those fellows on the block would find something in there for themselves. As I have said, we are going to them and asking them about getting themselves involved in these programmes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are those in this country who have been critical of the Apprenticeship Scheme at the National Training Board, that system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is now proving to be one of the best things which the National Training Board ever did. In today's competitive labour market, Sir, there is simply no substitute for that real world of work or on the job experience which the apprenticeship system offers. In this day and age, Sir, it pays those youngsters to have work experience on their resume. They are realising more and more that it pays off to say, I worked in this area before. Picking up a job is far more difficult for someone who has just left school and who only walks and faces an employer simply saying that I have just left school and there is nothing more to it than I just went to school. This particular apprenticeship system that we have at the National Training Board is proving to

be extremely beneficial.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe that a resume built in the trenches of corporate Barbados is a plus. In the eyes of employer it demonstrates that you are serious about your career choice. The Apprenticeship Scheme can be compared to your professional in-service. It is like that.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

Yes, it is compared like your attachment stint.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point I making is that the apprentices already understand the work place and they do not go to work like so many do with any false expectations. When those fellows come out to work they do not have any false expectation about the work. The truth is that they do not have things like first day jitters and those things that a lot of people have and get turned off and get turned away because they have already answered the question by being in the apprenticeship system as to whether the job feels like the right one for them. They have already answered the question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as to whether they fit into that particular work culture. They have already answered the question as to whether they like the rules of that particular trade or not because that scheme also helps them very very much.

It should not take us by surprise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to find that more than 80% of the apprentices go on to full time employment in the work in which they are being apprenticed. The same area that they are being trained in, more than 80% stick with that and they stay there.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not the most significant finding either because what impresses me most, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that to date the Barbados Vocational Training Board shows that invariably the apprentices are asked to stay on at the very firms at which they are being trained, that is the strongest point that you can make about the apprenticeship system, that speaks volumes for the attitude of the trainees. It speaks volumes for the Apprenticeship Scheme and for the National Training Board. It is good to know that there are still companies in Barbados that will reward positive attitudes for good work.

5:40 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again we have another sample. We have a sample which shows us that out of the 14 again that we took, we found that nine of them still worked with the old employer in which they were apprentices and that five of them though not with the same employer, are working with the same area of work and that is a very strong statement again about the Training Board.

As I wind up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe, like the former Member for St. Michael South Central said in an article about five days ago, that he had no doubt that full employment, by that he meant 5% unemployment, is attainable in Barbados with appropriate economic management.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, towards the end of 1999, in an election year, the Honourable Member for St. Peter said, "I will not be doing foolishness to win an election." I would not forget those words, prudent economic management. I have every confidence, Sir, in the Minister of Finance to deliver that appropriate economic management which the former Member for St. Michael South Central was speaking about, to put Barbados on the road to full employment.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not unusual on occasions like these that when the Honourable Minister presenting the Estimates is going to make his presentation and the principal spokesman replying to the presentation speak, that they both precast their presentations against a particular background, with a particular slant and bearing certain objectives in mind. The Honourable Minister of Finance was diligent to do that, indicating quite clearly what the whole purpose of his presentation was all about cautioning this country to ready itself and to position itself for the international occurrences that were likely to happen in the world economy, taking into account Barbados' obligations in the global economy and considering where Barbados is now and where Barbados wants to get.

However, the Honourable Member for St. John was not sufficiently deliberate to indicate precisely what his purposes were when he made his presentation, so much so that I recall leaving here last night and two ladies spoke to me and the first asked how long did that debate go for and who spoke and for how long. I said that on my side our presenter, if I should call him so, spoke two hours and 45 minutes while the main spokesman for the other side spoke for three hours and 15 minutes. And, the first lady to whom I spoke asked me if the principal spokesman, identifying with his part, really said anything. Then, the other girl jumped in said, "what do you expect, long presentation but what do you expect." These are two supporters of the Democratic Labour Party.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that occasions like these should allow us to look closely at particular indices in our economy. I believe that the Right Honourable Prime Minister gave some indices as to our economic health and permit me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to mention but a few of them.

He made it quite clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that notwithstanding a projection that revenue would not be as high as expenses that any deficit projected was totally manageable and that there was no need for anybody to become alarm.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I seem to recall an occasion between 1991 and 1993, and Honourable Members from that other side will also recall, that the political organisation to which they belong had

brought in here, Estimates that so projected deficits as to cause concern in here and then enormous suffering out there in Barbados.

The Right Honourable Prime Minister also made it quite clear that there is no need at this time for the Government to embark on a diminution of important capital projects and that the major ones which had been contemplated will be introduced.

We also learnt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you allow me to remind you, that notwithstanding the talk out there about printing money that generally speaking we have emerged up to now, with very healthy foreign reserves, indeed growing and increasing foreign reserves, thereby putting the lie to those alarmists who used a technical notion, printing money, last year to give the impression that some type of economic crisis was about to descend on this our fair land.

We also learnt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that not only has Barbados been managing the domestic component of its debt excellently, but a foreign component as well to such a degree and in such a way that this Barbados is far more creditworthy now than at anytime in its previous history and concomitant with this marked degree of creditworthiness is that Barbados is once again, perceived and perceived and perceived over and over again as a desirable investment climate both by local investors and by investors who are manifesting interest from their positions abroad.

You heard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North spoke of unemployment and employment, as he gave an account of activities under his portfolio that show where we are going, in terms of this matter to do with employment and employment opportunities for young people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the world of economists, economists in metropolitan countries settle for 4% unemployment as being tantamount to zero percent unemployment. I am serious. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in countries like metropolitan USA, Canada and Britain, economists are satisfied that 4% unemployment for them, equals zero percent.

5:50 p.m.

Thursday, March 20, 2000

Continuation of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, economists in metropolitan countries settle for four per cent unemployment as being tantamount to zero percent unemployment. I am serious Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In countries like the metropolitan USA and Canada and Britain, economists are satisfied that four per cent unemployment for them equals zero per cent. But the same economists say in here that in the context of heavily populated developed or developing countries, that an unemployment rate of 10 per cent to 11 per cent is nothing to bother about. We do not accept that and guided by the principle of the just society, and moving in the direction that the Honourable Member of St. Philip North spoke about, we have managed to define the economic forecasters' belief that 11 per cent unemployment for a country the size of Barbados is nothing to worry about; and we have taken it below that figure. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, whether or not we are looking at how long we have been keeping record of these things or not, I am telling the truth; I have subsisted on this earthly plain for more than four decades and at no point in my earthly mundane existence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have I seen or heard that unemployment has come to such a spectacularly low level. Mr. Deputy speaker, the problem about this is that not only the people's expectations continue to rise, not only that we have to meet the challenges of these increasing expectations, the problem here is that lots of questions, appreciation out there seems to have been recurring to this Government for this worthy and unprecedented achievement. Mr. Deputy Speaker, believe you me, as the Honourable Member St. John took us through his presentation for three hours and fifteen minutes, some 45 minutes more than The Right Honourable Prime Minister. At no point did I hear him suggest that unemployment was an issue. At no point did I hear him suggest what we can do to reduce it further. At no point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did I hear him demonstrate any concern about Government's fiscal or monetary policy. If he did, you must forgive me. I did not hear. I would rather suggest that he did not.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

It is clear that the Honourable Member was not here or his faculties were not operating at their full capacity yesterday, which I do not doubt but during the course of my speech I said that unemployment among women, which is almost double that of unemployment among men, is a very worrying statistic, and particularly so because most of these women are single mothers and heads of households.

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND:

Yes, I think now as I scratch that he did mention something about agenda ... Mr. Deputy Speaker, the position is this. The Honourable Member for St. John never said that taxes were too high, never said anything critical of our fiscal incentives over a time, never criticised us on our monetary policy. I would say he said ...

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Again I must stress that the Honourable Member obviously was not competent yesterday to understand what I was saying. I said quite clearly that taxes in the tourism sector are too high. Almost everything he is asking, unless he wishes me to produce the three hours and 15 minutes for his benefit, is

what we have already said in the debate.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

Mr. Deputy Sneaker, perhaps in the face of a very powerful presentation the honourable Member was so subdued as to be virtually speaking from a ... because I really did not hear him. What I did hear him say was that he was concerned that certain sectors in the economy were not operating to his satisfaction but I will continue. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Honourable Member for St. John, taking into account all his interest, could at least as a concerned civic-minded Barbadian have told her that we, occupying a constitutional position as Leader of the Opposition seem these threats to our competitiveness and sees threats to Barbados' economy by what is happening out there in the international world, particularly in respect to the offshore sector. I believe he mentioned it, but I believe he was not enough detailed enough and statesmanlike enough to tell us precisely what role, occupying his constitutional position he would play to not only ensure that he took the message aboard, that Barbados is a desirable place for the operations like the offshore businesses that we have, but that he was concerned about those agitators abroad who would want to threaten and ultimately diminish our offshore sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to say that in the context of this debate, we learn that taking into account the purpose of these Estimates, this Government will continue commitment to the small business culture. I was heartened that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, an honest, hardworking person, entirely committed to his goals, committed to his constituency, committed to his Ministry was able to enunciate his programme both for small business and his programme also for the protection of consumers. We, Mr. Deputy Speaker, heard in a situation where as we progress, and where Barbadians maintain their determination to have a mixed economy that particular concerns raised by consumers are being addressed by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North and his Ministry. He made it clear that he was contemplating policy positions, in which not only would this sector become not only more competitive, but the threat to the rights of consumers will be dealt with. He also mentioned unfair competition and the dominant role that agencies like monopolies, who standing in a position where they occupy the market solely and they have more or less a complete control of the economic culture, would be able to exert pressure on consumers in a way that would cause ... He mentioned that quite clearly. He also mentioned introducing measures to ensure that consumers would not be exploited, would not be ripped. He also mentioned something, Mr. Speaker have to speak about because the Honourable Member for St. John raised it yesterday. I am speaking about big monopolies. I am going to come to cartels now. In the context, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of all that happens in the global economic climate, there often exists abroad agencies called cartels, so-called competitors coming together and arranging price fixing. This is relevant because the Honourable Member for St. John asked about it yesterday, not directly, but he raised the whole question of where are we ... to do with energy mentioned it. We have this cartel called MOPEC. It is well known that certain times of the year they organise to organise supply. They are times when they free up supply. There are times when they cut it short to look for increased prices. In a situation where these open economies are often prone and subject to the occurrences that happen out there, and certainly to external shock, we have seen in recent weeks the phenomenon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in consequence to the price of oil has skyrocketed in a way that despite Government's policy this external shock has so impacted that we had to deal with it. But let us look first before considering the impact of the internal shock what the Government's policy is. We in the Barbados Labour Party Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have indicated quite clearly that the ideal position is that in an economy where energy is a principle raw material, where energy is a

principle factor input we are committed generally to a policy of the lowest possible energy prices. Accompanying that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have also indicated quite clearly that in situations where the imported prices fall, we would make adjustments to suit and decrease the price both to the principle importer and to the retailer and then to the consumer.

6:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

We know however that when the price rises so spectacularly as to be a threat to both the price and ultimately economic health that particular action would have to be taken. We would have heard repeatedly the Honourable Member for St. Peter and Minister of Finance saying that in time he is going to make adjustments to tax policy on energy and to the excise so as to be able to deal with it in a fiscal way.

What do we know is the current scenario. We have a situation where we fix and control energy prices. There are not many items that are price controlled but energy prices are controlled in here. Do not invite me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to look into the merits or demerits of widespread price control. Suffice it to say that if energy prices were not controlled and market forces were allowed to interfere with them, then it could be woe betide Barbados.

The justification in controlling the price is that you do not permit market forces whether caused by the demand and supply and other things to the market to so affect the price as to keep moving around causing the type of uncertainties that will not be good for the economy. So we have controlled the price.

However, when we import at a very high price and have to pay an excise, what happens is that in a situation where overnight we have to pay an increase price but where we also want to make the products available to the consumer to go - I have to tell the truth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, - and pay taxes and in a situation where stocks in the island are low and where there is a need for the product and where the external price imported is not only something that comes overnight but so high then - I am going to take the responsibility but at the same time I think I am explaining it - there is always the real Jekyll, the real rock and a hard place scenario, that you both have to pay an excise tax and at the same time you have to release the product but if they do not pay the tax, you cannot release the product. It is as simple as that.

I am saying that that is unfortunate. I am saying that it is unfortunate that it has come to a situation where a massive international increase in the price of oil affected this economy as to constrain our ability and our capacity to build it up. However, we have made adjustments in such a way that we expect to be able to pay the arrears of tax and we also expect that a new price which has been passed will be good enough to take us through, holding all variables and all factors constant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government is not happy that it had to increase the price of oil. Government has said repeatedly that in time adjustments will be made to the excise. We however hope that down the road prices will so stabilised that not only will the Honourable Minister of Finance be able to make and

introduce the adjustments to the taxes that he wants but that generally speaking we might be able if the price drops sufficiently - and it does drop quite often and later on in the debate I am going to bring figures on the Head, if we get to the Head 26 to show how overtime when the price drop at collection point in Barbados it also drop at the pump.

I conclude my presentation by addressing a matter somewhat addressed by the Honourable Member for St. Philip North but a matter which I believe the Right Honourable Prime Minister was entirely serious about when I raised it yesterday. He mentioned positioning Barbados to be more competitive globally. He mentioned positioning Barbados as an exporter. He mentioned positioning Barbados in a way where Barbadians should be equipped and ready for the challenges and more than once in his presentation he mentioned the whole question of the edification of our human resources.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip North and Minister of Labour made it quite clear what the activity of the Barbados Vocational Training Board has been and the extent to which people undergoing practical training had been able to take a direct part in this country's economy. Time was when people who were in that social economic bracket which the Honourable Member for St. Philip North was speaking about did not have a say in this economy. My colleague mentioned quite clearly that time was a short time ago when those people were trapped in a figure called 25 percent unemployment.

The Right Honourable Prime Minister is correct by saying that we need to equip and prepare our human resources better than before. I need hardly remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that part of the process in addition to what the Honourable Member for St. Philip North and Minister of Labour was saying, in addition to what the normal school system is doing and in addition to what the activities of the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP) and the Barbados Community College (BCC) are, that our vision in bringing EduTech is going to enhance our human resources beyond the point that the Honourable for the City of Bridgetown mentioned. She mentioned quite clearly that we are educated people. We are going to become technically oriented through EduTech and this has to be mentioned.

Let me conclude by going back to the national macro-economy. The Right Honourable Prime Minister said that for the future investments are going to be partly financed out of local loanable funds. For the last four or five years, in virtually every Budget presentation, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter has been talking about savings. I make bold to say that we have to encourage and promote savings. I will isolate a few savings instruments only.

The Opposition has spoken already, certainly on the second reading, about those people in Barbados who are unable to save. The Minister of Social Transformation is going to address those persons that the Opposition might want to say will never be able to save. He is going to address their conditions which he has already begun and in the fullness of time they too will be able to come into the mainstream of society and the mainstream of the economy.

Barbadians need to know that beyond a saving account in a commercial bank at three percent interest, beyond a fixed deposit at seven per cent interest and beyond shares in a credit union that there are other instruments for saving.

In an enlightened age - whereas the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown said that Barbadians are highly educated - there are Barbadians who need to know that there is a diversity of

saving instruments. I am so disappointed that there are people in Barbados who are 35 years old and who are suspicious of life insurance and even more suspicious of home insurance and live in chattel houses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the responsibility is ours. The time has come when we have to let the public know that we are serious about encouraging them to save. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas, on the Floor of this House, introduced a piece of legislation facilitating the evolution and the development of mutual funds in Barbados. He indicated then that mutual funds are proven as high attractive investment by ordinary people. Some people do not have to put more than \$100 a month or sometimes less.

Also where there is a particular savings instrument - namely the Treasury Bill as it is called - we need to sensitise Barbadians about how that system work. Treasury Bills are issued periodically for reasons that I will not go into. There are saving instruments. The average person in the community will not understand how the system work. The result then is the way the system work and the effect of the lack of information there are those in the community both who do not know how the system work and who feel that it is not for them and who have not been educated, do not take them up.

6:10 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

then what happens in the real world, institutional investors and institutional savers go for them simply because the average fellow does not understand how the system works.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would want to say that consistent with my opening remarks the Estimates should be forged on an anvil of clear objectives, presented in a coherent way, emphasising goals, setting

out the programmes, defending particular policies, and I am saying that these Estimates are worthy not only of support but certainly of emulation.

I conclude by saying that when we consider this Government's thrust on encouraging savings we have to bear in mind that not only will the little hurricane policy stop the chattel owners from being at a total loss in a situation where a small premium would give them indemnity, not only will that poor woman who loses her son at age 25 not be given financial compensation if he is not insured, not only will that person who has worked for a good income and not put it to good use not have something in his old age if he or she did not save but, ultimately, without having any brief or any involvement in financial institutions, the way savings work, even those who save will get back their savings and sometimes dividends and interest. Ultimately, as I said at the outset, those savings go a considerable way towards providing loanable funds and towards making room for investment.

When a Government has passed small business legislation with concessions, that Government would have been contemplating not only a culture by which small business can be formed and have their being but would have been contemplating a culture where there would have been facilitated with the investment funds that they wanted. As indeed, has happened through the Enterprise Growth Fund, the Fund Access and other agencies.

These Estimates are consistent provision for the development of Barbados. These Estimates bear potential to carry this country forward. These Estimates, as I have said, are worthy of emulation. When we make bold to approve these Estimates we do so not for partisan reasons to ensure our political success in the future, we do so and I am tempted to say, *pro bono publico* but Latin is not allowed in your Chambers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do it for the public good and along with this determination which is at the bottom of the Barbados Labour Party, to provide a better life for our people. Thank you.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to speak after the Honourable Minister of the Environment who has done a tremendous job in his speech. I want to say from the outset that one of the criticisms the Opposition has made about this administration is that the Government does not have a housing policy, which is simply an untruth.

Over the past 20 years or so the Barbados Labour Party Government in particular has placed emphasis on a housing programme. We believe that housing is a basic right and therefore every Barbadian has the right to shelter and therefore we have tried whenever we form the Government to ensure that our housing policy was strong.

I would want to remind the Opposition that it was this administration that passed the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act in the eighties. We set up the Housing Credit Trust Fund which the Democratic Labour Party never used, a US\$10 million fund that today on-lends more than \$111 million for mortgage funds to Barbadians, on-lending to the credit unions, on-lending to BMFC and on-lending to some mortgage companies in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not all. We have set interest rates since we became the Government at six per cent. Barbados is a member of the Habitat Commission and we sit on the Commission. All over the world Barbados is now set as a country to emulate; six percent for persons who can receive loans under

\$100 000. We have also gone a stage further - 100 per cent mortgage for persons borrowing money from the Housing Credit Fund, from the BMFC up to \$275 000 and you can borrow from the General Workers Loan Fund today up to \$150 000 so we have done a number of things during this term.

We have also introduced, at a time when the Democratic Labour Party under structural adjustment went back on a plan which we had in progress, where mortgage interest could have been claimed on income tax. This was re-introduced by this Government where every Barbadian claiming a mortgage can get interest payments claimed.

Repairs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is also part of our programme. Every Barbadian can claim up to \$3 500 on repairs on their homes. To say that we have no policy is indeed an untruth.

We have also bought since we became the Government over 500 acres of land for low income earners which is about 6 000 house spots. We have gone a bit further by having a universal selling price of approximately \$6 a square foot for the land and if you buy house and land, the land is reduced to \$4.50 a square foot.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want members to understand that the housing policy of the Barbados Labour Party is based on affordability. The housing programme of the Barbados Labour Party has always been that you must be able to replicate a system, that is why we set up the Housing Credit Fund in the eighties, that is why in this year's Estimates the Government recognised and allocated \$4 million to the National Housing Corporation. Why did we allocate the \$4 million? Over \$4.1 million this year was allocated to the National Housing Corporation and this was to service the interest payment for a bond that the member for St. John spoke of yesterday. Government since 1998 agreed that we would float a bond on the market to provide access to funds so that funds will be made available to NHC, knowing that housing demands a lot of capital. That bond that we floated brought in \$50 million, \$30 million on one hand and \$20 million on the other.

The Government agreed that any projects that were to be done on a non recoverable basis where subsidy was included that Government would pay the bond, that is why the Government has put \$4 million in these estimates to cover the interest payments.

I want to make the point that you cannot ask a government that puts over 500 acres of land at your disposal ... The land that was put at our disposal was done so that the NHC could develop the land and sell to Barbadians, at least covering their costs and making the minimum interest.

6:20 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to look first of all at the bond. The bond was to provide lots and terrace units and it was supposed to construct houses for sale. The most important point here is that housing takes a long time. The project cycle, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is very long. It involves planning, it involves

surveying, subdivision of land, the tendering process, the development of law and then the conveyancing. Some times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it takes over eighteen months before housing development lots can be sold - that is important at a time like today, Mr. Deputy Speaker ...

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. George North is misleading this House. When that bond issue came to this House we were told that the commercial projects would have been rented at such a price that it would have been able to service that loan. Now I am hearing that it is Government's policy to consider that loan to be a grant and that is very serious statement, Sir. Because it means that 28 people sat in this House and agreed that the Government would guarantee a loan for the National Housing Corporation and now we are hearing that we actually signed for an agreement for National Housing Corporation to get that loan and for the taxpayers to service it and that is a very serious charge, Sir.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

That is not what I say at all. I made the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the bond issue would provide lots. I was at pain to....

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. George North is saying that I lied and I want to say that cannot be true when the Honourable Minister said, Sir, that if you note in the Estimates this year that there is a figure for \$4 million to pay bond interest. I am saying that this is a serious charge because I am going to find it very difficult, Sir, to support anything that comes before this House for National Housing Corporation because it is obvious that Government is not being fair to this House the same way that they were able to bring a supplementary for 2.5 per cent increase in salaries and now they are bringing it back in these same Estimates. These Estimates cannot be trusted, Sir.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, surely the Honourable Member does not...

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I understand the Minister quite clearly to say that in the Estimates there is a sum of \$4.1 million to cover the cost of sinking fund interest payments for non-recoverable projects.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN:

Sir, he did not say that.

Hon. Sir. HENRY FORDE:

Sir, that is what he said and it is at...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN:

Sir, he did not say that.

Hon. Sir. HENRY FORDE:

Sir, I am on a point of order. The Honourable Member is in here long enough that he must know by now that he cannot get up in a midst of a point of order. If he will reduce his enthusiasm a little bit and listen. At page 175 of the Estimates, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under Head 716, one shows a grant to the National Housing Corporation to cover the cost of sinking fund interest payments to non-recoverable projects. I quite distinctly heard the Honourable Member for St. George North make that statement. The only body who seems to have been misled is the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. The position is absolutely clear, Sir, that it was always intended to have a sinking fund in order to cover interest payments in respect of non-recoverable loans.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West just got up and misled this Chamber because the Minister neither quoted from nor did he purport to quote from the Estimates. What the Honourable Member did perhaps was elucidated the speech but he cannot say that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was misleading this House when he said that the Minister said that the \$4 million was going to be used to service bond interest. He did not say anything about recoverable. He did not say anything about sinking fund. He said the \$4 million was going to be used to pay bond interest. A senior parliamentarian should never stake his reputation on getting up in here seeking to put into the records something that the Minister did not say. If he wants to elucidate, he can do that.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I made the point that the money that is given to National Housing Corporation this year is to cover non-recoverable projects. I made that point. I said non-recoverable projects.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

What do I mean by non-recoverable projects? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want further to elucidate. The loan includes London Bourne, Bonnetts, Deanes Town Terrace, Bush Hall and Flat Rock. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are 92 terrace units that were opened between November 1999 and March 2000 - 44 at London Bourne Towers, 28 at Deanes Town, 20 at Flat Rock. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are opening 12 more units at Bush Hall in the next two months and six at Bonnetts bringing a total of 104 terrace units at a cost of \$21.6 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the \$4 million that is in the Estimates is only to cover the non-recoverable projects that I have just mentioned. For example, we have to subsidise the rent at London Bourne Towers, we subsidise the rent at Flat Rock...

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

It cannot be recovered. We just cannot recover the economic cost for rent at London Bourne Towers, Flat Rocks or Deanes Town. Government has decided to put in that money to help the National Housing Corporation.

On the other hand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the social policy of the Government . It is also

important to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the last two or three years what we have done in the housing sector. I want to look at the records because the records are very important. I have always looked at the loan activity of the National Housing Corporation. I want to look at when the Democratic Labour Party was only approving 54 loans in 1989 when the Honourable Member was a member of the Board. In 1990 they approved seven loans. In 1992 they approved 10 loans. In 1992/1993 they approved 36 loans. Now, look at the difference. In 1994 to 1995 we approved 39 loans. In 1997 we approved 127 loans. In 1997 to 1998 we approved 1 047 loans. In 1998 to 1999 we approved 1 756 loans to a volume loan of \$24 million. That is the point, that the business activity of this country was so good that Barbadians working for as low as \$150 were borrowing money from the National Housing Corporation, even though we had put in \$10 million in the General Workers Loan Fund, it meant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we had to find an additional \$10 million, that is why we are now in negotiation with NIS to further supplement another \$10 million. We are hoping, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that by the end of this month we could complete the negotiations with the National Insurance Scheme where we could get that \$10 million to service all the outstanding loans for mortgages that we now have. It is important to note that we have now restructured the General Workers Loan Fund. I am hoping that over the next year that we could be on a growth path where we could use the money that comes in for repayment to lend out to Barbadians.

6:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. G.A. CLARKE:

We anticipated, Mr. Deputy Speaker that if we continue on this path that at least we could lend a thousand loans in every year for the next five or so years.

It is very important to note that the demand for loan funds in Barbados is very great at this time and that is why we have to find money in the market from the private sector. We cannot expect the Government to be constantly capitalising either the Housing Credit Fund or the General Workers Loan Fund so it is important that we go to the market.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John raised the point yesterday afternoon that the National Housing Corporation is doing too much and he wanted to know what we are doing.

The National Housing Corporation today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is managing a capital fund of over \$134 million. We are managing that fund and we have a structure in place. I am happy to report to the House that since September last year, we have a new Board in place that is managing the situation. We have a new structure in place. The Warrens and Country Road Projects are two big projects that are not financed by the National Housing Corporation funds, they are financed by a consortium. For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Warrens project is financed by a consortium of the CIBC, The Barbados Mutual, the Life of Barbados and the NIS. And, of course it is no secret, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Warrens, when it is completed will be in the vicinity of about \$62 million, whereas, the Country Road

project which is financed by BNB will be in the vicinity of about \$22 million.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I know the Honourable Member has quoted a lot of figures in here today and I do not wish confusion, either he or the Honourable Member for Christ Church West can elucidate but I would like to find out whether the cost the building at Warrens which was originally estimated at \$37.2 million is now in fact going to cost \$62 million and why that is so.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Please proceed.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot talk about cost overruns at this time because the building is not completed yet but one of the things that we have to understand is that the cost of Warrens is because of...

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Order please. I would like to hear the Honourable Member for St. George.

Hon. Sir Henry FORDE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. John obviously does not read the facts correctly or he uses the facts only to suit himself. The original cost of the scheme was \$45.7 million I think it was, but over \$45 million. There are reasons...

Aside.

Hon. Sir Henry FORDE:

No. This is inclusive of the cost of the land. There are serious investors, you know, who are lending money. They are not joking about the matter so when the Honourable Member wants to give the Press one impression, he must not...

Aside.

Hon. Sir Henry FORDE:

I am going to speak on the substantive matter but he is wrong in saying what was the initial price on the matter. There is no point misleading the public of Barbados all the time by giving wrong facts suggesting that somebody is doing something wrong, instead of debating in this House on the basis of facts and proper argument.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to continue. The Warrens Project, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will house about 11 double Ministries and of course there will be a post office and a day care centre.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also concentrated, however, on the provision of lots and housing for the ordinary Barbadian. The Honourable Member wants to know about his area. This morning, around

6:30 I was in St. John looking at the project. This year, we have completed about 205 houses that are on the market now and that persons have paid the deposit.

Aside.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE:

For example, in your area, 17 out of 20 persons have paid the 10% deposits.

Asides.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE:

So why are you coming in here and saying that they are not allocated then?

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The point I made is that those lots were allocated since 1994. The Minister and I agreed that they should be allocated to the people who previously had the lots but that was since last year. The Minister and I went in, I think it was March last year and looked at the houses. We had a subsequent debate in here. The Minister confirmed that the floors were supposed to be concrete and they are in fact, wooden floors and that he would have to revise the houses, that was two months ago. To this day those people have not yet purchased the houses and that is almost a year that those wooden houses, painted and looking nicely, are simply sitting at Gall Hill in bush.

Asides.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my understanding is, and I was there this morning, that all of the houses have been allocated and that those persons that have not received the keys yet are waiting because of the Mortgage Financing Programme. The 10% has been paid and by the end of the month all of the persons occupying houses at Orange Hill, Mount Brevitor, Rock Hall, Flat Rock, Briar Hall, Bakers, Cottage and Groves will receive the keys.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want the word to go forward that the National Housing Corporation is not operating as a financially capable institution. For example, my information is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the revenue from those 205 houses alone, would be in vicinity of \$14.3 million. So I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at what we have...

Asides.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE:

You talk about projected deficits, when you look at what we have done so far and the amount of houses that are in progress I want to also tell the Honourable Member that we still have another 140 houses that are near completion. When you look at the amount of lots that we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are 217 lots that are ready for sale now and 617 lots that will be ready for sale by September of this year. We have lots all across Barbados.

Asides.

6:40 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. G. A. Clarke:

When you look at the number of lots that we have, 217 lots that are ready for sale now; 617 that will be ready for sale by September this year. We have lots all across Barbados. One of the things that I notice that the Member for St. John has said that he recognises one constituency but we are building across Barbados. We have lots at Husbunds, Rock Hall, Parish Land. We have, Mr. Speaker, 133 lots at Husbunds that have been sold. And we're hoping a middle income development that is hoping to rake in almost \$9 million for the lots at Husbunds. To say that the National Insurance is broke is a total joke. It is just a matter of the cycle taking a longer time. We are hoping to complete the lots in St. Thomas. We are hoping to complete the 46 lots at Arch Hall. We are hoping to complete lots at Parish Land, Christ Church, Blackmans in St. Joseph, Cottage and Groves and Lower Burney. We are also hoping to do some lots in Grazettes. We are also looking at lots at Deanes Town Terrace where there is to be a new city housing lot we are hoping to achieve.

Aside.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

We have lots at Kendal Hill, 100 lots in Kendal Hill, Christ Church; Claybury, Woodland, St. John; Six Cross Roads; Rices. Beckles Land and Water Land. We are hoping to do that development in the city - Grazettes, Indian Ground, Hoytes Village, Church Village, St. Philip. We have land across the island. We have gone to the Honourable Representative for St. Lucy. Only a couple days ago I asked

you to prioritize two projects. I have gone to St. John and within the next month or so we should be bringing to Cabinet two developments in St. John as well as St. Lucy. Mr. Speaker, I am proud of our housing programme. It takes time but we have to move forward. As I said before the housing programme is project is based on reputability and affordability. This Government is trying to keep the price of lots to a minimum. If you look at the cost of land, just the cost of development is sometimes \$4.00 a square foot.

Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member has two minutes.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

When you look at what we pay for it as a Government and what the consumer pays for it \$4.50 or \$6.00 a square foot, one can that this Government really has a heart, this Government has really subsidised and has brought housing to the ordinary Barbadian. I want Members to see the programme. We want Members to understand what we are doing. We are not putting the programme only in the BLP constituency. We are going across Barbados. We are going all across Barbados. We have to be consistent. Mr. Speaker, I have not even talked about the amendment to the tenancies programme where within the next month or so we will bring amendment to the tenancies programme to give persons living in urban tenancies the opportunity to buy the land at \$2.50 a square foot and Government will then prop up the market price; and we have done that. This is what we are doing. I understand it has gone to the AG's Chamber. That will be coming to the parliament within the next month or so.

We have put money in the Estimates and surely in the Urban Commission to help subsidise those lots. We have also had money within the Ministry of Housing to subsidise to the market price, those lots that would be the countryside. The amendment would say not necessarily urban tenancies but other tenancies, giving the opportunity for those persons living on the outskirts of Barbados, not necessarily a plantation tenantry the opportunity to buy their land at \$2.50 a square foot.

This is a Government that understands the needs of the people and we know that housing is the number one priority today. We have tackled unemployment and we intend to tackle the housing programme. Thank you.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now suspended until 740 p.m.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

6:50 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

RESUMPTION

Mr. Speaker: This sitting is resumed.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Sir, I rise to make my contribution to this Estimates debate which is currently being debated. The post lunch period of yesterday's sitting reminded me of the English tour to the West Indies some twenty years ago when Geoff Boycott was making his final visit as a player to the Caribbean.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John was like Boycott facing Holding. Unplayable deliveries. He was taunted. He was flashing. He was swiping. He was missing. The deliveries were right down the corridor of uncertainty. He made absolutely no contact whatsoever yesterday afternoon. Sir, he did not speak to the substantive nor the salient points on the Estimates. He did not give an alternative.

Sir, in like style, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy continued in the same abysmal vain. I had lost all track of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy some weeks ago when he came into this House and tried to mislead this Honourable House that the reason why the temperature had gone up in Barbados was because people were under more stress. From then, I knew that he was not really serious. He tried to bring back an old postulate

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN:

On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. There is no where in the records of this House where you would see that I ever made a statement that the temperature in Barbados went up because people were under more stress. If he does not know the quotation, I am asking him not to try to quote me.

Asides.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

He said so. He said that the temperature had gone up and that was contributing to the global warming. He said so, Sir, whether it was environmental or otherwise. Sir, he went back with an old postulate in physics ever since the Renaissance by a man named Count Rumford who said that heat flowed from one body to another by this mystical form of something called Caloric. That principle was thrown out and Newton came with fresh thermodynamics principles.

Sir, this set of Estimates tells me one thing. It tells me that the management of the Barbados economy is in good hands not only the country but the Treasury. Sir, although the administration is on the eve of repaying an 8 per cent salary cut for which it was not or is not culpable, the Government has seen it possible and fit to raise salaries and wages in spite of the fact that Sandy Lane Hotel and the Hilton Hotel are closed.

The Minister of Finance could have reneged on his basic promises, but he did not. He still saw it fit to be able to speak to the social welfare of the country, infrastructural matters, health matters, environmental matters and all matters which featured prominently in the last Manifesto which was

greatly responsible for him being swept to office with such resounding numbers.

Sir, he could have presented a cold and harsh economic approach but he showed some commitment to the marginalised. That is why I said that these Estimates represented some form of restoring integrity. It is about the restoration of integrity to the civil servants. This is part two. Part one was when the legislation was brought to the House which said never again would this administration sit and see peoples' money taken away from them in such a form.

The laying of these Estimates represents the second part of the restoration of integrity to the civil servants. The other part has to do with the empowerment and the social upliftment and strengthening of the marginalised and the underprivileged.

Sir, this intestinal fortitude has been a hallmark of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) administration. Having been returned to office between 1995 and 1996 after eight years in the wilderness, a Barbados Labour Party (BLP) administration saw to it to tear itself away from the inertia which was set up by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Yes, we were running at an acceptable deficit with respect to the Growth Domestic Product (GDP), percentage wise. Yes, we had restructured. Yes, our balance of payments was stabilised but at that time the words on the lips were about slimming and trimming and having a more fit Government.

Sir, the administration then like now saw to it and were not afraid to go there and restore the good name to the country in terms of tourism. They saw to it that agriculture was turned around. They saw to it that the schools which were in dire state of disrepair were one after the other brought back to good and strong physical structure.

Sir, the new challenge which the Prime Minister referred to yesterday and the new challenges will be part and parcel of this administration strategy for the new century.

Sir, today, I have dubbed these Estimates, Estimates 2000 Orbit. These Estimates will take us into another sphere - I think the Prime Minister used the word 'repositioning' - which would assure us of economic sustainability and development simultaneously which would free us from any residual gravity of the bad old days of the early 1990's.

Mr. Speaker, the health of an economy is only as strong as its physical strength, its mental health and its human resources. Sir, when we speak of human resources, the latter is in consonant and resonant with the environment which must also be healthy. It is therefore hearkening to see in these Estimates, an improvement and the assurance that our primary, secondary and tertiary health care of the country would be addressed.

Before I begin to speak to this, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy sought to mislead this House this afternoon when he made some unfounded statements about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH). Sir, I am going to draw to his attention from the Estimates that between 1991 and 1993, the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) chopped the vote to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) by \$10 million.

7:55 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. During my speech I never mentioned anything about expenditure at the QEH. I dealt only with the revenue, Sir, so he cannot be referring to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Mr. D.T. GILL:

He spoke, Sir, about nothing being done. Rather than doing something to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, you saw it fit to cut their vote by \$10 million. Then you proceeded between 1992-1993 to cut it by another \$100 000. They were just going down. It was like the sugar production just as it declined. Everything was declining. Sometimes I even laugh and say "Nothing was conjugating." Every possible area declined.

The Drug Service went from \$16 million to \$15 million and you went into park. I think the Honourable Member made reference about parking. You parked and chilled out, to use contemporary jargon. You chilled out at \$16 311 000. But look at it, Sir? Today the vote for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is 75 per cent, almost \$100 per cent over and above what it stood in 1992-93. Compare \$57 million to \$97 million, \$40 million more.

To show you, Sir, that this was no sheer happenstance, a similar increase was also reflected in the Drug Service, another 75 per cent increase. You went down as low as \$15 660 000 as opposed to \$26 329 000. At that time they were tinkering with the economy and with people's health.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy seems quite prepared, almost 10 years after, to tinker, if given the opportunity. When I hear him say in here this afternoon that if we had St. Joseph in place at least you could go and refurbish a ward at the QEH and take some of the people from there and put them down there, I never heard so much nonsense in my life. You cannot take seriously ill people, carry them almost 16 miles to bring them back up for X-rays, to take them back down, to bring them back up for blood samples, to take them back down. That is total madness. It shows that they never had a policy.

The money which should have gone to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the old people used to say: "It went in Maxwell Pond." It probably went in Russia Gully. You took it north and it got lost. You ought to be ashamed to come in here this evening, not Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, and try to grandstand by saying that nothing is being done at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Sir, if you check the Estimates, you will see: Care of the Disabled, Care of the Elderly. You forgot the elderly. You abandoned the elderly - National Assistance Board, a poor track record, the Barbados Drug

Service, the Sanitation Service Authority, Environmental Health and all other environmental projects including the South Coast and the West Coast Sewerage Projects.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I think that everything he said about me about 1991 to now should be struck from the records because I was not part of any administration in 1991 so I cannot take the blame. He has willfully, Sir, misled the House by giving the impression that I was in this House and I did all of those things. Nothing he said was correct so those things should be struck from the record, Sir.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Mr. Speaker, "you" plural. He has real problems.

Sir, there are no shortcuts. I do not think the Democratic Labour Party was or is serious about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. You cannot play any political football with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I make no bones about it. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a good institution. There are no shortcuts to good and decent health care.

If you check the Estimates, you will see there is an additional \$1 million being voted for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It was neglected over the years. It has a good foundation, excellent doctors, excellent ancillary staff, excellent paramedical staff. You would see beginning this year and into next year serious physical changes to the structure. You would see proper fencing around the Queen Elizabeth Hospital as well as at the Psychiatric Hospital where people would not be just walking off the street and walking on where you do not know who are part of the resources on staff from who is patient, from who is intruder.

The nursing staff - I guess this will bring some degree of comfort for them because those leaving the late shift and those going onto the late shift are somewhat concerned in terms of their security and safety.

Sir, at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, you will find in medicine, a very dynamic area, not static, where new innovations and new discoveries in medicine come on stream almost daily that the cost to maintain that hospital will continue to rise.

Twenty years ago, what was used to test your sugar levels, you went in a back room and you used a small litmus paper, but no longer. Practically every house with someone who is diabetic, you take a lancet, you prick the thumb or the index finger, and you check your blood. There was a time where you took the test tube and you had to heat it and check the colour. Those things are now something of the past. All of that is gone so we should not be ashamed to come in here and vote more money for the Hospital.

In recent years that Hospital, and we are all at that age where anyone of us this evening, God forbid it, because of the strain and stress of politics, could fall victim to a heart attack. Right now, our hospital can boast of having an excellent cardiac unit. Gone are the days when you had to think in terms of going north. It has an excellent renal unit, an intensive care unit for paediatrics and a medical intensive care unit. When we come here we should leave aside the petty politics and put our institution on a

sounder ground.

8:05 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D.T. GILL:

That Queen Elizabeth Hospital could be very well used as a marketing tool where we sell our country or promote our country to international businesses.

Sir, we are jostling out there for international golf tournaments and people will not come to these shores if they are not sure of certain infrastructural positions or the ability to deliver good health care. Even as we go out there and vie for certain international agencies, if they know you have a good infrastructure, if they know you have a good educational system, if they know that you have a strong health care system, they will put their headquarters here.

Some months ago, I read a newsletter put out by the Royal Bank of Canada. They put out a very neat and profound newsletter and it said that Canadians were ashamed of stating publicly that they have one of the best if not the best standard of living. The article went on to state that Canadians should stand up and shout it and say it from the hill tops. Sir, if we were put in the position, we could get up and say without a shadow of a doubt that we have one of the best if not the best health care systems in the Caribbean.

If you check the Estimates, you will see an additional million being voted for the Barbados Drug Service. We are not in the style of cutting from the Barbados Drug Service or from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. This additional million dollars will go in great part towards improving or installing a computerised system which would link up all the Government dispensaries and at a later date could tap into the private dispensaries.

When I worked in Martinique years ago that was common. At the end of the day, just as how the

Minister of Finance could have a printout about our balance of payments, in like fashion, at the end of the day in Martinique, and I think the other French Department of Guadeloupe, the closing and the opening stock for the next day could be had from a computer system. What would that spell out in a real tangible terms? If you have such a system, it would cut down on the duplication.

Barbadians love a lot of medicine. They will move from A to B to C to D. You could follow them. They like to know they have a medicine chest of medicine, then a handbag with medicine and then a drawer with medicine. They just feel good about it, the fact that they do not have to pay for it, they forget and double the dose and they do every sort of thing. If you have such a system you will see that I. Roett or D. Gill when last he turned up, if he is moving from place to place and it is also helpful for the doctor to profile his patient.

This million dollars will bring great stability and you can cut back on the wastage and irrational usage. It will also set you a more definitive pattern of ordering stock and this is one of the problems which our service among other things is facing.

Sir, I have no problem whatsoever with having a vote of \$1 million for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It is a proper tertiary institution. They could have a million dollars for their pharmacy. Right now they are somewhere between \$500 000 to \$600 000, by cutting wastage in certain areas, you could push it up to a realistic \$1 million. Look at what transpired in 1992, \$400 000, in 1993, \$317 000 as opposed to today, over \$600 000 voted for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

I would love to see the day, if it be tomorrow, when that institution be given back its vote for pharmaceuticals because if there is a department with which a patient must interface, it is the dispensary, whether as an out-patient or an in-patient.

I would also like to see that we revisit the legislation governing the Barbados Drug Service. I would like to see a more timely reimbursement to the pharmacists, sometimes it is three to four months and that silliness started or took root in the early nineties when they kept the suppliers as well as the owners three or four months without payment and when they did pay they paid them for one month and they expected them to genuflect and bow down and say thank you, Sir.

I would also like to see the day when the Barbados Drug Service looks seriously at re-categorising a group or a whole set of their drugs. A patient has no right at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital being held up because of bureaucratic bungling and uncertainty, waiting for a signature, a seriously ill patient. That institution has to be taken out of the control of the Barbados Drug Service and operate on its own. It is a tertiary teaching hospital and there is no time or no place for that.

There is something else I would like to draw attention to before I wind up, that the insurance companies have to play a greater part in the delivery of care through the Barbados Drug Service. This is where private and public must come together with one common view and that is better health.

Mr. Speaker, I said at the beginning, these Estimates have restored some sort of integrity to the civil servants who were put out to pasture, who were wandering and languishing in the heat, wondering if and when they would ever be repaid.

8:15 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000.

Continuation of Mr. D. T. GILL:

At the same time the administration has not left the marginalised and the unfortunate way behind, they have seen it fit to keep them moving in tandem with the middle income. If you move up ten we move you up an appropriate percent. So, Sir, these Estimates are by far quite efficient and quite appropriate at this stage in our development as we start the year 2000 and move on beyond.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Speaker, despite the late hour it gives me great pleasure in contributing to this debate. This debate on the Estimates, I consider one of the most important debates of this House ranking alongside the debate on Budgetary Proposal and Financial Statements. I sat here yesterday and again today and I would have thought that the Members of the Opposition, as slight as they are, would have taken this opportunity at such an important time to respond to what the Honourable Member for St. Peter delivered yesterday and to do it in a very constructive and coherent way but unfortunately the Honourable Member for St. John wasted the opportunity to do just that. Instead he engaged in a useless broadside on the integrity and the performance of the Ministers of this Government. Most of what he said was ill-founded. He did not make contact with reality and the facts to substantiate anything that he would have said.

Mr. Speaker, these Estimates - as the Prime Minister has grown accustomed to - were very well prepared. Yesterday the Honourable Member for St. Peter outlined the background against which these Estimates were prepared. The Honourable Prime Minister said that the Estimates were geared in the context of very important regional and international events which are changing and which have serious implications for the Barbadian economy. For example, he noted the WTO agreement would take more force. There will be limited concessional finance that we could look forward to from the international financial institutions and he made mention of the creation of the Caribbean single market and economies.

Against that background he noted that we need to focus on what lies ahead, these events obviously would provide challenges and opportunities and that we should not be preoccupied with past achievements. In this regard there needs to be re-definition of the role of the state. The state should not be retreating but it should accept that it has to play a different role in order for Barbados to maintain regional and international competitiveness.

Mr. Speaker, in my considered opinion, as the world gets smaller and smaller, as liberalisation and

globalisation get more entrenched I think that any right thinking Prime Minister in charge of a serious administration will face the challenges head-on and he will prepare his country carefully for doing business in a more integrated world economy. The Prime Minister was very clear yesterday to set out his thoughts against this background.

It is to those things that the Honourable Member for St. John and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should have taken some time out to understand because there are very important issues but instead the Honourable Member for St. John went off on a tangent not making contact for about four or five minutes with this very important document. He said at one point that the present administration is concentrating on winning an election and it is not taking into consideration Barbados' long term interest. Mr. Speaker, you know that is a very ludicrous statement.

We had elections just over a year ago and the people spoke and the people spoke loudly even in St. Philip South they spoke very loudly. They made a clear statement and they made a statement which indicated that they were happy with the performance of the Barbados Labour Party's administration. With a little more effort on the part of the campaign team in St. Lucy and St. John there would be no Members on the other side. We do not have to be preoccupied at this early stage and I daresay, at no stage with winning the Elections. Once we perform well it is obvious that we will win the Elections. As far as I am concerned, we have a job to do and we have to do it very well and once the electorate is satisfied with our performance we will be returned to power.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party, very skillfully led by the Honourable Member for St. John, in that respect, are doing a very good job to free us up so that we can get on with the people's business.

Mr. Speaker, for some time now the Leader of the Opposition has been going on and on and crying foul about the Barbados Labour Party's ability to manage this economy. Time and again I have heard it said that we do not have a creditable, sensible, well calculated macro economic policy and time and again the evidence suggest otherwise. This economy continue to experience strong economic growth. This year the out-turn figures at February 29th predicted that the economy will grow in real terms about 3.4%. Inflation is under control and net international reserves are fairly strong. This puts a lie once again to what the Honourable Member for St. John would come into this House and would want us to believe would happen to the economy at some point in time.

It would be remiss of me, Mr. Speaker, if I did not mention in this House now that I am looking at the macro economic variables, the extremely good performance of the administration and its job creation strategy to have the unemployment rate, not calculated by Members on this side but calculated by a very reputable team, the Barbados Statistical Service. We have the unemployment rate down to single digits.

8:25 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Speaker, let me look ahead, because we heard yesterday that we are not taking the future into consideration in any serious way. I will quote from a press release of the Central Bank of Barbados, A Review of the Economy 1999, at page 8 of 9 which deals with the outlook 2000, and it says that

“Real GDP is forecasted to grow between 2% and 3% during 2000.”

The real economists in this country at the last Barbados Economic Society meeting just a couple days ago, sampling the views of the real economists, not the Members from the other side, they projected that the real economic growth to the Barbados economy next year would be 2.9% and I continue to read.

“This growth should reflect an improved performance in tourism, sugar and manufacturing output. Continued growth in developed countries is expected to trigger a moderate increase in long stay arrivals, while cruise passenger arrivals should show a significant recovery from the outcome of 1999.”

Mr. Speaker, the economy is expected to grow. All the commentators say it will grow and the administration has ensured that a structured economic programme is put in place for this economy to grow next year and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, we also heard yesterday coming from the other side, the Honourable Member for St. John making a very poor attempt to defend the position taken by one of his former colleagues during the public discussion about Central Bank’s financing of Government’s operations.

I think the Honourable Prime Minister dealt very effectively with this issue by using some very practical examples. The Honourable Prime Minister said yesterday and he is correct that cyclical movement in the reserves resulted in there being a slight decline in the first two months of last year relative to the first two months of this year when the reserved would have increased by over \$40 billion. When we compare that with the era of the other administration, Mr. Speaker, if we look between 1989 and 1993, the reserves fell to a ridiculously low level of over \$40 million at 1992, and the reserves are well in excess of \$650 million.

Mr. Speaker, once again the Members on the other side are in no position, they do not have any moral or any other authority to come in here and tell us about how we should manage the foreign reserves, because we are doing a very good job.

Let me get on now to one of these ludicrous intentions made by the Honourable Member for St. John. He came into this House yesterday and instead of responding to what is contained in this document, he took the opportunity to launch an attack on the Members of the frontbench. He said that the Prime Minister should turn us on our heads and shake to see if the sense would go in the other direction.

Mr. Speaker, on 20th January a lot of people got turned on their heads and they got a good shaking and they were shaken by the people who had the sense. And the people who had the sense, Mr. Speaker, posed confidence in the Barbados Labour Party at a level that was not seen in this country. But he also would want the Prime Minister to turn us on our heads and shake because that is what a leader would have to do to persons who are largely efficient.

The Democratic Labour Party over the years has had a large number of inefficient ministers. He, himself, ranks fairly high among that list of inefficient ministers and he is fairly well placed to talk about ministers who are inefficient. The events of 1999, January 20 and the previous September 6, 1994 indicated who were efficient ministers and how the efficient ministers feel.

He also had a lot to say about what the Ministry of Agriculture is doing and the kinds of statements the Minister of Agriculture is making and he is not going a little deeper telling the country what is the Ministry's response to the problems facing this country.

Mr. Speaker, it is well known, probably not by the Members of the Opposition, that within the context of the WTO arrangement that the agreement on agriculture has been designed in such a way that the agricultural sector in developing countries and I daresay in developed countries as well, will be put under tremendous stress and strain. We at the Ministry of Agriculture recognise it and we intend to put up a very important defence to lead regional and external events to make sure that commercial agriculture in this country will be excellent.

So the thrust of the development of the agricultural sector, Mr. Speaker, will have to be on increasing the international competitiveness of agricultural production and of our processing and marketing systems. Since Barbados is a relatively high cost producer of agricultural outputs, the country will not be in a position to pursue a competitive strategy on a cost basis.

Asides.

Hon. A.P. WOOD:

Mr. Speaker, we will have to revisit the way we do business and product depreciation will have to be at the centre of our focus. We will also have to seek to develop niche markets and penetrate them as a fundamental approach to achieving some sort of competitive advantage in agriculture.

In the context of our involvement in this WTO arrangement, Mr. Speaker, one thing that is very important, and the Honourable Member for the City alluded to it, is information dissemination on the implications of involvement in WTO - in my case, the agricultural sector, this is very important.

As the Honourable Member for the City said earlier, the Ministry of Agriculture will be organising a series of management seminars. We have devised a Public Education Programme to get the information to the Fifth Formers. We will sit with them and explain to them the implication of changing international trade arrangements for the sector.

Mr. Speaker, we have just put together a strategic plan at the Ministry and this strategic plan will seek to transform and position the agricultural sector in Barbados, as I said, with the ultimate objective of enhancing competitiveness.

8:35 p.m.

Thursday, March 20, 2000

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

This strategic plan will seek to transform and reposition the agricultural sector in Barbados with the ultimate objective of enhancing competitors. In this regard the Ministry will place particular emphasis on the following areas, policy formulation and reform. We will seek to identify specific and appropriate policy responses to the fair liberalisation process. That will be our priority. In this connection the Advertising Planning Unit will be collaborated with the institutions like the Inter-American Institute Co-operation on Agriculture ... Particular interest will be placed on analysing the prospects of the future of the important components of the industries, like the sugar industry. We will be seeking people to widen the livestock industry, we will be seeking to revitalise the cotton industry.

With respect to financing competitiveness, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry will formulate a comprehensive competitiveness for ... which is specific to our sector. In this regard particular emphasis will be placed on technological modernisation and diversification initiatives. I will explain all of these when I get on to my Head, hopefully next week. We will also be seeking to promote an agribusiness and marketing focus. The successful production and export of agricultural commodities will undoubtedly depend on the capacity of producing the Barbados account of business oriented and market-lead approach in undertaking production, assessing and marketing activities.

The Ministry will therefore be seeking in the not too distance future to revitalise its form management programme where the objectives will be to provide, advise and training in the following communities, form management and the wider area of form management. We will be conducting form management surveys. We will be helping the farmers to upgrade and analyse crop and livestock projects. Mr. Speaker, that is just a rough outline of how the Ministry intends to keeping very close contact with the farmers, how the Ministry, while recognising the challenges it faces as a result of the important changes

to the regional and international trading works.

Mr. Speaker, I must introduce you to special projects the Ministry of Agriculture will be undertaking in an effort to reposition the agricultural sector to maintain viability and competitiveness in these changing times. We have a very important project which we hope to operationalise in the very near future. This programme is the Agricultural development Trust. This Agricultural Trust should provide financial assistance first and foremost to those whose vital agricultural enterprises, which are expected to suffer some sort of disruption as a result of the implementation of Barbados' commitment to welfare organisation.

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Sir, as I said earlier, the routine to increase our competitiveness, in order to achieve that, some components of the sector will obviously need to be recapitalised, retuned, introductions of more modern technology will have to be the order of the day if the sector.

This Agricultural Development process will provide finance on concessional terms to those industries which we deem valuable to our agriculture to allow the sector to remain alive. Mr. Speaker, we will need to conduct some detailed studies at the level of the commodities in order to determine how financially and economically viable some of these industries will be.

The Agricultural Development Trust will make funds

available for the conducting of these studies. Mr. Speaker, these things I will expand on when I get on to my Head. Another problem that is worth some sort of mention at this stage is our land for the landless project The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, from a constituency characterised by agriculture would know that there are large numbers of farmers out there, be they crop farmers or livestock farmers would like some more area to expand their farming operations and we have others who would like to get in to farming. The Ministry of Agriculture's response is to identify a pool of land of which we can have this landless project operationalised to match the demand in some way with supply.

The rolling out of this project is a very, very important project but we would not just be making land available to the small farmers but we will be providing a package of assistance to the small farmers which would leave us in no doubt that their projects would not fall by the wayside.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would just like to say once again that I fully endorse the construction of these Estimates. I think that these Estimates were set against the right background. I think the allocation of the funds ..., we have the \$2 billion economy now, that the allocation of these funds leave us in no doubt what is the strategic focus of this macro-economy.

8:45 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

If we can get the full cooperation of our public officers in the execution of the programmes within the various ministries, I have no doubt that this country will continue to grow from strength to strength.

While the Opposition remains preoccupied with minor issues, we will forge ahead with the more important issues confronting this country. We will remain steadfast in our approach and I have no doubt that we will succeed.

I thank you.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

Mr. Speaker, I too would like to lend my voice to the debate in this Honourable Chamber in relation to the Estimates of Expenditure 2000-2001. I want to do so based on the record of the Government of which I am a member of over the years, based on the record of this Government in terms of providing houses to those needy people through the years and based on the fact that this Government has projections to improve and continue the housing stock for Barbadians to provide Barbadians with a better standard of living than they would have most likely had under the regime of the former Government. The position is clear in this Honourable House that should you put the two together, this Government stands head and shoulders over the Opposition in terms of providing housing for its people.

I say that, to say this. When you look as far back as the days when the Barbados Labour Party's Government provided houses for people who lived in the area of Delamere Land who were affected ... and then they were moved to the area of the Pine, the Barbados Labour Party Government was responsible. When one talks about providing houses for poor people and you look at Belfield in Black Rock, the Barbados Labour Party has been responsible. When you talk about providing housing for the people of Barbados and you look at Deacons Housing Area, the Barbados Labour Party has been responsible. The Barbados Labour Party stands head and shoulders above the Opposition in terms of housing.

Should we talk of recent times and we look at the standard of housing provided by the Barbados Labour Party Government, and we look at the areas of Kensington Lodge, Bonnets Housing Area and Grazettes Housing Area, we can pat ourselves on our shoulders and say to ourselves that the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) has done a wonderful job.

To top it all, I am hoping that the day would come when the big cameras would come to Barbados and take pictures of what could be considered as the highest quality housing provided for low income earners in terms of the London Bourne Towers. When you look at what was built or what is being built

on Bay Street by this Government there is no other country in the Caribbean that can compare. As a matter of fact, I will boldly say that those of us who have lived overseas and lived in some of those units in England, New York and even Jamaica, when one look at the London Bourne Towers, it is an exhibition for this Government, and one can see the wonderful work this Government has done.

It hurts me to think that the Opposition can sit on that side and ridicule this Government in relation to the development of housing and the spending power given to the National Housing Corporation.

During the period of 1997, the National Housing Corporation has increased its loan limit from \$20 000 to \$75 000 and then in 1998 they increased it to \$100 000. In fact, they have not only increased the loan limit but they have provided almost 100 percent mortgages. While the other lending institutions are asking for 11 percent and eight percent interest rates, the National Housing Corporation has a rate of only six per cent. Not only that, this Government has provided people who are looking to own properties with the provision of repaying their loans, not in five or 10 years but in 25 to 40 years.

The demand for housing in this country would have to be great based on the fact that the unemployment rate in this country is dropping. As far back as 1993/1994 the unemployment rate was somewhere in the vicinity of 27 per cent. In the year 2000 you have a situation where this Government has been responsible in bringing the unemployment figures down to almost 9 per cent. This is a clear indication that if more people are working, the greater the demand will be for houses.

I have to support this Government assistance to the National Housing Corporation (NHC) which in my humble opinion is well managed and looking after the interest of all Barbadians. The National Housing Corporation (NHC) had almost 8 481 applications representing a total of almost \$52 million. You have a situation when these are broken down into parishes and the allocation for each parish where when you put the figures together there were over 1 086 that has been approved and allocated for the Honourable Members for St. John and St. Lucy more so than for a parliamentary representative in the constituency of St. Joseph.

This only goes to show that the critical analysis coming from Honourable Member for St. Lucy seems to be somewhere along the lines of being perplexed and confused because the figures speak for themselves. Therefore, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should not be complaining.

The National Housing Corporation has taken it upon themselves to refurbish and repair some of the houses that were built by the Democratic Labour Party in areas such as the Deacons Farm Housing Area, which is my constituency, which were built in a hurry to create votes for the Democratic Labour Party. These houses are now causing this Government a lot of time and money to provide a certain standard of living for the people who live in them.

The Democratic Labour Party (DLP) built asbestos roof houses.

8:55 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Mr. M.Z. WILLIAMS:

You built houses that people who suffer from sinusitis and various complications are highly affected. This Government that I am part of, out of a \$7 million budget has been responsible for replacing many of the asbestos roofs in the Farm and other places, not only replacing the asbestos roofs but have been ceiling and will continue the project of making sure that those houses which you built in the Farm and felt within yourselves at the time that you were doing the people of the Farm a favour...

We have now proven that those houses are outdated.

The electrical systems in those houses are fire hazards. Out of the \$7 million budget that the National Housing Corporation is spending we are also looking at complications caused by the wiring in those houses. I have to support any additional funds that are given to the National Housing Corporation because as parliamentary representative for the constituency of St. Michael North West I stand to benefit. Not only do I stand to benefit but my constituents stand to benefit, those who live in areas like the Farm.

When you look at what was built in 1969-71 and you drive through the Farm today what you are seeing is a complete transformation. The windows have been changed. The louvers have been removed. The houses have been ceiled. This is a clear indication that the money was well spent.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is extremely important that I support the National Housing Corporation in the area of property ownership. There are so many young people who have started to work and the first thing that they look for is to own their properties or to rent. This Government is so solid in its ways that it has looked at the fact that it is better to provide young people with the possibility of owning their homes more so than paying rent for the balance of their lives.

I tell my young constituents when they come to me to discuss the idea of rental that you can rent a house for 25 years and still not own it because the landlord is the owner of that property but if you follow the scheme provided by the National Housing Corporation where it allows you to own a house

and land, as a young person of 20, you have 40 years to pay back. When you reach a particular age, you do not have to worry about the landlord giving you notice. You are the sole owner of that property. This Government must be complimented for doing such.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to establish in this debate that the NHC has also assisted the average Barbadian who has lived on urban land and who has been paying rent. In some cases the rent is not much because I know of one case where a person has to pay \$36 a year but they are in arrears. It is possible that this Government will remove that from that person because what can be done is that you can be assisted with as much as \$2.50 per square foot towards purchasing that land.

What is important in general to us politicians is that we must understand two things. When we preach, We must be sincere in preaching. You cannot accuse people of not paying rent who live in Government houses because it was the other side who told people not to pay. The undisciplined behaviour that was carried on will not continue because people must understand their responsibility. When they were told by the Opposition not to pay rent it had a serious reflection on the mentality of certain people. We are changing that concept now. We are removing that belief from those people because it is their duty if they are involved in terms of rent, hire purchase or of a bank loan to respect that position.

You also told the people not to pay water rates. You went the length and breadth of this country and told the people not to pay water rates. I am speaking about the Opposition, the two representatives on the other side, the Honourable Members for St. Lucy and St. John representing the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. D. StE. KELLMAN:

On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I have never ever instructed anybody in this country not to pay rent or water rates.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

Mr. Speaker, as a young boy my mother told me anytime you hear a radio with somebody butting in, it is a Spanish station. If you cannot understand Spanish, turn it off.

The Opposition cannot deny this either. They are complaining about golf courses and housing in this country, they are talking about this Government that I am part of giving or selling land to expatriates. I would like the Opposition to understand that it was their government which told the people you do not want to see a cane blade in Barbados. The position is that those statements you are now living with.

This Government is a solid government. It is a government that thinks not for the small man alone. Everyone is totally involved in the exercise of this Government. Your Opposition Government has proven to me that you have to be a good friend of somebody who owns an insurance company at the directorship level so you might be in a position to overlook the terrace or the little tenants below you or you might be in a position to go and watch cricket at certain places that others cannot go and watch.

The Opposition Party has a financial wizard who is talking fiscal matters under ten. I would say that as a financial wizard that there are institutions in this country that since he is a wizard he should be in a position to help those little ones to become like himself. Unfortunately, this Honourable Chamber and the people of St. Michael North West have told him to his face that since you were not in a position to talk

for us on the first financial Budget that you had then you cannot talk for us any more.

The Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. John, has to tell the people in Barbados why it is that he told the former member for St. Michael North West in the by-election that the voice on fiscal matters will be heard by somebody who liked locking horns. The horns got popped out.

A lot of people feel that I am in this Chamber for no reason at all or that I should not be in this Chamber. Get this straight. Anytime you go to the bank and you deposit a dollar it is a dollar. If you go the next day and put down another dollar, it is two dollars. If I won my seat by 29 votes, I won. I am a representative of the people, so do not talk about 29, talk about beating and getting past the tape.

I am ready to represent the people of St. Michael North West and the people of Barbados under this Government. If there are things I am doubtful of, I am capable of staying back here and getting an honest answer, not misleading answers from the other side.

I heard the Honourable Leader of the Opposition critical of the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, for the \$77 million on GEMS. I would like him to go back to the Auditor General's Report of 1992. He is to find it and bring it to the Chamber. I will not use it in here. I sat in here today and read it and I showed the Leader of the House. He seems to be confused with seventy-sevens. He is mixed up with 77. The position is that \$77 million was not authorised to be spent. The Honourable Member for St. John was the Minister of Finance at the time.

I am saying to you in this Honourable Chamber that as long as I am a Member of Parliament that one of the things that I will do is sit here and when I hear certain statements read, I will ask for information and read back to find out if they are correct. I will not be misled by that side.

On the news today, the first thing this morning that the Leader of the Opposition said, misleading the people of Barbados, when in truth and in fact his glass windows have stains all over it...

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of this Government. I am proud when I look under the Ministry of Culture and I see what the the Ministry of Education and Culture have planned for the young people of this country. I am proud to think that under the Ministry of Culture that the world is likely to hear our performing artists either by way of CDs or by way of music videos. It is here - projections by the Ministry of Education and Culture. When I look at the Ministry of Social Transformation and I can see what they have planned for Barbadians at the community level I am proud to be part of this Government. I am proud in the sense that young people who had no direction, as accused by the people on the other side that we had no direction for the young people of Barbados, that this Government has a plan for young people.

9:05 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000.

Continuation of Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

Mr. Speaker, this Government has a plan for young people. When I look at the projections under the Ministry of Tourism and I would like the Honourable Member of the City to hear this, when I look at the projections and I look under the Ministry of Tourism and I see the expected arrivals that is not what I am impressed with. I am impressed, Mr. Speaker, that over 13 000 Barbadians are employed in the tourist industry and 13 000 Barbadians employed is a lot of people. If you are going to tell me that 13 000 were employed with the tourist industry between the period of 1999 and the projections that I am seeing for 2000/2001, I guaranteed that we will have a projection of almost 18 000 employed in the tourist industry.

I must compliment the Ministry of Tourism. When I look at the possible arrivals in terms of visitors, long staying visitors and short staying visitors moving from 422 000 to almost 597 000, that is an increase, an increase in revenue in this country, an increase of more spending power. The taxi drivers will benefit, the hotels will benefit, the waitress will benefit, the people on the beaches who braid and plait hair will benefit.

Asides.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

Yes, the small man will benefit.

What is your plan? What has been your plan? Your plan, Mr. Speaker, was to move to a place in St. Philip called Bushy Park and make it exclusive.

Asides.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I did not want to go that way but thanks for prompting me.

The Leader of the Opposition in his exclusive way knew what he had planned for Bushy Park. I hear a lot of talk in here, Mr. Speaker, about Bennetts and about this Government is responsible for Bennetts. Something fell off a truck, Mr. Speaker, and I am going to say that the Leader of the Opposition and the Democratic Labour Party are guilty of trying many years ago to sell this country off to expatriates.

Mr. Speaker, there is proof. You remember well, the problem, Mr. Speaker, at Westmoreland. Do you remember who went forward to settle the grievance at Westmoreland? Do you remember the voice? Mr. Speaker, it was not the General Secretary of the Barbados Workers Union. It was not the leader of the Barbados Labour Party. It was a man who is the bag carrier for the Democratic Labour Party. A man called DaSilva. You cannot accuse this Government of being corrupt. You cannot accuse this Government of doing things. You have got to look at your glass window. When you drive down Bay Street there is a building on Bay that has a face it in. Do you know it? It is just by Esso. Look in the next glass and you will see the faults and the critical things that you have done to my people of Barbados; the unfair things that the Democratic Labour Party has done to the people of Barbados and every minute trying to be critical of this Government and the good work that this Government is doing. Go away.

Asides.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

Is that unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. SPEAKER:

I never said a word.

9:15 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Mr. M.Z. WILLIAMS:

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely comfortable...

Mr. SPEAKER:

You have two minutes to conclude.

Mr. M.Z. WILLIAMS:

I think I will use those two minutes very effectively and I think that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should be grateful because when the crumbs fall off the table, they normally can be swept up and thrown out. I have heard in many cases that people gathered together can benefit and St. Lucy has benefitted from any growth in this country. When I hear him saying that St. Lucy does not get this and St. Lucy does not get that ...

Asides.

Mr. M.Z. WILLIAMS:

Mr. Speaker, I do not expect the Leader of the Opposition would say that St. John gets anything at all. So do not expect the Leader of the Opposition to say that he gets anything at all because it is about honesty. If you cannot be honest to your mind, you cannot be honest in your speech.

Asides.

Mr. M.Z. WILLIAMS:

I know they get because I see here that over 600 loan applications have been approved. In St. Lucy, I can go by St. Lucy's Parish Church and drive comfortably to River Bay on a nice barber green road. I can go to Half Moon Fort in St. Lucy which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy can tell you that I am a St. Lucy person, so when I hear him talk about St. Lucy and St. Lucy does not get this...

Aside.

Mr. M.Z. WILLIAMS:

I like the talk when he says about he wants his own airplane. I like the talk when he says he wants his own helicopter but he must be fair.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I am saying to the Opposition, Barbadians are not asleep, they are well aware that the Barbados Labour Party Government, under the leadership of this Party and the Prime Minister, is comfortable and guarantee that their standards of living will improve. On that point, I will do one thing to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, “click, the Spanish station is off.”

Asides.

Sir HAROLD St. JOHN:

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I welcome this opportunity to say a few words on these Estimates and I will give the Honourable Leader of the House the assurance that I will give him ample time to reply, as we are going to close at 1000 p.m. There are a number of points that I would like to raise in this debate, particularly with a view to clarifying statements that were made by the other side.

I understand the difficulty under which the other side operates. Being a Leader of an Opposition is never easy and being a Leader of an Opposition with only one other Member is even more difficult and it is even more difficult when you are faced with a Government whose performance has been so outstanding and there is very little to criticise.

It is therefore the role of the Leader of the Opposition to try and discover areas of conduct on the part of the Government which lend themselves to criticism. It is not the role of the Leader of the Opposition to invent facts or is it the role of the Leader of the Opposition to distort the performance of the Government.

Yesterday and today, the Opposition, in my humble opinion, took on a position in relation to the performance of the Government which was totally unjustified. Indeed, after listening to the outstanding contributions made by the Members of the frontbench who were unjustifiably attacked, the Leader of the Opposition and his fellow Member, must now feel that they were wrong to have adopted the positions that they adopted.

The truth of the matter is that point by point the Members on this side were able to demonstrate that these Estimates of Expenditure reflect a continuous position of the Government in its quest to improve the social and economic conditions in Barbados, to reposition Barbados and its economy with a view to ensuring that the changing world environment in which we are all operating, will have as little impact as possible.

I want to emphasise, Sir, that this Government has always been of the view that it is one of the prime roles of Government to ensure that the Government uses its powers with a view to ameliorating possible harmful consequences to people, to the economy and to the environment. That is why I am particularly happy to have heard the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance re-emphasize this point that in a small country like Barbados, the role of the state has to be continuously reviewed with a view to ensuring that the state performs that function that I have spoken of.

I do not need, Sir, to emphasize the historical role that the Barbados Labour Party had in transforming Barbados in a number of areas from its formation but what I want to say, Sir, is that all of this criticism one is getting now about the performance of Members of the frontbench, and they alleged failures, after

hearing them today and yesterday, I think that those people who make that criticism fail to recognise facts and fail to recognise that Barbados is no different from other countries in the world and that it is important that you educate, that you counsel and that you ensure that the citizens of Barbados understand the difficulties under which we are operating. I want to deal in particular with the criticism by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition of the international business environment in Barbados and the alleged failure of the Government to deal with.

First of all, Sir, that criticism only re-echoes a criticism that was made by a well-known spokesman in the international business sector in Barbados whose record of dislike of this Government is also well known. Few people recognise changes that have been brought about by this Government to ensure that the integrity and the competence of Barbados as a desirable destination, and that it continues to maintain its reputation as an honest and efficient offshore centre.

I was very glad when the Honourable Minister of International Business was able to point out that since this Government has been in office, amendments have been made to important areas of legislation. In particular, the very International Business Companies Act. In particular, the introduction of a Mutual Funds legislation. In particular, a number of initiatives have been taken to educate functionaries at the Government level, as well as practitioners in relevant disciplines in the private sector in the form of sponsoring of important conferences and seminars periodically.

Today in Barbados, I believe, the International Information Business Conference under the auspices of the BIDC is taking place and it is an important and significant event, initiated by the BIDC, Sir, which has been so successful that it has been attracting as many as 200 or 300 people, in which the changing role of the information industry is being explained.

I find it difficult to appreciate, Sir, that despite repeated statements, repeated publications by the public sector that journals and broadcasting houses and the media in Barbados do not seem to appreciate that the informatics industry, although we have lost some employment, it is far from dead. It is alive and kicking and what is happening is that new areas of employment of a higher skilled area are taking place.

9:25 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000.

Continuation of Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN:

Although we have lost some employment it is far from dead. It is alive and kicking. What is happening is that new areas of employment of a higher skilled area is taking place, and so, Sir, I was glad that point was reemphasised today. I also wish to speak slightly about tourism. All Honourable Members of this House know that I am a Director of hotels and resorts. All Honourable Members of this House know that I am the Chairman of Needham's Point which is a Government wholly owned,

fully owned property and it is charged with the responsibility of the redevelopment of Needham's Point from the Drill Hall to Grand Barbados.

I showed my colleague here the Barbados Labour Party Manifesto 1986 and he was surprised that the Barbados Labour Party was promising the development so long ago. I will just read it shortly, Sir, because these things ought to be known, and they ought to be known, but unfortunately the habit of reading history seems to have been a lost art. Even university professors invent history as we have seen recently. In the spirit of building for the future, the BLP will very urgently, in the light of new administration, bring to fruition, the Carlisle Bay Development Project, which will add a new dimension to the amenities of historic Bridgetown.

The re-development covers the area between the Pierhead and Needham's Point. There will be improved infrastructure for the creation of a pedestrian mall linking a variety of commercial, social and cultural facilities. Specifically it is proposed to be like a promenade along with the Grand Bay Hotel, formerly the Holiday Inn Hotel I am more than happy to be associated with the instrument that has been created by this Government in the last four years to implement that concept which was envisaged by the Labour Party so long ago.

The Leader of the Opposition and the DLP had from 1986 - 1994 to implement it. They did not do it. Now that we are doing it, we reject any projections from the other side that it is wastage and that it is not a worthy project.

I would like to deal too, Sir, Sir, with hotel and resorts because they have made it a habit that I will not speak in the House of Assembly in relation to that matter, because I regard it as the duty of the Board of Directors and the relevant Ministers to speak on it, but I want to say, Sir, that anyone with eyes to see, with a fair and objective mind could not fail to appreciate the dramatic transformation that has gone on the South Coast of Barbados, consequent to find the inspiration provided by the scheme for the redevelopment of hotels in the South Coast and instrumentality of hotel and resorts in Barbados.

If you look at the former hotel in St. Lawrence Gap, you will see the Time Out Hotel, if you look at the former Blue Horizon, you will see that it has been refurbished. If you look at the former Savannah Hotel, you will see that it is refurbished, and what it is more, 80 more rooms are on the verge of completion and will be ready for this winter. If you go up to Silver Sands and you look at Silver Rock Hotel you will see that 35 new rooms have been built.

As I understand it, Sir, I listened to the speech very carefully that was made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East and I heard him say that 399 odd rooms will be available for attraction of tourists to Barbados by this winter season and that 311 were already in existence and being marked. I heard him say that.

The Honourable Member says that \$70 million have been wasted. If the Honourable Member would do a little calculation he would just divide \$70 million by 391 and he would see that the per room cost of these hotels is well within the range of any three-star hotel built today. I know he is a great reader, but the problem is not if he reads but he has a capacity to try and use what he reads for a different purpose for which it is intended to be used. That is his problem, a well-known problem. I am not getting in to that. That is a defect that the Honourable Member has manifested for so many years. I am not going to

deal with that. That is a defect. I am not going to deal with that. That is a defect. It seems to follow him all the time. The position is that it is untrue to say that there is no accountability with respect to either the Needham's Point or hotels and resorts.

9:35 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN:

There are companies. They are audited by - certainly to my knowledge - international chartered accountants and certainly to my knowledge they are audited in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act.

There is just one other point I want to make. There is no doubt about it at all that Barbados' tourism industry faces particular problems arising from the fact that Barbados is a highly diversified destination. It is a high cost destination. Therefore, we have to look for markets of visitors who can afford our cost.

The future of the tourism industry in Barbados and the dependence of Barbadians on tourism is well-known. It lies in the capacity of Barbados to be able to provide tourist accommodation which will suit the cost that we can provide. In fact, that has always been our position.

I am also very happy to say that when I move from the Hilton Hotel and I go right up to the Crane, right up to my friend from St. Philip who has joined the fold, a parish that has now fully understands and appreciates the time that they wasted in the past ...

Asides.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN:

Now that they have seen Six Roads being resuscitated, have seen the new development between the Airport and Six Roads, have seen the development at Skeetes Bay which was promised for a long time by the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) but never brought to fruition, are seeing the expansion of the Grantley Adams Airport and have seen the development at the Crane ...

Asides.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN:

The problem with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is that he is just like what the former member for St. John used to say about a gentleman who had a small business in Fairchild Street. His concept of money was, that the totality of the word 'money' could fit into his fob pocket.

Asides.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN:

His vision is limited by inexperience. The concept of development is something that the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) understands. Had it not been for the vision and the courage of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP), St. Peter and St. Lucy would not be what they are today.

The bitter criticism that was heaped upon the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) in the 1980's for building the bypass road and for building Heywoods ...

Asides.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN:

The point is, that Government sometimes has to be visionary and takes decisions which at first sight would appear to be costly but in truth and in fact are very necessary infrastructural developments which will lead to further developments by Government. It will be so with Needham Point, Hotel and Resort and the Durants Golf Course.

I am proud to say that when I go for my little walk on top of the hill on mornings, I can see a whole area totally transformed with a project that in 1986 the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Manifesto said it would implement if re-elected.

All of the nine years that the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) was in office, the same land lay idle. Today, it is expected that by June or July this year and certainly by the winter season, all eighteen holes would be in operation with a public/private sector initiative. Mr. Speaker, so is Needham Point and Hotel and Resort.

It is a matter for the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) if they get back in office - in the unlikely event - that if they want to give it away, they can give it away like how they gave away Heywoods. If they want to give it away like they gave away the totality of the telephone company and the telecommunications

industry that is a matter for them.

No criticism of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) which is unjustified will deflect the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) from implementing the visionary projects of which we conceive and on which we believe are necessary for bringing Barbados into a competitive position in this new millennium.

Thank you, Sir.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, in making the last speech for the day, I wish to follow the theme of the Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, the first term of this administration was devoted to setting right the economic foundations of Barbados. In September 1998, - I think it was - the Prime Minister called me and about three other persons to a meeting at the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Headquarters. He said to us, I have got the economy sorted out, Barbados will continue to grow for as far as I can see, I am now in election mode, let us get everything in order for elections. I said to him then, fair enough - I was still Chairman - we will do what has to be done. I wish you to remember, since we have got the economic foundations of the country in order, the next task of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Government is to deal with the social system. He agreed.

Therefore, it is not by accident, it is a matter of setting designs that we put up-front social transformation of Barbados as the first set of policies in this Manifesto of January last year. In the past year we have been doing what is necessary to carry out the programmes in this Manifesto. You will hear during the course of these debates what the Ministry of Social Transformation has been doing and is doing to change the social structure and the system in Barbados.

It has only been a year since we refashion the policies of the party.

9:45 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

The composition in these Estimates has been a daunting one because the economy has continued to perform and all of the indicators of economic stability, growth and development are there to be seen.

One understands, having been in Opposition, that the only tactic available to the Opposition in these Estimates, and you will see it in the Budget, mark my words, would be to lay aside and ignore the numbers and the programmes which those numbers represent and instead throw some mud. You saw them yesterday. This side answered today.

More to the point has been the careful strategy of the Democratic Labour Party, evident from the turn of this year, to try and deflect the Cabinet from carrying out the policies to which we are committed in the Manifesto by creating a climate of instability in Barbados, trying to feed on the emotions of people and create dissenting feelings because we have to deal with reality. Things were not as bad as they were made to appear.

Let me give you an example. In this speech I am not going to speak as Attorney General. I am going to speak as Minister of Home Affairs. I accept that there have been sporadic outbursts of violent crime which engender a fear among the population. Is the reality as bad as it is made to appear? That is the question. I have said that a lot of the violent crime, and I maintain this, is located among groups who know each other and who are exacting reprisals against each other.

The Prime Minister sent me a letter and asked me to read it into the records of this House dated March 16, 2000 from Judith and Robert Groman:

“196 Peachtree Lane

Roslyn Hts., NY 11577

U.S.A.

Dear Prime Minister:

My husband and I, along with another couple with whom we frequently travel have recently returned home after spending a week in Barbados. This was our first visit to the island, although we have been to several of the other Caribbean islands.

I would like to express to you how much more we enjoyed ourselves on Barbados. The resort where we stayed, the Crystal Cove, was perfect, the weather could not have been better and the Caribbean Sea was, as it usually is, exquisite. What distinguished Barbados, however, from many of the other places

we have visited, is the warmth and graciousness of the people themselves.

As I mentioned before, we have been many places around the world. At the risk of sounding “syrupy,” our visit to Barbados was the first time we felt truly welcome and “loved.” From the cheerful “good mornings” from strangers on the streets, to offers of assistance if we stopped for a moment to look at a map, to offers to actually walk us to a specific location in Bridgetown when we asked for directions, to the ease of friendly conversation, and exemplary manners of vendors on the beach, the security guards, even the young men who arrived on the beach each day with their wave skimmers, scuba boats, or other such sports amenities being offered. Too, we felt safe wherever we wandered, and we covered just about every place we could go, North, South, East and West.”

And it goes on, Sir.

This Government will not be sidetracked from doing what it has to do to try and preserve the security and stability of Barbados.

I have articulated in here some weeks ago when we had a nine-hour debate on crime many of the strategies and I am not going to repeat.

I wish, before I turn to Head 28, Home Affairs and what we intend to do, to support the Honourable Minister responsible for International Business and the speech of the Honourable Member for Christ Church South in regard to the Government’s efforts in the offshore financial services sector. I think the Deputy Prime Minister pointed out to this House already that the offshore financial services sector is truly the creature of the Barbados Labour Party going back to 1979. We deliberately sought then to turn this economy outwards to make provision for the delivery of services. Now, within the last two to three years, the offshore financial services sector has come under pressure from big, powerful international organisations.

First, it was the OECD, then to a lesser extent in June 1998 it was the very UN itself in the publication of a document on Tax Havens and Bankruptcy. I spoke about that at the UN on June 18, 1998. More recently, it is the Financial Action Task Force that is sending chilling winds into this region in regard to the offshore sector.

This Government, contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday, has not been dilatory or lazy in developing vehicles for the diversification of the offshore product itself.

Sir, we passed the Insurance Act, 1996. We passed the Shipping Corporations Act in 1996. We brought a new Financial Institutions Act in 1996. The Society with Restricted Liability Act was 1995, so too was the International Trust Act, 1995. The Mutual Funds Act was 1998.

In addition to that, we created a suite of intellectual property legislation that is of the utmost importance to Barbados in this year 2000 now that WTO has come fully on board, Sir. There are the Copyright Act, 1998, the Geographical Indications Act, 1998, Integrated Circuits Act, Protection Against Unfair Competition Act, 1998, to mention four.

Presently we are working on substantial amendments to the Patents legislation and the Trademark

legislation. We are laying the legislative foundation for intellectual property and the offshore sector. The problems in the offshore sector centre around an occupation in the developing world with money laundering.

9:55 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2000

Continuation of Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

Even as recently as last week the Secretary of State, Lawrence Summers, speaking in the States had to concede in these words:

“Now, of course New York, London, Hong Kong and other developed financial centres are no strangers to money laundering.”

That was said on March 2, 2000. It is paradoxical that he could be saying that, at the same time acknowledging the extent of money laundering in major capitals of this world and at the same time they are putting the utmost pressure on small jurisdictions which are trying to diversify. That is why I spoke as I did on June 9th when I addressed the United Nations General Assembly. I repeat what I said then.

“Let me say a word about money laundering. Through the programmes of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force the region has made considerable progress to establish structures and systems to counter money laundering. Notwithstanding our best efforts, it seems that the developed world has considered penalising those of our countries which have diversified our economies to promote offshore financial services as legitimate international business.

Mr. President, let me warn that pursuit of such thoughts will not only be regressing but will be entirely counter productive.”

I went on to say that the answer to the problem was not to outlaw the offshore financial centres but to assist them in better regulation.

We are now hearing, since the OECD appeared not to have made the kind of inroads that they thought were possible, that they are now using the Financial Action Task Force to put further pressure on these

jurisdictions.

I wish the country to be reassured that the Government has developed a strategy as a response to these external pressures and they will be met in a measured and sustained way, beginning as early as next week at the meeting of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force in Trinidad followed the next week by the U.N. Offshore Forum sponsored by the U.N. in the Cayman Islands.

Sir, turning now to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the main highlights of the programme for the Ministry of Home Affairs are I think capable of being encapsulated in about 12 or 13 points for the year 2000-2001. The numbers in the vote reflect a programme. In fact, this Government had been practising programme budgeting. You set a series of programmes and then you make the numbers fit those programmes.

In the Ministry of Home Affairs, let me just run through what we have been doing. I will enumerate them. First, completion of construction of the public sector complex at the Glebe St. George, that project is ongoing and provides for a new post office, a police post, a community centre and a library, that will be finished in the fiscal year, 2000-2001. The windows are in fact being put on all like now so. The second project relates to completion of the fire station at Arch Hall and that will give additional fire coverage to the northern parishes, that will finish in the new fiscal year. In addition to the fire station, the Ministry of Housing is committed to establishing 46 lots behind the fire station, so it is both a fire station as well as a housing project at Arch Hall.

The next fiscal year we will be completing the design work for a new public centre complex at Horse Hill, the drawings for that are well advanced. Early in April, I will have a meeting with the consultants. I think they may have over provided and we will have to reduce the scale of the project to manageable proportions.

10:05 p.m.

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In that complex at Horse Hill we will have a new police station, a small court, a new post office and new medical facilities. The Outpatients facilities that they have at the back of Horse Hill court is no

use. We are building a proper medical facility. There will be a library and a community facility.

Sir, No. 4:

I have received at last on the day before yesterday the Green Paper on Immigration from the Department. I will be bringing the Green Paper followed by a White Paper on immigration policies in the new financial year. Similarly, new legislation is being prepared for CERO to declare it a disaster management agency rather than just a response mechanism. The Fire Service will be enhanced with repairs to a number of stations including Worthing and the Airport. At Four Roads Fire Station we need to build the garage outside and paint it up and so on. It is about five years since we have had any work done on it. There is also something with the sliding fall in the station. I think there is a little problem there and we have to sort that out, Sir. We are presently doing work at Weston Fire Station. Work will be done on all of those fire stations. We have just done work at the Airport but that is not completed and there are funds in the new Estimates to continue the work at the Airport Fire Station. I think that Members will agree that it looks a lot better than it did last year.

Mr. Speaker, I think for me what would be the most exciting part of next year, however, will be our work in information. I have reconstituted the INFOCOM Committee and put some private sector people on it to help them finalise an INFOCOM policy. I think Honourable Members will agree that that is necessary. I hope to bring that later on in this calendar year. Right now, the draftsman is finalising the terms of the licence for radio and television and the regulations. Regulations were never made under the Broadcasting Authority Act. I am trying to do regulations now for the first time and hopefully within a month those regulations and the new licence would be going to Cabinet, we had a final meeting on them last week Wednesday with the Broadcasting Authority. I signed off on them and they are being drafted by the Deputy Chief Parliamentary Counsel.

Mr. Speaker, I see a very exciting time for information as I have said because I am committed to working to see what is necessary to create a second channel for CBC television which would be dedicated to public service broadcasting. I was heartened week before last when the General Manager of CBC told me that she is very hopeful that we could do it this year on a separate channel. I think the technical people have worked out that what we need to do is to have a signal that is close to Channel 8, say Channel 9, 10 or Channel 7. We have to have the two signals close to each other. The capability or CBC run a second channel dedicated to public service broadcasting, I think, Sir, that the capability is there and the challenge is for CBC, GIS and AVA to develop a set of programming to keep that station operable.

One would not envisage that at the beginning that you would go for more than 12 hours broadcasting. Some consideration was given to 24 hours. I do not agree with that myself but I will wait and be advised. I would have thought that we would start gradually and build but there is a lot that we can do and I do not have time to go into it now, Sir, but I will on another occasion. I want it clearly understood that we are working to make sure that we get a broadcasting channel later on this year on radio and television.

Sir, 900 AM has a golden opportunity, in my view, as being one of the last AM stations in the region to really corner the Eastern Caribbean market. There is no reason why 900 AM with a slight increase in power should not be the leading station in this part of the region from Antigua to Guyana. It is important because I lament the fact that on Monday or Tuesday the Heads signed the last two Protocols

to set up the Single Market and Economy and at the same time as we are trying politically and otherwise to bring the region together as one, at the same time that we are doing that, the radio stations of the region are keeping us as a people apart. The proliferation of FM stations in the region has meant that it is well nigh impossible for the average person in Barbados to hear what is going on in Trinidad; 610 has reduced power and had Indianised itself; 730 is a gospel station; 100.1, 98.9, 105.1, 106.1 and 97.3, all of them are FM stations in Trinidad. I could have heard most of them on my FM set home up to last year this time and then all of a sudden 99.9 coming in from St. Vincent has got CBC drown out and my system cannot now discriminate between the stations.

Asides.

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

Try it in your car radio. Tune into 100.1; as you go to Redman's Village you pick it up but by the time you hit Mile-and-a-Quarter, you cannot hear it anymore, it is being jammed by 101.1.

Sir, as a region, we have to do something about that. As I have said, we are having great difficulty in hearing. To hear the Dimanche Gras Show two Sunday nights ago I had to go to 620 Antigua Broadcasting Service who were relaying it for 105. CBC did not have the presence of mind to carry it here.

Asides.

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

I thought there were carrying it so I did not call them. These are problems that we have to resolve this year.

Sir, before I finish I wish to speak about two sets of programmes this country can look forward to. I remember some time ago when I was in the Opposition and Mr. Sandiford was Prime Minister and responsible for CBC that I said then that I wanted to understand why it was that we as Barbadians could not see some of our great cricketers on television. I have the chance now that I am in the seat to do something about it. I am a collector of cricket tape privately. I may have said in here and said it elsewhere that I used to buy cricket tapes from F.S.H. Marketing for US\$19.95 per tape. I have cricket tapes going to the 60s and the 70s. I have specials, the tied test - whatever, I have it. Now, if I could get that at US\$19.95 a tape from F.S.H. Marketing, surely as a Corporation CBC should be able to negotiate something similar.

Last July, I went to London and met with the BBC and I asked the BBC if we could do a deal and they said, sure. I sent Tony Cozier in November to the BBC and he has extracted about 50 hours of cricket tape footage going back from all down in the 50s right up to the 70s. Now, CBC have a lot of tapes from the 1980s. We have a whole lot of tapes which we are converting and we are looking for somebody to present the programme..

10:15 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

The next thing that I did, Sir, I found an item in the Estimates where we used to pay £415 a year on service and equipment to a firm in England, Overseas Film and Television Centre, to store films of Barbados done by the GIS. When we were doing Estimates last year, I asked the Chief Information Officer, what was this and she told me that we have to pay these people in London, they are called the GIS Productions from the 1950s. I asked if we ever tried to repatriate them and was told nobody has ever done it.

I went and spoke to Mr. Muskat myself and for \$27 000 we have got 42 tapes of old Barbados, from 1951 when we had adult suffrage for the first time. You will see later on this year a series on old Barbados and you will see that group with Dame Ermie Bourne, Grantley Adams, Freddy Miller, Errol Barrow in their morning dress and Lord Alfred Savage with plumes on his hat. You will see what Warrens Plantation looked like. It was pure cane. You will see Everton Weekes making 132 against Australia at Kensington in 1959 and Keith Miller and Walsh and you will marvel at what Kensington looked like.

Asides.

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, according to my watch it is now 1015 p.m.

Asides.

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

I want some companies out there to come forward and formally sponsor this programme.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is just a sample of some of the things that the Ministry of Home Affairs will be doing this year. I am obliged to you.

SUSPENSION

Sir, and if you will allow me while I am on my feet, Sir, I ask that this House be now suspended until 10:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY:

I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that this House be now suspended until 10:00 a.m. tomorrow was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

Mr. SPEAKER:

May I remind Members that this is a suspension and there is no grace period so we start promptly at 1000 a.m.

10:20 p.m.